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**Argument Paper**

17-year-old Tyler Lee Young attended Murray High, had bright dreams in his future, was 2 weeks away from earning his black belt in karate, and envisioned himself attending the University of Texas one day designing the sort of computer games he loved playing. He suffered from Asperger’s Disorder and for him Murray high was worse than a torture chamber where he was subjected to unending humiliation by his classmates under the watch of his teachers and administrators. Despite his dreams and bright future one night after his parents fell asleep, he changed into his favorite outfit, strapped one of his belts around his neck and hung himself. It may not be as big of a deal as people mature, but I’m talking about child bullying. Childhood between the ages of 8-18 is a very confusing time as it is; they are old enough to know what is going on, but not to control their emotions.

Bullying is a form of abuse, emotional or physical. Being harassed opens victimized children up to developing psychological disorders at a later stage in life. Many people think, “Oh it’s just kids being kids, it’s a rite of passage.” But it’s not, it’s an assault. They start losing focus in their work, and become very depressed. The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that nearly 1 in 3 students between ages 12-18 reported being bullied in school, which 8 years earlier only 14% of the population said they experienced bullying. With new technologies, social networking sites, and cell phones it is just becoming a new form of bullying. Others may say, oh you don’t have to listen to it, but school is one of the main things going on in young lives. Popularity means a lot to them, they don’t know yet that it won’t follow them into adulthood. It isn’t a conflict between equals, it’s an intentional, persistent, humiliating, mistreatment by someone who thinks they have some type of advantage over the other. Whether it’s between rich and poor, black or white, gay or straight, fat or thin, it is a direct attack to point out someone’s weakness.

There needs to be more done to prevent bullying because of the cruelty done to children, the heavy consequences that follow, and the lack of responsibility put on the administrators/teachers.

It is a controversial subject because it is hard to target who started the bullying, who saw the bullying, and because it causes harm to ones psychological, social, and emotional well-being. Although over 40 states have passed anti-bullying laws, no liability is put on the teachers so they have no incentive to stop it. Our constitution gives us the right to free speech, so that gives us the right to say mean or violent language to someone. Victims are not only hurting themselves, but putting others lives in danger. Although 47 states have passed anti-bullying laws, I think there still is not enough being done.

Bullying consists of daily cruelties designed to make a child appear weak or vulnerable. They are isolated, being stripped of their friends and put off by everyone in the class. “They are left with very unhealthy options including having to continue to suffer, stay away from school, retaliate, or end their lives”(ProQuest Staff). It has been proved to increase anxiety, increase absenteeism, lose their focus and drop in grades. Standing by and not doing anything when teachers see bullying occurs ultimately robs children of being able to enjoy learning in a positive environment, allowing for the greatest possible academic , social, and emotional achievement of all students. If you “tattle” then you are just succumbing yourself to being bullied more. If you fight back, stand up for yourself, or just try to make things better, unlink the movies it is just making things worse for you.

These children are being harassed for things that are beyond their control. Racial acts, sexist acts, the religion they were raised in, medical disorders, or just something about the way they look will be mocked at, where physical abuse follows where they are defenseless. Whether it is in the classroom, prank phone calls, or online these children are forced to deal with it the only way they know how at that age. The victims possess 3 qualities that make them targets which consist of rewards for the bully (lunch money), they show distress, or they are less likely to tell on the bully. Bully-victims are more inclined to hang out with deviant friends who share similar anti-social behaviors and engage in criminal behavior. They need an out to lash out and escape, and they have been bullied for so long that their social skills and empathy are diminished. This takes me to my next claim, the consequences that come from these problems.

There are many consequences that come from the victims of bullies. “Studies have reported the aggression that grows from being a victim of bullying has been shown to engage in more illegal or problematic acts” ( Ragatz, L. L.,). They are carrying around weapons, using alcohol and illegal drugs, lying, fighting, staying out past curfew etc… Moreover they show less remorse than children who are not being bullied. The development of the children have a vast effect in later years, there is a direct correlation in psychiatric outcome. From being rejected and made fun of daily, they are inclined to becoming more aggressive and develop depression and emotional disorders. The studies I found on these facts were matched up on 8-year-olds up to 10-15 years later! Which means that they are carrying this weight on their shoulders for many years after the fact.

