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Growing up in our society can be gruesome whether someone is Gay, Bisexual, lesbian, too thin, too fat, too beautiful, too ugly, too sick, too healthy, too young, too old, too black, too white and the list can go on. We live in a world full of judgment. If I were to ask you, have you ever looked at someone and judged them? Most likely, the answer would be yes because everyone in the world has judged someone including myself. But how many of you have actually acted upon that judgmental impulse? Most people would say no, yet “…53 percent” of people act upon this impulse (Pacer’s NBPC). Therefore, I’d argue that this is a form of bullying. I argue this because words, comments, slurs are all forms of verbal bullying. If those words can affect a human being negatively then under those circumstances that would be considered verbal bullying. Nonetheless, there are multiple forms of bullying such as physical bullying, cyber-bullying, and social-bullying. Each form of bullying has proven to have rippling effects on the victim's lives. Which brings me to the topic of bullying, over the past 15 week’s I have been analyzing, interviewing and investigating the causes and effects of bullying in my community. I believe bullying is the highest crisis that our society is facing today. I believe the only way to prevent bullying is helping young children understand the concept of bullying and keeping all lines of communication open.

Some might ask what is bullying? Well, bullying can have multiple forms and multiple meanings, depending on what form of bullying is being inflicted upon an individual. For instance, verbal-bullying “…this is when someone, who is a bully, uses insulting or demeaning language to mock, embarrass or insult another person” (Chip Thompson). Physical bullying “…this is any bullying that hurts someone’s body or damages their possessions. Stealing, shoving, hitting, fighting, and destroying property [are all] types of physical bullying” (Chip Thompson). Cyber-bullying “…this is any bullying that happens over any technological device. This includes email, instant messaging, social networking sites [such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram], text messages, and cell phones” (Chip Thompson). As for, social-bullying “…this is any bully that is done with the intent to hurt somebody’s reputation or social standing” (Chip Thompson). More importantly, I have witnessed, listened and evaluated evidence that has convinced me that bullying can be prevented.

During week one and two, on January 24, 2019, and January 30, 2019, I discussed why I picked bullying. During my adolescence years, I experienced bullying at my old high-school named Vista Del Lago. Well, attending high-school I was constantly bullied because of my weight. During this time in my life, I was heavier than an average teenager. Students would call me fat, Shamu, quarter pounder and the list of insults can go on. Regardless if they were just words, after hearing them long enough you start to believe those cruel degrading words. In the results of my research, I found a website called NVEEE which stands for National Voices for Equality, Education and Enlightenment which is published by government statistics and officials. NVEEE’s website provides factual information and statistics about bullying. The website states “…kids who are obese, gay, or have disabilities are up to 63% more likely to be bullied than other children” (NVEEE). Which basically means more than half of the students of each school that fall under the categories of “…obese, gay, or any form of disabilities” will experience some form of bullying during their adolescence (NEVEEE). How can we prevent that? I believe it starts at home and at a young age. When children are growing and developing it is best to teach young children about bullying. Explain to them the concept of bullying and the signs of bullying. Whether someone is bullying the child or the child is bullying the other student. It is important that parents instill the notion from right and wrong. Therefore, when children understand the term bullying there is a higher likely hood that children will be aware of the signs. When doing so, the “…63 percent” will lower. With time and knowledge less and fewer students will be victims of bullying.

During weeks two and three of my research, on February 3, 2019, and February 14, 2019, I started to analyze bullying. First, I wanted to see if bullying had a pattern either with age, time and town. Right then and there, I thought to myself who would be a resourceful candidate. That's when I chose to interview my parents because they are both in their late 40’s to '50s and each of them has experienced more life than me. Which indicates that they acquire more knowledge and were born in a different time than I was. I started with my father who goes by Vincent Castillo, during our interview I asked him the following questions: “What year did you start high-school? I started in the year 1975. What city and high-school did you attend? I attended Valley View High-School, in the city of Moreno Valley. Were you bullied at any time during your adolescence? [His answer was simply] no” (Vincent Castillo, Maili Smith). When my dad answered no, it was very surprising because I figured that he might have experienced some form of bullying but I was wrong. Nonetheless, his response intrigued me to ask more questions. Next question I asked was, “Why do you personally think you were not bullied? I think I was not bullied because I was on the football team, wrestling team and soccer team. Everyone knew me and I would say I was somewhat popular” (Vincent Castillo, Maili Smith). When my father said the term “Popular” it made sense (Vincent Castillo). Kids that are not popular are more likely to get bullied. Not to mention, on NEVEE’s website argues that “…every 7 minutes a child is bullied” (NEVEEE). My father may not have experienced bullying but more than “…86 percent” of children in school’s face bullying every day (NEVEE). “…86 percent” is such an enormous percentage that it angers me (NEVEE). Think about it, every-time a parent drops off their child more than likely they are facing a form of bullying. Some might argue that my dad was not a resourceful candidate to interview because he did not experience bullying. Although that may be true, his interview brought light to the fact that my father fell into the 14 percent statistic of children that never came face to face with bullying. Nonetheless, his interview proves that if you're not popular that students will most likely be bullied and his interview also represents the 14 percent of none bullied children.

