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SCHOOL BULLYING AND GROUP PROCESSES SURVEY

by  
Margaret Linn

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
December 1999

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved 12-7-99

## ABSTRACT

Marge Linn  
School Bullying and Group Processes Survey  
1999  
Dr. Linda Jeffrey  
Masters of Art Degree in Applied Psychology

The focus of this thesis is to determine the extent of bullying behavior in a southern New Jersey school as measured by an adapted version of the Olweus Bully Questionnaire. Four hundred seventy-two, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade middle school students were surveyed regarding bullying behavior in their school. The obtained percentages indicate an increase in the trends found by previous research.

Recently, there has been a shift in bullying research from a dyadic focus on the characteristics of the Bully and the Victim to the recognition of bullying as a whole group process, with the majority of children playing some kind of role. Five main categories were identified in order to reliably distinguish the varying roles children play during a bullying incident. These categories included; the Bully, the Victim, Assistant (Bully), Defender (Victim), and the Outsider (passive observer). Results indicate that 17.2% of the students have an active role during a bullying incident. In addition, 44.5% of the students self-identified as passive observers.

Future progress in the measurement of school bullying, and the advancement and success of prevention and intervention strategies will depend on making clearer distinctions between the varying roles children play during bullying incidents. School-wide intervention programs are reviewed.

## MINI-ABSTRACT

Marge Linn  
School Bullying and Group Processes Survey  
1999  
Dr. Linda Jeffrey  
Master of Arts Degree in Applied Psychology

A large sample of middle school students (n=472) in southern New Jersey were questioned regarding their experiences with bullying in school. To investigate whole group processes, students were surveyed regarding various roles played during the bullying incident. Results indicate one in four students are involved in a bullying interaction, and one in two are passive observers.

## Introduction

In recent years, the subject of bullying in school settings has received increased attention in the research literature. According to Olweus (1978) bullying, can best be defined as chronic psychological or physical harassment of an individual. Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior with an imbalance of power, where the dominant person/s intentionally and repeatedly cause distress by tormenting or harassing another less dominant person/s. Remboldt (1994) indicates that wide ranges of coercive behaviors are used by bullies to intimidate and harass their victims. These behavior include physical aggression, and a wide variety of harmful verbal tactics such as teasing, name-calling, put-downs, sarcasm, taunting, staring, sticking out the tongue, eye-rolling, silent treatment, manipulating friendships and ostracizing.

Investigators in Norway, Sweden, England, Australia, and the United States have conducted research on bullying in schools, and their collective findings indicate that bullying is a major social problem that crosses national boundaries. Studies reporting the prevalence of bully victimization in the United States have yielded contradictory rates, ranging from 10% to 77%. Whether the actual rate is 10 or 77%, it is clear that a significant number of United States children are experiencing continuous harassment by their peers. According to Remboldt (1994), statistics may not provide a completely accurate indication of the frequency of bullying, since many incidents of bullying are not reported or are underreported.

Another impediment to recognizing or measuring bullying behaviors is that many adults mistakenly view bullying tactics as normal behavior for children. Bullying is often viewed by society as merely a bothersome part of a normal childhood. On the contrary, since

research indicates that such actions have the potential to cause immediate, as well as long term emotional damage for both victim and bullies.

Bullying is not a benign behavior, and studies have shown that it is a serious form of aggression, and a precursor to more serious aggression (Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993, 1994). Bullies positively value violence, and thus are usually aggressive toward teachers, parents, siblings, as well as peers. Bullies tend to be impulsive and exhibit a strong need to dominate others (Olweus, 1993). The results of a study on behavioral patterns of bullies indicate that aggressive children tend to have a hostile attribution bias when they are in social interactions. Bullies often feel as though they are victims, and feel justified in retaliating with aggression. This style of problem solving along with an aggressive, impulsive temperament appears to contribute to an antisocial behavior pattern that puts bullies at risk for other problem behaviors, such as substance abuse and delinquency. These and other problems persist into adulthood, and Olweus (1993) has shown that former bullies had four times as much recidivism for serious crime as the average person. Goleman (1987) noted that former bullies tended to be uncaring, punitive parents whose children often grew up and became bullies. Therefore, aggressive children take their problems into adulthood, and pass them on to a new generation of aggressive children requiring school and social intervention.

Children who are repeatedly victimized suffer immediate as well as long term repercussions. In the short term, victims suffer physical and psychological distress, have low self-esteem, difficulty concentrating, and are afraid to go to school. In the long term, victims have higher levels of adult depressive tendencies and psychosomatic symptoms, and difficulty in social and sexual relationships (Gilmartin, 1987).

A review of the existing literature indicates that bullying is a widespread phenomenon that cuts across geographic, socioeconomic, and gender boundaries. Bullying in schools has

serious and detrimental effects not only on the bullies and their victims, but also on the witnesses to the bullying incident. Given that bullying has been described as “violence in a group context, in which pupils reinforce others’ behavior in their interaction” (Sutton & Smith, 1999), the social context of bullying is of paramount concern. Bullying is collective in nature, and based on social relationships in the group (Lagerspetz & Bjorkqvist, 1982). An important objective of this present study was to distinguish the roles of students during the bullying incidents, and provide strategies for intervention.

However, an essential first step in addressing the social issue of bullying is the education of both school personnel and students about the frequency of bullying incidents. In this study the Olweus questionnaire was administered to a large sample of middle-school students in New Jersey. In addition to questions regarding bullying experiences, six additional questions were posed to the students regarding attitudes and emotions about the bullying incident. The sample selected for this study was obtained from one region in New Jersey; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire state. In addition, the obtained percentages relied on self-report data, which depend on the truthfulness of those involved, and may be of limited value in assessing situational variables.

An important implication of group processes research is that most children are somehow involved in the bullying process, and interventions should be directed not only toward the Bullies and their Victim, but also toward the entire group. Tackling the denial of responsibility and pervasive social norms against responsibility of action will depend on finding an accurate and valid way to identify the various roles children play during the bullying incident. More research investigating bullying as a group process could provide useful feedback for the school community.

Despite the well documented problems that arise from bully/victim interactions, and the indication that there are no benefits to allowing aggressive behavior to continue, bullying has yet to be addressed as a social or school concern. In reviewing the existing literature, it is highly probable that bullying in schools represents part of a much larger problem of violence in our society. The pervasiveness of bullying in schools may reflect the institutionalization of bullying behavior. According to Askew (1989), the values of schools often reflect the values of the larger society, in which schools may support traditional stereotypes of masculinity.

Bullying will continue to be tolerated in schools until there is a philosophical shift among school personnel in how they view and respond to coercive behavior. According to Hoover and Hazler (1991), the clear message sent by all adults in the school system is that no bullying will be tolerated, ever. The implications of such a code is that school personnel will be models of humane behavior who refrain from physically and/or psychologically mistreating students or fellow employees (p. 216). Reducing violence in our schools will require a whole curriculum approach, in which students are encouraged to work together cooperatively and to solve conflicts constructively (Cowie & Sharp, 1994). Schools should never tolerate bullying as ordinary, commonplace behavior because children involved in bullying conflicts are at risk for future maladjustment. Bullying is a disturbing social problem that hurts us all, and clearly, schools have a moral and ethical obligation to create a safe environment for our children.



## Literature Review

Although bullying has long been recognized as an unfortunate aspect of school life, it has not been the subject of scientific research until recent years. Research on bully/victim problems has been most extensive in Scandinavia, due in large part to a crisis precipitated by the suicides of three Norwegian boys between the ages of 10 and 14 in 1982. These youngsters committed suicide as a result of being repeatedly victimized by bullies in their schools. The death of these boys prompted a national call to remedy the problem of bullying in schools. In response to this public outcry, the Norwegian Minister of Education asked Professor Dan Olweus of the University of Bergen, an international authority on the subject of bullying, to develop and implement a school intervention program designed to reduce acts of peer intimidation and violence. In a series of studies conducted in Norway and Sweden of children ages 8-16, Olweus (1991, 1993, 1994) found that 9% of the students in his samples reported being bullied while 7% claimed that they bullied others “now and then” or “more often.”

Investigators in England, Australia, and the United States also have conducted research on bullying, and their collective findings indicate that bullying is a major social problem that crosses national boundaries. In studies of all-boys schools in Great Britain, Smith (1991, as cited in Slee, 1994) found that 20% reported being bullied and 10% claimed to bully. Findings from another British study revealed that among eight and nine year olds 26% reported being bullied “now and then” or more frequently and 17% reported bullying others (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). In Australia Slee’s (1994) research in primary and secondary schools showed that approximately 14% reported being victimized at least “once a week” or “more often.” A subsequent study by Slee

(1994) of children in grades three through seven showed that 25.7% reported being bullied at least “once a week” or “more often.”

In the United States, a study of elementary school boys and girls, ages 9-12, indicated that 10% of students could be described as “extreme victims” as evaluated by classmates (Perry, Kusel & Perry, 1988). Both boys and girls were classified as victims and there was a strong correlation between victimization and unpopularity. Remboldt (1994) reported that the Johnson Institute’s Student View survey found that nearly 14% of school aged boy respondents and slightly over 4% of girl respondents were involved in beating people up or starting fights three or more times a year. These statistics indicate that a substantial number of school age children from several different countries are the victims of bullying behavior.

According to Remboldt (1994), such statistics may not provide a completely accurate indication of the frequency of bullying, since many incidents of bullying are either not reported or are underreported (Remboldt, 1994). Remboldt (1994) indicates that a wide range of coercive behaviors are used by bullies to intimidate and harm their victims. These behaviors include physical aggression, and a wide variety of harmful, verbal tactics such as teasing, name-calling, put-downs, sarcasm, taunting, staring, sticking out the tongue, eye-rolling, silent treatment, manipulating friendships and ostracizing. A major impediment to recognizing bullying behaviors is that many adults mistakenly view verbal bullying tactics as normal, harmless behavior for young children (Gilmartin, 1987). On the contrary, since research indicates that such actions have the potential to cause immediate, as well as long term emotional damage for both victims and bullies (Remboldt, 1994). Therefore, bullying is a widespread problem that requires attention.

Bullying among children can be considered as a form of abuse (Dawkins, 1995). It is intentional, unprovoked, and aims to cause pain and distress to another child. It is conducted by one or more children and usually on repeated occasions, and it occurs to some extent in all schools (Olweus, 1993) but is more frequent in some schools than others (Stephenson & Smith, 1989). Bullying is either physical or psychological, and verbal bullying is the most common form (Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Olweus (1978) suggested that bullying could best be defined as chronic psychological or physical harassment of an individual. He later clarified this definition by stating that bullying typically involves three components: an imbalance of physical strength, psychological strength or both, a deliberate unprovoked intent to harm the other person involved; and repeated harmful action against the other individual involved (Olweus, 1991). Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior with an imbalance of power, where the dominant person/persons intentionally and repeatedly cause distress by tormenting or harassing another less dominant person/persons (Besag, 1989; Olweus, 1991; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). As stated earlier this aggressive behavior can be expressed physically (e.g., kicking, hitting) or verbally (e.g., name calling); it can be direct or indirect (Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993). Direct bullying refers to open attacks on the victim---kicking, pushing, hitting, teasing, taunting, mocking, and threatening and intimidating (Farrington, 1993; Olweus, 1991). Indirect bullying refers to social isolation, social ostracism, exclusion, and nasty gossip (Olweus, 1991, 1993). Indirect bullying involves manipulating the social status of an individual within his or her peer group by changing the way others perceive and respond to that individual (Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988).

The work of Olweus (1991), based on a personality perspective, has been fundamental in identifying the characteristics of bullies and victims. Olweus (1991) viewed personality as a significant contributing factor in the tendency to bully others. He suggested that bullies have “irascible temperaments,” “aggressive tendencies,” “weak self-control,” and a positive attitude toward violence and violent means. Middle and high school students indicate that victims are most often bullied because they “didn’t fit in” or because of their religion (Hoover, Hazler, & Oliver, 1992). Olweus (1978) characterized victims as generally anxious, low in assertiveness skills, and physically weaker than other students. Victims also have been described as socially ineffective (Olweus, 1991; Perry et al., 1988; Stephenson & Smith, 1989) and introverted (Slee & Rigby, 1992). A consistent negative relationship has been noted between bully victimization and self-esteem (Besag, 1989; Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1992, Olweus, 1991; O’Moore & Hillery, 1991; Perry et al., 1988; Slee & Rigby, 1992).

The tendency to be a victim is stable through the years (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993, 1994). Olweus found in his extensive studies that boys who were victimized at age 13 were also likely to be classified as a victim at age 16. Slee’s (1994) study reported that 27.6% of victimized children said they had been bullied for a period of time lasting from a few months to more than half a year. Boulton and Underwood’s (1992) results showed that children who reported being bullied in the previous term were very likely to report being bullied in the current term. In the United States, Perry et al. (1988) found that the tendency to be a victim was stable over a three-month period. Perry et al. also determined that “a stable propensity to be victimized is established by the time children reach middle school” (p. 812). Children who are repeatedly victimized by their peers, have been found to be socially ineffective in peer

relationships, are often alone, excluded from group play activity, and learn social avoidance (Gilmartin, 1987; Hoover, Hazler & Oliver, 1992; Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993, 1994). Slee concluded that “victimization is associated with poor physical, social and psychological well-being in primary school” (p. 100). In addition, Slee’s research results supports the theory that the tendency to be victimized is significantly associated with fear of negative evaluation for boys and girls, suggesting the victims worry or become nervous in social evaluative situations involving peers. Victimization is also associated with social avoidance and distress, particularly for girls (Clarke & Kiselica , 1997).

