SUICIDE: THE SILENT KILLER

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- What is suicide?

- Why do people commit suicide?

- Who does it effect?

FINDINGS

All suicides

- Number of deaths: 44,965
- Deaths per 100,000 population: 13.9
- Cause of death rank: 10

Suffocation suicides

- Number of deaths: 11,642
- Deaths per 100,000 population: 3.6

Firearm suicides

- Number of deaths: 22,938
- Deaths per 100,000 population: 7.1

Poisoning suicides

- Number of deaths: 6,698
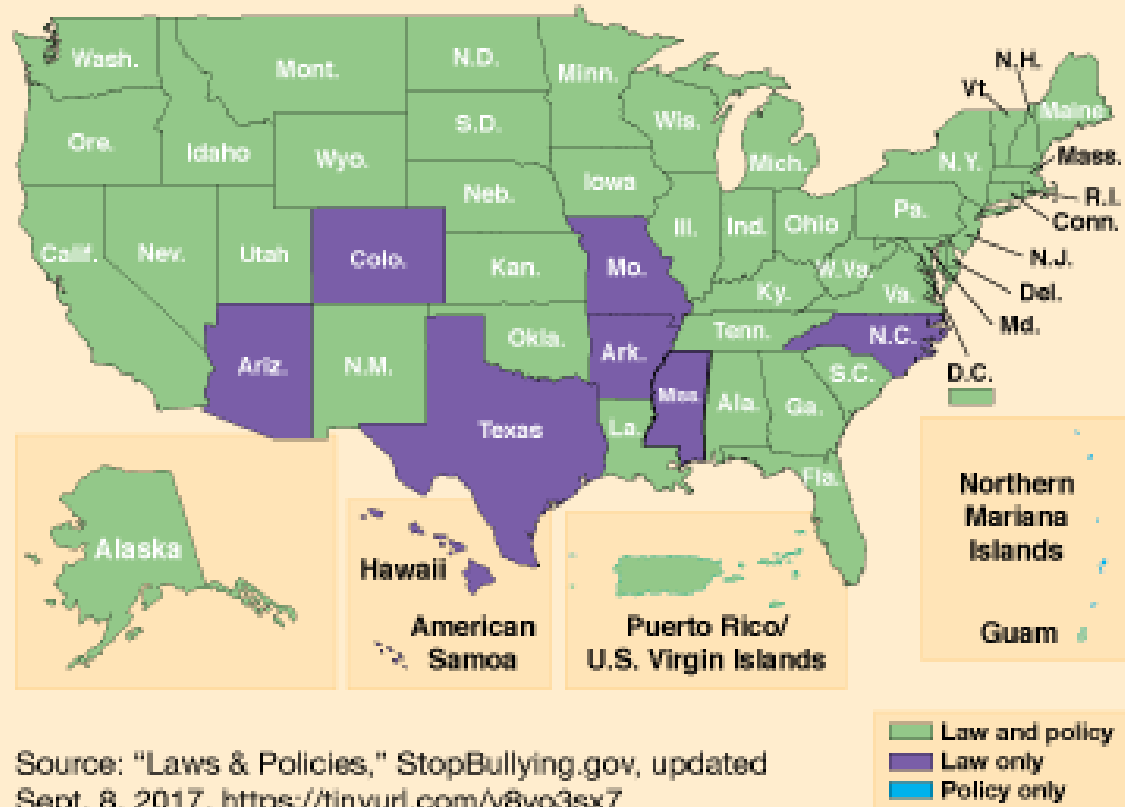- Deaths per 100,000 population: 2.1

INTERESTING FINDINGS

- Suicide rates for youth ages 10-19 increased 56% between 2007 and 2016, after dropping 15% between 1999 and 2007.

- Bullying behavior and suicide-related behavior are closely related.

- Enough is known about the relationship between bullying and suicide-related behavior to make evidence-based recommendations to improve prevention efforts.

- According to The Department of Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, Adolescents and young adults are the most likely to consider suicide

- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for people who are 15-24 and 25-34.

- Abusive, unstable environments at home can cause a child to become depressed especially among adolescents. A home in constant chaos in which a child is abused, neglected, victimized and/or alienated can lead to despair, fits of rage, violence and an overall sense of worthlessness much further down the road. This type of environment increases the chance of suicide for the child later in life.

Green – States that have laws and policies in place against bullying

Purple – States that only have laws in place against bullying

Blue – States that only have policies in place against bullying

Bullying Laws Vary by State

All 50 states, the District of Columbia and most U.S. territories have laws to address online or in-person bullying, or both, and most also have policies that guide schools on preventing such behavior. In some cases, bullying appears in the criminal code of a state that may apply to juveniles.

