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Senior Honors Thesis

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Introduction

I began school many years ago with the belief that I would become an educated individual by taking intellectually-stimulating classes with well-qualified, intelligent professors. I thought that I would read and discuss essays, novels, and textbooks, perform science experiments, and engage in heated classroom discussions.

In many ways, I was right. I experienced all of these aspects of education in college and truly learned a lot. However, it was not until sophomore year when I took a service-learning course that I realized education involves much more than sitting in a classroom, taking notes, and memorizing facts. I slowly began to see how my unique life experiences had enhanced my education, and how my education could enhance these particular experiences. I came to the realization that true knowledge and a well-rounded education involves connecting what I have learned in the classroom to the outside world, and connecting what I have learned in the outside world to the classroom.

Three years ago I began volunteering at a full-service, title 1, urban elementary school in Knoxville, and embarked on a very important journey in my academic career. I initially began volunteering at Sarah Moore Green Elementary School as part of a service-learning course with the University Honors Program, but decided to continue volunteering there because it was such a rewarding, educational experience. I found that my work at Sarah Moore Green enriched my fields of study greatly, since I am a double-

major in Sociology and Political Science. I found myself connecting what I had learned in classrooms to what I was experiencing in Sarah Moore Green. I also began formulating hypotheses and testing them, and came to the realization that life in the real world does not always follow clear-cut, textbook examples.

My senior thesis is a first-person descriptive account of three years worth of work in a Title 1, full-service, urban elementary school, and what I have learned. The children I have worked with and situations I have seen are very closely related to my majors of Sociology with a Criminal Justice concentration and Political Science. My experiences are an example of qualitative research and idiographic work (Kronick), where I learned by 1st-person observation. My work at Sarah Moore Green has truly enhanced my fields of study and has given me a new perspective on areas of public policy, politics, crime, psychology and sociology.

The Class that Started it All

During my sophomore year at the University of Tennessee, I enrolled in University Honors 337 with Dr. Kronick. I enrolled in the class because I needed another three hour honors concentration course, and initially knew very little about the course. However, I soon found out that it was an interdisciplinary service learning course, and all of the students enrolled were required to volunteer for a few hours each week at a local inner-city elementary school.

Before enrolling in University Honors 337, the concept of a full-service community school was completely foreign to me. When the concept was explained, it made perfect sense. Full-service schools are schools that attempt to utilize the school to benefit students, parents, and community members in every possible way. Full-service

schools are intended to fulfill children's needs, and sometimes a full-service school takes on unconventional roles. This is what makes a full-service school different from a regular school.

The idea of full-service schools has progressed significantly over time. Dr. Kronick explained to our class that he chose to get involved with elementary-age children after working in corrections. Dr. Kronick concluded that by the time he was working with these individuals, it was much too late. He began to see the importance of starting early, and felt it necessary to start working with children at the elementary level. It is at the elementary age when children are susceptible to various influences, when children need attention and positive role models to ensure their success. Dr. Kronick started working with Title one, urban elementary schools, where intervention was necessary in many children's lives. These are the children that are likely to become drop-outs and criminals, and Dr. Kronick realized that something needed to be done to help these children. Thus began his work with full-service schools.

University Honors 337 was a very small class, consisting of about six sophomore honors students. We met for two hours once a week in addition to our time spent at Sarah Moore Green, and discussed our experiences. Dr. Kronick lectured during our weekly meetings, and I was always amazed at how relevant what I was experiencing at Sarah Moore Green was to so many different academic fields. All of the students in the class became very close, and we slowly began to realize that what we were learning in this course was invaluable. We wanted to make a difference in the lives of these children, and we wanted other University of Tennessee students to experience what we were experiencing.

About a month and a half into the semester, our class decided to attend a conference on University and Community Partnerships at Vanderbilt Law School. None of us really knew very much about the conference prior to attending, but our experience at this conference had a huge impact on all of us. The conference consisted of various university faculty and officials, as well as community leaders. The majority of the attendees at the conference were from Nashville, including faculty from Nashville universities as well as Nashville community leaders. Our group of five students were the only ones from the University of Tennessee, and we were actually the only students (non-adults) who attended the conference.

On the second day of the conference, all attendees were asked to attend forums on various issues. One of the forums was for the community leaders, and about half of our group decided to attend this forum. At first, the community leaders seemed upset that university students were attending this forum. They seemed to feel as if they could not speak freely in front of us. However, they soon became comfortable and voiced their opinions. The community leaders did not think highly of a lot of universities. They felt like universities tried to come in and "take over" and often did more damage than good with regard to community service. One community leader in particular, an older woman, took our group aside and told us that we were viewing community partnerships the wrong way. "It's not about helping," she said to us, "it's about building relationships. We don't want to be a charity case, we just want to build relationships with those who volunteer their time." This was an extremely poignant moment for our group, and it changed all of our attitudes about the community work we were doing.

What the lady at the conference said had a huge impact on me. I had previously

had the attitude that I was going to go in to inner-city Knoxville, and help as many underprivileged, poor children as I possibly could. I soon realized that I was going about my work with the wrong mindset. I wasn't helping anyone, in fact, I probably learned more from the children of Sarah Moore Green than they ever did from me. I was not looking to "help" them, I was looking to build relationships with them and other community leaders, and do everything in my power to ensure a bright future for these children. This was the most important lesson I learned in University Honors 337, and it happened almost by accident. However, the far-reaching effects and ramifications of this particular lesson greatly enriched my fields of study as well as the way I viewed the world.