With this in mind, four days later I interviewed my mother named Sasha Castillo. Her interview entailed the same concept of finding a pattern among age, time and town to better analyze the expansion of bullying. During the interview, I asked the following questions, “What year did you enter high-school? I started high-school in the year of 1988. What city and high-school did you attend? I attended Valley View high-school same as your dad and also in the city of Moreno Valley. Have you ever experienced bullying of any form during your adolescence? [Her response was the following]: yes. What form of bullying did you experience? I experienced physical bullying on a daily bases” (Sasha Castillo, Maili Castillo). As a matter of fact, my mom was bullied almost every day and the unbelievable part is she never knew why. She explains that “…girls would jump [her] after school” (Sasha Castillo). As a result, she began preparing herself after being beaten so often, that she started to hit back and that experience has impacted her life forever (Sasha Castillo). After a brutal year, my mom was always on edge and ready for anyone to physically bully her (Sasha Castillo). She was finally fed-up and tired of being these girls punching bag (Sasha Castillo). Nonetheless, my mom fell victim to bullying, like so many other young children. Furthermore, the National Education Association website argues that “…[more than] 160,000 children miss school every day due to [the] fear [of being] attacked or intimidated by other students” (National Education Association). Statistically, that means children skip school or pretend to be sick in order to miss school because they fear that they will be physically harmed. Above all, age and time play a role in bullying. In fact, no matter what year someone attends high-school the statistics just keep rising, yet children between the ages of “…14 to 17” are more likely to face bullying (NEVEEE). As for the town, it depends on the statistics surrounding that individual town. Well, doing my research statistically only having two interviews from the same town and one not experiencing bullying. Indicates that out of every 2 children, one will experience bullying (Maili Smith). Which is correct, proven by the interviews but in a mass setting, it does not prove that towns or cities are a playing factor in bullying.

During weeks four and five, on February 25, 2019, and March 10, 2019, I got the chance to interview my younger brother named Vincent Castillo Jr. This interview was a big step from my brother because he was born Gay. Which most people know that a lot of people who are not heterosexual are bullied based on their sexual orientation. This tendency has been happening for Centuries before he and I were even born. During his interview I wanted him to be completely candid, in order for me to evaluate all the facts. I started off by asking him if he was bullied (Maili Smith). His response was “…of course” (Vincent Castillo Jr). I continued to the next question, “What form of bullying have you experienced? I have experienced everything under the sun, anywhere from verbal, and physical bullying. Do you believe it had everything to do with your sexual preference? Of course, it did. We live a world where being different is frown upon. I can not help that I was born gay” (Vincent Castillo Jr, Maili Smith). The moment I heard my brother say “I can not help that I was born gay” really resonated with me. He explained to me during the interview that he had no-one to talk to because at that time none of our family was aware that he was gay (Vincent Castillo Jr). He experienced people calling him “…faget, homo, degenerate, kill yourself, and the list could go on” (Vincent Castillo Jr). He states that after being verbally bullied and physically bullied he was in such a depressed state that he contemplated suicide (Vincent Castillo). When hearing my brother say he was debating on taking his own life devastated me. I thought to myself if only I made it clear to my brother that we had an open line of communication. Maybe then he would have come to me or anyone to talk to about the bullying which caused the downfall of depression. Nonetheless, as of today suicide is the “second” leading cause of death in the United States (NEVEE). In the “…past 3 decades, suicide rates have skyrocketed to more than 50 percent” stated in National Voices for Equality, Education, and Enlightenment (NEVEE). This statistic basically means over the past 30 years suicide has become more of a common way for victims to free themselves from all the pain and suffering that is being inflicted upon them (NEVEE). Future has proven that those numbers will only increase with the increase in bullying. I believe if these victims had an open line of communication and felt safe enough to confine into someone who they can trust. Maybe then those lost souls would be alive today. I failed my brother and by the grace of God he did not take his own life but communication will be key in an ongoing relationship. Communication can be a lifeline for the broken.

