

Bullying case essay sample

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Bullying is a major global problem that requires intervention. It comes with a high price tag that translates from the mental and physical impact into actual monetary losses in both worker productivity and turnover and the health care costs associated with bodily harm and psychological damage. It is likely that we all are connected with someone that has been the target of bullying. Whether that person has confided in you or not is another story. Statistics show that bullying affects one of every 10 American school kids each day, and more than three-quarters of children report being bullied some time during their school years (Harvard Children's Health). The good news is you're not alone. The bad news is no one wants to talk about it. Bullying functions as a way to express dominance and status (Gibbone 20). It is characterized by the repeated exposure of one person to physical and/or emotional aggression including teasing, name calling, mockery, threats, harassment, taunting, hazing, social exclusion or rumors (Leventhal 403). It includes racism, hate, ethnic intimidation, and slurs or abuses regarding sexually orientation.

Bullying can occur face to face or online. Research has indicated that there are five separate types of bullies with separate characteristics used to achieve dominance and status. Physical bullies are the classical bullies that come to mind; the in-your-face, "hand your money over or I'll pound your face in" kind. They usually act on their threats. They are generally the most visible type because their actions are easily recognized as aggression. Most of these bullies are not sophisticated with their barbaric tendencies. Verbal bullies, as the name implies, are the bullies that like to hurt people with words. They crack jokes that are a clear attempt to degrade or embarrass

the target. Bullies of this nature are very hard to identify because their bullying is very spontaneous. These are the bullies that can cause serious psychological damage by implanting mental images of one's self into the victims. Relational bullies, which usually involve a group of people, like to use their peers to help outcast or exclude others from playing on their team or sitting next to them at the lunch table. They use subtle forms of aggression to inflict feelings of unworthiness or inequality on their victims through spreading lies/rumors, betraying confidences, soiling reputations, and other acts of indirect " behind-the-back" aggression to ostracize and carry out social manipulation (Turmel 552).

Generally victims of this nature tend to isolate themselves and are depressed. Reactive bullies are very impulsive bullies. They are provocative, and they usually taunt their victims into altercations. They are the most difficult to identify because they like to claim self-defense to justify their actions. These are the bullies that are most likely to come to school concealing weapons and placing the school population at risk for violent incidents. Cyber bullies utilize cell phones and internet via chat rooms, social networking sites, text messaging, emailing, and websites. A major difference between traditional, face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying is that perpetrators can remain anonymous, and the information travels instantly in the digital world. This takes the confrontational aspect of bullying out of the equation, essentially dehumanizing it, and empowers those who may not have participated in bullying in other situations (Gibbone 20). One major problem with the digital world is a phenomenon many kids participate in called sexting or exchanging messages with sexual content. According to Le

Blanc, “ 20 percent of teens have sent or posted nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves. In addition, 71 percent of teen girls have posted content to a boyfriend” (8).

In the unreliable realm of teenage relationships, this material is easily transmitted and manipulated, turning a private exchange into public humiliation. Bullies, by nature, are those who deliberately repeat acts of uncalled for aggression that are physically and/or mentally damaging toward the victim who feels that they are helpless. Sassu and colleagues at the University of Connecticut have created this list of characteristics on an average bully: Bullies are typically physically, psychologically, or socially stronger than the children they bully. They also have a higher likelihood of underachievement in academic settings. Parents and teachers must look out for behavior like fighting (physically or verbally) with other children at school. Don't ignore other children's accusations that a child is being a bully at school or elsewhere. Watch how the child interacts with others, particularly expressions of dominance or aggressive behavior. Does the child speak about other children as “ stupid” or use other negative terms to describe others? Does the child say that certain children “ deserve” bad things to happen to them or show little concern for others in bad situations? A parent should take note if a child becomes easily frustrated when he does not get his way. Is my child defiant or oppositional? (1)

Does society create the bully? With more parents continuing to work, lots of children are being raised in the day care system. One study found that day care children have weaker maternal bond, and are less cooperative with others leading to higher rates of fighting and being mean (Henslin 82). They

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also scored higher on language tests leading sociologist, James Henslin, to ask, " Are we producing a generation of " smart but mean" children" (83)? Other studies have shown that bullies often have a disturbed household while growing up. The parents have a tendency to be intimidating with an uncaring attitude towards their child, and they seem to deny their child basic needs of warmth, love and sympathy. Research shows that some parents have a very unpredictable, unreliable and extreme form of correcting their child, such as very intense, unexpected and overly reacted eruptions of physical altercations and/or uncalled for verbal punishments (Smokowski and Kopasz 102).