Bullying problems are more frequent among boys than girls (Bouton & Underwood, 1992; Lagespetz, Bjorkqvist, Berts & King 1982; Roland, 1989). Boys, particularly, are more likely to be nominated as bullies than girls (Boulton & Smith, 1992). Girls are involved more commonly in psychological bullying, whereas among boys physical bullying is more frequent than it is among girls (Stephenson & Smith. 1989). Physical bullying is also relatively more common among younger children than older ones (Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Studies reporting prevalence of bully victimization in the United States reveal highly contradictory rates, ranging from 10% (Perry et al., 1988) to 25% (Duncan, 1999) in studies of current year victimization, to 77% in retrospective study of lifetime bully victimization (Hoover, Hazler, & Oliver, 1992). Whether the actual rate is 10 or 77%, it is clear that a significant number of U.S. children are experiencing continuous harassment by their peers. This high prevalence rate may be the reason bullying is often viewed by society as merely a bothersome part of a normal childhood. However, research has found that bullied children experience a variety of problems that occur

significantly less often in children who are not involved in bullying. For example, bully victims are more likely than nonvictims of bullying to have low self-esteem (Duncan, 1999; Olweus, 1994; Rigby & Slee, 1992; Slee & Rigby, 1993), low self-confidence (Perry et al., 1988), and poor self-worth (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Callaghan & Joseph, 1995; Neary & Joseph, 1994). Bully victims have been found to be more introverted (Duncan 1999; Slee & Rigby,1993) and socially avoidant (Slee, 1994) than nonvictims. They feel less happy (Duncan 1999; Rigby & Slee, 1992) and more insecure (Olweus, 1994; Perry et al., 1988), incompetent (Neary & Joseph, 1994), and hypersensitive (Olweus, 1994). Bully victims have also been found to report more pessimism about life and to feel tired and lacking energy (Duncan, 1999). This is consistent with the higher rates of depression among bully victims noted in several studies (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Callahan & Joseph, 1995; Duncan, 1999; Neary & Joseph 1994, Slee, 1995). Bully victims also report higher levels of anxiety (Duncan, 1999; Olweus, 1994; Perry et al., 1988; Slee,1994) in addition to feeling unsafe (Slee, 1994), panicky, and nervous at school and having recurrent memories of the bullying to the point that their concentration is impaired (Sharp, 1995). Finally, bully victims are more likely than nonvictims to be rejected by their peers (Boulton & Smith, 1994) and to spend time playing alone (Slee, 1995). Thus it is not surprising that victims report having fewer friends, feel unpopular and isolated (Slee & Rigby, 1993), and feel lonelier (Olweus, 1994) than other children.

Olweus (1994) reported that male bully victims have a close and positive relationship with their mothers. However, teachers believed these mothers were over-protective of their bullied children. It is unclear from the research if the teachers perception of the victims as being over-protected is an entirely accurate observation.

Previous research by Olweus (1993) indicated that teachers do relatively little to stop bullying behavior. It may well be the case that teachers believing bullying to be a natural part of childhood are under-protective, and view parents as over-reacting to an otherwise trivial matter. In addition, since these studies were retrospective, it is unascertained whether the over-protectiveness existed prior to the child being bullied, or is an expected family response. One of the unresolved research issues in bullying behavior is how families respond to children being bullied.

Olweus (1993) also found that victimized boys tend to be babied by their mothers, who were described as controlling and restrictive. Bully victims, more likely than nonvictims, have also been found to describe their families as cohesive yet enmeshed (Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1992) and as overly intense and over-involved (Bowers, Smith & Binney, 1994). In addition, Rigby (1993, 1994) found that female bully victims reported poorer family functioning than did nonvictims. Also, the female victims described a more negative attitude toward their mothers than did nonvictims, whereas no differences were found between male victims and nonvictims when the boys were from intact families (Rigby, 1993). However, male bully victims being raised by their mothers only had a more negative attitude toward their fathers (Rigby, 1993).

Rigby (1994) also found that whereas inadequate family communication was related to bullying others in males, it was related to bully victimization in females. In addition, female bully victims rated their families as having lower affect. There is a substantial amount of research examining the impact of severe childhood trauma (physical & sexual abuse), but little research investigating childhood experiences on what may be considered the milder end of the trauma continuum. Do less dramatic traumas like bullying incidents have psychological impact on a child similar to that

caused by child abuse? According to recent research, those who were bully victims experienced higher rates of emotional and physical maltreatment by parents and more childhood sexual assaults than those who were not childhood bully victims (Duncan, 1999).

Certain characteristics of the bully victim may make him or her a more likely target of other forms of assault. For example, Schwartz, Dodge, and Coie (1993) found that children who were frequently victimized by their peers displayed less assertive behaviors and were more submissive in their interactions with peers. Perry, Williard, and Perry (1990) found that this submissiveness and lack of assertion is detected by their peers who expect that when assaulted, the bully victim will not retaliate, will display more suffering, and will inadvertently reward the bully's behavior. Indeed, Berstein and Watson (1997) suggest that this interaction style predisposes victims to the constant harassment they experience at the hands of their peers. Therefore, it is possible that these same interpersonal characteristics noted by researchers and peers are also detected by sexual assailants or abusive parents, thus increasing the bully victim's vulnerability to sexual and or physical assault. However, it is important to note that rather than the characteristics of the bully victim leaving the child more vulnerable to sexual assault or other forms of abuse, it may be that child abuse or sexual assaults contribute to the development of those interactive styles bullies seem to target. For example, Finkelhor and Browne (1985) proposed that sexual abuse can lead to the development of a sense of powerlessness as well as weakening self-confidence, assertiveness, and the ability to detect whether others are trustworthy. They further suggest that because of the powerlessness, abused children may come to expect to be harmed, thus failing to engage



in behaviors that may help with self-protection, all of which may lead bullies to single out the abused child for their attacks.

Similarly, Sharp (1996) noted that those bully victims with low self-esteem and passive response styles, both of which are common symptoms of sexual abuse survivors, were bullied more often than others and showed higher levels of stress following the bullying. Duncan (1999) hypothesized that young adults who were childhood bully victims would be more likely than those who were not bullied to have also been abused in childhood. It was also hypothesized that whereas child abuse survivors would report more psychological distress than their nonabused peers, those who were both abused and bullied in childhood would report the highest levels of psychological distress.

In addition, some studies in Australia (Rigby, 1994) and Europe (Olweus, 1993) provide some evidence that mothers of bully victims may have less healthy relationships with their children than mothers of nonvictims. Duncan (1999) found that approximately seventh grade was most often selected as the grade in which the bullying was at its worst. Approximately 60% of the bully victims reported that they were most often tormented by a group of children. Verbal assaults (being ridiculed, called names, insulted, or otherwise verbally harassed) were reported by 97% of the bully victims. In addition, bully victims were significantly more likely than nonvictims of bullying to have been sexually assaulted in childhood, and bully victims reported significantly higher levels of emotional and physical maltreatment by their parents than did nonvictims. This study provided further evidence of multiple victimization experienced by many child abuse survivors. Also of importance was the finding that bully victims, in comparison to nonvictims of bullying, reported a higher frequency of physical and psychological maltreatment by their parents, particularly their mothers. Previous

research indicates that adults with abuse histories are more likely than those who were not abused in childhood to experience a variety of psychosocial difficulties. There also has been research indicating that victims of multiple forms of childhood abuse experience even more symptoms of psychological distress than those experiencing only one form of abuse (Briere & Runtz, 1990; Brown & Anderson, 1991; Duncan, Crouch, Saunders & Kilpatrick, 1997).

In a recent study by Duncan (1999) participants who were abused in childhood but not bullied, or bullied but not abused, reported similar levels of psychological distress. However, participants who experienced both abuse and bully victimization in childhood reported significantly higher levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, overall psychological distress, and higher symptom severity than the other participants. The higher levels of distress reported by victims who experienced both abuse and bullying in childhood may be due to their having fewer opportunities to escape their maltreatment. For the abused child who is not being bullied, school may provide a daily respite, and for the bullied child who is not being abused, home may be the place to feel safe. However, for the child who is experiencing abuse within the home and who is being bullied at school, there may be no safe haven.

To date, much of the research on bullying has relied on self-report data, teacher report data, and peer nominations, which may be of limited value in assessing situational variables that influence bullying (Olweus, 1978, 1991, Perry et al.; Roland, 1989, Stephenson & Smith, 1989). In contrast, Atlas & Pepler (1998) used naturalistic observations of bullying in the classroom with video cameras and remote microphones. According to the authors, bullying behavior “is an interaction that occurs between an individual bully and victim and unfolds within a social ecological context” (p. 2). This

bullying interaction is influenced by a number of factors: the individual characteristics of the bully and victim, the dyadic interaction between them, the presence of peers and teachers, and the context in which the bullying behavior unfolds.

The first variable within this framework for bullying is the individuals. As stated earlier, Olweus (1993) described boys who bully as having an aggressive personality style combined with physical strength. Male victims, on the other hand, were characterized as being physically weak and timid and having an anxious personality style (Olweus, 1993). Gender is another factor that relates to bullying interactions. On self-report questionnaires, boys are more likely than girls to acknowledge that they have bullied others (Roland, 1989; Ziegler & Pepler, 1993). That finding is consistent with the traditional view that males are more aggressive than females (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Also, girls are more likely to be victimized by indirect and subtle forms of bullying than boys are (Whitney & Smith, 1993).

The second variable is the dyadic relationship between the bully and the victim. The most salient feature within this dyad is the power imbalance between the bully and the victim. As stated earlier, the presence of a power imbalance distinguishes bullying from other forms of aggressive behavior (Olweus 1993).

The third variable is the social ecology of bullying. Bullying affects the immediate players, but, it also has consequences for peers who are either actively involved or who witness the interaction (Olweus, 1978). Observational research on bullying on the playground reveals that peers were present in 85% of the bullying episodes and only intervened to stop bullying in 11% of those episodes (Craig, 1993). According to self-report questionnaires, 40% of students in the primary grades responded that teachers intervene to stop bullying only “once in a while or almost

never” (Olweus, 1993). Also, bullying is a covert activity that is kept from view of adults (Smith, 1991).

Using observational research Atlas & Pepler (1998) obtained assessment of individual characteristics of bullies and victims, features of the dyadic interaction between them, social ecological factors such as peer and teacher involvement and the structure of the environment in which bullying behavior occurs. The results of their study for individual characteristics indicated that there was more direct than indirect physical bullying, and aggressive children were significantly more likely to be involved in bullying episodes. This finding is consistent with other research (Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993; Stephenson & Smith, 1989) which describes bullies as having an aggressive personality pattern that predisposes them to respond aggressively. The second variable within their systematic model is the dyadic features of the bullying interaction. Bullies in the classroom were rated as taller and heavier than their victims, and victims were rated as physically weaker and thin. These findings support the notion of a power imbalance between the bully and the victim (Olweus, 1991, 1993, 1994). Third, is the social ecological interaction of the bullying episode. According to the authors, 85% of peers participated during a bullying episode, 32% were actively involved, and 53% were passively participants (p.12).

Findings from this study (Atlas & Pepler, 1998) indicate that peers are often present and aware of bullying, provide an audience for it, but do not intervene. Finally, in their classroom observations, bullying most frequently occurred when the children were involved in solitary activities, not directly in front of the teacher, during teacher-led tasks. This research is consistent with previous studies that have shown that the structure of the classroom influences children’s behavior (Olweus, 1991; Houston-Stein,

1977). Classroom context interacts with individual characteristics. Dodge & Coie (1988) found that some children are more likely to engage in off-task and disruptive behavior than other children when not directly supervised by the teacher. This present study of naturally occurring bullying interactions appears to be an effective method for investigating and understanding bullying in the classroom. Comprehensive research on the dynamics of bullying interactions and ecological variables related to bullying may help reduce bullying incidents.

As the above research indicates, bullying in schools is a problem that demands attention. However, an important aspect of the problem that has received only minimal attention, is how bullies and their victims feel after the bullying incident. The major aim of a study by Borg (1998) investigated the emotional reactions associated with the bullying incident as reported by self-declared bullies and victims. The study looked also into the role of pupil sex and school level differences in emotional and behavioral reactions. A total of 6,282 pupils from six grades in 50 state primary and secondary schools participated in a nationwide survey employing a group-administered questionnaire. The results yielded some interesting findings. Victims experienced mostly feelings of vengefulness, anger, self-pity, and helplessness which were experienced more often by primary school victims. Moreover, significantly more girl than boy bullies felt sorry; and while more primary than secondary school bullies felt sorry, the converse was true for feelings of indifference and satisfaction with more secondary school victims expressing these feelings. It is argued that our understanding of the problem of bullying is incomplete without a consideration of the emotional feelings associated with it and the implications that these have within the context of managing the problem.

About one out of every third self-declared victim reported feelings of vengefulness, anger, and self-pity. Although all three reactions can be considered quite acceptable in such situations, vengefulness is neither a socially acceptable nor a morally acceptable behavior. According to the authors, what should give rise for concern is that one-quarter of the victims felt indifferent to the whole experience, or worse still completely helpless. "It would appear that some children still consider bullying as part of the turbulent process of growing up; as a difficult phase which has to be endured if one is to be better prepared for life, hence their apparent indifference in the face of the bully's hurting behavior." (p. 12). A possible reason why so many victims feel helpless following the bullying incident may well be the result of the often widespread skepticism on the part of teachers and school administrators in regard to bullying and its seriousness, and their inability or unwillingness to support and protect bully victims. A study of attitudes towards bullying among 172 secondary school teachers showed that there is a tendency for teachers to underestimate bullying as a problem (Farrugia, 1996) and to dismiss most bullying incidents as trivial. Obviously, the consequences of such an attitude are clear. If resorting to adult or peer help does not result in the protection and support expected, then the victim is gradually conditioned and led into a state of helplessness (Olweus, 1991).

According to Sutton & Smith (1999) there has been a shift in bullying research from a dyadic focus on the characteristics of the bully and the victim, to the recognition of bullying as a whole group process with the majority of children playing some kind of role. Lagerspetz & Bjorkqvist (1982) state that "Bullying is collective in its' nature, is based on social relationships in a group, and should not be studied in isolation from the influence of others within the school group"(p. 23). Pepler & Craig (1995) reported

that peers were present in 85% of bullying episodes, and the behavior of these others is increasingly becoming the topic of bullying research, in addition to intervention. Whitney & Smith (1993) found that one-fifth of the pupils report that they might join in if they saw someone being bullied, and it seems that this is often translated into support for the bully (Lagerspetz & Bjorkqvist, 1982). Twenty three percent of children report being amused by bullying scenarios (Boulton & Flemington, 1996) and by joining in or reinforcing the bullying incident, peer witnesses may actually inflate the bully's self esteem. Farrington (1992) states that the most common reported motivations for the bully are "to feel powerful" or "to look cool."