How States Deal with Bullying at Schools

Law and policy
Law only
Policy only

Source: "Laws & Policies," StopBullying.gov, updated Sept. 8, 2017, https://tinyurl.com/y8yo3sx7

- Interview #1: Raquel Baez (Retired ESL Teacher)
  - When asked what her thoughts were on the subject she was shocked that it was such a high number of adolescent suicides. As a former teacher she witnessed first hand bullying in the halls and classrooms. She said a lot of times the situations were never resolved because of lack of care from either the parents or the superiors.

- Interview #2: Louis Guglielmo (NYC Police Officer)
  - When asked what his thoughts were on the subject he wasn't surprised at the statistics. He said in his line of work they are called to scenes of violent fights. These poor kids are ganged up and and beat for not being within fashion a lot of times.

- Interview #3: Gabriel Baez (Student)
  - When asked what he thought I was shocked to learn that some were being bullied in his school. The school was however, taking action to hold the bullies accountable and provided prevention courses for all the grades.

Chronology

1970s–1980s	Bullying draws first serious study, particularly in Norway.
1970	Swedish-born Dan Olweus begins first scientific study of bullying in Norway.
1978	Olweus' book, Aggression in the Schools: Bullies and Whipping Boys, is published in the United States.
1983	After three boys in Norway who were bullied commit suicide, Olweus creates the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program.
1990s–2007	First state anti-bullying laws are passed; growth in cellphone and social media use spurs cyberbullying and leads to new challenges for schools.
1999	Students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold open fire at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., killing 13 and injuring 23. Initial reports that the two had been bullied are later discredited, but the tragedy focuses new attention on bullying.... Georgia becomes the first state to pass anti-bullying legislation.... U.S. Supreme Court rules in Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education that school officials in Macon, Ga., can be held liable for failing to act to prevent bullying.
2001	Activists begin lobbying states to pass anti-bullying laws modeled on the Healthy Workplace Bill drafted by law professor David Yamada, director of the New Workplace Institute at Suffolk University Law School in Boston.
2003	Social networking site MySpace is founded.
2004	A federal study of school shootings finds that almost three-quarters of attackers felt bullied, persecuted or threatened or had been injured.... Facebook is founded.
2006	Twitter debuts.... Thirteen-year-old Megan Meier of Missouri kills herself in a case later linked to cyberbullying. The mother of one of her friends is later convicted of misdemeanor computer fraud but the conviction is overturned on appeal.

2007	First introduction in Congress of Safe Schools Improvement Act, which would require schools to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment. Versions of the bill are introduced in succeeding sessions, but none comes up for a vote.
2010-Present	Federal government hosts bullying prevention conferences, but the future of such efforts is called into question under President Trump, who is accused of stoking bullying on school campuses.
2010	U.S. Department of Education (DOE) issues recommendations to help schools develop anti-bullying policies…. DOE and the departments of Defense and Health and Human Services hold the first Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Summit.
2011	President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle Obama host first White House Conference on Bullying Prevention.
2014	NFL report says harassment and bullying by teammates led Miami Dolphins offensive lineman Jonathan Martin to quit the team and contributed to his mental health issues.
2015	Montana becomes 50th state to ban bullying.
2016	Donald Trump is widely accused of bullying political foes, often through Twitter, during a contentious presidential campaign and his first year in office…. FBI reports hate crimes reach highest level in almost 20 years…. Southern Poverty Law Center says bullying and harassment increase on school campuses because of the presidential election…. North Carolina Supreme Court strikes down state's cyberbullying law, saying it restricts free speech.
2017	First lady Melania Trump begins a campaign against cyberbullying with speech at U.N. luncheon…. Anti-bullying advocate Prince William announces an online code of conduct for the United Kingdom called "Stop. Speak. Support." … Democratic senators send a letter to Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, asking how she will reduce bullying at schools…. Texas legislators approve "David's Law," specifically aimed at cyberbullying.

CONCLUSION

- In summation, the research showed that suicide has many facets to its very complicated nature. The act of taking one's own life is calculated and brought on by many factors. The imbalance one feels with the degree that rules and codes of conduct effect the freedom of an individual within a group or as Durkheim phrased it, the degree of regulation. The feeling that one does not belong or fit in to a group/society also played a role in the act of suicide. Both of these factors are just part of the causes that lead a person to suicide. The findings proved that alienation, bullying, and unstable home environments lead to severe depression and in most cases suicide. There have been many strides to help in the prevention of suicide and the hope is that one day society as a whole will be able to come together and work to eradicate this epidemic amongst adolescents and young adults.

SUMMARY

What is suicide? Why do people commit suicide? Who does it effect? Are amongst the most asked questions. Suicide is the calculated action of taking one's life for one reason or another; a tragic occurrence that happens far too often. This action not only ends the life of the individual(s) involved but has an astounding effect amongst those left behind in their wake. Those effects can be equated to that of the ripples on water after throwing a stone; the waves heave outward and effect everything it touches. While the causes of suicide tend to be vast and extremely personal, there have been many studies to show that there are some base similarities such as bullying and depression. According to The Department of Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, depression and bullying play undeniable roles in suicide for adolescents and young adults in modern society.

