

Introduction

There has been a fair amount of scholarship in the last twenty years on the parallel between income level and educational success. Studies have shown that the better-off a family is, the more likely it is that their children will receive a quality education and go on to pursue a good career (Hochschild & Scovronick). Children from families with higher incomes are more likely to have access to higher quality education and expect more from their education than are children from low-income families. Because socio-economic status is almost always inextricably intertwined with race, the families of lower economic background are usually families of color. This translates into lower educational attainment for students of color. However, it has also been found that when children from lower economic backgrounds have been moved into settings with children from higher economic backgrounds, their level of educational success has increased dramatically. Some explanations for this could be the wider opportunities that became available to them and the higher expectations set for them (Goering, 5-12).

Mixed-income housing arrangements can be seen as a plausible, though highly unexplored, method of creating less economically and racially segregated spaces for children to be educated in. Though mixed-income units have been praised in the past for creating desegregated public living spaces, the connection between those desegregated living spaces and the opportunity they create for providing integrated educational settings has not been made. The goal of this paper is to better understand the crucial connection between income level and educational attainment. It will explore the possibility of using mixed-income housing as a way to increase the educational achievement of traditionally underserved and low-income students of color by mixing them with their privileged peers of higher economic background. To do this, the mixed-income housing projects would have to include some sort of magnet school within or near the community that would be attractive not just to the low-income families but also to higher income families that tend to have higher expectations for their children's

education. There have been some examples of this in the last ten years. This paper will explore mixed-income housing and its successes and learn from the examples already laid for high quality education in mixed-income housing settings. It will show the opportunities that mixed-income housing currently provides for integrated schools.

Mixed-Income Housing

Mixed-income was largely born out of Congress' 1992 passage of HOPE VI, a program designed to eliminate many of the poorest project areas in the country and replace them with mixed-income communities. The basic goal of mixed-income housing is to create areas of economic integration, or a mix of incomes, so that poverty is not as concentrated in a small area. To accomplish this, most mixed-income complexes have a certain percentage of their units slotted for people of low-income or below a certain percentage of the Area Median Income (AMI), a certain percentage for people of more moderate to average income, and a certain percentage for market rate housing. Everyone that earns less than the average AMI will have their rent subsidized by the government. Others with slightly greater than AMI may qualify for partial subsidization, and those renting the market rate units will pay a regular rent for their units (Brophy & Smith).

There are a number of common themes among the successful mixed-income housing, many of which surround the issue of attracting market rate renters. Because most people do not desire to live around low-income residents in areas of poverty, there must be incentives for market rate tenants to move in. The more successful complexes have provided highly competitive rent rates to market rate tenants, usually a bargain for the quality of housing that is being offered. This has been listed by many market rate tenants as the reason that they chose to live in their mixed-income units (Brophy & Smith, 11, 13).

Another key to attracting market rate tenants lies in the physical landscape. In the Harbor Point development in downtown Boston, “emphasis was placed on making the units attractive, the community safe, and the amenity package sufficient to attract market-rate tenants” (Brophy & Smith, 7). In the case of Harbor Point, its placement in a neighborhood with a reputation for high crime was not a hindrance to renters because it was less important than its proximity to downtown and large employment centers and its waterfront location.

There are certain things that are necessary to make a development attractive to its more middle class renters. These benefits for the market rate renters have to be carefully balanced with those benefits for the more moderate income families as the two different groups may have conflicting needs. The location should be suitable to everyone living in the complex, and the budget needs to be balanced between creating an attractive landscape and useable functions in the community. We have a number of great examples to look at in the numerous successful complexes that have been created all over the country. These should be seen as resources as we create integrated settings that will benefit students in their education.