In depth interviews were conducted with 206 school children between the ages of 7-12 years old from 4 South East London schools (Sutton & Smith, 1999). Results of their study indicate that 78% of the peer onlookers could be considered to actively reinforce the bullying behavior, which would include; laughing, providing an audience, or inciting the bully. Only 11% of the peer onlookers indicated using supportive, consoling behaviors such as: side taking with the victim, or active efforts to make others stop bullying (p. 99).

According to the authors, future progress in the measurement of bullying and the success of intervention strategies will depend on investigating the various roles children play during a bullying incident rather than just who gets bullied and who does the bullying. It is therefore vital to research bullying as a whole group process.

In wake of the recent tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado, Espelage (1999) has just published the results of a survey of bullying in six midwestern schools in the United States. The results indicate that 80% of students take part in bullying, with 15% of the students being bullied regularly. The researchers employed in-depth

interviews with students, to gather pertinent information. It appears that more children are participating in bullying incidents, and prevention should be targeted at the entire group process.



## VICTIMS

According to Olweus (1994), a child who is called names, pushed around, or harassed on an ongoing basis is considered a victim. About 7 to 10% of school age children can be classified as being repeatedly victimized, and these children tend to fall into two main categories (Olweus, 1993; Perry, Kusel & Perry, 1988). Most are extremely passive and almost never behave aggressively. They tend to be insecure, do not defend themselves, and are rejected by their peers. These children have been alternately labeled passive victims (Olweus, 1978, p. 137), victims (Smith, 1991, p. 245), and low-aggressive victims (Perry et al., 1988, p. 812). Members of a smaller group are highly aggressive and tend to provoke the attacks of others. They are among the most rejected of the children, surpassing both bullies and the more passive victims (Perry et al., 1988). These victims have been alternately labeled provocative victims (Olweus, 1978, p. 138; Smith, 1991, p. 245) and high-aggressive victims (Perry et al., 1988, p. 812).

Studies carried out by Olweus (1993) in Norway and Sweden found that sex and age differentiated victims from nonvictims. His research indicates that boys were more exposed to bullying than girls, particularly during middle school years. However, although boys tended to be more likely to face direct, physical bullying, both sexes were equally likely to face indirect bullying such as social isolation. Olweus (1993) also found that younger students were more likely to be victimized than were older students. This age difference was particularly strong during the elementary school years and was weaker during the middle school years. The only external characteristic Olweus found to be associated with victimization was that victims tend to be smaller and weaker than

their peers. Victims tend to be differentiated from nonvictims on some personality characteristics. Both passive and aggressive victims tend to be anxious and insecure, and they have lower self-esteem than do nonvictims. They also seem more withdrawn and socially isolated (Olweus,1993). Aggressive victims tend to be hyperactive and hot tempered, whereas passive victims tend to be sensitive, cautious, and unassertive (Olweus, 1993). Moreover, both kinds of victims tend to be less able to control their feelings and more likely to seek attention than other children (Lowenstein, 1978).

Whether victims differ from other children in terms of intelligence is unclear. Researchers do agree that victims tend to have lower grades in school (Olweus, 1978; Roland, 1989). Yet, this poor academic performance may be partly the result of being bullied. It may well be that as the harassment escalates, victims become afraid to go to school, and this fear may lead to frequent absences, difficulty concentrating, and poor school performance (Farrington, 1993). Victims may also differ from nonvictims in terms of their home environment. Olweus (1993) suggest that victimized boys have closer relationships with their mothers than do nonvictimized boys. This closeness however may actually involve overprotectiveness. In a study of children who were rated by peers as being frequently victimized, parent interviews revealed that mothers of victimized boys tend to treat their sons as younger than their age and tended to be controlling and restrictive (Olweus, 1993). Moreover, one study has showed that fathers of victimized boys were often hostile or indifferent toward their sons, making them less available as role models for their sons (Martin, as cited in Olweus, 1993). Traits such as low self-esteem, insecurity, and anxiousness may result from the victimization itself, and although they exacerbate the problem, it is difficult to determine if they help cause

the original instances of victimization. In any case, there is evidence that some of these characteristics exist in children before they acquire a victim status.

For example Olweus (1993) conducted interviews with parents and found that victimized boys were characterized as cautious and overly sensitive at an early age. Moreover, as mentioned, Schwartz, Dodge, & Coie (1993) showed that potential victims displayed a distinct pattern of behavior involving submissiveness and passivity even before they were victimized. A second piece of evidence suggesting that there is a group of children that is consistently victimized is the finding of some researchers that the same children repeatedly get picked on over long periods of time. This occurs even when the children switch classes and thus interact with a different group of peers. In a longitudinal study, Perry et al., (1988) found that victimization among children in third through sixth grades was stable over a 3 month period, and Olweus (1978), in a study of boys rated by peers for bullying and victimization behaviors, found that the boys who were victims in sixth grade still remained victims 3 years later in ninth grade. In particular, he found that there was stability in the degree to which children were harassed and rejected by others. In fact, about 65% of the variance in level of victimization in the ninth grade was predictable from the level of victimization in the sixth grade.

Children's self-esteem greatly suffers when they experience bullying (Besag, 1989; Whitney, 1992). Children involved in Slee's (1994) study of primary school students felt worse about themselves after encountering a bullying. Boulton and Underwood (1992) reported similar finding pertaining to the victims of bullying. Child victims may lose interest in school and grades may be likely to deteriorate because their attention is being drawn away from learning (Anderson, 1982). Slee (1994, p. 98) found

that 10% of victims reported actually staying away from school to avoid bullying, while 29% had thought of doing so.

If the victims are as miserable as research suggests, why do they not seek help? One reason may be that historically adults' responses have been very disappointing. Roberts and Coursel (1996) alluded to the fact that victims often don't report incidents to school officials or parents for fear of retaliation, and when they do they often receive minimal, if any, support from the adults in school. Statistics supporting this observation are staggering. Olweus (1991, 1993, 1994) discovered that 40% of primary and 60% of junior high school children reported that adults in the school did little or nothing to help bullying situations. In response to the question "How often do the teachers try to stop it when a child is bullied at school," Boulton and Underwood (1992) found that in the United Kingdom, 33.6% of the children surveyed answered "sometimes/almost never." In the same study, Boulton and Underwood (1992) also determined that 75% of the responding students indicated that their teachers had never addressed the subject of bullying in class. In Scandinavia, Olweus reported that 65% of primary school bully victims had never been talked to about bullying by their teachers. In their 1992 study of midwestern students (aged 12-18) Hoover et al., found that "students who felt victimized generally believed that school personnel did not respond adequately to episodes of mobbing and bullying, with 66% of yes-responders indicating that officials handled situations poorly" (p. 14).

When school adults ignore, trivialize, or tolerate bullying incidents, the victims internalize the implied message that the adults have discounted their worth as individuals, and they carry this message forward into adulthood (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Gilmartin, 1987). According to Perry et al., (1988), "perhaps teachers do not

often intervene because they don't want to give the impression that they are not good supervisors or perhaps they believe that bully/victim problems are a necessary childhood evil" (p. 34). Besag (1989) suggested that school administrators may be reluctant to admit to any bullying problems for fear that it would reflect badly on the school.

The way adults handle bullying in the school teaches all the children about gaining, using, and abusing power; listening versus telling; negotiating versus demanding; considering the needs, behaviors, and feelings of other people; and the real value of cooperation (Hazler, 1994). This lesson will be one they remember long after their school years, and may be one they pass on to the next generation.

## SUMMARY

There may be a victim pattern of characteristics and behaviors. Children who are victims have certain attributes in common that differentiate them from other children. Among the most important of these are the personality characteristics of being anxious and insecure, which may signal to others that they are easy targets. Other common features of victims include having an insecure attachment pattern, being withdrawn, and behaving passively and submissively, even when it is inappropriate to do so. The only physical feature that differentiates victims from nonvictims is that male victims are often smaller and weaker than male nonvictims. A second piece of evidence that supports the existence of a victim type is that victimization is stable. It appears that children who are victims generally remain victims throughout childhood and early adolescence, even when they switch classes and interact with new peers. Finally the existence of a victim pattern is supported by the fact that victims are identifiable by others. Both aggressive and nonaggressive children and teachers are accurate in recognizing which children are probable victims. A prototypical child: he/she generally plays alone at recess and is tentative in approaching other children but desperately wants to please others and be included. This child cries easily and is reluctant to fight back when being harassed. Yet, this child may continue to attempt to please a bully even after being victimized. Because of his or her low self-esteem, the child may even believe that being the target of harassment and social isolation is inevitable. Children who become victims have certain common traits that differentiate them from other children.

## BULLIES

According to Olweus (1994), any deliberate negative act against a victim by a child who is physically or psychologically stronger and who repeats these behaviors across time is considered a bully. Olweus (1993) found that about 7% of children in elementary and middle school regularly bully other children. As with victims there are two kinds of bullies. Most bullies initiate aggression against victims. However, a few, called passive bullies sometimes participate, but do not initiate the bullying (Olweus, 1993). Bullies are generally older male children. Olweus (1993) found that male bullies pick on more than 80% of the male victims and more than 60% of the female victims. Girls also bully, but they generally use more indirect techniques, such as ostracizing and ridiculing victims. For example, boys tend to play in larger groups than girls, and fighting and aggressive play are often part of the process of establishing a male pecking order (Maccoby, 1986). Boys bully in a more direct way, using physical aggression and verbal threats. Girls are less likely than boys to demonstrate physical aggression (Maccoby, 1986), and they are taught to express their anger in covert or indirect ways (Campbell, 1993). Lagerspetz and Bjorkvist (1994) found in their study of indirect aggression that there was a very low correlation between self and peer ratings in girls who are bullies, which would indicate that girls either do not want to admit to bullying or are not aware that their behavior is bullying. Nevertheless, girls do bully through the use of intimidation and ridicule and by spreading nasty rumors and making a friend jealous by associating with someone else (Lagerspetz & Bjorkvist, 1994).

According to Lane (1989), boys bully more than girls by a ratio of 3:1 but this figure may be inflated because girls use covert bullying techniques that are harder to

detect and measure. The behavior girls resort to is generally not associated with bullying by adults or children and so it often continues unchecked. Boys bully both boys and girls, but girls generally only bully girls. "Bullying for boys is more likely to be part of power based social relationships and for girls affiliation activities are more frequently the source of bullying activities" (Lane, 1989, p. 213).

Although Roland (1989) found that female bullies do slightly better on intelligence tests and actually receive better grades than do other children, male bullies generally do less well on intelligence tests than do other children and perform poorly in school. Even as adults, most bullies have below average scores on intellectual achievement tests (Goleman, 1987). Bullies positively value violence and thus are usually aggressive toward teachers, parents, and siblings, as well as peers. They tend to be impulsive and exhibit a strong need to dominate others (Olweus, 1993). Olweus (1978) also found that bullies seem to have little of the anxiety and insecurity that victims have.

The results of a study on behavioral patterns of bullies indicate that aggressive children tend to have a hostile attribution bias when they are in social interactions, thus interpreting ambiguous events as being intentionally harmful. They often feel as though they are victims and feel justified in retaliating. In a similar vein Deluthy (1981) found that although highly aggressive children were able to produce a similar number of alternative solutions for hypothetical interpersonal dilemmas as did other children, most of these solutions tended to be aggressive.

This style of social problem solving, along with an aggressive, impulsive temperament, seems to contribute to an antisocial behavior pattern that puts bullies at risk for other problem behaviors, such as substance abuse and delinquency. These and



other problems persist into adulthood. Olweus (1993) showed that former bullies had four times as much recidivism for serious crimes as the average person, and Goleman (1987) noted that former bullies tended to be uncaring, punitive parents and that their children often also became bullies. Some research suggests that children who become bullies tend to have been raised in an environment in which the primary caregivers were either uninvolved or actively hostile. Through interviews with parents, Olweus (1978) identified three parental qualities that contribute to aggressiveness in boys. The first is the parents' negative attitude toward their son (especially in the first 5 years of life). Boys whose primary caregivers were rated on self-rating scales as either hostile and rejecting or cold and indifferent were more likely to physically attack their peers and verbally attack peers and teachers. The second quality is the parents' tolerance of aggression. Boys who had been raised by parents who were tolerant of aggressive behavior in their children and who did not set clear boundaries of what was appropriate were more likely to be aggressive. The third quality is the parents' use of power assertive methods of discipline. Boys who were frequently subjected to the physical punishment, threats, and violent outbursts of their parents were more likely to be aggressive.

Bullies lack empathy and will never admit that their victims are weaker in some way, but will insist that the victim provoked them (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Olweus, 1991, 1993, 1994). Bullies often misread their peer's actions and assume hostile intentions where there are none (Lochman, 1992). In primary school, bullies enjoy about average popularity. Research also indicates that as bullies move through the upper grades and junior high school, their popularity wanes (Olweus, 1991, 1993, 1994). The bully, however, never seems to reach the low level of popularity that is typical of

the victimized child (Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993, 1994). Throughout childhood and early adolescence, male victims are liked by their female classmates even less than the aggressive bullies (Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993, 1994). Studies show that aggression is very stable over time and that early signs of bullying are likely to predict later aggressive behavior (Farrington, 1992; Huesmann, Eron, Lefkowitz, & Walder, 1984; Lane, 1989; Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993, 1994). Olweus found that approximately 60% of boys identified as bullies in grades 6-9 had at least one officially registered crime by the age of 24, and that 35% to 40% had three or more convictions. A 22 year longitudinal study of 8 year old, peer nominated aggressive boys found a significant correlation between childhood bullying and an adult criminal record (Eron & Huesmann, 1984).

Olweus (1993) suggests that family problems, including frequent conflicts between the parents, divorce, psychiatric illness, and alcohol problems, may also contribute to children becoming bullies. Family problems may lead to children being at risk for becoming bullies in several ways. First, the problems may absorb the caregivers' time and attention, making the parents more likely to neglect the children. Second, the problems may cause a stressful reaction in the parents, for which the parents have no outlet. Thus, these parents may be more inclined to express their stress by abusing their children. Third, problems involving conflict or aggressive behavior on the part of the caregivers may provide a model to the children of how to act toward others. These features help explain why bullies are aggressive. First, in terms of temperament, bullies are impulsive and have a strong desire to dominate others. Second, in the early years of their development, bullies may learn aggressive behaviors from their caregivers, who act as models and do not teach their children to control aggressive

impulses. Bullying may also occur for different reasons at different ages. In particular, in the early years, bullying may be a way of establishing one's place in the peer hierarchy that is acceptable among children. Coie, Dodge, Terry, and Wright (1991) found that when children enter school, popular boys pick on aggressive boys to establish their place in the hierarchy.

## LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF VICTIMIZATION

The fact that bullies chronically victimize certain children for long periods of time may have implication for their future development. In the short term, victims suffer from physical and psychological distress, have difficulty concentrating, and are afraid to go to school; but even in the long term, the effects of being subjected to bullying can be serious. In a longitudinal study, Olweus (1993) found that boys who had been victims in the period between sixth and ninth grade had much higher levels of depression and a more negative view of themselves at the age of 23. Moreover, the degree of childhood victimization was highly correlated with the level of adult depressive tendencies (Olweus, 1993). This occurred even though as young adults they were no longer victims of either direct or indirect harassment and no longer showed typical victim characteristics (Olweus, 1993). These findings suggest that former victims may have internalized the negative evaluations of their peers from childhood. They continue to criticize themselves, have low self-esteem, and often suffer from depression, even though they no longer have the socially undesirable victim like traits of childhood and are no longer ostracized by others.

The future of children involved in bullying during childhood is reported to be rather unfavorable. Bullied children may have problems related to school, such as being reluctant to attend school and may be actually absent (Reid, 1983). There are also case reports of children who have committed suicide because of bullying (Prewitt, 1988). As adults, victims are found to be more likely depressed and to have poor self-esteem (Olweus, 1993), and to have difficulties in later sexual relationships (Gilmartin, 1987). Bullies are found to be more prone to have criminal convictions later in life, and more

likely to be involved in serious, recidivist crime (Whitney & Smith, 1993). It has also been suggested that bullying may contribute to the referrals of some children to psychiatric consultation, however, research concerning bullying problems in the field of child psychiatry is scanty (Dawkins, 1995). According to research (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, Henttonen, Almqvist, Kresanov, Molanen, Piha, & Tamminen, 1998) bullying was found to be very common among children who were psychologically disturbed. Bully-victims scored highest in externalizing behavior and hyperactivity, and they themselves reported feelings of ineffectiveness and interpersonal problems. Victims scored highest in internalizing behavior and also psychosomatic symptoms, and they themselves reported severe depression. Children involved in bullying especially children who both bullied and were bullied themselves, were psychologically disturbed. More children involved in bullying than others were referred for psychiatric consultation. These findings indicate that bullying is a common phenomenon among children who are psychologically disturbed. According to the authors, bullying also elevates the probability of being referred for psychiatric consultation.

The feelings of isolation and the loss of self-esteem that victims experience seem to last into adulthood. In Gilmartin's (1987) study of love-shy adult males, the subjects indicated that they were often bullied as children. Victimized children are more likely to have low self-esteem, low social self-confidence, and experience depression in adulthood (Oliver, Oaks, & Hoover, 1994).

A recent study by Tritt & Duncan (1997) was conducted to expand our understanding of the long-term correlated of childhood bullying by exploring whether involvement in childhood bullying is related to young adult self-esteem and loneliness. The results of this study indicate that childhood bully victims have lower level of self-

esteem than bullies and normals, and young adult loneliness was a significant predictor of the level of childhood bully victimization. Previous research confirms that bullied children are traumatized by these unpleasant experiences. We can now add to this knowledge that at least some of the psychological difficulties related to childhood bullying also appear in adulthood. Despite the fact that victims are no longer in settings in which this aversive behavior took place, victims and bullies reported higher levels of loneliness in later life.

The importance of loneliness is reported in the literature, which indicates that loneliness is related to psychological distress (Russel, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980). For example, research suggests that lonely individuals have difficulty developing meaningful friendships and intimate relationships (Jones, Freemon, & Goswick, 1981), and are more depressed, hopeless, empty, and dissatisfied with life than are those with low levels of loneliness (Russel et al., 1980). Therefore, this recent study by Tritt & Duncan found higher levels of loneliness in the young adult survivors of childhood bullying and in their tormentors may be the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Given the distress related to loneliness, it is possible that young adults involved in childhood bullying may be experiencing numerous other symptoms also related to their childhood experiences.

## WHY WE TOLERATE BULLYING

Despite the well documented existence of bully/victim problems and the indication that there are no benefits to allowing aggressive bullying behavior to continue, bullying has not yet been addressed as a pressing social or school concern. Ambert (1994) suggested the following reasons for the historical tolerance of bullying behavior:

1. Bullying is a behavior that is often covert and secret and usually takes place when supervising adults are not present.
2. Children as aggressors do not fit into our view as children as “social innocents”
3. Child welfare professionals still focus on the role of the family, particularly the mother, as the primary influence on children. The huge importance of peer relationships has not yet become as important a focus in the professional literature.
4. Children, both witness and victims, often do not report bullying because of embarrassment, fear of retaliation, or the belief that school adults will not respond effectively (p. 67).

In addition to these suggestions offered by Ambert (1994), sex role stereotypes, homophobia, and the media also, contribute to the bullying phenomenon. Although there is little difference behaviorally and physiologically between newborn boys and girls, adults generally handle and react to them differently immediately after birth (Birns, as cited by Eron & Huesman, 1984). According to Eron & Huesmann (1984) “as parents and as a society we train our boys to be more outwardly aggressive than girls,

and we still very much subscribe to “boys will be boys” mentality when it comes to male aggressive behavior” (p. 14). Lane (1989) also suggested that society tolerates bullying from boys because there may be some ambivalence concerning attitudes of power and masculinity. Our culture believes that physical aggression is a male trait, so boys are expected and encouraged to be aggressive and openly aggressive behavior in girls is discouraged (Eron & Huesmann, 1984; Lagerspetz & Bjorkvist, 1994). These cultural lessons are reflected in the ways girls and boys play together in groups and how they exhibit bullying behavior differently. Pogrebin (1980) argues that our societal fear of homosexuality might contribute to the valuing of hyper-aggressive behavior in males. Boys learn early to fear the words “sissy,” “fag,” or “fairy.” These and any other homosexual taunts are considered to be terrible insults to school-aged boys (p. 70).

Consistent with Pogrebin’s argument, Clarke & Kiselica (1997) believe that some boys may use maladaptive behaviors, such as physical aggression, in an effort to avoid being labeled gay and being the target of homophobic ridicule. “Perhaps some boys may view themselves as “real men” when they behave in hyper-aggressive ways, such as bullying” (p.5). Clarke & Kiselica also believe that the failure of some school personnel to protect the victims of bullying might not be a manifestation of a homophobic perception that victims are “sissies” who deserve the coercive attack of bullies.

Finally, the media may contribute to the bullying phenomenon by reinforcing the belief that the use of physical force and coercive techniques are the way to gain adulation from peers, and aggression is the only way to handle conflict (Eron & Huesmann, 1984).



The previous literature review indicates that bullying is a widespread phenomenon, it cuts across geographic and socioeconomic boundaries, it has serious and detrimental effects on the victims and their families, in addition to the bullies and the witnesses of the bullying incidents. Clearly, schools have a moral and ethical obligation to create a safe environment.

## INTERVENTION

The utopian ideal is for children to stop bullying one another. It is of utmost importance for parents to teach children that respect for the other person is critical. Starting well before school, we need to create a culture that promotes pro-social ways of dealing with conflict.

In reviewing the existing literature, it is highly probable that bullying in schools represents part of the larger problem of violence in our society. The pervasiveness of bullying in schools may reflect the institutionalization of bullying behavior (Askew, 1989). On the basis of research in boys' schools, Askew suggested that values of a school often reflect the values of the larger society, in which some schools may support traditional stereotypes of masculinity and competitiveness. Reducing violence in schools requires a whole curriculum approach in which students are encouraged to work together cooperatively and to solve conflicts constructively (Cowie & Sharp, 1994). Deutsch (1993) outlined a curriculum program for educating children based on a philosophy that facilitates cooperative, interdependent learning, and constructive conflict resolution. According to Pepler, Craig, & Ziegler, (1993) an anti-bullying curriculum can change students' attitude about bullying and increase helping and empathic behavior. Schools should never tolerate bullying as ordinary, commonplace behavior. Atlas & Pepler (1998) state that schools must recognize the seriousness of bullying behavior, because children involved in bullying conflicts are at risk for future maladjustment. "Providing a safe environment will cultivate a positive atmosphere for learning and set the stage for encouraging and fostering further development" (p. 22).

According to Susan Douglas (1998)

“There is a deep and pathological crisis surrounding masculinity in this country. We get into big trouble when we ask about the relationship between cherished male institutions---football teams, military academies, police squads, frat houses---and brutal criminal behavior. In the mid-1980’s athletes in sports in which aggressiveness and physical force are prided—most notably football and basketball players—were reported to the police for sexual assault 38% more often than the average college student” (p. 15).

It appears that culture in the United States is built upon a bullying version of manhood and aggression especially in organized sports.

The causes of bullying probably include genetic, constitutional, physiological, and social factors. But bullying often persists because it is immediately and substantially rewarded. By hurting others, bullies get what they want—higher status, material possessions, and self-esteem. As a result, aggression may be adopted as a way of solving problems very early in life and fully incorporated into a person’s response repertoire or personality by the middle of childhood. Any child who is aggressive in one situation is probably aggressive in most other situations. Physically aggressive children and adults are also likely to be verbally aggressive and to engage in other forms of anti-social behavior (Douglas, 1998).

In a long term study of 850 subjects, Dr. Leonard Eron of the University of Michigan (1998) found that an aggressive boy of eight was likely to be an aggressive adolescent at thirteen and an aggressive adult at age thirty. School bullying predicted serious antisocial behavior in late adolescence and adulthood. Both men and women who had been aggressive children also tended to abuse their own children, often producing a new generation of aggressive children.

One lesson for parents is that they should not encourage aggression by condoning violence in sports, teaching children that aggression is a good way to avoid attack, urging them to hit harder if they are hit, or justifying fights with the cliché “*boys will be boys.*” Even more important is the example set for children by people in authority, heroes, and other children they admire. Observation and imitation are the most powerful learning mechanisms for young children. Apart from parents and other children, the main source for models of violent behavior today is television. Children learn to imitate what they see on television. If a child is constantly exposed to film heroes who solve problems and win approval by aggression, the child will learn that aggression is effective. Television also influences a child’s understanding of how the world works, what behavior is appropriate in various situations, and how others can be expected to behave. This can provide a basis for self-justification by adults who persist in aggressive habits learned in childhood.

Headley (1998) indicates that students whose parents used nonviolent disciplinary techniques fought less often than those whose parents relied on hitting and more violent disciplinary methods. Fighting was significantly more common among students who believed their parents wanted them to fight if insulted. Students who reported that they try to stay out of fights usually succeeded, while students who more frequently participated in and observed fighting was more likely to carry a weapon. The researcher concluded that students’ understanding of their parents’ attitudes and behavior correlates strongly with violent behavior.

To alter the culture of tolerance for aggression and bullying, and to help the many people adversely affected by this problem, a systematic, school-wide intervention is required. A variety of interventions have been suggested throughout the counseling

literature, however, most intervention programs include the following basic components. Bullying will continue to be tolerated in schools until there is a philosophical shift among school personnel in how they view and respond to coercive behavior. According to Hoover and Hazler (1991), the clear message sent by all adults in the school system is that no bullying will be tolerated, ever. The implication of such a code is that school personnel will be models of humane behavior who refrain from physically or psychologically mistreating students or fellow employees (p. 216). School personnel, students, and parents, need to be educated about bullying behavior, the characteristics of bullies and victims, school codes of conduct, and procedures for responding and reporting incidents of bullying.

School policies regarding bullying behavior must be enforced consistently. Olweus (1994) found that there is an inverse relationship between the number of supervising adults present and the number of bully/victim incidents. It appears that the presence of adult supervisors inhibits the expression of bullying behavior (p. 234). Statistics indicated earlier indicate that childhood aggression is a negative outcome for both bullies and victims, therefore, primary schools need to teach self-enhancing social skills to prevent children from becoming bullies or victims (Froschl & Gropper 1999; Huesmann & Eron, 1987), as well as assertiveness skills to teach children to avoid becoming victims (Hoover & Hazler, 1991, Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993, 1994). Because bullies and their victims are at risk to suffer a variety of immediate and long term problems, both would benefit from supportive counseling and training designed to teach them adaptive skills for coping with their difficulties. Oliver et al (1994) stated that family counseling involving the parents of the victims and the bullies will enhance individual counseling.

An important discovery reported by Olweus (1993) is that school-wide interventions require at least two years of implementation before significant positive results are seen. During the first year of implementation, policies and procedures are developed, education and skills training are started, but only small benefits will be noticed. During the second year, interventions appear to have a favorable ripple effect throughout schools, where substantial reductions in bullying behavior is achieved by the end of the year. Olweus (1991, 1993, 1994) reports a 50% reduction in bullying in Norwegian schools over 2 years as a result of a nationwide intervention program. Within the Norwegian intervention, Olweus (1991) outlined three class rules against bullying for peers to follow “We shall not bully other students, we shall try to help students who are being bullied, and we shall make a point to include students who become easily left out” (p. 445).

A team led by Merle Froschl and Nancy Gropper (1999) developed classroom activities to help teachers in grades K-3 take a proactive, gender-sensitive approach to teasing and bullying. According to Stein (1995), the antecedents of peer to peer sexual harassment may well be found in young children’s teasing and bullying behavior. Yet often this behavior is tolerated and excused as part of a typical stage of childhood or as a time when “*boys will be boys.*” Teachers rarely ask whether this early behavior may have something to do with later interactions and thus miss an important opportunity for intervention.

Whether or not teasing and bullying take root and grow into more pernicious behavior, they deserve attention. Teasing and bullying are harmful and create a classroom climate of fear that negatively affects a child’s ability to learn and a teacher’s ability to teach (Ross, 1996). Learning to respect others and to contribute to their well

being are not easy tasks for young children who tend to be egocentric in their thinking. However, these skills are essential in promoting children's sense of connectedness to others and to the world around them (Levin, 1994). Gender plays a subtle and important role in young children's teasing and bullying behavior. Both boys and girls are teased and bullied more by boys (Froschl & Gropper, 1999). In this study boys initiated more than three times as many incidents as girls. In general, researchers have found that teachers do relatively little to stop bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993). In over 71% of the bullying incidents teachers were uninvolved or otherwise ignored it. From interviews with children, the researchers found that children yearn for adults to intervene. Teachers fail to intervene for a variety of reasons. They may be unaware of the incident, want children to work things out on their own, want to discourage tattling behavior, or believe that these activities are a natural part of childhood. However, the fact that boys do initiate most incidents and that adults do not intervene are crucial. If adults do not intervene, children think that boys are being given license to behave in this way. All students get the wrong message about acceptable gender roles, and fostering friendships and respect between boys and girls becomes increasingly difficult (Ross, 1996).

