Bullying in Schools

English 2010

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Bullying in schools. This has become a hot topic in the media these past years, and the reason I wanted to do a report on this trending discussion is because this past year one of my friend’s brother was a victim of bullying. It ended with him taking his own life. I think this is something that needs to be looked at and also I believe people should be educated on how to prevent it. I plan elaborating on three points. First, what different ways are students attacking each other and what psychological impact does this have on the victims? Second, who seems to be the victims and why? And finally, what is being done to prevent it. My hope is with this essay you will be informed and more aware of what some youth are dealing with.

Reports have indicated that 93% of teens use the Internet and 75% own a cell phone. This is up 45% from 2004 (Robert W. S. Coulter, et al. "Cyber bullying, School Bullying, And Psychological Distress: A Regional Census Of High School Students."). With over 90% of teens on the internet cyber bullying has taken off. Cyber bullying is bullying over or through electronic technology; such as, cell phones, computers, social media groups, texting and websites. It is so easy for someone to post a negative statement about another person on the internet. There is no face-to-face communication. There isn't a fear of saying it in person. A popular social media group, Facebook, has been a key factor in many bullying stories. ABC news has done many news reports about girls being bullied by peers and even friends. One that stuck out to me was the Amanda Todd story. "Amanda Todd committed suicide after years of bullying and cyber bulling. In 7th grade, Amanda said she started doing web cam chats with friends. After a year of being showered with compliments, Amanda made a decision she would regret for the rest of her short life, she went topless on camera. That image was saved by a boy she didn't know. Then during Christmas break, it was used against her. Amanda said she lost all her friends and
got in to drugs. She claimed she moved schools twice, but couldn't get away from her tormenter. After what Amanda calls a severe depression, the bullying became too much. On Friday, October 12, 2012 police found Amanda Todd's body in her Vancouver home Wednesday. She had committed suicide" (Fischer, Kim. "Girl Commits Suicide After Being Cyber Bullied."). Students may not realize the impact they have when they say, or do something negative to another peer. Bullying victims are associated with an increased likelihood of psychological distress. Like depression, suicidal thoughts, self-injury and suicide attempts (Robert W. S. Coulter, et al. "Cyber bullying, School Bullying, And Psychological Distress: A Regional Census Of High School Students."). Sadly many have taken their lives and it puts that psychological distress now on the family. It's really quite a horrible trend that affects everyone.

A recent study was done and found that Middle School and High School girls were twice as likely as boys to report receiving emails, text messages or chat room messages that teased, taunted, and ridiculed them (Ross, Margaret. "Cyber Bullying Articles & Facts."). This study also said "Middle School and High School girls were about twice as likely as boys to display cyber-bullying behaviors in the form of email, text, and chat". Why are girls more likely to bully each other? I think it is because our society has put an enormous pressure on having the latest fashion, listening to the coolest music, and fitting in. Anyone who shies away from the "norm" is now an automatic target because they stick out. Growing up we all have experienced the weight of fitting in and we can all relate, in some way, from both sides. But girls are not the only victims. The LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning) community has experienced its share of bullying. With this generations civil-rights movement young LGBTQ have experienced bullying on a global level. Living in Utah, a more conservative state, we are
more prone to anti-gay slander. When students see/hear their parents acting/speaking in this way they believe it is okay to imitate. Because of the open expression of anti-gay the LGBTQ youth may not feel safe expressing who they but fear the bullying and harassment from not only the students but the parents. Many Countries as well are stating their stance about the LGBTQ community. In late 2007 Fox news reported a story about being gay and living in Iran. ""There are criminal laws on the books in Iran that allow people to be killed for being homosexual," said Paula Ettelbrick, executive director of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission."("Iran Does Far Worse Than Ignore Gays, Critics Say | Fox News."). With reports like this it is very clear why some LGBTQ students do not feel safe being who they are, and that is a form of bullying.