Opportunities for Integrated Education

Through their emphasis on integrating different income levels, mixed-income communities create a great opportunity to be able to desegregate the areas in which they are located. One of the opportunities that then arises out of this type of community is the chance to be able to provide a desegregated, equal opportunity environment in which to educate the community’s children. The opportunity would be mutually beneficial to all parties: the children from higher income families (tending to be white and more privileged) would learn in a more diverse environment with children unlike themselves, generating unique experiences and understandings. The children from lower income

families would likewise benefit from being around children that were accustomed to higher competition in their education and having more resources available to them to obtain a better education. Thus the low-income students would benefit by being surrounded by higher expectations, and the middle-income students would benefit by being around students unlike themselves (Hochschild & Scovronick 38-39).

There are a number of issues that must be examined when looking at this method of desegregating schools through housing. One is that the families that rent the market rate units, or those that are from higher income households, tend not to have many children while the lower income families in mixed-income developments tend to have many more children. This tells us that the market rate renters are often young couples or retirement age couples while the low-income residents tend to be families (Brophy & Smith, 17). As this is the case, schools in the area would reflect this. They would be composed primarily of low-income students without the necessary balance of higher income students.

A second issue in these communities is that, while they may be economically and racially diverse, the residents living in the communities often have very little interaction. Thus, while the population may be very diverse, the different groups stay contained and interact only within groups, not between (Brophy & Smith). In order to create integrated schools, it would be necessary to have more interaction between the low-income and middle-income families in the housing units so they would feel more comfortable around each other and be willing to send their children to school together.

Income and Education in the Past- MTO and the Gautreaux Program

In 1992, in response to the painfully obvious failure of public housing across the country, Congress enacted two programs to address the concentration of poverty in the public housing system. The first was the HOPE VI program which was designed to tear down public housing units with the

most extreme concentration of poverty. In their stead, mixed-income units would be put up which would create a mixed community of working class families, families on public assistance programs and middle-income families, supposedly creating areas of dispersed poverty, resources and crime levels as the income level of the residents became more heterogeneous (Goering, 4-5).

The second program was the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing Demonstration, or MTO. The goal of this program was to give families living in areas of concentrated poverty and racial segregation the opportunity to move to more affluent areas. The idea was to experiment with the concept of housing mobility as a means to address racial segregation and extreme poverty. Families that were chosen to be a part of this program would be relocated to more wealthy communities, exposing them to the benefits of living in higher income neighborhoods (Goering, 5-6).

The MTO program was based off of an earlier program in Chicago called the Gautreaux Program, which had most of the same stated goals as the MTO program. Families that were selected as a part of this program were moved to predominantly white or mixed neighborhoods financially better off than those that they had come from. Much research has been conducted surrounding the results of the Gautreaux Program. What was suggested was that “if families moved out of the ghetto, children would gain greater access to educational opportunities. Children were not only less likely to drop out of school, but were more likely to take college-track classes than their peers in a comparison group who moved to poorer, more segregated parts of the city of Chicago” (Goering, 6). Surrounded by children of higher economic background that were more educationally competitive and demanded more from their education, the expectations and achievement levels of the relocated group of students were also raised. The parents of the relocated students were consistently impressed with their children’s’ success in the new schools. “The level of everything is so much higher than it was in the city” said one parent. “Everything is just more advanced” (Hochschild & Scasovronick, 40).

The MTO program has taken many of the aspects of Gautreaux and attempted to implement them on a national level. Although there have been some problems with the program, the overall outcomes for a child's education have been exceedingly positive. Students were much more likely to stay in school until graduation if they were a part of this relocation program; there was a decline of 41 percent in non-graduation attrition among the students (Goering, 7).

What is suggested by the Gautreaux Program and MTO is that low-income students achieve more if they are surrounded by higher income students that have been accustomed to a higher quality education. It is no secret that children coming from families with more money will have a better education because of money available from taxes, more willingness on the part of the parents to financially support their child's education and a variety of other reasons (Hochschild & Scovronick, 53-54). If children from families with less money are exposed to the opportunities available to higher income children, they too will be able to take advantage of these resources and opportunities and will receive a better education.