- Sociological perspective on the subject of suicide has had a deep concentration on the effects of how social structures and cultural rules can create an environment in which self-destructive behavior can grow. The first sociological studies on suicide were completed by Emile Durkheim, in 1897. Durkheim believed that two factors greatly affected the relationship between the individual and the society or social group. The first was the degree of regulation. This has to do with the degree that rules and codes of conduct effect the freedom of an individual within a group. The second is the level of interaction or assimilation into said group; how well the individual "fits-in" with the others in the group. The idea behind this was that if the individual was balanced in these factors than he or she had a lower chance of suicide than that of individuals that were imbalanced in one or both factors. In today's society these factors still hold true.

• "The overall rate of suicide among young people has declined slowly since 1992, but it still remains the third-leading cause of death in age groups spanning children 10 years old to young adults up to age 24. Suicidal behavior is rare in prepubertal children, probably because of their relative inability to plan and execute a suicide attempt." (source 1) Sociological, psychological and Biological theories all identify many different reasons for suicide. However, none offer up a definitive answer to the question, "Why do people commit suicide?" They merely aid in the understanding of what might trigger an individual to commit suicide. Amongst the different reasons for suicide was the trigger of severe depression (also known as clinical depression). This this form of depression has been linked to many suicides over the years. People who suffer from severe depression/clinical depression lack the ability to pass through gloomy emotions quickly like most people. It is an illness that makes the individual feel hopeless, worthless and alone. While depression alone is not solely the reason for suicide it is a huge factor.

- "The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) estimates that severely depressed people have a suicide rate twenty-five times higher than the general population. And it has been estimated that one in four Americans suffers from clinical depression at some point in his or her life." (source 3)
- Many influences lend a hand in adding to an individual's feelings of depression. Abusive, unstable environments at home can cause a child to become depressed especially among adolescents. A home in constant chaos in which a child is abused, neglected, victimized and/or alienated can lead to despair, fits of rage, violence and an overall sense of worthlessness much further down the road. This type of environment increases the chance of suicide for the child later in life. However, a child raised in a home that is loving and closely-knit has a better chance of thriving and growing up with well-adjusted healthy mental attitude and lowering their risk of suicide.

While many things can be done to aid in a happy and healthy home environment for children another component has become a major factor. Bullying and cyber-bullying has recently aided in the cause of depression and ultimately suicide amongst adolescents and young adults. Reports have shown that in the United states schools from kindergarten to twelfth grade are seeing increasing incidents of cyber-bullying, often leading to suicide. Adolescents are taking their own lives after being berated over and over by rumors and attacks of character on main social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. This bullying in person and through the internet (cyber-bullying) are causing the victims to more likely bring guns into schools. The feeling of having no safe place to go and feel like they fit in instills a sense of rage and urge to be violent, as a way to end the suffering. These adolescents are struggling through puberty and are met with hatred and violence because to others they do not "fit-in".

- The introduction of cellphones and social media in the mid-2000s the flood gates have completely busted open and allowed for bullies to hide behind the protection of a computer screen or cellphone. They no long have to worry about repercussions of their actions in person. The laws, having not yet kept with the times in a way that does not hinder a person's freedom of speech, are not set up to protect the victim. The trends of cellphones and social media being in the hands of majority of adolescents has helped to spark a rise in suicides associated with cyber-bullying. More and more cases of adolescents killing themselves over embarrassment and humiliation that correlate to being bullied in school, at home and/or online. One case in Missouri cost a teenager her like due to fake rejection she assumed was real.

"In 2006, Missouri teen Megan Meier killed herself after a neighborhood parent, Lori Drew, along with Drew's teenage daughter and another teen, created a MySpace page for a fictitious boy who drew Megan into an online relationship and then cruelly rejected her. In what was considered the first verdict in a criminal case involving cyberbullying, a federal jury in 2008 convicted Lori Drew of three misdemeanor counts of computer fraud, but judge George H. Wu threw out the verdicts and acquitted her." (source 2)

Cases such as this are far too common in today's world. The age of technology has become a breeding ground for bullying behavior to become even harder to navigate and resulting in high rates of severe depression and ultimately suicide (in some cases).

In summation, the research showed that suicide has many facets its very complicated nature. The act of taking one's own life is calculated and brought on by many factors. The imbalance one feels with the degree that rules and codes of conduct effect the freedom of an individual within a group or as Durkheim phrased it, the degree of regulation. The feeling that one does not belong or fit in to a group/society also played a role in the act of suicide. Both of these factors are just part of the causes that leads a person to suicide. The findings proved that alienation, bullying, and unstable home environments lead to severe depression and in most cases suicide. There have been many strides help in the prevention of suicide and the hope is that one day society as a whole will be able to come together and work to eradicate this epidemic amongst adolescents and young adults.

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