This seems to show that some of the bullies are just mere images of their parents. A third aspect in creating a bully comes from research done by Pepler and associates with elementary school children in other countries which demonstrated that " peer group members reinforce and maintain bullying" (Espelage). Corroborating experiments conducted by Pellegrini et al. on middle school students showed that children bully their peers to " fit in." The researchers found that " bullying enhanced within-group status and popularity among 138 fifth-graders making the transition through the first year of middle school" (Espelage). Similarly, in a separate study, Rodkin and colleagues followed 452 fourth- through sixth-grade boys and found that 13.1% were rated as both aggressive and popular (Espelage). It would be logical to say given these conditions that bullies are a product of their family and social environment.

The Olweus website says bullying affects all society including the bully, who learns you can get away with this behavior; bystanders, who may experience

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anxiety due to what they witness; parents, who have to respond according to their child's needs; schools, which have an obligation to keep a safe and productive learning environment; and the community who have to live with the repercussions (1). In regard to the actual victim of bullying, about 70%, tend to show obedient or lifeless reactions to the bullies. This is due to the fact that they truly feel unable to change their situation (Smokowski and Kopasz 103). However, the rest of the victims tend to have a more hostile attitude and may react aggressively. Victims are far more likely to suffer from anxiety, insecurity, isolation, weak social skills, and inadequate skills in regards to problem solving and communicating their feelings. Much of this could be possibly explained by the environment at home. Research indicates that many victims are raised in a very shielding environment, which leads to more insecurity when the child no longer has their “ blanket” to cover them from real life situations.

Parents have a tendency to evade situations where their child may encounter a problem. As a result, these children have poor perseverance and lack the skills to help them through being bullied as well as many of life's dilemmas (104). These victims tend to have a very negative self-image, lower self-esteem, and they generally blame themselves for being targeted by the bullies. With fewer friends and weak social skills the victims generally suffer academically and socially. Long term effects generally have a negative impact on the victim's adult relationships, such as work-force relationships, and victims are more at risk for suicide, coined bullycide (105). More drastic effects can include school and /or work shootings where many people can lose their lives, and the victim usually takes his or her own life as well.

Children who are targets of bullies are often physically smaller, have a disability, or other characteristic that sets them apart such as possessing higher intelligence, being overweight, their sexual orientation (or perceived orientation), or whether their peers consider them physically unattractive. Parents and teachers should be aware of the signs that a victim of bullying may display. Certain physical complaints are often associated with being bullied, usually because of the stress involved, which results in difficulty sleeping, stomachaches, headaches, not wanting to eat, and wetting the bed (Harvard Children's Health).

Sassu, et al. describe what to watch for: Children may fear going to school, say they feel too sick to go to school, or exhibit anxiety toward school. Parents should look at their child and pay attention to marks or bruises. Ask the child about the bruises, and pay attention to their response. Know who your child's friends are, and watch how they interact. Is the child submissive or withdrawn with other children or have difficulty being assertive? Pay attention for signs of general unhappiness or insecurity. If a child talks about "nobody liking her," "not having any friends," or "wanting to hurt or get back at someone," it should prompt further questions and communication (2). Americans have a tendency to be concerned with the people in our own circles of friends and family, but this doesn't happen only in the United States. A wide range of bullying prevalence has been documented among students and in labor forces worldwide (Leventhal 403). The World Health Organization has compiled statistics on bullying in 36 countries. In countries around the world, boys account for roughly twice as many of the recorded instances of bullying vs. girls (see Graph 1). When data on victims is

compared, the results are much more equal with boys only accounting for a small percentage more than girls (see Graph 2).

The ratio of female bullies to female victims is smaller than the ratio of male bullies to male victims. It would appear that a small number of girls are bullying a larger number of girls, or that girls are being victimized by both girls and boys. Prevalence of bullying is high in many countries, but there are large variations across countries. In New Zealand, researchers have found a high incidence of bullying specifically amongst youth ages fourteen to eighteen. A poll they conducted of students in this age group showed that 58% reported being bullied, and 44% reported they had bullied other students (Raskauskas et al 39).