The Full-Service School

Most Americans see the education of their children as one of the most important issues in our country today. Americans expect teachers and schools to provide their children with high quality education. However, there are often non-academic barriers that severely impact a child's education. According to Barbara H. Krysiak, author of "Full-Service Community Schools," educators today "are not trained to care and provide for the children who increasingly come through our doors poor, speaking a myriad of languages, hungry, physically unhealthy, emotionally disturbed, homeless, and oftentimes abused and neglected" (5). The full-service school attempts to address these non-academic barriers.

In 1991, the Florida legislature became the first to use the term "full-service school" when it passed a law supporting schools with the objective of enhancing "the capacity of school health service programs to prevent teenage pregnancy, AIDS and other

sexually transmitted diseases, and alcohol and drug abuse" (Krysiak 5). In the past few years, the importance of community has been recognized, and educators began using the term "full-service community schools" (Krysiak 6).

Full-Service Community Schools strive to create partnerships with the community to help meet students' needs. Many students in today's inner-city schools must cope with health, social, and economic issues that detract from learning. According to Dr. Robert Kronick, author of Full-Service Community Schools, "many kids today are living dangerously close to the edge, the edge of delinquency, mental illness, and poverty" (xiii). When children have to face these serious issues on a day-to-day basis, school becomes less of a priority. These children are more worried about surviving than they are about attending school, and many times they don't have parents to adequately watch over them. They may come from single-parent households, or their parents may work three jobs to support a family. Every situation is different, but many times these children have to survive a lot of hardships.

The full-service schools in Knoxville "have an average of ninety percent of their children on free and reduced lunch, and a migration rate of 35%-53% each academic year" (Kronick 21). These children are often extremely poor and don't stay in one place or school long enough to fully adapt. This can have huge social and emotional impacts on the children. It is a fact that these children cannot learn properly if they are sick, are not well-fed, or if they are constantly relocating. This is exactly what the full-service school tries to alleviate.

Full-service schools attempt to provide after-school programs, health services, social-services, and utilize school buildings to their maximum potential. The full-service

school model strives to make the school the center of the community, and to get as much use as possible out of it. The conceptual definitions of a full-service school are " a school which serves as a central point of delivery, a single community hub for whatever education, health, social, human, or employment services have been determined locally to be needed to support a child's success in school and in the community" (Kronick 27). The thinking behind this model is that children who are not coming to school are not learning, so the full-service school attempts to remove barriers that keep children from attending school.

The Thomas-Gardner School

A great example of a successful full-service community school lies in the Thomas- Gardner School in Boston. This school includes before and after-school programs, health and mental health services, and evening classes for adults (The Full Service School, video). The Thomas-Gardner School aims to provide "a seamless education" that integrates extra programming into the school. The school aims to reinforce its curriculum through before-school and after-school programs, which places a greater emphasis on learning.

In its after-school programs, the Thomas-Gardner School provides one hour of academic enrichment, and then offers "clubs" including dance, swimming, or whatever skills that teachers want to share with students. Students from neighboring colleges, such as Boston College and Harvard, serve as tutors (The Full Service School, video).

With regard to health, the school has an on-site health clinic. There is a nurse practitioner who works onsite,, and can write prescriptions for common ailments. The school also recognizes the importance of mental health issues, and has social workers

who work with the children.

When the Thomas-Gardner School was getting started, parents were asked about their wants and needs. Parents expressed a need for evening classes, and their wish was granted. The Thomas-Gardner School offers various night classes for adults, including popular technology and computer classes.

The Thomas-Gardner school has been very successful. It has created strong partnerships with the Boston community, Boston college, the YMCA, and area businesses. The students have made drastic improvements academically, emotionally, and socially. According to The Full Service School video, the children think of the classroom as their own "house" and are happier, healthier, attend school regularly, and come to school with their homework done and eager to learn. In other words, the atmosphere of the school has changed dramatically.

The Thomas-Gardner School is an example of a successful full-service school with a strong community partnership. The school proves that education is most successful when schools can address non-academic barriers, which can severely detract from learning. The Thomas Gardner school serves as a model for full-service schools, and schools here in Knoxville can learn a lot from the school. The Thomas Gardner school's strong partnership with Boston College is one that should be emulated here in Knoxville. The University of Tennessee has a wealth of resources that would be beneficial for area full-service schools, but this would require and strong relationship with the community. Knoxville is not quite there yet, but the possibilities in the future are endless. Schools in Knoxville can learn a lot from the Thomas Gardner school.

Some of My Experiences

During my three years at Sarah Moore Green, I saw a lot of different things. I taught a photography class as part of the after-school program during my first year there, and gained some valuable insights. The class was part of the after-school program, which aimed to enrich the children's education as well as to keep them safe during 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., which are "the critical hours for crime, sex, and overeating" (Kronick 46). There were several other after-school classes offered around the same time in order to accommodate all of the students.

I learned some really valuable lessons during my first year at Sarah Moore Green. For one thing, our class composition changed dramatically over the course of the semester. Three students moved (completely left Knoxville) and one student got moved to another after-school program for disciplinary reasons. Attendance was sporadic, and there were several children who became very ill with various illnesses over the course of the semester. I was taken aback with how much these children's lives could change over the course of the semester, and this was one of the first important lessons that I learned.