During the most important weeks of my research, on March 29, 2019, and May 7, 2019, I started to ask the most important questions. With the help of all the evidence, analyzing and research I have asked a fellow principle some vexing yet necessary questions. I had the pleasure of interviewing a high-school substitute principle named Doctor Broncotello. He has his doctorate in children development which indeed helped the overall interviewing process. The first question that I ask Dr. Broncotello was, “In the 20 years being in child development and working as a principle, have you seen any form of bullying? If so, what forms?” (Maili Smith). His response was simple and straight forward, his answer was “Unfortunately I have seen every form during my years as a principle” (Dr. Broncotello). I continued to ask the question that has been on my mind since starting this research, I asked the following, “Do you personally think with all the experience you have in child development and being in the school district for as long as you have, believe bullying can lead to violence” (Maili Smith)? His response was the following, “Yes I believe that if a victim is pushed to a mental breaking point anything can be possible. I have seen students bring weapons and use them to get revenge on the bully. But in the end, the victim gets the harsher punishment because they were going cause bodily injury or the possibility of killing the bully.” (Dr. Broncotello). When Dr. Broncotello mentioned that the victim to bullying is pushed to their last straw, they resort to extreme measures. With that said, doesn't that mean that the root of the problem is the bullying? Why does it take a child to cause physical harm to the bully instead of reaching out to someone or just anyone? I’d argue that the victim is being bullied either physically, emotionally or mentally to a point that they are willing to inflict the same results that were being brought upon themselves to the bully. Nonetheless, I asked Dr. Broncotello one last question, “Since you mentioned weapons in the previous answer, do you think most or all of the school shooting are results of either mental health issues or the mass amounts of bullying that the victim received” (Maili Smith). When I asked him this unsettling question, he just seemed surprised that I linked bullying to the school shootings. When in fact studies have proven that, “…[more than] 1/3 of students surveyed said they heard another student threaten to kill someone [and over] 100,000 students carry a gun to school each day” because of bullying (NEVEEE). When is the line drawn? When more innocent children are killed every day in the backfire of victims trying to get revenge on their bully. I’d like to also mention, Dr. Broncotello did not feel comfortable in answering such a controversial question (Dr. Broncotello). Which in fact made me a little confused because if we as a society can’t even talk about the mass murdering that is happening all over the United States, then nothing will ever stop. I turn on my local news and hear that people want more strict gun control which I stand by but in reality, the gun is not the root of the problem. I argue it is the countless times a child is bullied.

We live in a world full of gay people, bisexual people, lesbian people, skinny people, thick people, sick people, disabled people, and the list could go on. But one thing they all have in common they’re all human beings regardless of their sexual orientation and their physical appearance. Just because someone is different that does not give anyone the right to bullying them. Nonetheless, this research has been so eye-opening and such a life-changing experiment. The most compelling evidence I discovered and pieced together was the connection between school shootings to bullying. I believe with all my might that bullying is a big crisis in our community and the United States. Young people are committing suicide, entering deep depression and murdering the innocent every day. The major question is when does this stop? I can not even begin to answer such a complex question but I know it starts here. We as a society need to speak up and start listening for the signs. The first steps start with an open line of communication and teaching young children the meaning behind bullying. That's just the beginning, more can be done in the near future to make children feel safe at their schools and to help save the innocent. Although this may all be true if nothing is done and everyone keeps sweeping this major crisis under the rug. It’s only a matter of time, schools will no longer stand and people will start homeschooling all their children. Teachers will no longer be an asset to our community rather at an unemployed individual. This will be the result if bullying continues to lead to suicides, school shootings and more. The root of the problem has always been bullying and it’s about time we stand up and fight for these children. Bullying should have ended years ago, but it’s not too late. Knowing what's right doesn't mean much unless you're doing what's right, remember that.

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