Are Students Safe Anywhere?? Essay, Research Paper

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Are Students Safe Anywhere?

For most people, living in the suburbs means living a better life: fresher air, better schools, basically an all around cleaner and safer environment. Does that mean living in the suburb guarantees a safer environment? There is always one thing that is inescapable wherever one lives, and that is violence. Violence is everywhere, and for the most part, I would like to discuss the violence in America s schools. What I would like to find out is, if there is a significant difference in violence in urban schools than in suburban schools? Are suburban schools at a greater risk for violence than urban schools?

Most people would think that urban schools are worse than suburban schools because of the type of people that attend them: urban teens. People assume that suburban schools are better because the students there don t have to walk through metal detectors when they enter the front doors of their school. Urban schools are not held in high regard compared to suburban schools because of the stereotypes that are placed on urban teens pregnant, drug addicted, violent, fatherless, welfare, dependent, poor, black, and uneducated (Way, pg. 1).

After seeing what happened in the mid-sized town of Littleton, Colorado, I feel safer being in an urban school. In all my years of urban schooling, I have never experienced or heard of any serious act of violence. When I think about what happened in Littleton, Colorado, I know that it could have happened anywhere because I have met some pretty disturbed people in my high school. When I had heard that two disturbed students shot and killed twelve youths and one teacher before pulling the trigger on themselves, I was flabbergasted. I quickly thought to myself, wow, that could have very well been my school , because there were kids in my school who were in a similar situation as the two kids in Colorado.

Some may believe that a school s location may play a role in the outcome of violence. For example, Mary Karpos, a criminology expert and professor at the University of Miami, feels that the disassociation of an emotional response from peers is more apt to occur in the city (Krieg, pg. 38). Karpos says that, Cities have a high population turnover People become disconnected and anonymous to each other (Krieg, pg. 106). Psychologist Charles Ewing says that, urban school shootings tend to involve one person, and are usually carried out for reasons of self defense or during another crime such as a robbery (Krieg, pg. 106). Ewing, however feels that suburban deaths are generally quite different.

Ewing feels that emotional reasons are to blame for the killings in suburban schools. They re killing because their rage is directed at their peers and to assert emotional autonomy , says Ewing (Krieg, pg. 104). He also says that, kids in the suburbs may have more time and monetary resources to carry out sophisticated broad scale killings that involve various types of weaponry (Krieg, pg. 117). I can agree with Ewing on this notion because it makes sense. Generally, kids in the suburbs have more money than those in the city. So the more money and the more time one has, the bigger and better weapons and plans one can obtain. If students have the resources for these violent actions, then what precautions can we take to make sure that these violent actions don t happen?

The problem is that students all over the country, whether they are urban or suburban students, has or can easily obtain resources like guns, knives, or even bombs to commit violent acts. Like a prison, schools all over the country, predominantly urban schools, are using metal detectors, police officers and security cameras for prevention tactics (Krieg, pg. 118). Though these tactics have been around a while, students still manage to get around these tactics and are still able to sneak instruments of crime into our schools. Joseph Perry, a psychology professor at Miami s Barry University, feels that urban schools are a step ahead, because they already recognize the problem that kids are unsafe at school (Kreig, pg. 118). Even though this realization gives urban schools an advantage, it also gives reason to believe that urban schools are more violent than suburban schools.

The reason to believe this is because urban schools have experienced so many incidents with guns and gangs, that it was almost mandatory for them to install metal detectors and add security to the schools. One example of why there is reason to believe that urban schools are more violent is from what Kristine Barker, a special needs teacher at Weymouth Intermediate School in Massachusetts, has experienced. Barker worked at an urban school district outside of Boston. Here, she went through violence prevention training. She feels that this training, has given her an edge in her current suburban situation (Kreig, pg. 119). Now that she works in a more suburban district, we have less training , she says (Kreig, pg. 119). Given Barker s situation as a teacher, her experience would lead one to believe that urban schools are more violent than suburban schools. These examples do not necessarily lead to the determination that urban schools are less safe than suburban schools.

Fran Hellar wrote a letter to one newspaper company. In his letter, he brings up a good point that violence committed by youth in suburban areas is a new occurrence. The thing is, these killings and other acts of violence are not addressed in the statistics (Hellar, pg. 17). In a way, one can see why officials wouldn t reflect on the statistics of suburban violence. Since suburban violence is newer, why would they want people to know that violence is a part of their communities now? I feel that these suburban communities seem to want to live up to their stereotypes that are commonly used to describe them: clean and safe.

The fact of the matter is that violence is all around, especially in our schools. One reason for this is because a lot of changes occur in school. For example, the transition from grade school to high school, puberty, or a switch to different friends, can put a lot of stress on students because it leaves them outside of their comfort zones. Man s propensity for violence is not a racial or species attribute It is culturally conditioned by history and the ways of life Violence is most common in highly competitive societies, particularly during periods of rapid change that upset social order (Bender and Leone, pg. 44). This is an understandable concept because life is a highly competitive game. It s no surprise that violence occurs in America s schools. After all, how couldn t someone expect something to happen while a student is in adolescence going through changes in school and by stepping out of there comfort zones?