A proactive, direct curriculum approach is essential and can take familiar forms: story time, reading, meeting-time discussions, experience charts, drawings, art projects, creative story writing, journal writing, role-playing, puppet plays, charts, and graphing (Froschl & Sprung, 1998). The perception of difference is at the root of teasing and bullying among young children. Almost any perceived difference---gender, race ethnicity, language, social class, disability, and size---can become fodder for hurtful words and actions. Creating a climate of respect and learning takes effort on the part of

the whole-school community. However, research has shown that it is worth it. School-wide intervention programs can reduce teasing and bullying and antisocial behavior in general (Olweus, 1994; Cummings & Haggerty, 1997; Grossman, Neckerman, Koepsell, 1997). Support from the school administration is essential. A clearly stated, consistent, school-wide policy, distributed to everyone in the school community, can be an effective tool in combating teasing and bullying. Parents are crucial partners in efforts to create a climate in which teasing and bullying are not acceptable behaviors. Parents need ongoing communication about what is going on in the classroom as well as suggestions for ways to communicate with their own children on the topic.

By taking a proactive approach, teachers and schools have the opportunity to create a more prosocial climate in general and more positive interactions regardless of gender or other perceived differences including race, ethnicity, class and disability. The resulting environment fosters respect and potential friendships among children who might otherwise remain apart.

Research by Dodge, Cole, Pettit, & Price (1990) provides a potential direction for early intervention. Dodge et al. found that although the most popular first graders were the most likely to bully others, these popular children also engaged in cooperative play, leadership, and did not engage in other types of aggression. By the third grade, the popular boys were no longer bullying others. Dodge et al. proposed that young boys may evaluate each other based on who is most dominant, but may use other criteria as they grow older. This suggests that some less popular young children may learn by modeling and reinforcement to engage in bullying to make friends. Therefore, it is possible that the popular young children grow out of this immature style of interaction, and those who do not have the other more appropriate interpersonal skills to fall back



on, may continue to bully. Consequently, when they grow older and leave the setting in which they have relied on bullying in order to receive attention, the young adult ex-bully is lonely because bullying no longer is successful. In addition because the ex-bully previously relied on aggression in his or her interactions with others, the ex-bully may not have learned the social skills necessary to develop and maintain new, more adult, friendships.

One reason bullying is such a problem is that so many people are negatively affected by it. The characteristics and experiences of the victims must be examined in great detail to understand the reason victims refrain from reporting their hardships to school officials. Also, the effects of bullying on children who witness bullying, the families of the victims, the bullies themselves, and society must be addressed to fully elucidate the extensive, damaging ramifications of bullying, and why intervention is necessary.

Other possible solutions for the prevention of school violence are for the schools themselves to fight back. The New South Wales Government is cracking down on high school violence and school bullying by setting up special reform schools for violent students who pose a physical risk to teachers and other pupils. According to Coleman (1998) the government currently has a list of more than 800 high school bullies on a register compiled by New South Wales education authority. "This list means that one in every 200 New South Wales high school students is officially regarded as a serious threat to the safety of classmates and teachers" (p. 4).

It appears that the United States is following suit, as bullying is landing middle school students a day in court. Last year in Waukesha, Wisconsin two middle school students, ages 12 and 13, faced disorderly conduct charges after reportedly pulling up

another boy's underwear and tearing it. In addition to possible fines of \$141, each of the boys were suspended for three days over the incident (Cannon, 1998).

Schools have begun treating threats of violence no matter how farfetched, the way airlines treat jokes about bombs (Adler, 1999). In the United States many schools have also made discipline issues out of violent imagery in creative-writing assignments. Zero-tolerance policies on threats, violence, or weapons are being instilled in many schools in the United States (Adler & Springen, 1999).

## Method

### Participants

A total of 472 middle school students, 238 boys and 234 girls from one southern New Jersey school district participated in this study. Students who had a parent refuse consent at the start of the study were not included ( $n = 9$ ). The final sample of students included five classes of fifth grade ( $n = 123$ ), five classes of sixth grade ( $n = 124$ ), five classes of seventh grade ( $n = 113$ ), and five classes of eighth grade ( $n = 108$ ). The age range for participants was twelve to fourteen (mean age = 11.9). The school district was located in an ethnically diverse community.

### Measures

An adapted version of the Olweus Bully questionnaire was administered. The Olweus questionnaire is a thirty-four question self-report instrument designed to measure bullying of self and others. A selection of two to five responses follows a Likert-type scale. Thirty-four questions were asked with respect to age, gender, number of friends, and bullying behavior of self and others. Five additional questions concerning emotions and attitudes about the bully, victim, and the bullying incident were added. Four main categories were identified in order to reliably distinguish the varying roles students play during a bullying incident. These categories included: Bully, Victim, Assistant, Defender, and Outsider. In addition, attached to each questionnaire, was a separate page requesting each student-participant draw a picture of a bully and victim. Before conducting this study parent/guardian consent forms were distributed to all fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade middle school students.

## Procedure

The questionnaires were administered to all fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in special subject classes during a one week period. Students were advised that their participation in this study was voluntary, and that they were free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants were assured that survey completion was under strict conditions of anonymity and confidentiality. Finally, the students were advised that the study was regarding bullying behavior at school, and that their honest evaluations and opinions were an integral part of this research. The following definition of bullying was used for all students:

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior with an imbalance of power, where a dominant person/persons intentionally and repeatedly cause distress by tormenting or harassing another less dominant person/persons. This behavior can be physical (kicking, hitting) or verbal (name-calling); it can be direct or indirect. Direct bullying refers to open attacks---kicking, pushing or hitting. Indirect bullying involves social isolation, group exclusion, and nasty gossip. Boys and girls both bully equally. Girls may do it in ways that are more indirect; such as group exclusion, gossiping, and name-calling. Boys may do it more directly; such as hitting, kicking, or pushing.

The questionnaires, scan sheets, and number two pencils were distributed to all students. The special subject teacher and researcher were present to answer any questions the students had. Subjects remained in their own seat, and did not confer with one another during the study. Once the questionnaire, scan sheet, and picture was returned, each student was thanked for their participation and given a treat.

## Results

The percentage of students in this sample reporting Being Bullied, and Bullying Others is indicated in Table I (page 51). Previous research on the prevalence of bullying and victimization has yielded varying rates. Results from this sample of students revealed higher rates of bullying in schools than reported by earlier researchers.

The incidence of Being Bullied now/then, or more often for all fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade middle-school students was 22.4%. Combined totals for Bullying Others now/then, or more often was 16.2%. The percentage of students in this sample who report being involved in bullying shows a marked increase from previous research findings.

In order to investigate bullying as a group process, all fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade middle-school students were asked whether they could join in bullying a student, they did not like. Referring to Table II (page 51), results show that 47.9% of the students in New Jersey indicated yes/maybe. As is evident, those who would join in bullying another student, while actively reinforcing others behavior, is twice the rate reported in a sample of British students by Whitney & Smith (1993).

Concerning the emotional reactions experienced by the students during the bullying incident, and toward the Bully and Victim, the results are consistent with previous research. Approximately one-quarter of the students in this sample indicate feelings of Indifference toward the Incident, Bully, and Victim (Table III, page 51). What clearly should give rise for concern is that 56.0% of the students surveyed felt Fearful or Helpless during the bullying incident, and 14.7% indicated feeling Excited. Emotional reactions toward the Bully ranged from 9.0% Admiration, to feelings of Helplessness 14.7% of the time. The emotional reactions of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders toward the victimized student were

feelings of Satisfaction 10.0% of the time and an additional 16.0% consider bully victimization part of the turbulent process of growing up (Table IV, page 52).

In order to reliably distinguish the varying roles students play during a bullying incident five main categories were established: the Bully, Victim, Assistant (bully), Defender (Victim), and the Outsider, or passive observer. The percentage of students rating themselves in each category is outlined in Table V (page 52).

As is apparent, 44.5% or close to one-half of the students surveyed self-identified as Outsiders, and another 17.2% indicate having an active role during a bullying incident.

BEEN BULLIED

BULLYING OTHERS

Sweden	Olweus	9.0%	7.0%
Great Britain	Smith	20.0%	10.0%
United States	Perry et. al	10.0%	14.0%
United States	Linn	22.4%	16.2%

Table I.

JOIN IN BULLYING OTHERS

Great Britain	Whitney & Smith	25.0%
United States	Linn	47.9%

Table II.

WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE BEING BULLIED HOW DO YOU FEEL?

United States	Atlas & Pepler	25%	Indifferent
United States	Linn	20.0% (Incident)	Indifferent
		25.4% (Bully)	Indifferent
		20.7% (Victim)	Indifferent

Table III.

WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE BEING BULLIED, HOW DO YOU FEEL?

Excited	14.7%	Incident
Fearful	31.4%	
Helpless	25.2%	
Total:	56.0%	Incident
Admire	9.0%	Bully
Helpless	14.7%	Bully
Satisfied	10.0%	Victim
Part of Growing Up	16.0%	Victim

Table IV.

PERCENTAGE OF CATEGORIES CHOSEN

Bully	9.6%
Assistant (to Bully)	7.6%
Outsider	44.5%
Victim	10.5%
Defender (of Victim)	27.6%

Table V.



A final analysis was completed investigating the differences between grades fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth. Table VI (page 55) lists the percentage of students reporting Being Bullied now/then or more often. The data are consistent with previous research which found seventh grade to be the time at which bullying is at its peak (Duncan, 1999).

Table VI also lists the per grade totals for Bullying Others, now/then and more often. As is apparent, grades seventh and eighth with percentages of 23.0 and 23.3 are the highest reported figures. Also consistent with previous findings, bullying behavior appears to increase progressively from elementary to middle school (Olweus, 1993).

When questioned whether they could join in bullying another student whom they did not like, eighth grade indicated the highest percentage 67.8%, yes/maybe. Table VII (page 55) lists the per grade percentages.

Investigating the emotional reactions associated with the bullying incident as reported by the various grades, the results indicated some interesting findings. Table VIII (page 55) lists the per grade percentages. Seventh graders reported feelings of Excitement 21.7% of the time when witnessing a bullying incident, as opposed to the fifth graders who indicated this feeling 8.0% of the time. Feelings of Fearfulness/Helplessness were experienced most by the fifth graders, 77% of the time, and least by the eighth graders, 37.2%. When witnessing a bullying incident, the eighth graders reported feeling Indifferent 36.4% of the time, which was the highest reported amount.

How the students view the Bully and Victim during the bullying incident is listed in Table IX (page 56). The highest feelings of Anger toward the bully were experienced by fifth grade, 69.1%, and the lowest for eighth grade at 38.0%. Feelings of Indifference reported by fifth grade 7.3%, triples at sixth to 23.8%, increases to 30.2% at seventh, and reaches the

highest peak at 43.5% during eighth grade. Emotional reactions toward the victim during the incident, increase steadily from 16.1% during fifth to 26.2% during eighth grade.

Finally, when asked to rate themselves into the various categories, the highest percentage of active participants (Bully/Assistant), was reported by the eighth grade students. The role of Defender was highest among the fifth grade students and lowest for eighth (Table X, page 56). One in two eighth graders rated themselves as outsiders, or passive observers during a bullying incident. These results suggest growing social acceptance and tolerance of bullying by the eighth grade.

BEEN BULLIED      BULLIED OTHERS

Fifth Grade	22%	7.5%
Sixth Grade	16.2%	12.2%
Seventh Grade	27.9%	23.0%
Eighth Grade	21.8%	23.3%

Table VI.

JOIN IN BULLYING OTHERS

Fifth Grade	29.4%
Sixth Grade	50.4%
Seventh Grade	50.4%
Eighth Grade	67.6%

Table VII.

WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE BEING BULLIED HOW DO YOU FEEL?

	Excited	Fearful/Helpless	Indifferent
Fifth Grade	8.0%	77.0%	8.8%
Sixth Grade	12.5%	60.8%	18.3%
Seventh Grade	21.7%	50.0%	17.9%
Eighth Grade	17.3%	37.2%	36.4%

Table VIII.

**WHEN YOU SEE SOMEONE BEING BULLIED, HOW DO YOU  
FEEL ABOUT THE BULLY AND VICTIM?**

	Bully (Anger)	Bully (Indifferent)	Victim (Satisfied)	Victim(Indifferent)
Fifth Grade	69.1%	7.3%	8.0%	16.1%
Sixth Grade	47.5%	23.8%	9.1%	23.1%
Seventh Grade	44.3%	30.2%	11.9%	18.3%
Eighth Grade	38.0%	43.5%	15.0%	26.2%

Table IX

**PERCENTAGE OF CATEGORIES CHOSEN**

	Bully/Assistant	Victim/Defender	Outsider
Fifth Grade	16.2%	36.6%	37.8%
Sixth Grade	15.3%	25.4%	44.9%
Seventh Grade	18.5%	30.6%	43.5%
Eighth Grade	19.5%	18.5%	51.9%

Table X.

## Discussion

Bullying in schools remains a common problem with as many as 22.4% of the students in this study reporting Being Bullied now/then or more frequently, and participating in Bullying Others 16.2% of the time. In Sweden, Olweus (1991, 1993, 1994) found that 9% of the students in his samples reported Being Bullied while 7% claimed that they Bullied Others. The results from this sample of students in New Jersey are significantly higher than those reported by Olweus in Sweden, and twice the amount reported by Perry et. al for previous samples in the United States. The combined percentages for the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in this New Jersey sample indicate a marked increase in the trends found by previous research.

One possible explanation for the higher percentages obtained for this sample of students in New Jersey, is that very specific directions were given to all students regarding what constitutes bullying behavior. The students in this study were instructed that indirect bullying includes behaviors such as: social isolation, group exclusion, nasty gossip, and name calling. It is quite feasible that these students were unaware that these subtle, coercive, and manipulating behaviors are indeed forms of bullying.

