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Post-Study Reflective Essay

School violence can be defined in many different ways, but for the most part we all recognize school violence to be repeated, negative acts done onto another student. Well known examples of such include bullying, sexual harassment, school shootings, and fights. At the beginning of the semester I was sure that I understood what school violence was and the severity of the issue, and what steps a school much take in order to prevent school violence from continuing. Furthermore, I was under the impression that the government is able to completely solve the issue, but I was misinformed and biased. What schools need changes drastically from area to area, and there are so many other variables to consider when trying to fix such a complex issue such as school violence.

Although I did know the basics for what school violence is, I only understood what they tell you in school. I new that bullying was repeated, unwanted acts from another student, but it is more complex than just that. First off, bullying digs deeper than I originally thought. Bullying can be teasing and name calling, but it can also be more harsh such as intimidation and even assault. Learning what can be considered bullying has shown me how serious the issue is as a whole. Furthermore, research shows that about thirteen percent of students in eight grade to tenth grade are bullied. The national center for education F(2009) has found that there are about eighty eight thousand one hundred eight two middle schools in the united states. The average number of students in middle school is about five hundred seventy four (National center for education, 2009). Thus, there is about six and a half million student in just middle school that are being bullied. Bullying is much more severe than I originally assumed. But school violence is more than bullying. It also includes school shootings and fights which is often seen as more important. But, given the number of students that are bullied each year, it is just as important as school shootings and fights. We may see the harm school shootings and fights cause in a more dramatic way, but the longevity that bullying can have on a student’s mental health is such an important factor as well.

But why is it so important that we address the issue of school violence? The obvious answer that, I would have responded with before studying school violence, is for the safety of our students, but the answer is just as complex and school violence itself. Ignoring the issue of school violence in schools is going to allow the issue to persist and eventually affect the culture within our country. Earlier in this semester we talked about the latent functions of schools. One of those latent functions is to teach students the proper way to behave within society, especially when it comes to children who do not have the good role models at home. Thus, making rules and programs against violent behaviors within school demonstrations to students that they should not behave in such a way later in life. Therefore, ignoring the issue will allow an opening for students to develop aggressive social behavior and allow violence to become normalized in our society. However, we do not want adults stooping to violence whenever and where ever they feel like it because it began normalized in society. Furthermore, the issue with ignoring violence is that it can result in disruption of instruction time. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed to try and educate disadvantaged students showing that we already are having issues with equal education for everyone. Ignoring violent behavior is going to decrease our changes of closing the achievement gap as more violence leads to more disruptions in the classroom. In turn this would hurt disadvantaged students more as they are receiving less and less instruction for every fight. For these reasons and many more we need to develop a way to fix the issues with school violence.

Before researching the issue, I made it seem as though the government is not trying to fix the issue, but that is not the case. They are trying to but school violence is an extremely hard and complex issue within schools today. Sean M. Brooks states in his book, *Violence Among Students and School Staff*, (2017) that programs such as peer mentor groups, higher educational demands for teachers, and ridding schools of physical education, social events such as prom, and competitive sports teams could help correct the problems with school violence. Some of his remarks can be radical in nature, but have some validity when it comes to school violence. Maybe instead of completely wiping out these tradition, it could be of value to just tweak them to be less susceptible to peer pressure and bullying such as changing the dress codes for social events and ruling against dressing out in gym class. Although we have many programs to help prevent bullying, implementing peer mentor groups is another step towards fixing the effects bullying has already had on students mental health. Brooks also brings up a good point that certain degree areas -such as political science, sociology, and history- are better at conflict resolution and that expanding teachers knowledge in those areas could help resolve a lot of issues without requiring extreme actions to be taken. However, this is a hard one to implement as teachers are already required to take and pass so many classes and tests in order to teach. Furthermore, there is other issues within schools that school boards should research in order create a safer environment for students. My group researched the structure of schools today and often times schools are not built to prevent school violence. The bathrooms restrict students exits and muffle sounds (Schneider, 2000). Furthermore, many school have way too many exits that increase the likelihood of an intruder (Schneider, 2000). With this research in mind, school boards would be able to design schools better to prevent certain types of bullying before they have even begun.

More research into which programs are beneficial and which can be harmful would be enormously helpful for school boards to make informed decisions on what programs to implement. Many programs such as the no tolerance policy sound great but have harmful affects in the long run. Thus, more testing will allow better solutions, but for now schools are trying their best with what they have. People, myself included, need to take a step back and look at the broader picture. Before I took this class I was always angry that schools did not do enough to help prevent school violence, but now I see that is not the case.

References

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