I also learned how intelligent and willing-to-learn many of the students were. Many of the students looked forward to the after-school program, and some told me that it was the only reason they attended school in the first place. I saw firsthand that these children were just as smart as any other children I knew, they just had to overcome huge obstacles just to get to school. Many came from large, poor families. One child came from a single-parent household because her father was in prison. I simply could not fathom what some of these children must have had to endure on a daily basis, but I was extremely impressed with their natural intelligence and drive.

When I first told these children that I was a college student, many replied that they didn't know anyone who went to college except for their teachers. When I asked them about the University of Tennessee, many had never heard of it except for what pertains to football. This struck me as a serious problem. The University of Tennessee is less than five miles away from Sarah Moore Green elementary school, yet many of these students had never been there, seen the university, or even heard of it. The majority of the students felt like college was something for "other people" and not them. I made it a point to try to stress to them that they, too, could go to college one day. I told them that they would have to work hard, but that education was the key to success. For the rest of my years volunteering, I tried to tell all the children I could about college and encourage them to attend. These children need to hear about college and to know that it is a possibility for them.

At some point during the semester, the subject somehow came up of growing old and dying. I was completely surprised to find out that many of these children did not expect to live past their teenage years. Many of them had friends and family members that had died as teenagers on the streets, and the students of Sarah Moore Green felt they were destined for the same outcome. I found this appalling, and tried to stress to the children that they could live to be very old. This is a perfect illustration of how these children have been socialized. They feel as if they are destined to be like their counterparts, because that is all that they know.

I also saw the value of being a role model while working with these students, and how important one-on-one time is with these children. Sometimes these children just need to feel loved and need a little encouragement. When they come from large families

and spend all day in large classrooms, many students do not get the proper attention that they need. I found that just taking a few minutes to talk to each child really improved my relationships with them, and it also allowed me to get to know them properly. Just a small, five minute conversation can often make a world of difference.

During my other two years at Sarah Moore Green, I tutored students individually during the school day. This was an extremely rewarding experience as well, and was less chaotic. As a tutor, I got to work with students one-on-one, during the structured school-day environment. The after-school program was much less structured and I worked with several children at once.

After-School Programs

The hours of 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. are some of the most dangerous hours for children in poor, urban communities. These are the hours in which "overeating, unsafe sex, and crime are being perpetrated on as well as by students in our inner-city schools" (Kronick, Full Service Community Schools 71). Full-service schools strive to keep children safe during these hours, but by doing so, the schools face many challenges.

In order to keep children in the school building after school hours, after-school programs must provide educational services that are beneficial and attractive to both students and parents. After-school programs have a great opportunity to offer programs such as art, music, theater and dance. Many children in our inner-city schools have not had much exposure to the arts, so the children get extremely excited about these programs. In one after-school program portrayed in the video Strong Minds, the teachers promote programs that integrate art and ethnicity. For example, one such program allowed students to create masks of their own faces, and compare the ethnic differences.

If not for after-school programs, many of these children would not get the opportunity to learn about the arts, so these programs are vital for our children.

While working at Sarah Moore Green, I taught an after-school class and sat in on many others. Some of my favorites were a dance class that focused on swing dancing. The children in the class not only could perform the dance steps, but they could tell you a brief history of every single dance step they learned. I also sat in on a music class that focused on jazz. The children in this class loved it, and I never saw a child misbehave or even speak out of turn in this class. When I talked with the children about the class, they told me about jazz history and tossed around names of major jazz musicians. I was impressed with the children's interest level and by how much they retained from these courses.

After-school programs are one of the most important elements of the full-service school. It is important that after-school programs are not "a duplication of the day program" (Kronick 71), but this opens up many doors for after-school programs. These programs keep children safe and off the streets, they provide children with a supplementary education, and allow the children to have fun. I feel that the after-school programs have the most potential to be successful, simply because these programs can cover such a wide-array of subjects. These programs, with adequate funding and staff, could offer guest speakers, field trips, and other hands-on activities. After-school programs cannot be overlooked because they also prevent so many dangerous behaviors involving inner-city youth.

Mental Health and Elementary-Aged Children

Mental health problems are extremely prevalent in elementary-aged children, and

one of the main needs for children and families in poor urban communities is mental health care. A significant percentage of American children have diagnosable mental health problems, but most of these children do not receive adequate treatment for them (Vanderbleek 211). According to Carl Paternite, author of *School-Based Mental Health Programs and Services*, "there is compelling evidence not only that there are strong positive associations between mental health and academic success, but also that emotional and behavioral health problems are significant barriers to learning" (659). In Strong Minds: Mental Health for a New Generation, the producers emphasize screening processes for mental health, where students are immediately diagnosed with various mental illnesses. The bottom line: school-based mental health services are important.

While school-based mental health services have been criticized, they do have significant advantages and can be effective. Schools "have a stake in identifying students with emotional and behavioral problems because these issues significantly affect the students' academic performance" (Vanderbleek 212). Children spend a large portion of their lives in school, so it makes sense that mental health issues would surface in school environments. Many times, teachers are the first ones to notice mental health problems in a child, and teachers can be trained to recognize and aid children with mental health problems.

Mental health in elementary-aged children is a field that has not received as much attention as it should. Often, mental health problems are overlooked, and more attention is paid to other problems in children. Most mental health services in schools today focus on " addressing mental health problems that disrupt the classroom or school environment" (Vanderbleek 215). However, many mental health problems are not always

upfront and recognizable. Instead, they are under the radar and not easily detected. Those who study mental health and advocates for school based mental health reform "have proposed redefining mental health in schools to include 'promotion of social and emotional development and efforts to address psychosocial and mental health problems as major barriers to learning" (Vanderbleek 215).