As I stated in my first paragraph, I have a friend whose brother was a victim of bullying. He was bullied for his sexual orientation and ended his life November 29, 2012. David Phan was the annoying little brother who always wanted to hang out with the older kids. His brother Don and I had been in school together from fourth to ninth grade. When we would hang out David never seemed to be depressed, he would tell jokes and watch movies with our group. As time went on Don and I lost contact but still had mutual friends. I will never forget the feeling I had while at work the night of David’s death. I received a text from my mom saying I needed to call my friend Carrissa. I knew something was wrong and I immediately phoned her. She was crying and explained that David had shot himself on the over pass by Bennion Jr. High. As stories started to surface it became clear David was being bullied by a group of students. Society would classify them as the "popular" kids. That day David had left the school with his mom and returned an hour later with a loaded gun (unknown to the family). He placed himself on the
sky bridge and waited for school to end. As the "popular" students made their way across David held the gun up and shot himself. This is not only traumatic for the family but also the students who witnessed it. I later learned that Bennion Jr. High had counselors at the school for anyone needing to talk. Stories like this are all too common and many have called national attention for programs to help prevent them. The Phan family asked anybody thinking about sending flowers to donate the money in a Wells Fargo fund set up in David’s memory. The fund is now being used to help educate youth about anti-bullying outreach.

Utah's policy does have an active anti bullying rule although the state lets the individual school handle the consequence. "Bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, and hazing of students and employees are against federal, state and local policy, and are not tolerated by XYZ school. XYZ School is committed to providing all students with a safe and civil school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect. To that end, XYZ School has in place policies, procedures, and practices that are designed to reduce and eliminate bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, and hazing-including but not limited to civil rights violations-as well as processes and procedures to deal with such incidents. Bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, and hazing of students and/or employees by students and/or employees will not be tolerated in XYZ School" ("Utah Anti-Bullying Laws & Policies."). For clarification XYZ schools are every school in Utah. One anti-bullying program that I am associated with is Safe Zone. The University of Utah defines it as "The Safe Zone Program at the University of Utah LGBT Resource Center strives to create an atmosphere of inclusion for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) individuals on our campus and in the surrounding community. The program raises visibility and promotes ally building
through, education of individuals on LGBTQ+ issues relating to gender and sexuality and how one may intervene when they witness discrimination. Creating visibility of people who can provide resources to LGBTQ+ community members and their allies. Creating a safe environment on campus and in the community free from transphobia, homophobia, heterosexism, and cissgender bias." ("Safe Zone." - Training and Outreach.). The first estimated Safe Zone was started in response to an anti-gay protest against the Ten Percent Society student organization at North Dakota State University in the fall of 2000. A small group of faculty and administrators at NDSU started a program that identified and trained caring and committed members of the NDSU campus community to be Safe Zone Allies. As of 2005 over 200 U.S. college campuses have a Safe Zone program or one very similar ("Safe Zone." LGBTQ Resources). The Salt Lake Community college offers this program and some faculty and students have already graduated from it. Another approach Utah High Schools and Middle Schools are trying is public speakers. Jim Jordan is probably the most well-known anti-bullying public speaker in Utah. He engages the students with magic while discussing issues like being a victim, bullying without knowing, and being a bystander. When I was a sophomore in high school Jim came to our school. I can say from experience his technique to involve the students worked. Cottonwood High School was never a school known for bullying, but students did have altercations with one another as every high school does. After the assembly the moral of the school was higher. I saw students from different "clicks" socializing with other "clicks". This may have only lasted a few days but throughout the year the students at Cottonwood High School all seemed to be more excepting of everyone’s differences.
As I bring this essay to an end I would like to reiterate my answers to the questions I asked in my first paragraph. What different ways are students attacking each other and what psychological impact does this have on the victims? With 93% of teens on the internet there has been a rise to cyber bullying. Psychologist say bullied victims are associated with an increased likelihood of psychological distress, like depression and self destruction. Who seems to be the victims and why? High School and Middle School girls are twice as likely to report incidences of cyber bullying. Another group victimized is the LGBTQ youth. They have a very publicized bullying issue. As humans, when we see something different we believe that it is not part of the norm, it is scary. Many LGBTQ students have felt bullied from not only other students but also different nations like Iran. And finally, what is being done to prevent it? Many Utah schools have their own policies about bullying. Safe Zone is a national program found all throughout the nation. It is designed to train allies for the LGBTQ community. Locally, Jim Jordan is a public speaker who incorporates humor and magic into his speech to help Middle and High School students learn more about being a victim, bullying without knowing, and being a bystander. As President Obama said "No child should be afraid to go to school in this country."
Works Cited