In China, children that “seemed more in control of themselves” were less likely to be victims of bullying (Cheng et al 12). International studies with considerable geographic and cultural variation show that between 5% and 70% of children are exposed to bullying. Two international studies looked for a correlation between socioeconomic factors and bullying and found the risk of being bullied was higher among adolescents with parents from lower socioeconomic position. The tragic bullying related massacres and suicides which first got America’s attention have also occurred in several other countries (Due et al).

We need to change the way people think in regard to bullying. Children typically do not report bullying incidents for two reasons: they are embarrassed, and if they tattle, they fear greater retaliation by the perpetrator. Children feel unprotected by the system. This can happen

because many people have the opinion that teasing is just part of growing up, and a child needs to learn how to deal with their peers and develop problem solving skills and independence. Some teachers have downplayed bullying and harassment as normal joking behavior among students (Carroll 51). The perception is that acts of indirect and relational aggression are less violent and therefore less serious than direct physical and verbal acts of aggression. It is not surprising, then, that teachers intervene less frequently when they witness acts of relational aggression (Turmel 552). The attitude is so strong that some teachers have even dismissed sexual harassment. One child that was persecuted many times at school was eventually sexually assaulted by a teammate in the locker room. He informed the coach of the team, yet the assailant was allowed to play in a game the following day so the team would not have to forfeit.

In addressing the incident, “ the coach held a team meeting in which he instructed the student-athletes, in the presence of the victim, to “ not joke around with guys who can’t take a man joke”” (Carroll 51) . This backward thinking goes all the way up to societies leaders. The anti bullying website, Bullypolice. org quoted two unnamed senators, Senator L. & Senator S., respectively, who opposed the anti-bullying bill as saying “...kids need to learn how to handle bullying... Staff will side with victims and reward kids for thinking and acting like victims. It’ll promote a victim mentality and handicap kids for life,” and “ people do need to learn how to stand up for themselves... this is just another example of a nanny state government...” Still other times, a caring adult doesn’t know effective advice to give the child so they tell the child just to ignore it. The child may feel brushed off, and it doesn’t teach the

child how to be completely unreactive. Many reactions are seemingly out of child's control, like getting red in the face, or letting some kind of body language or expression show. Physically showing no expression or ignoring, doesn't actually keep the words out.

The problem on bullying appears to be very extensive, and yet at the same time it is overlooked because society thinks it is the problem of a few kids. Why should all of society care? Dan Olweus has shown evidence that bullies grow up to be criminals and/or abusive spouses or parents (Sassu 1). By the time a bully reaches 24, they have a 60% chance of having a criminal conviction. By 35, there's a 40% chance that a bully has multiple convictions (Education para 6). These criminal acts maybe personal, or they may be perpetrated on random members of a community; a wrong time, wrong place scenario. In the end, society ends up paying for not addressing the problem before it develops since our tax dollars fund the criminal justice system. Those who are bullied may lose interest in school, performing poorly, or even drop out (Turmel 552). Children who are affected by bullying often exhibit risky behavior. With statistics like one in three teenage girls in the United States getting pregnant at least once before turning 20; drug use among girls ages 12-17 has surpassed that of boys in the same age group; and girls make up 30 percent of all juvenile arrests today, with numbers steadily increasing we should all be concerned (LeBlanc 8).

As the United States prepares to adopt a more socialized system of healthcare, another societal cause for reform evolves. Children who are the victims of bullying will be utilizing the healthcare system as a result of physical and mental injuries. Some of the costs will be paid for with tax

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dollars. There is a new practice gaining “popularity” in the bullying world according to reporter, Segall. It is called ball tapping. “The game involves hitting or kicking male students in the groin – often very hard.” Segall interviewed Dr. Martin Kaefer, a pediatric urologist who said, “We’ve actually had a child here at Riley Hospital that required surgical excision of the testicle after that happened.... Continued pain, difficulty urinating or blood in the urine can be warning signs of ... damage to the urethra ... [that] can require very complicated surgery...[and] affect fertility down the line” (Segall). Students involved in bullying are at a significant risk of experiencing a wide spectrum of psychosomatic symptoms including alcohol and drug abuse and, above all, self-inflicted, accidental or perpetrated injuries.