Full-service schools attempt to provide school-based mental health care services. Mental health problems are a barrier to education, and the full-service school recognizes this and attempts to provide care. The school plays the role of a "parent" and is very involved in a child's life. Teachers serve broad roles and are key figures in children's lives, and can therefore recognize mental health problems rather easily. Many children in Title 1, urban elementary schools would not get any mental health care if not for the full-service school, so these programs are important. School-based mental health services, like any service, can be improved with more funding. However, the programs are important because they provide some help, which may save children's lives. Mental health services also remove a huge barrier to education, and allow children to learn.

Health Problems and Elementary-Aged Children

The Full-Service School model recognizes that health is a major issue for elementary-age children. Health problems are a major issue because children who are sick, hungry, who have physical problems, or dental problems simply cannot learn. While working at Sarah Moore Green, I witnessed health issues firsthand, and saw how serious they were.

During my second year at Sarah Moore Green, I worked with a young girl named Alicia. She came from a very poor family, and was one of the few white children that I

worked with. She struggled socially and never really fit in with the rest of her class. I built a relationship with her and slowly began to find out about her background and family life. She explained to me that she came from a very large family and that her mother had just had another baby. She said that her younger siblings were sick all the time, and she was the one who always had to take care of them. She also said that the reason many of the other kids in her class did not like her was because she had head lice earlier that year, and that they made fun of her.

Head lice is a huge health concern for elementary schools, especially inner-city elementary schools. It can spread like wildfire, and schools have to be prepared to deal with such a serious problem. It can be combated easily, but detracts from learning when children are repeatedly sent home from school. There is also a social stigma attached to head lice such as what Alicia experienced.

In Alicia's case, her fellow students saw her as "unclean" and "dirty" because she had head lice. Head lice is a common problem in Title 1, urban elementary schools, and according to Robert Kronick, "Regardless of the circumstances, when children are sent home from school because of the condition; days of education are lost" (Probation 104). Because head lice is extremely contagious, "other children, faculty and staff members, and human services workers - especially in Title 1 urban schools - are placed at risk by the affected children" (Probation 104). While the problem of head lice can be combated easily, it can have significant effects in schools. It is important for parents and schools to take necessary treatment and preventive measures in order to ensure that the problem does not get out of hand.

In the article "Probation and Head Lice: The Intersection of Corrections and

Education," Robert Kronick examines the problem of head lice from a sociological perspective. According to Kronick,

> From a societal point of view, head lice cases clearly should be handled by the social system and agents of social control, though significant others may positively or negatively affect behaviors. In the case of head lice, if extended family members, neighbors, or friends condemn the behavior, the problem is likely to disappear. However, if these groups of people exhibit the same behavior themselves, then the eradication of head lice is difficult. (106)

Here we see how important societal interaction is to problems in elementary schools. Head lice is a problem that is easily cured, but without proper treatment, it can affect large numbers of people. If children in our schools are repeatedly sent home from school, then they simply cannot learn. If their parents cannot pick them up from school, then these children waste away hours sitting in school clinics. During my work at Sarah Moore Green, I did not witness any widespread head lice epidemics. I saw several isolated cases, but, for the most part, the teachers and officials at Sarah Moore Green did a very good job at educating children and parents about the problem. This is a great example of how parents, teachers, and the school as a whole "condemned" the problem and made a point of eliminating the problem. This is not to say that there were not head lice out breaks, but it illustrates how to deal with the problem structurally.

Other health problems I saw while at Sarah Moore Green included flu outbreaks, dental problems, and skin problems. Flu is a common problem in all schools, but it was definitely evident in Sarah Moore Green. Dental problems were common, and many students had simply never received dental care. Some of these children were never taught

how to properly care for their teeth, and many had apparent problems such as extreme overbites and underbites that had not been corrected. If health care were expanded at Sarah Moore Green, dental care would be important. Skin problems were also prevalent. If feel that many of these children did not bathe properly or often, and it was evident in their skin. Many young children have very sensitive skin, and I don't feel like these rashes and other skin conditions were ever properly cared for in the children. Skin problems often take a back seat to other, more serious, health problems, when in reality skin problems can be serious.

Another problem I encountered was ringworm. I worked with several students who had ringworm, which is a skin infection caused by a fungus ("Ringworm"). It is spread from person to person and can be transmitted by "sharing towels, clothing, or sports equipment or by having direct contact with an infected person's rash" ("Ringworm"). In an elementary school environment, such a condition is easily spread and common. Ringworm is easily treated, but in my experiences with the children at Sarah Moore Green, the condition was often left untreated. Many of the children and their parents assumed it was just a rash or an insignificant skin problem. If left untreated, the skin can become infected and very painful. The condition of ringworm is one that is not particularly serious, but because many of the children at Sarah Moore Green do not receive adequate health care, it can quickly become serious. This is just another example of a health problem, that when not properly treated, can severely detract from learning.

The issue of poor eyesight was also prevalent at Sarah Moore Green. One year I worked with one extremely shy child, who sat at the back of the room. After working with him for a few weeks, I realized that he had extremely poor vision and simply could

not see the board. I told his teacher, she moved his seat, and eventually talked to his parents about getting him glasses. The problem was solved, his grades improved, and he lost most of his frustrations with school. Sometimes these children need outside help, and in this particular case, his teacher and I were able to direct attention to a significant problem. It is important that these children get proper attention, because this particular child probably never would have spoken up or realized that his eyesight was so poor. Many elementary-age children suffer from poor eyesight, and it is important that we recognize this as a problem in young children. Poor eyesight can have a detrimental effect on a child's education.