Mixed-Income Schools

McCormack Baron Salazar (MBS), a developing company based in St. Louis, has developed a number of mixed-income units across the country. The group concentrates on creating mixed-income housing that not only provides an economically diverse community but that also has the best interests of that community in mind. Previous projects by MBS have included such developments as schools, recreational centers and grocery stores to be included near the mixed-income units as part of the project. According to residents, bankers, city officials and friends, Richard Baron, executive developer of MBS, "is one of the few people who looks at the whole community. Most developers are only in it to make a

buck and get out; he wants to make a better life for people. It's maintenance, parent participation and education" (Matthews, 10).

One of the mixed-income units that MBS has created is Centennial Place in Atlanta, Georgia. Centennial Place is very similar to many other mixed-income units. It houses 900 families with incomes ranging from a few thousand dollars a year to \$140,000 a year with 40 percent of the units reserved for public housing clients and 20 percent for low-income residents. What makes Centennial Place unique is that the community also includes a new YMCA, a new police miniprecinct, a renovated community center and a new elementary school (Costello). The school is named after the community, bearing the name of Centennial Place Elementary school. Two-thirds of Centennial Place students live in the surrounding community, most of which are from the mixed-income unit. Centennial Place has been a highly successful school, drawing children from all over the city to be a part of the school.

The school was a replacement for Fowler Elementary, which, in 1996, was among the worst performing schools in the city of Atlanta. The new school was erected as a part of the contract with MBS and with funds coming from various places, including HOPE VI. The school has become a magnet for students from all over the city. One-third of its students have been drawn from areas outside of Centennial Place, attracted by the school's reputation for academic excellence. The school's curriculum, based strongly on math, science and technology, aims to prepare the school's population of primarily low-income, Title I students, to go to college (The Achievement Alliance).

Centennial Place has shown that low-income students of color are capable of educational achievement at high levels. While the majority of students are from low-income families with few coming from the mixed-income complex's market rate renters, the school does provide very high quality educational services. The longer the school continues to show success, the more likely it will be that people of all income levels will want to send their children there.

Initiating Mixed-Income Schools

The actual process of creating integrated schools in mixed-income areas will involve much grassroots organizing and public support as well as cooperation from the local government. Above all, there must be support and dedication from the community. In an area where a mixed-income development is being created, it is necessary to have an interested and supporting population that has the desire to educate its children in a diverse setting. This group is necessary to put pressure on a city or federal government to create a new school or restructure the organization of an old one. The public would have to prove that a new school was necessary to improve the quality of education for their children, for the government, in most cases, would be unlikely to take the initiative to create a new school in an area where there were already other options available to the children in the area. If there were an already existing school near the development, it would have to be shown that the school would be more academically effective if it were restructured as a magnet school that would attract all types of students. The burden to prove this would fall on the community, which would have to bring their thoughts to the local government. If the idea for the construction or reconstruction of a school was approved, it would be left up to the school board and reformers to ensure that the school had all the necessary elements to make it successful. After that, the more schools of the sort that were started across the country, the easier it would be to create more like it.

Heritage Park and prospects for the future

One of McCormack Baron Salazar's most recent developments is Heritage Park in Minneapolis. Having replaced an older, very run down project that had housed many of the low-income residents of the city, the new 900 unit development provides badly needed low-income housing. Across the street from Heritage Park is Bethune School, a school similar to many of the schools near public housing

projects or in low-income neighborhoods. Four years ago, when MBS was first starting the Heritage Park project, Bethune School went through some reorganization to improve the quality of education that it offered. Before this, Bethune had gone through four principals in two years and was suffering from a very high turn over rate. The school is now an arts magnet and is starting to get back on its feet, due in part to a push from the Heritage Park developers (interview with Darlene Walser).

Bethune School has the potential to become something similar to Centennial Place and also provides an opportunity to create a mixed-income educational community, as do the schools located near other mixed-income housing units all across the country. But for these schools to be successful in their attempts to attract a diverse student body there are a number of criteria that need to be met:

- The adjacent housing units need to have higher numbers of market rate families with children.
- In order for this to happen the schools must be competitive, rigorous and offer special course work that cannot be found elsewhere. Centennial Place's math, science and technology-based curriculum is a good example of this.
- There needs to be more interaction between low-income and market rate families in the housing complex so that market rate families will actually be willing to send their children to local schools. This could be achieved through more community activities as a part of the housing complex. Sports and recreation would be ideal methods to achieve higher interaction.