While these consequences may only seem to affect the victims, there are fatal consequences that effect people that aren’t even involved. “Everyday 160,000 students stay home from school to avoid being bullied, and 30% of those bullied have brought weapons to school” (Fried & Fried, 1996) While there are people out there that consider this awful act a “rite of passage” some victims are killing others or themselves. One study has shown that there is one consistent factor that has been found in all young killers, and that is they have been studied to have felt isolated or like an outcast. These children are committing suicide and/or killing others to escape the constant taunting of their classmates, which is affecting families, schools and communities everywhere. The shooting in Columbine was easily broken down to the fact that he was bullied by the jocks and the popular girls which made 2 students go on a shooting spree killing 12 classmates and one teacher at random before turning the guns on themselves. The fact at hand is that if we gave any, even just a little, attention to these boys, this massacre could’ve been prevented which brings me to my next claim, the responsibilities of the teachers/administrators.

“Put out matches, not forest fires. One **child** making fun of another was a lighted match. A student throwing a punch in the hallway was a forest fire” (Weddle). Children never start bullying at extremes, they first test the waters to see which rules adults are serious about enforcing. Unfortunately, school officials have been acting as if these little acts of aggression deserve little or no attention. As I have stated earlier in this paper, bullying can destroy the victims desire to learn, go to school, or even live and this can go on well into adulthood. “Research has demonstrated that bullying harms not only the victim but the bully and bystanders as well” (Weddle). Schools have adopted the proactive approach to develop and implement an anti-bullying policy to create a positive and safe learning environment and have been successful. But then why are we having an increase in bullying and related suicides in schools across the country? Well, I have found this answer, and I feel we need to find a way to come together and implement this approach.

Unfortunately with the anti-bullying policy being put in place in schools over 47 states, it is not giving any incentive to teachers for preventing this from going on. Meaning when an outbreak of violence and harassment occurs to the point that it gets so bad court officials are involved, they are hesitant to put any liability on the teachers who are allowing these behaviors to go on right in front of their faces. “For example, a Louisiana court held that despite a virtual absence of supervision in a locker room where a student was violently attacked by 3 other students, the injuries were not foreseeable. According to one witness ‘Almost everyday somebody was getting pushed or shoved into lockers, rolled around, thrown around… hair being pulled, arms twisted…’” (Weddle).Now, I’m not saying that this is the fault of the school officials in any way, but what I am saying is we need to monitor what a teacher can and can’t do to prevent small acts of bullying before they explode.

An opposing argument is “kids will be kids, they’ll grow out of it”. The parents should be educating their children on what bullying is, help improve their self-esteem. The schools have counseling services and anti-bullying policies to enforce it doesn’t go too far. It’s a rite of passage, just a phase that they will grow out of. They can go for help, and the anti-bullying laws will help them through their way. This is not the case, it is an unfair assault against someone who is much weaker than the bully, and has any other disadvantage you can think of, low self-esteem, less friends, depression, mental or physical disorders, they are just the target to be pushed around. The problem is that this form of abuse is happening outside of the home, out of parents sight. Sure the parents could intervene and help, but that’s only if they know about it. A lot of the time the child is too embarrassed to approach this topic with their parents. His self-image has already been lost so they don’t want their parents to see this weakness in them. The teachers are who see this the most, and yet they don’t do anything either, maybe they are just too afraid to intervene, or they just don’t have any incentive to get involved. If we could construct a zero-tolerance policy in which administrators/teachers have either an incentive to enforcing this policy, or a consequence if they don’t, we could prevent this in schools across the nation.

Bullying is a form of abuse, it causes is emotional, physical and physiological harm. The aggression that is building up inside the victims is damaging, even fatal. There are many definitions for it but the bottom line is that it’s repeated harm meant to distort a child’s self-esteem and image that can cause long-lasting effects. It is easy to recognize, so why aren’t we doing more to prevent it. There needs to be more done to prevent bullying because of the cruelty done to children, the heavy consequences that follow, and the lack of responsibility put on the administrators/teachers. We should be standing up for those that have an unfair advantage and point popularity to the other direction, to sticking up for the victims. If we can educate ourselves on the damages that bullying causes we can construct a new procedure for schools to adopt. By doing that we can save lives. "Bullying exists because of a lack adult intervention" Stuart Green.

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