The children in Title 1 urban elementary schools are especially prone to health problems, and a lot of them do not receive proper check-ups, treatment, and preventive health care. In Bowling Alone, Robert Putnam examines how societal integration affects health care. According to Putnam,

> "The more integrated we are with our community, the less likely we are to experience colds, heart attacks, strokes, cancer, depression, and premature death of all sorts. Such protective effects have been confirmed for close family ties, for friendship networks, for participation in social events, and even for simple affiliation with religious and other civic associations" (126).

Here, Putnam touches on the issue of social capital, and shows how societal integration can be a form of protection against various health problems. If all the children at Sarah Moore Green received proper attention at home, from the school, and from the community, then health would not be such a big issue. However, most of these children are not integrated fully and do not receive proper attention, and health problems often

escalate quickly and become very serious. The health problems prevalent in Title 1, urban elementary schools emphasize the need for health care in these schools.

Social Capital

According to Robert D. Putnam in Bowling Alone, "child development is powerfully shaped by social capital" (296). Putnam defines social capital as "connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (19). Putnam simplifies his argument by saying "Social capital keeps bad things from happening to good kids" (296).

Social capital is a monumental concept, especially for elementary-age children. Most of the children at Sarah Moore Green are lacking in social capital; they do not have strong relationships and networks within family, peer group, school, and community. As demonstrated by Putnam, "states with disproportionately large numbers of poorly educated adults and low-income single-parent families tend not to have as may vibrant civic communities as do states where residents have the economic luxury and practical skills to participate" (297). In Sarah Moore Green, and the surrounding community, poverty, crime, and social problems run rampant. Many residents do not have strong ties to the community, and thus do not care about the community.

A lack of social capital can have profound effects on children's lives, as illustrated in Bowling Alone. In his research, Putnam finds that "Social capital is especially important in keeping children from being born unhealthily small and in keeping teenagers from dropping out of school, hanging out on the streets, and having babies out of wedlock (298-299). A lack of human capital can also have profound effects on children's lives. Human capital refers to "properties of individuals" (Putnam 19), and an example of

human capital is a college education. It is not just poverty alone that affects the children of Sarah Moore Green. They are lacking social and human capital, which is one of the most important factors for success in school and in life.

The full-service school attempts to build social capital in children's lives. For example, full service schools by definition strive to be "community schools." Full-service schools are meant to be a community hub, providing benefits and resources for all involved. Full-service schools are not only places where children can learn, they are places where children can go after-hours, where parents can go, where health care is administered. Full-service schools attempt to maximize the usage of the actual school building, and aim to get the community involved in the school's activities.

When full-service schools are successful, they generate social capital. They provide networks within the school for both children and parents. They encourage parental involvement, and strong parental involvement leads to familial social capital. Full-service schools that successfully integrate "community" into the school are extremely effective. For example, schools that involve community leaders, neighboring universities, and members of the community not directly associated with the school help generate social capital for our children. These schools also send the message that school and education are important to everyone, not just students and parents of students.

I discussed my experience earlier with a Nashville community leader at a conference on University and community partnerships. This particular leader told me that in order to successfully volunteer in one's community, one cannot try to "help" people or children. Instead, one must try to "build relationships" with the children and the community. I found her advice to be extremely profound, and it has followed me for the

past three years. However, I now understand that by working with the children of Sarah Moore Green, I am helping them build social capital. Other volunteers, as well as myself, are part of networks formed with the children that have strong sociological benefits. Many poverty-stricken people do not have social capital, and this is exactly what the community leader in Nashville was alluding to in her advice.

It is obvious that social capital has a significant impact on people, especially children, although this is a difficult concept to measure and explain. Putnam reports that "where civic engagement in community affairs in general is high, teachers report higher levels of parental support and lower levels of student misbehavior, such as bringing weapons to school, engaging in physical violence, playing hooky, and being generally apathetic about education" (301). If there is a strong sense of community, and a strong emphasis placed on education, then children are more likely to value education as well. If children and parents value education, and see it as a priority, then children will probably be more successful in school. However, it is often difficult to generate civic engagement in community affairs and to make people value education. If a community is poor and uneducated, then that community may not emphasize the importance of education. The children of these communities will grow up expecting to live the lives of their parents and the people they see on the streets.

A great example of this is evident in the children of Sarah Moore Green. The school is located in fairly close proximity to the University of Tennessee, yet hardly any of these children have ever seen the campus. Some have never even heard of the University, and those who have only seem to associate it with football or basketball. The children of Sarah Moore Green have no network with the University, and they are

growing up with the idea that "college is for other people, not people like themselves." Many of the children come from families of high school dropouts, and they see the other kids in their neighborhood dropping out as well. If the communities do not value education, then the children most likely will not value education either.

Putnam makes a powerful argument for the importance of social capital, and we see the need for sufficient social capital within the children and community of Sarah Moore Green. These children need strong networks of social and community ties, and need to be encouraged by family, school, peer group, and community as a whole. The full-service school, when successful, is an effective way to generate social capital. The more developed and advanced the full-service school is, then more community is involved. Thus the full-service school can generate more social capital.