Sometimes one may be able to spot troublemakers or bullies or be able to tell by student s actions if that student poses a violent threat to the school. Moreover, some people even feel that software may be able to help make schools safe. For example, is it possible for one to believe that there is software that could have spotted Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, the two students that attacked Columbine High School, before they had a chance to attack? Actually, there is software called Mosaic-2000, which is supposed to be capable of performing this function (Steinberg, pg. 118). Though evaluators haven t tested it, it is an idea that could help deter violence. More than likely, this software would never work. One-problem professionals feel would happen is that the software would mislabel innocent students as dangerous (Steinberg, pg. 118). It is known that it is impossible to predict a violent act before it happens. Until this software has been scientifically tested, it should not be used because it would give the schools the right to reprimand a student just because the machine says the student falls under the qualification of dangerous (Steinberg, pg. 118). It s foolish to believe that software would have been able to predict the Columbine tragedy or any other violent act for that matter.

One other way that experts feel is a way to prevent violence in our schools is by helping those with drug abuse problems. It has been proven that those who use drugs tend to be more violent. Dr. Steinberg feels that if we could do a better job of identifying and treating adults with serious mental health and substance abuse problems, we would see a decline in antisocial behavior among young people (Rothstein, 17). Though studies have shown that violence is increasing in schools, apparently drug use is not increasing, contrary to the fact that drug use has doubled among teenagers since 1991 (Falco, pg. 91). Instead of using machines to try to make predictions on dangerous students, getting help for those with substance abuse problems is a more concrete way of trying to make a difference in the struggle against violence in America s schools. Research has shown us that the reduction of violence is due to the prevention of drug use. With the way things are now in this country, I feel that this is probably the most effective way to prevent violence in our nation s schools.

Even though crime is all around in our schools, apparently juvenile crime is said to be decreasing, it s just that the media covers so much of it, it makes it sound like it s on the rise. Polls show that Americans believe that juveniles are responsible for 43% of homicides, but actually they are only responsible for about 9%. Nearly two thirds of Americans think juvenile crime is on the increase, but in reality, there has been a 58% decrease in juvenile homicides since 1994 Ironically though, a poll in the Washington Post reports that for two thirds of the parents, school violence is the thing that worries them the most these days (Shiraldi, pg. 14). On the other hand, and on the other side of the country, California Superintendent of Public Institution, Delaine Eastin, feels that the schools in California continuously offer sanctuary for the majority of students (Kim, pg. 98). The safety in our schools fluctuates throughout the country. There is no denying that crime and violence is all around in our schools. When it all comes down to it, which would be the safest place to send one s child, to an urban or a suburban school?

Maybe an urban school is safer. I mean they have metal detectors and security all over the school. One thing is that raising a child in an urban area can be risky. The most important outcome for inner city youth is ducking the bullet (McLaghlin and Langman, PG 4). This deadly bullet can be described as a metaphor for a situation where a girl gets pregnant at the age of sixteen, or a young man gets locked up at the age of eighteen. This is a hard bullet to dodge growing up as an inner city youth. If this risk is too much for one, then maybe the suburbs are an ideal place to raise and send a child to school. After all, students don t have to walk through metal detectors when they step in the front doors of school. Before making that decision, maybe one s mind would change if one heard about the outbreak of white supremacists called the Devil Dogs in the suburbs of Arizona.

Mostly comprised of athletes, this group of teenagers engage in anabolic steroids, have guns hidden under false floors of cars, and have fight club parties in empty swimming pools. The devil dogs committed numerous amounts of violent crimes and murders. The majority of the time, they got away with the crimes. They got away with it because the majority of the town was white and the devil dogs are in good with the teachers and coaches of their school. Every time they were arrested, their teachers and coaches wrote letters to the judge, vouching their high character (Cart, pg. 61). Even the former mayor of the town wrote a letter that said, though the boys behavior was obnoxious and aggressive, they were only acting the way jocks are supposed to (Cart, pg. 61). As crazy as this story may sound, it really happened, and I know I would probably have second thoughts about sending my child to a suburban school.

Finally, I find that determining whether urban or suburban schools are more violent is complicated. However, after thinking about it and with the evidence presented in this paper, I feel that an urban school is environment is safer. For instance, I would feel safer knowing my child goes to a school where if someone did walk in with a gun, he would more than likely be caught by the metal detector, and prevented from entering the school. Where as, at a suburban school, someone can walk into a school with a gun because there are no metal detectors. Another reason is because of the increased amount of security guards in urban schools. Furthermore, there may be more fistfights and more cameras in urban schools, but it seems as though presently, more and more youths are being killed in suburban schools where there were not as many precautions taken as there are in urban schools. It s just too easy for suburban kids to obtain guns and other ammunition because they have the money do this. It s even easier for them to get these guns in schools because they don t have metal detectors. Knowing this makes it easier for me to believe that an urban school environment is safer.

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