The consequences of bullying extend into adulthood, as there is evidence of a significant association between childhood bullying behavior and later psychiatric morbidity (Leventhall 403). For example, LGBT-targeted bullying during school years caused those children to be more than twice as likely as a young adult to report being clinically depressed, and they were more than twice as likely to report having been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease from increased risky sexual behavior (Resmovits). Moreover, adults bullied in the workplace are prone to suffer from a variety of health risks, including depression and cardiovascular problems (Leventhall 403). Data on the health care expenses related to bullying has not been gathered, but in a world of escalating health care costs and socialized medicine programs, the bottom line is that you can bet your bottom dollar that bullying is society’s problem. Still not convinced? “The school milieu is functionally an occupational environment, where future

employees and employers develop their physical, cognitive, social, moral and ethical skills” (Srabstein).

Psychologist Michael H. Harrison, Ph. D., quotes a recent survey of 9, 000 federal employees indicating that 42 percent of female and 15 percent of male employees reported being harassed within a two-year period, resulting in a cost of more than \$180 million in lost time and productivity. Among the sources of these high costs are high absenteeism resulting from time off taken by harassed employees, reduced productivity among workers who are nursing emotional wounds and stress-related illnesses, or trying to appease or avoid their harasser. High turnover is another economic drain. According to Namie’s studies, 82 percent of people targeted by a bully leave their workplace: 38 percent for their health; 44 percent, because they were victims of a performance appraisal system manipulated to show them as incompetent. Human resource experts peg the cost of replacing an employee at two to three times that person’s salary (Urbanski Farrell).

If anti-bullying programs are successful in protecting a child from self-esteem ablating bullying and giving them the tools to deal with abuse thereby empowering them, it is possible that it may protect them from falling victim to child predators. A pedophile will go after vulnerable children. They will pay a lot of attention to the child’s personal problems, offering advice and counseling, giving a child gifts, taking them on special outings, showering them attention; the things a lonely, bullied child need. They will tell the child how much they love them, and that they want to have a long term relationship with them. Then, they instill fear by threatening to share their secrets with classmates and their parents. (amw. com) We cannot eliminate <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-case-essay-sample/>

child predators, but if a child learns how to be more secure in themselves, they may be less likely to need the self-esteem boost a child predator initially offers to lure them in. With the social skills these programs build, children may spend more time with their peers than on the isolating, online social arenas where they run into predators.

So what can be done? It took a Supreme Court decision and threats of continuing lawsuits for schools to finally embrace bullying prevention-intervention procedures on a broad scale (Walker 594). Intervention and indoctrination must start within the first social settings that a child encounters such as day care, Sunday school, and preschool. It has been empirically documented that children very early on in their preschool and school careers express beliefs that endorse relational aggression (Walker 594). The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is the most recognized program implemented. Starting in elementary school and continuing through middle school, the program depends on the staff to apply it consistently to counter the problem (Smokowski and Kopasz 106). The program works by installing a new atmosphere of compassion, having consequences on targeted actions, and constantly having unwavering discipline for those who break the rules (106). The program is showing great promise. In a Norwegian school district it was reported that after 8 months incidents were down by 50% or more and showing even better results at 20 months (106).

Besides school programs, there are other methods that caring individuals, celebrities, and companies are using to raise awareness and promote acceptance among children and teens. The American Girl company introduced Chrissa, the 2009 Doll of the Year, whose interests and concerns <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-case-essay-sample/>

mirror those of girls today. Chrissa is a friendly, creative girl who finds the strength to speak out against bullying on her website <http://www.americangirl.com/movie/chrissa>, where children can find a poster contest, and a “ Stop the Bullying” campaign (Hargrove 39). Seattle writer, Dan Savage and his partner started the “ It Gets Better” campaign which has become a world-wide movement with over 10, 000 user-created videos spreading the message to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender children that the future is easier and holds beautiful things, so don’t lose hope. The video messages can be seen by anyone on their website or Youtube. com. Celebrities and well-known figures have contributed such as President Obama, Senator Hilary Clinton, the Vice President of the European Union, British rugby star Gareth Thomas, Adam Lambert, Anne Hathaway, Colin Farrell, Matthew Morrison of “ Glee”, Joe Jonas, Joel Madden, Ke\$ha, Sarah Silverman, Tim Gunn, Ellen DeGeneres, and most recently, the San Francisco Giants (itgetsbetter.org).