Crime and Neighborhoods

Many of the children in Title 1, urban elementary schools are far too familiar with crime. They have grown up on the streets, have witnessed gang violence, and many have known someone who has served time in prison. These children see crime as a way of life, and without proper education and intervention, they too will begin lives of crime.

Most juvenile crime can be considered a status-offense, such as truancy. However, this is problematic because "many youth will end up in state custody with delinquents who have committed serious acts such as assault, arson, or robbery" (Kronick 61). Juvenile crime is often a direct result of mental health issues, and can be prevented if treated properly.

It is important to understand the importance of neighborhoods in children's lives. It has been said that "disadvantaged, disorderly, and decaying neighborhoods foster an

environment in which deviance becomes widespread" (Patchin 308). Children who grow up in poor, "rough" neighborhoods are forced to grow up fast. They see older children, whom they may idolize, involved with gangs, drugs, and violence. Children who grow up in such neighborhoods see crime as a way of life, and often end up committing crimes themselves. Carl Upchurch, who grew up in a rough neighborhood, describes his experiences in Convicted in the Womb:

> I had to mimic what surrounded me in order to survive. Motivated by anger and a profound sense of worthlessness, my behavior became that of a self-destructive, self-loathing creature living only from moment to moment, impulse to impulse. If I wanted what someone else had, I took it. If someone messed with me, I punched him or kicked him or stabbed him. All that mattered was getting what I wanted, *now*, no matter whom I hurt or how much I jeopardized my own well-being. I had no remorse. I didn't care who or what else existed, or even what happened to me. I was governed by a careless, heartless, ruthlessness fostered by a pervasive sense of inferiority (xi).

Upchurch saw his neighborhood as a part of himself, which illustrates just how much of an impact neighborhoods can have on young children.

Neighborhoods often serve "parent" type roles for children. Carl Upchurch says that he "pretty much ran my own life from the time I was four years old" (16). He describes his neighborhood and life on the streets:

> Out on the streets I got a sense of power that I didn't have at home. I went where I wanted, did what I wanted, and took what I wanted. South Street and its surroundings were colorful and lively, and I couldn't get enough of the sights and

> sounds. From the time I could get down the stairs alone, I roamed - first with my eyes, later with my feet, watching adult interactions and acquiring wisdom far beyond my years, despite the absence of the love and nurturing that all young children need. By the time I was old enough to go to school, I had life as I knew it all figured out. (16)

Often when children do not feel a sense of belonging at home, they turn to life on the streets. This can have detrimental effects on young children, particularly in rough, inner-city neighborhoods where crime runs rampant.

The neighborhood surrounding Sarah Moore Green can be regarded as a rough, inner-city neighborhood. I have worked with several children whose parents have served time in jail, and who have witnessed violence. Gang violence seems to be present in Knoxville as well. The children of Sarah Moore Green are very familiar with crime, drugs, and violence, even at such young ages.

Of the eight national education goals, one seeks "schools that are free of drugs, alcohol, and violence" (Adelman 10). Full-service schools attempt to provide safe learning environments for children. Often, these schools lie in the middle of unsafe neighborhoods, but the school itself can still offer safety for children. A school promotes safety by having strict rules and involved faculty. At Sarah Moore Green, every teacher I worked with was aware of problems of violence. They seemed to understand the neighborhood that the school was in and recognized the potential seriousness of violence in schools. If there was ever any talk by a child of violence, then teachers were immediately on top of the issue.

If children do not feel safe in school, then they cannot learn. Violence in schools

and neighborhoods can be yet another barrier to education. Because of this, it is important that schools recognize violence and try to keep children off the streets.

Politics and Schools

Most of us never think of schools as political places, but the reality is that politics have a huge impact on schools. This is seen through public policy, funding, and the ultimate successes of our schools.

George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" act has been at the forefront of American public policy in education today. The act attempts to "(1) close the achievement gap and increase accountability by rewarding successes and sanctioning failures, and (2) improve literacy by putting reading first, and (3) improving teacher quality" (Kronick 40). In theory, the act has merit and attempts to improve education. However, the act has had detrimental effects on many urban Title 1 schools. The legislation seems to blame and punish schools that are facing the monumental task of overcoming the non-academic barriers that their students face.

The No Child Left Behind Act implements methods of strict standardized testing in our schools. According to Jonathan Kozol, "since the enactment of this bill, the number of standardized exams children must take has more than doubled" (280). Teachers and schools want children to perform well on these standardized tests, because that is how they will receive funding. However, intense pressure is placed on teachers, students, and schools in order achieve maximum performance on these standardized tests. It can be argued that many teachers now spend most of their classroom time focusing on the information covered on these standardized tests, instead of covering a wider, less specific curriculum. Frequent standardized testing has become a focus in our schools,

because the law requires it.

President Bush emphasizes that "we've got the money in place to fund the measurement systems" (Kozol 308). However, this is not the case across the spectrum. Many urban, inner-city elementary schools have been forced to cut funds from other areas to pay for test-related materials, "test-checking" personnel to prevent cheating, and to teach test-related curricula (Kozol 308). If a poor, urban school is in danger of closing and losing funding because of No Child Left Behind, then the school will focus and spend large sums of money to ensure passage of standardized tests. However, is this really what education is all about? Do we want children who can perform well on standardized tests, or do we want children who are actually learning and receiving a well-rounded education?