When questioned whether they could join in bullying another student/s whom they did not like, close to one-half of the subjects responded yes/maybe. These statistics indicate that a substantial number of school-age children are the victims of bullying behavior.

Bullying is not benign, normal, and harmless behavior for children. On the contrary, research indicates that such actions have the potential to cause immediate, as well as long term emotional damage for both the victims and the bullies.

Bullying among children can be considered a form of abuse. In the short term, victims suffer from physical and psychological distress, have difficulty concentrating, and are afraid to go to school. In the long term, the effects of being subjected to bullying can be quite serious. Childhood victimization is highly correlated with levels of adult depressive tendencies (Olweus, 1993), difficulties in later sexual relationships (Tritt & Duncan, 1997), and suicide (Center for Disease Control, 1998).

Bullies also suffer. Although bullies may find aggression useful and rewarding in school, it does not work well in later life. Research has shown that bullying is a serious form of aggression, and a precursor to more aggression (Olweus, 1978, 1991, 1993, 1994). Longitudinal studies have shown that bullies are highly prone to criminal convictions later in life, and are more likely to be involved in serious, recidivist crime (Eron & Huesmann, 1984). According to Eron (1999) both men and women who had been aggressive in childhood, tend to abuse their own children, often producing a new generation of aggressive offspring requiring school and social intervention.

The emphasis of previous research and intervention has been to describe the problem of bullying solely in terms of the behaviors and characteristics of the Bully and/or Victim, in isolation from the influence of others within the social group. Recently, there has been a shift in bullying research from a dyadic focus of the characteristics of the Bully and the Victim, to the recognition of bullying as a group process, with the majority of children playing some kind of role. Bullying has been described as violence in group context, where students reinforce others behavior in interactions. Bullying in schools is collective in nature, and is based on social relations in the group (Lagerspetz et al., 1982). This present study attempted to identify the roles

children play during the bullying incident in a large southern New Jersey middle-school district.

Five main categories were developed, in order to distinguish between the Bully, Victim, Assistant (Bully), Defender (Victim), and the Outsider roles involved in the bullying process. Progress in the identification of specific roles and the measurement of bullying as a group process has a direct impact on strategies for school-wide prevention programs. Research in the area of bullying as a group process, and the success of intervention programs, will depend on finding a clear distinction between the ringleader Bully, Assistants, children that reinforce their behavior, and the Outsider, the intimidated observers. Strategies aimed at isolating the ringleaders from their support group, and mobilizing the Outsider to help will greatly benefit the entire school population.

When students in this sample were asked to rate themselves into various categories (Bully, Victim, Assistant, Defender, and Outsider) almost one-half of the respondents self-identified as Outsiders, or passive observers, and close to one in five indicated having an active role. In addition, one-quarter of the students indicated feelings of Indifference toward the bullying incident, Bully, and Victim. These findings have important implications for intervention strategies. Outsiders who remain impartial during a bullying incident could be taught to assume responsibility, instead of turning a blind eye. Students could be educated on how to avoid peer pressure, cultivated in order to see themselves as helpful, enlightened about moral inclusion, and taught altruism by modeling the adult population.

The differences between fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades yielded some interesting findings. Seventh grade was identified as the year when bullying is at its

peak. Schools should be aware of this turbulent time, and keep a watchful eye out for bully victimization. The fifth grade students in this sample indicated that they would join in bullying others 29.4% of the time. The eighth graders stated they would join in 67.6% of the time. The emotional reaction of anger toward the Bully was highest for the fifth graders (69.1%) and lowest for the eighth graders (38%). Finally, feelings of indifference reported by the eighth graders (43.5%) is five times higher than the percentage indicated by the fifth graders (7.3%). What clearly should give rise for concern is feelings of indifference increase measurably as the middle school years progress. It appears, that children become desensitized to the aggression displayed by their peers. As children proceed through their school years, bullying behavior progressively becomes acceptable, and possibly excused as a difficult phase that has to be endured, hence the indifference.

Pepler & Craig (1995) reported that peers were present in 85% of bullying episodes and the behavior of these others is increasingly becoming the topic of bullying research and intervention. How do these children actually behave during a bullying incident? Do their actions support the bullying? Do they join in? Are they passive and intimidated observers? Whitney & Smith (1993) reported that 20% might join in if they saw someone being bullied, and it seems that this is translated into actual support for the bully (Bjorkquist, et al. 1982). Do these observers reinforce the bullying either by actively encouraging or by their passive acceptance? Do they stick up for the victim or tell a teacher about the incident? According to Whitney & Smith (1993), ignoring what is going on may be interpreted by the Bully or others as support and/or approval.

When school personnel ignore, tolerate, or trivialize bullying incidents, the logical conclusion is that the school is not a reliably safe environment for anyone. How



adults deal with school bullying teaches children about gaining, using and abusing power, negotiating versus demanding, and most of all considering the needs and the feelings of others.

This study's objectives were to distinguish the roles of children during the bullying incident and strategies for intervention. The results show a pressing need for a systematic, school wide solution to bullying that takes into account the various roles children play. In addition to the victim, the intimidated observers, children who witness bullying suffer greatly. The results of this sample of students indicate that onlookers become greater in number as they age. Interventions and strategies begun early in middle school may well curtail the indifference and apathy that appears to be entrenched by eighth grade. Moreover, there is a great opportunity for intervention strategies to mobilize the onlookers in order to decrease bullying behavior. Taking into account the various roles children play during a bullying incident is paramount to bullying intervention. Interventions and strategies geared toward the entire school body will benefit every child who has to keep their head down, just in case. After all, they could be the next victim.

Schools should never tolerate bullying as ordinary, commonplace behavior. The results of this study indicate that bullying is a pervasive problem that is taking a toll on the educational, social, and emotional development of children.

In order to research bullying in the future and affect intervention strategies, it must be studied as a group process investigating several roles rather than who does the bullying, and who is bullied. This study used self-report techniques, therefore the results depend largely on the honesty, and integrity of those involved. In addition, the sample selected for this study

was obtained from one region in New Jersey; consequently, the results cannot be generalized to the entire state. The obtained percentages may well be the proverbial tip of the iceberg.

The present study's objectives were to distinguish the variety of roles students play during a bullying incident, and strategies for school-wide intervention. As stated, the most important implication in researching bullying as an entire group process, is that most children are somehow involved, and interventions should be directed not only toward the Bullies and their Victims, but toward the entire group. Strategies should be aimed to reduce the number of children who join in with the bullying, or passively encourage it by turning a blind eye. Schools need whole-school policies where students can be identified and encouraged to take an active helping role during a bullying incident. Schools need to increase student's confidence that if they report the incident, something will be done. Passive bystanders can be trained to be peer helpers.

In the future, it would be most interesting to investigate group dynamics by looking at leadership or conformity issues. Ultimately, bullying is a disturbing social problem that hurts us all and schools must be challenged to ensure they are places of safety for our children

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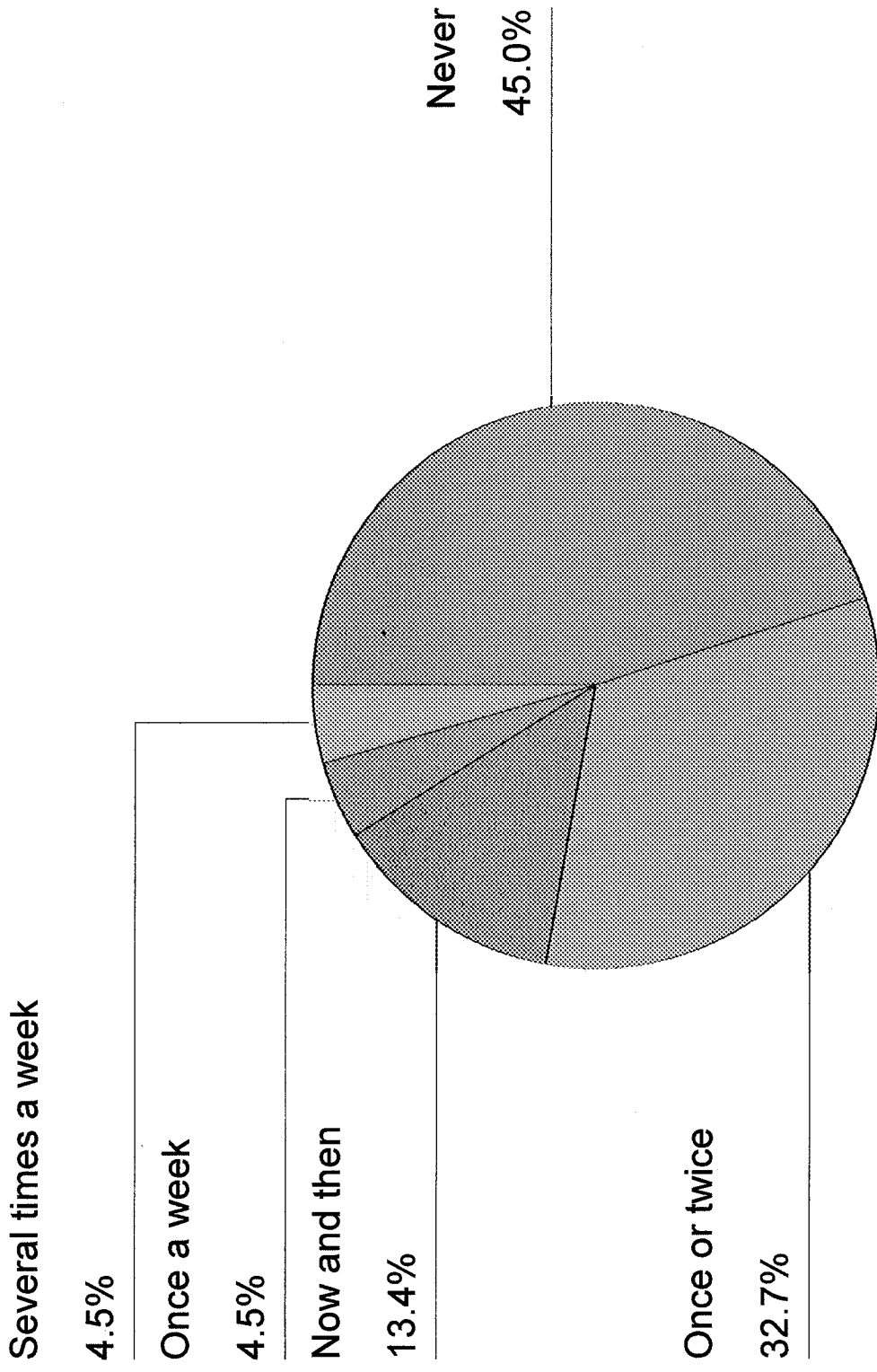
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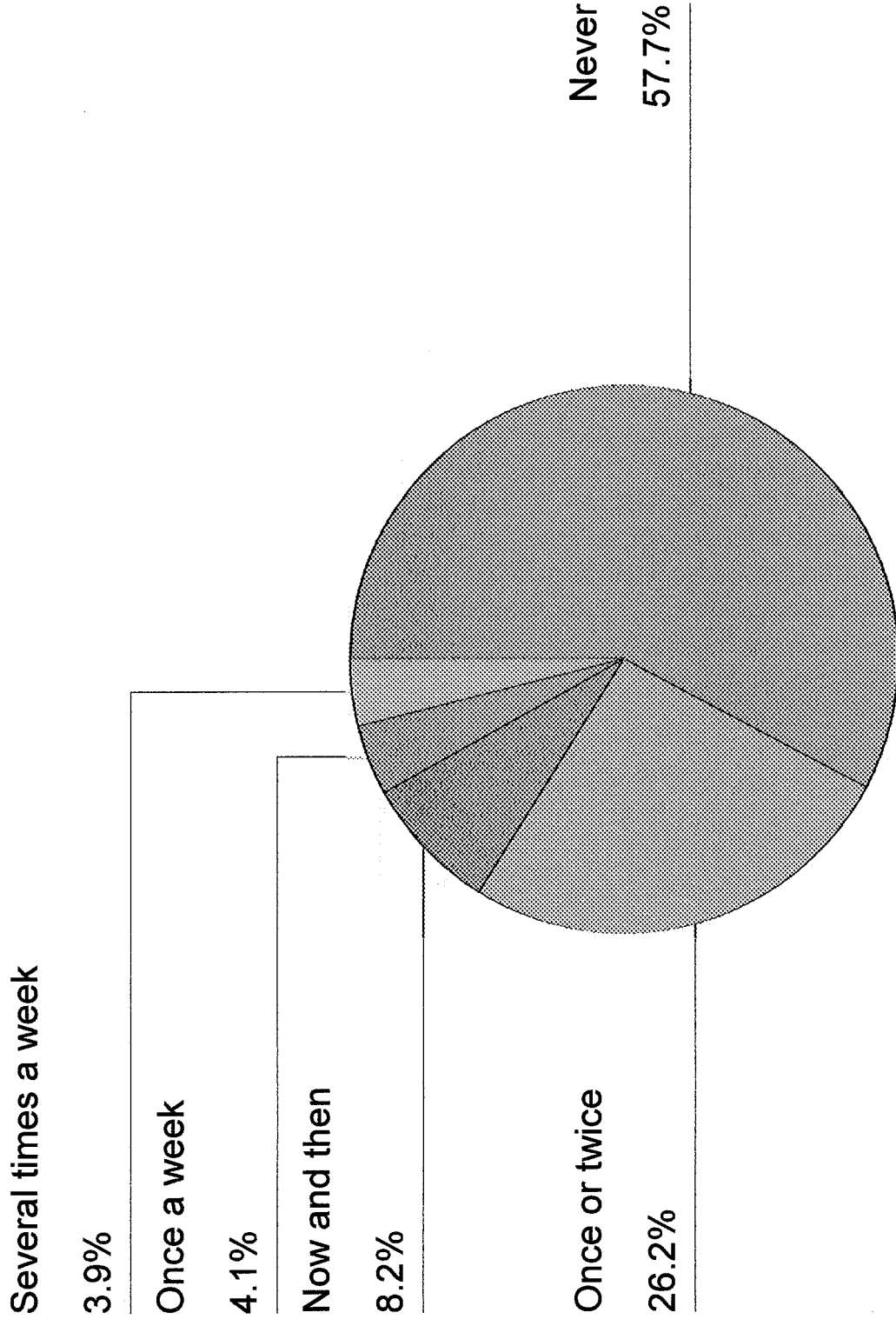
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# Have you been bullied in school?