Judge Alex aired a special session on bullying. Miss Florida 2010 has taken her platform as an anti-bullying spokeswoman (bullypolice.org). Musicians like Lady Gaga enforce their anti-bullying message in songs like “ Born This Way,” and on TV interviews such as Oprah, where she speaks directly to her fan base of “ Little Monsters” telling them to stay true to themselves. Parents of teens who have committed bullycide, such as Matt Epling (our very own tragic Michigan connection), have written books and created awareness videos on popular sites like Youtube. com to stress the importance of addressing the pain this social issue causes to so many. Whose role is it anyway? A Minnesota student complained to his parents that he was

threatened by others waiting to get him on his way home from school. This was reported to the school principal who involved the school resource officer (a policeman from the local police department.) It was considered an off-campus incident and no further action was taken (Diamantes 306).

Sometimes schools don't involve the law because there is no law describing what constitutes illegal conduct. According to bullypolice.org, there are now 47 states that have some kind of anti-bullying bill. Michigan is one of three with no law because it is sitting on the table of the Senate Education Committee waiting for review since 2007. Michigan does have a statewide anti bullying education policy adopted in 2006- the next best thing to having a law. The system does not reliably stand up for the children. When criminal misconduct occurs, some school systems are slow to report it. If the incident does go to the court system, many times, the courts back up a school's lack of action because the type and scope of action, and who is responsible to take this action, are not clearly defined. Cases show that courts back the schools if they make "reasonable" responses to reports of bullying (Diamantes 306). Inconsistencies abound and in another example the court ruled against an institution whose initial response to bullying had been ineffective, yet they kept doing the same thing. The court found the school to be deliberately indifferent and held it liable (Diamantes 306). Schools that receive federal funding are obligated to address cases of bullying covered by federal civil rights laws (stopbullying.gov).

Schools need to provide a safe learning environment, and should be able to obtain support from community leaders in law enforcement, prosecution, social services and healthcare providers in a cooperative effort. If we break it

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down from a sociological perspective, the best way to look at it through symbolic interactionism. Interactionism focuses on the one-on-one interactions in a society or subjective interactions. There is no bullying on a macro scale, only in subjective social interactions. Bullying is one person abusing another. Each person involved has a name with an implied meaning that defines the relationship between and the behaviors of the players. Symbolic interactionism looks at the interactions of people as role-taking, almost as if we are all actors playing our part (Goffman). For example, if two people call each other friends, they would treat each other certain way, but change the label to enemies, and their behaviors toward each other obviously would have to change. A manager may use bullying methods to assert their authority and increase the productivity of their subordinates. The one in the position of authority may feel justified in their actions because they are getting the job done. The subordinate may feel that it is his role to accept bullying behavior because that's part of being an employee.

Role-taking would also be useful in resolving the conflicts that arise from bullying behavior. Role-taking allows us to take another's perspective, to see what our actions might mean to others. Interactionism emphasizes the subjective meaning to human interaction and behavior against bullying. In discussing the topic of bullying and what we hoped to learn, our group discovered that we all had experienced bullying at one point in our lives. Some of us didn't realize the treatment we received was considered bullying, but none of us have forgotten no matter how distant the incident nor how much our lives have diverged. Some of us have children currently or plan to have children in the future. Our attitudes toward bullying will shape the way

they grow up. Our children are the future of America. We live in a global society, therefore it is important that children learn acceptance of other cultures and orientations because the common denominator is we are all HUMAN. Discrimination toward any group in society requires action to change the current view of what is acceptable. It starts with awareness through education.

The most interesting thing that we learned when researching this topic is the high number of people that have been bullied. What really stood out is the damage that it can cause. We were surprised that there weren't really any gaps in research, and yet as a nation we're not acting very fast to fix the problem especially because it transitions into other societal issues like crime and how much tax payer money this behavior costs. When it comes to bullies, victims and society, it is apparent that we are all victims. How can we make restitution to the families who have lost children- the martyrs of bullying that finally made us pay attention? We owe it to them to see to it that programs like the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program are implemented in every state. We owe it to them to lobby congress to make clear legislation. Why wouldn't we take out such insurance on our society and our children?

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