No Child Left Behind has critics in all forms of education. One fourth grade teacher in an affluent Nashville suburb described the act as "No Child Left Untested." Schools nationwide have felt the repercussions and effects of this act, and these effects will likely be around for years to come.

Another provision of the "No Child Left Behind" act calls for "a right of transfer" which would allow students to transfer schools if necessary. This appeared, at first, to be an opportunity for children in poor, failing schools to transfer to nearby affluent, successful schools. However, this was not the case, because in many districts schools were already full, and affluent schools had stringent requirements (interviews and testing) that excluded many students (Kozol 203). In The Shame of a Nation, Jonathan Kozol argues that:

If the president had used his leadership to advocate for transfers not only within

> school districts, but *between* them, the transfer option might have had real meaning and, indeed, if earnestly enforced, it might have opened up the possibilities for mightily expanded racial integration in suburban schools surrounding our core cities (205).

The transfer provision of the No Child Left Behind act seems to have no real practical applications. It was a provision that could have potentially changed education today dramatically, but, instead, it has not addressed the real problems in education today. Kozol points out that many of the nation's failing, needy schools lie in close proximity to well-funded, successful schools: "less than a fifteen-minute bus ride often separates our wealthiest and poorest schooling systems" (204). The transfer provision has had little to no effect on our schools.

The Race Issue

"Racial isolation and the concentrated poverty of children in a public school go hand in hand," according to Jonathan Kozol (20). Kozol also states that a "segregated inner-city school is "almost six times as likely to be a school of concentrated poverty as is a school that has an overwhelmingly white population" (20). According to researchers at the Harvard Civil Rights Project, "the proportion of black students in majority-white Southern schools has reached its lowest level since 1968" (Greenblatt 8). Gary Orfield, co-director of the Harvard Project, says:

> Despite decades of court-ordered school integration, more than one in sic black children attends a school comprised of 99-100 percent minority students; by comparison, less than 1 percent of white public-school students attend such schools (qtd. in Greenblatt 4).

What does this mean? It means that our inner city schools are not only poverty-stricken, but that they are made up primarily of racial and ethnic minorities. Sarah Moore Green, as well as two other Title 1 urban elementary schools in Knoxville, Tennessee, have an "average of 90 percent of their students on free and reduced lunch, and a migration rate of 35%-52% each academic year" (Kronick 21). These schools are primarily black, and as illustrated above, are extremely poor.

Carl Upchurch discusses race and class in Convicted in the Womb: "The hard truth, as it relates to race *and* class, is that most people, black and white, who live outside of poor communities don't care about how poor people live as long as they don't impinge on their lives" (198). This is a harsh reality, but it is true, and is seen in the huge divisions between suburban, white schools, and inner-city, minority schools.

Because many inner-city schools are predominantly black, there seems to be a predictable patter for many young black, inner-city children. Carl Upchurch refers to this pattern: "The patter of young black urban males is that they are destined, for the most part, to grow up to be drug users and/or sellers, to become proficient with street weapons, and to end up either dead by age twenty-one or cycling through the criminal justice system, or both" (199). Society, in general, has low expectations for our poor, inner-city, black children. If this is reflected in education, then the racial divide will only be exacerbated.

Many people do not adequately understand the segregation that has taken place in our schools. Many American suburbanites believe that our schools are diverse, and that this has been a result of the desegregation measures that occurred in the 1950s through the 1980s. However, the reality is that our schools are more segregated now than ever

before, and that there has been a form of "resegregation" in our schools. Jonathan Kozol states that "almost three fourths of black and Latino students attend schools that are predominantly minority, and more than two million attend schools which we call 'apartheid schools,' in which 99 to 100 percent of students are nonwhite" (19). The reality is that desegregating our schools has not been an important issue in recent years, and many Americans do not realize the extent to which our schools are segregated. Kozol argues that during the past 25 years, "there has been no significant leadership towards the goal of creating a successfully integrated society build on integrated schools and neighborhoods" (19).

Some schools are recognizing their ethnic makeup and integrating it into their curriculum. Some schools consisting of mostly black students are "beginning to replace multicultural curricula, designed to stress diversity and reduce inter-group conflict, with Afro-centric curricula intended to include Black people's history and Afro-centric values such as humanism, no materialism, and community cohesion (Ascher qtd. in Kronick, Full Service Community Schools 65).

The bottom line is that education is extremely valuable to everyone. Sometimes our education system is not fair and as effective as it should be, but educations is still important. Carl Upchurch emphasizes the value of education to cultural empowerment for blacks:

> The greatest gift an education gives is perspective. By now you should understand how remarkable it was for me to discover that someone, somewhere, was thinking as I thought, feeling what I felt, hurting as I hurt. Just knowing that was empowering. It validated me somehow, gave me a sense of self-worth - and

the courage to persevere in the face of monumental obstacles (201). Upchurch also describes education as "power" for blacks, and emphasizes its importance (201).

A Visit to Prison

On November 28, 2006, I traveled to the Morgan County Correctional Complex to tour the facility and had the opportunity to speak with four convicted murderers. As a criminal justice major, I wanted to see the inner-workings of a nearby prison and observe the facility.

What I experienced at the Morgan County Correctional Complex was surprisingly relevant to my work at Sarah Moore Green. Many of the students at Sarah Moore Green, as in many inner-city schools, come from families with criminal histories and neighborhoods where crime is prevalent. As a general rule, many of the children in our poor, inner-city schools will end up in prison at some point in their lives.