As of right now, there is little talk of restructuring Bethune School to make it more attractive to the market rate residents of Heritage Park. Consequently, it will likely not become an option for those families that live there. If it became a very successful arts school, offering specialized instruction that was unavailable elsewhere, however, Bethune could be a viable and likely option for the children from higher income families.

Conclusion

In 2004, Centennial Place Elementary in Atlanta, Georgia, was the recipient of the first-ever annual Dispelling the Myth award. This award was designed to dispel the myth that “low-income and minority children cannot achieve high academic levels.” Students at Centennial Place have certainly dispelled this myth. They have reached and exceeded standards set for them by the state. Ninety-eight percent of students in 2003 met or exceeded standards in reading and 93 percent met or exceeded standards in math (Atlanta Housing Authority press release). Eighty-seven percent of their students with disabilities met or exceeded state math standards and 85 percent met or exceeded state reading standards (The Achievement Alliance). Centennial Place has shown that it is a highly competitive school that is able to produce intelligent and capable young students from all walks of life.

Examples such as Centennial Pace show us the possibilities presented by highly competitive schools based in mixed-income areas. Such schools can help to spread educational equity across the demographic board. They can help to bring us back to a time when desegregated school settings were equated with equal access to resources and high quality education. In 1954, in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court observed the following: “To separate [children in schools] from others of a similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generated a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone” (Hochschild & Scasovronick, 29). Today, this seems like a revolutionary idea as students become more and more segregated based on race and class. It is time that we once again realize the importance of this idea and look to recreate the integrated school settings that were begun in the 1950s.

Works Cited

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This article gave specific information on eight different mixed-income developments nation-wide including percent rented to public-assistance families and market rate families and analyzed the various reasons for success among these eight models.

"Centennial Place Elementary Receives National Award for high Performance." Atlanta Housing Authority. 8 Oct. 2003 <www.atlantahousing.org/pressroom> under press releases.

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"Centennial Place Elementary School: It's Being Done." The Achievement Alliance. 1.9 <www.achievementalliance.org/files/CentennialPlace.pdf>.

The Achievement Alliance was formed under the idea that the "No Child Left Behind Act represents the nation's best hope for raising the academic performance of all students and closing achievement gaps. [The] goal is to provide accurate, nonpartisan information about student achievement." The Centennial Place report gives full information on the specialized programs and teaching methods that are being implemented at the school without additional funding but with many local community ties to organizations in the area.

Costello, Jan R. "Centennial Place: Model of mixed-use urban living." Atlanta Business Chronicle 7 Sept. 1998.

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Hochschild, Jennifer, and Nathan Scovonick. The American Dream and the Public School. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Matthews, Sherrie Voss. "Building a Community, Not Just Housing." Planning March 2004: 10-13.

A report on the humanitarian development projects of McCormack Baron Salazar, this article contains information on the various projects that Executive Developer Richard Baron has completed and talks about his reasons for being invested in community building.

Walser, Darlene. Interview. 14 Nov. 2005.

PaStarr, Callie. Telephone Interview. 14 Nov. 2005.

Darlene Walser is the project director of the Heritage Park mixed-income development in Minneapolis. The interview with her provided information on developer MBS and connections to other similar developments across the country.

Income and Education:
The prospects for integrated education through mixed-income communities

My favorite quote from Myrna Carter Jackson [was] when she said that we were never fighting for integration, because we had integrated when they brought us into this country, what we were really fighting for was equal access.

Eddie Harris, 8th grader at South Side Family School on their civil rights trip to the southern United States, 2005

Callie PaStarr
Re-envisioning Education and Democracy
Ruthanne Kurth-Schai
Public Intellectual Essay
December 15, 2005