# How often have you taken part in bullying others?

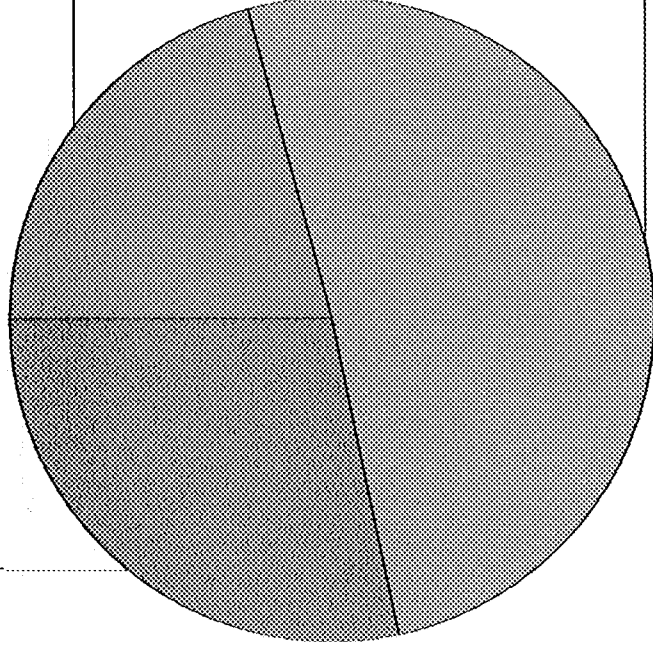


# Do you think you could join in bullying a student you do not like?

Maybe  
28.4%

Yes  
20.7%

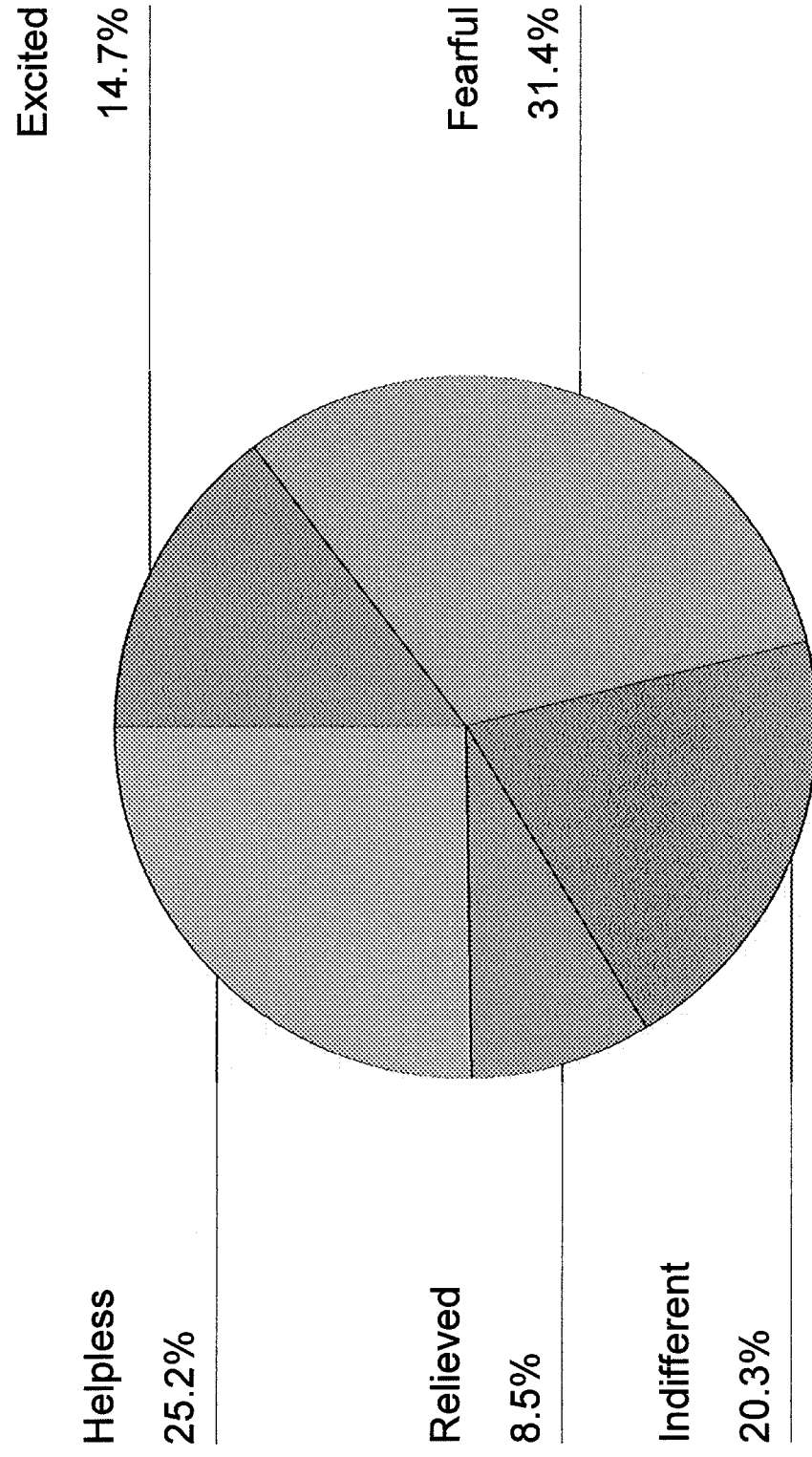
No  
50.9%



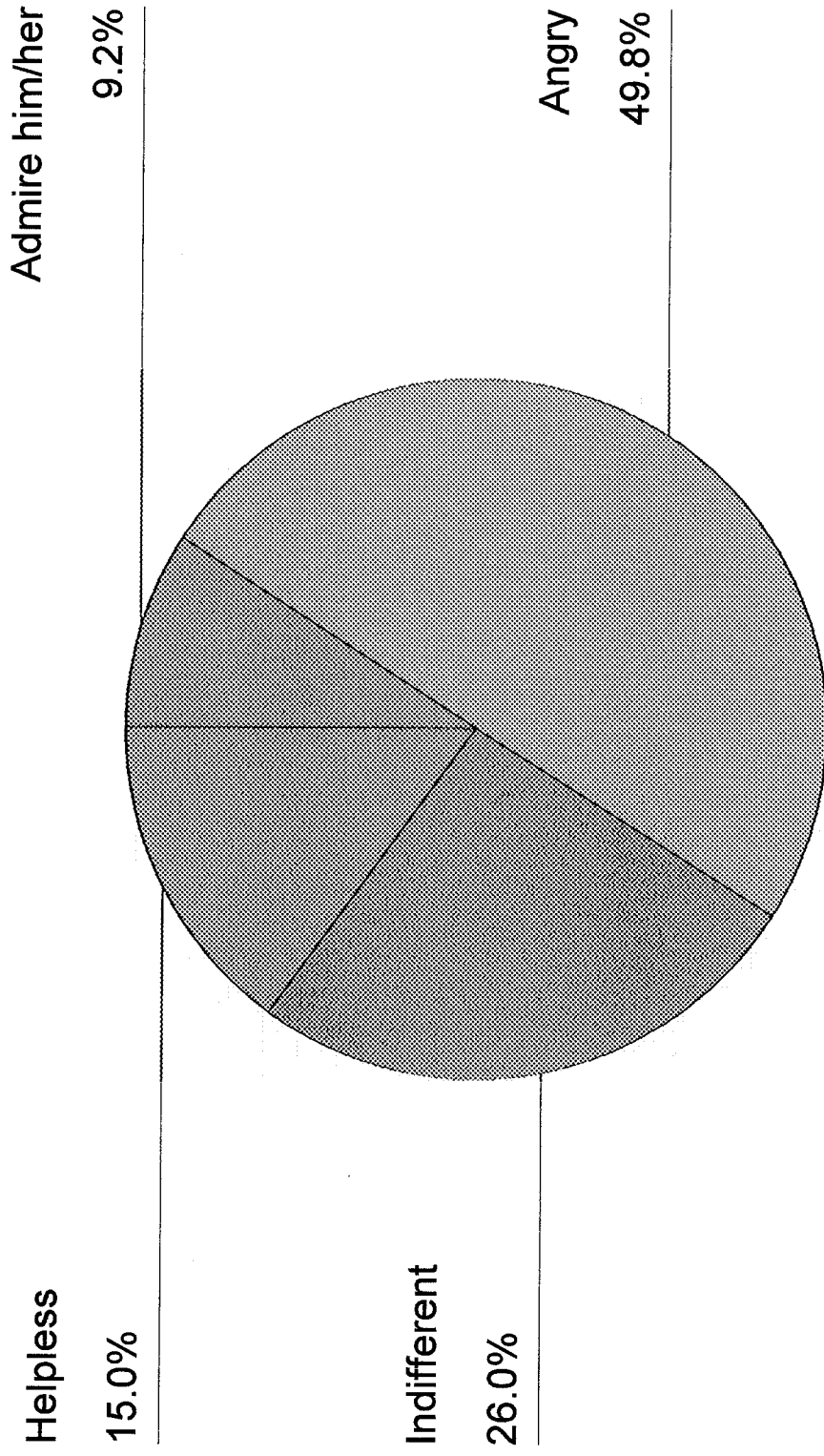


# When you see someone being bullied

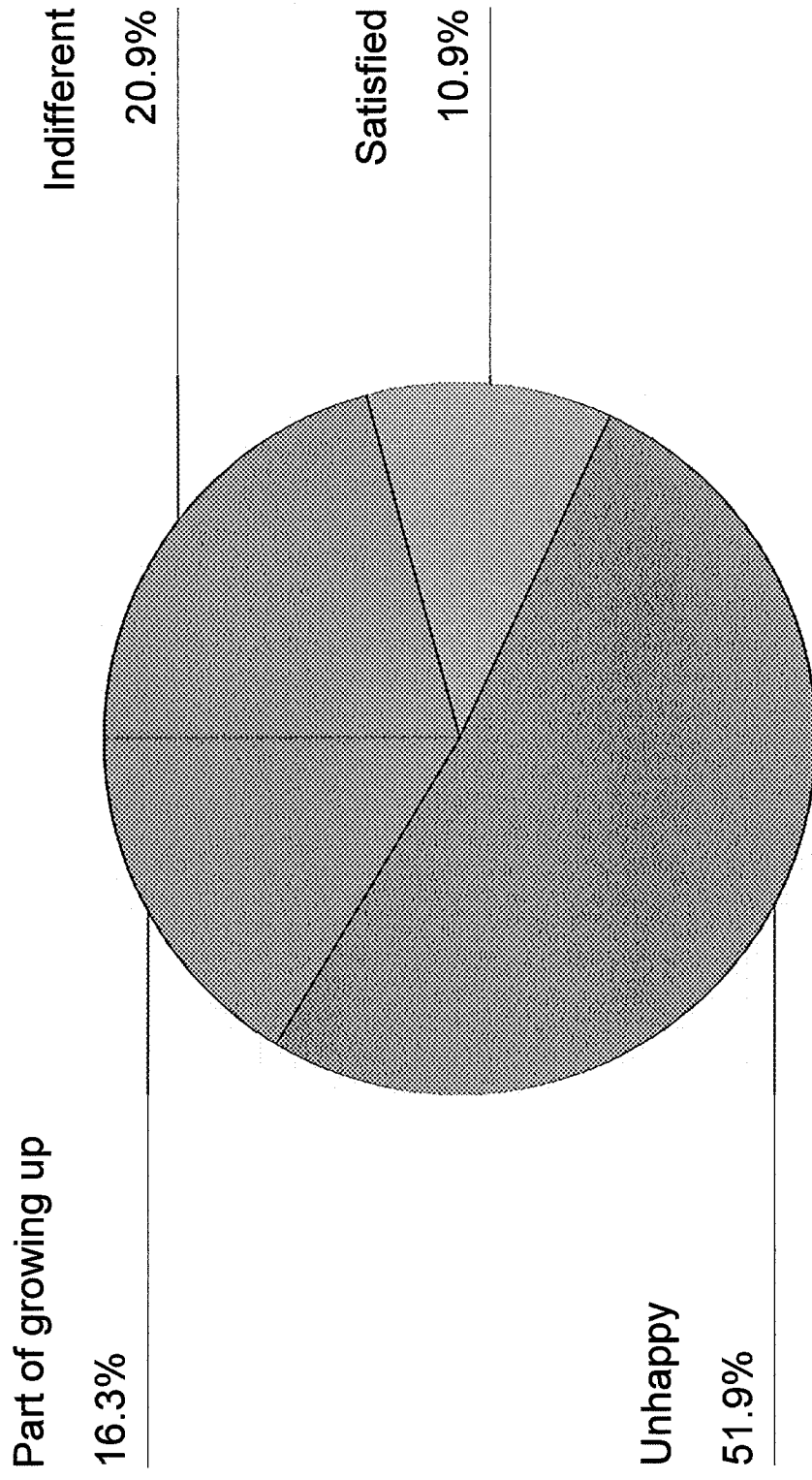
## how do you feel?