Security at Morgan County, as with any prison, was very tight. I was searched, had to pass through a metal detector, had to fill out paperwork, and was given numerous identification badges. After I passed through the facility, I was given a tour of the complex, and observed the daily life of the facility. I was taken aback by the horrid smell of the facility and the harsh stares of the inmates. The facility is an all-male facility, and the prison officials warned me that I would get stared at and yelled at by the inmates, so I expected it. For the entire time I was in the facility, I felt as if the energy was being drained from me. The mood of the complex was depressing, the activities going on were monotonous, and the inmates exuded a sense of hopelessness.

The sense of hopelessness was what struck me the most. Some of the prisoners

were serving short sentences, but many were serving life sentences. The reality is that all of these prisoners will have difficulty re-entering society. I can't even begin to imagine the number of lives affected by each prisoner, such as how their crimes affected their victims, the victims' families, and the prisoners' families.

As a final part of my tour, I got to participate in a panel discussion with four convicted murderers. In this discussion, I was allowed to ask the prisoners anything I wanted, and they were willing to answer anything that was asked. I must mention that in this discussion there were no security guards with guns around and no glass separated the convicts from me. The experience was just like talking to four friends. For a moment, I forgot that I was in a prison talking with four convicted murderers. They seemed just like regular people.

They were regular people who had committed horrific crimes. Most had lived lives of crime, drugs, and violence. One committed only one crime in his life: murder, and now he was serving a life sentence for it. This particular inmate is now 30 years old, and he entered the Morgan County Correctional Complex at age 18. He committed a contract murder of a Doctor's wife when he was in high school. He said that he had gotten involved with the wrong crowd, and found himself in way too deep, and killed the woman.

One thing that struck me was the significant role that drugs played in many of their lives. Most of the inmates said they started experimenting with drugs at a very young age, and this marked their entry into the criminal world. They also discussed their neighborhoods, and how as young children, they were often delinquent. They came from broken homes as children, and never wanted to be in school. One said he had gotten

kicked out of school more times than he could count. None of them valued education before they got arrested.

It was extremely interesting to talk with the inmates about their crimes, their victims, and their lives. All of them expressed remorse for what they had done. When we discussed family visits, two of them broke down crying talking about how they will never see their children grow up.

The inmates seemed at peace with themselves and their lives in prison. However, the sense of hopelessness echoed throughout the discussion. With elementary-aged children, there is a sense of hope. Many of the children in poor, inner-city schools will inevitably live lives of crime and become victims of crime. The full-service school aims at prevention, and right now, it seems one of the best solutions to a difficult problem. I couldn't help but wonder if anything could have changed the outcomes of these inmates' lives. Perhaps if they had different childhoods, positive educational experiences, or simply people in their lives who cared, would they still be in prison for murder?

I cannot answer that question, but I do know that something needs to be done. My experience at the Morgan County Correctional Complex was eye-opening, depressing, yet incredibly insightful and beneficial. It simply reinforced my belief of the importance of full-service schools.

Service Learning

I became involved with full-service schools through a service-learning course, and cannot emphasize how much I learned from my experiences. However, service-learning courses usually do not receive the credit they deserve and the desired recognition from universities. Many universities advocate classroom-only instruction, and simply do not

want to fool with the added obstacles that come along with service learning.

However, service learning provides university students with hands-on experiences that the classroom cannot provide. It allows students to see theories and concepts firsthand, instead of simply reading about them in a book. In order for service learning to be successful, "faculty must feel comfortable taking the personal and professional risks necessary as they attempt the delicate process of interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement" (Bepko 84).

At the University of Tennessee, there are hardly any service-learning courses. This can be attributed to a variety of causes, but the results are that students at the University of Tennessee are only learning small amount of what they can potentially learn. When I attended the conference on community partnerships, one speaker, Nadeen Cruze, emphasized a "learning pie." She described classroom knowledge as being a very small, sliver of the pie, and said that the rest of knowledge was learned through hands-on experiences.

Service Learning courses require dedicated professors, and they require partnerships between a university and a community. In order for partnerships to be successful, "there msut be an ongoing commitment to the relationship on all sides: university, school and community" (Bepko 84). These relationships are not easily formed or easily maintained. They require hard work, diligence, and an ongoing desire to improve one's community. Gerald Bepko and Sylvia Payne emphasize this in their article "Full-Service Schools: Involving the Urban University in School Improvement and Community Redevelopment:"

The establishment of interprofessional relationships is key and time-consuming.

> It Involves trust as well as commitment to continuity. Few people will have the stamina to sustain an effort that is not likely to last the school year or that is dependent on the participation of certain individuals whose roles may cease or change. (84)

Service Learning courses are beneficial to students, the university, and community. However these courses require committed faculty, reliable students, and a supportive university. There also must be a strong partnership between an university and community, which is not easily accomplished.

I am an strong supporter of service-learning. I never would have started volunteering at Sarah Moore Green had it not been for the University Honors service-learning course. My work at Sarah Moore Green, as well as many other endeavors outside the classroom, are what "made" my education and shaped me into the person I am today. Knowledge is not something to simply memorize and regurgitate, it is something to be fully understood, processed, and applied by a student's mind.

For the past 3 years, I have expanded my mind and outlook on life. As a senior, I am preparing to graduate college, and begin law school. What I have learned in my real world experiences will follow me for the rest of my life, and I will never forget my experiences at Sarah Moore Green. I hope to somehow continue my work with full-service schools, and will take these experiences with me.

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