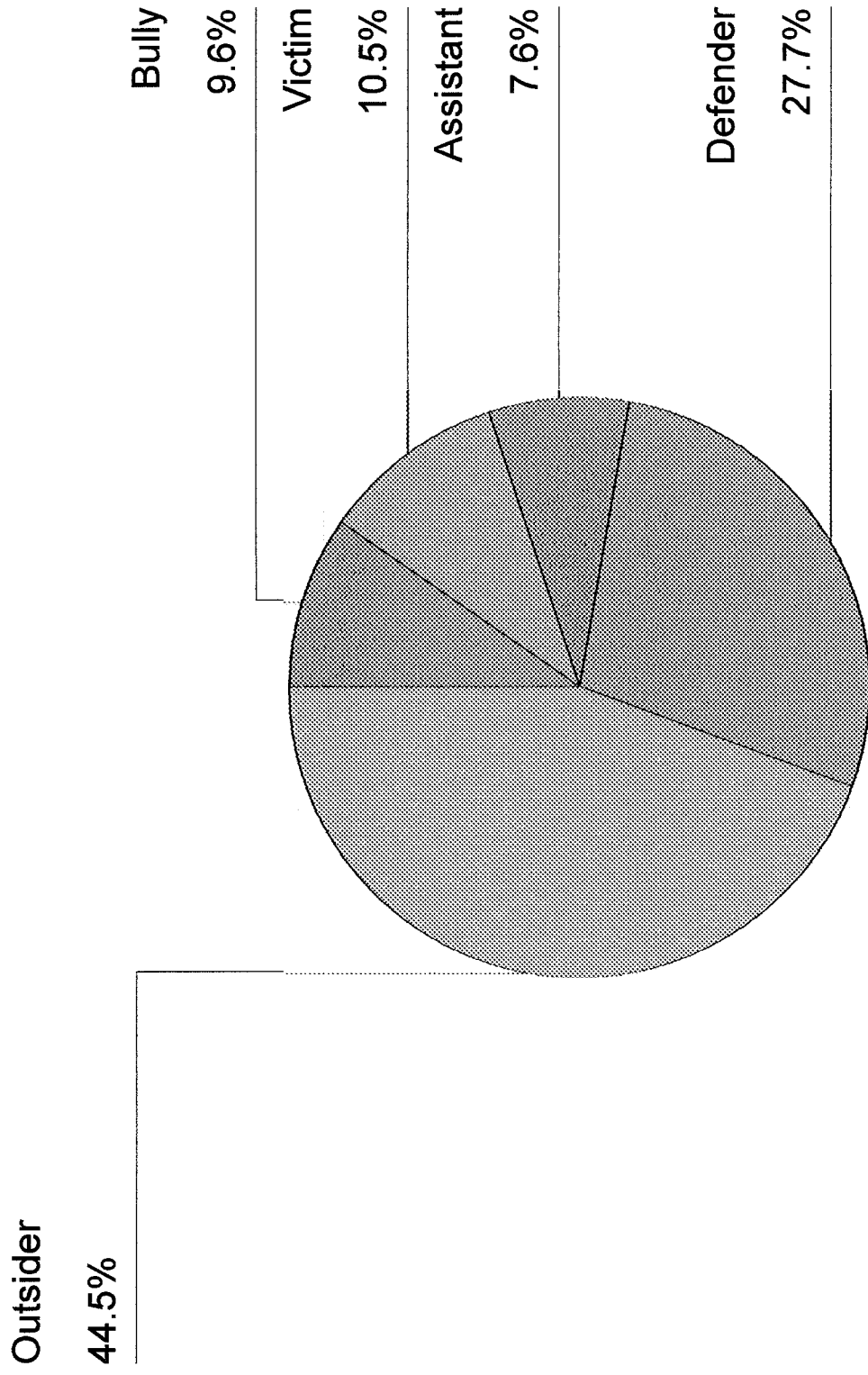
# When you see someone bullying another student how do you feel about the bully?



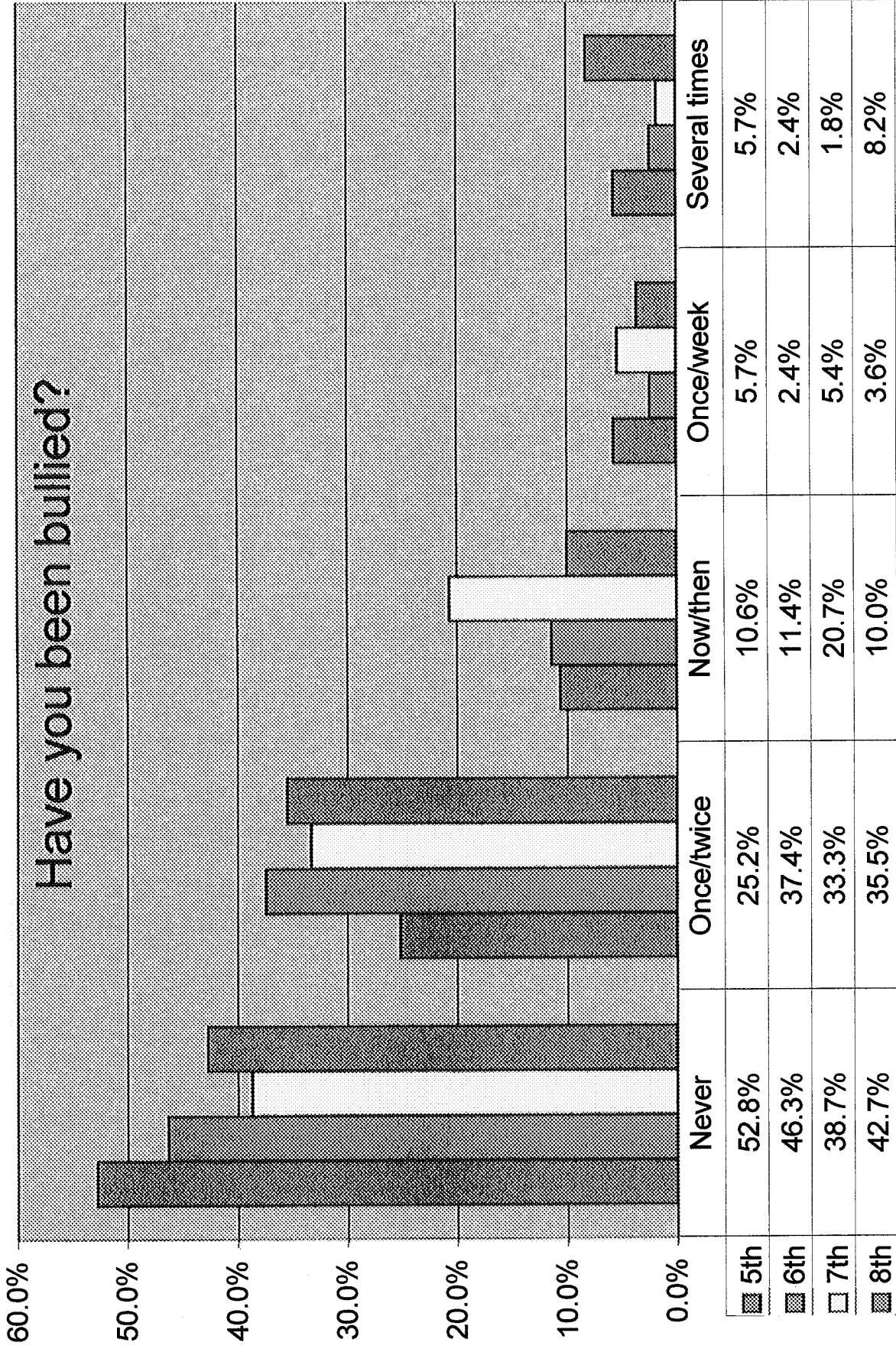
# When you see someone being bullied, how do you feel about the victim?

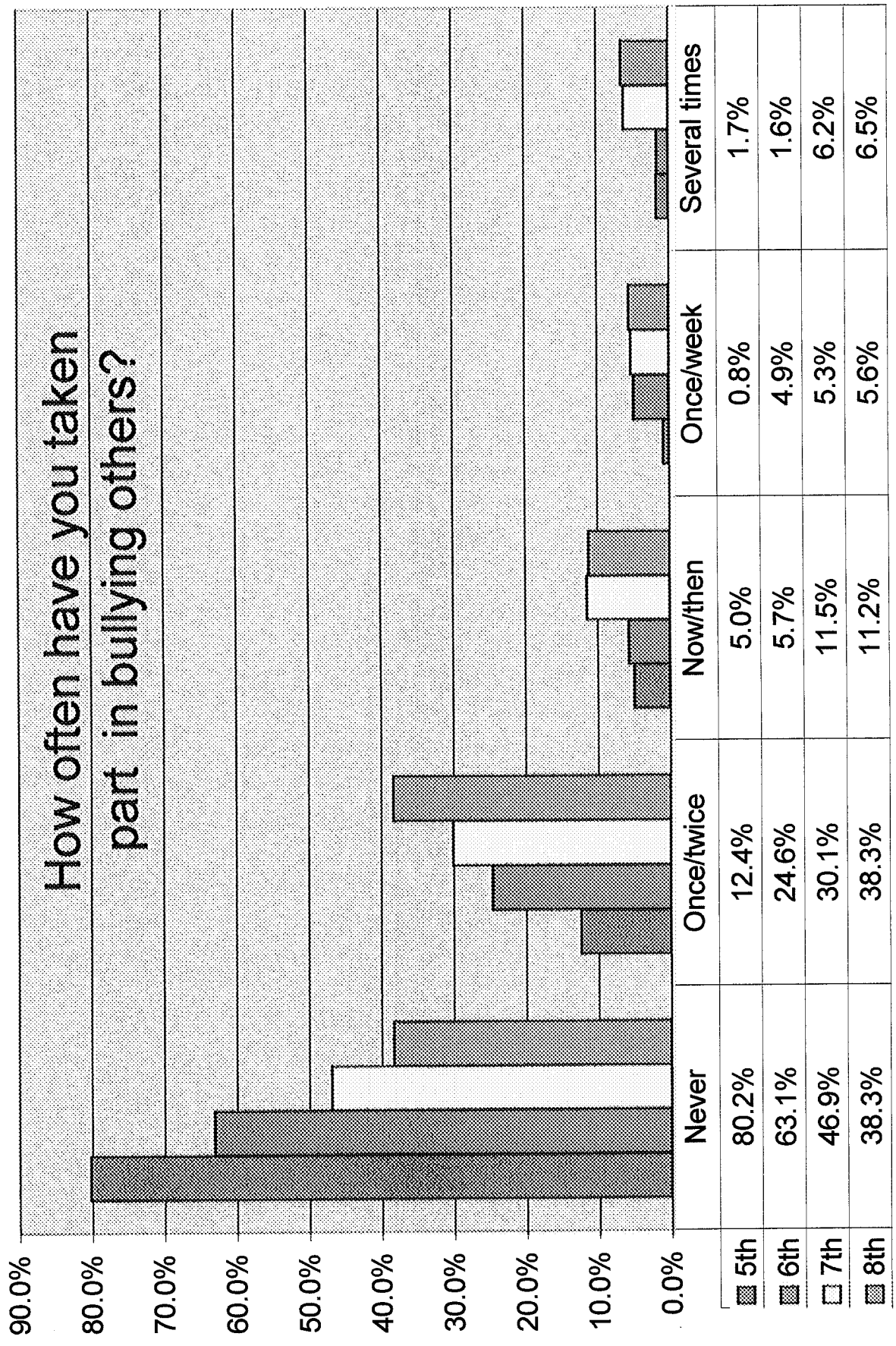


When a bullying incident occurs, rate yourself in one of the following categories.

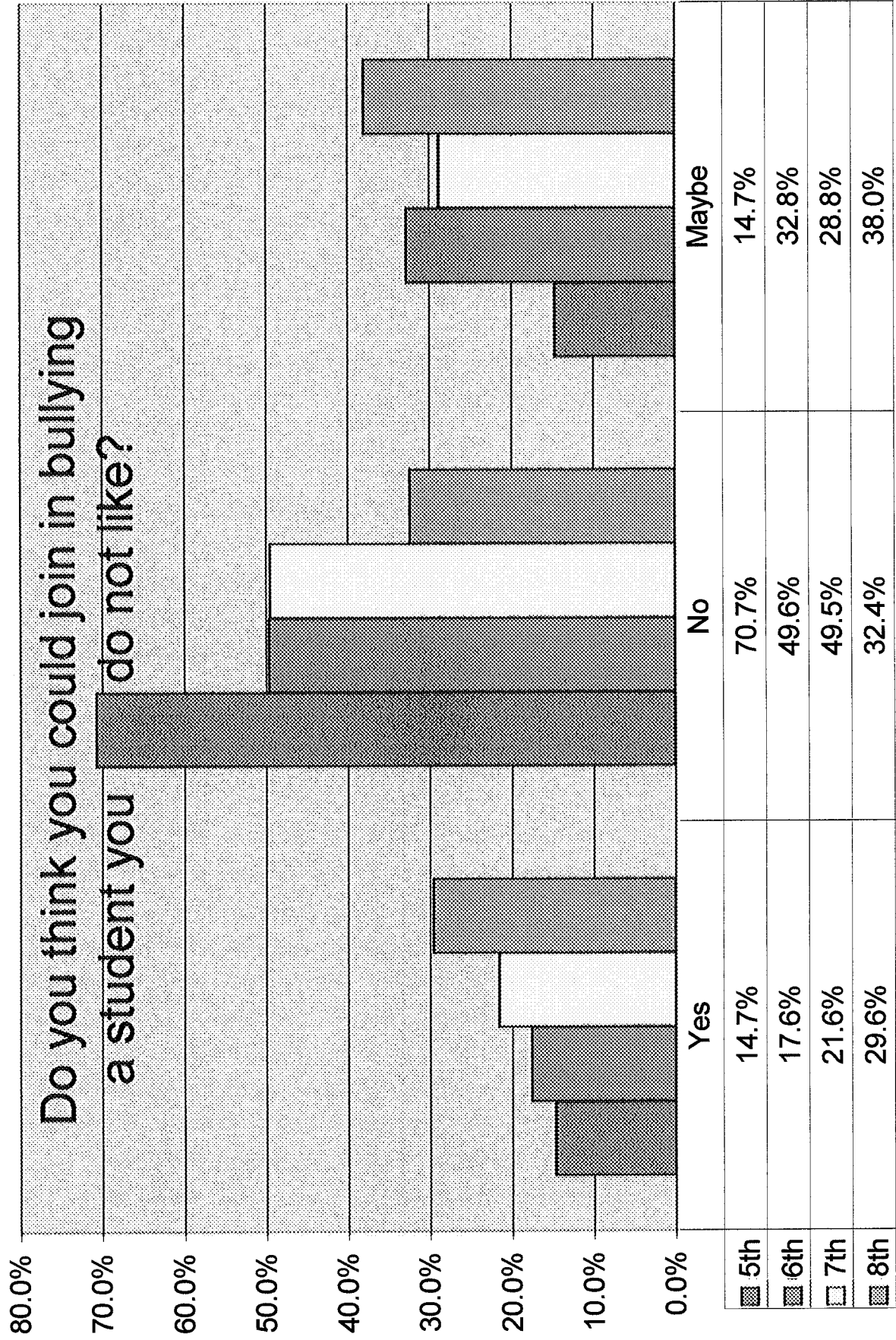


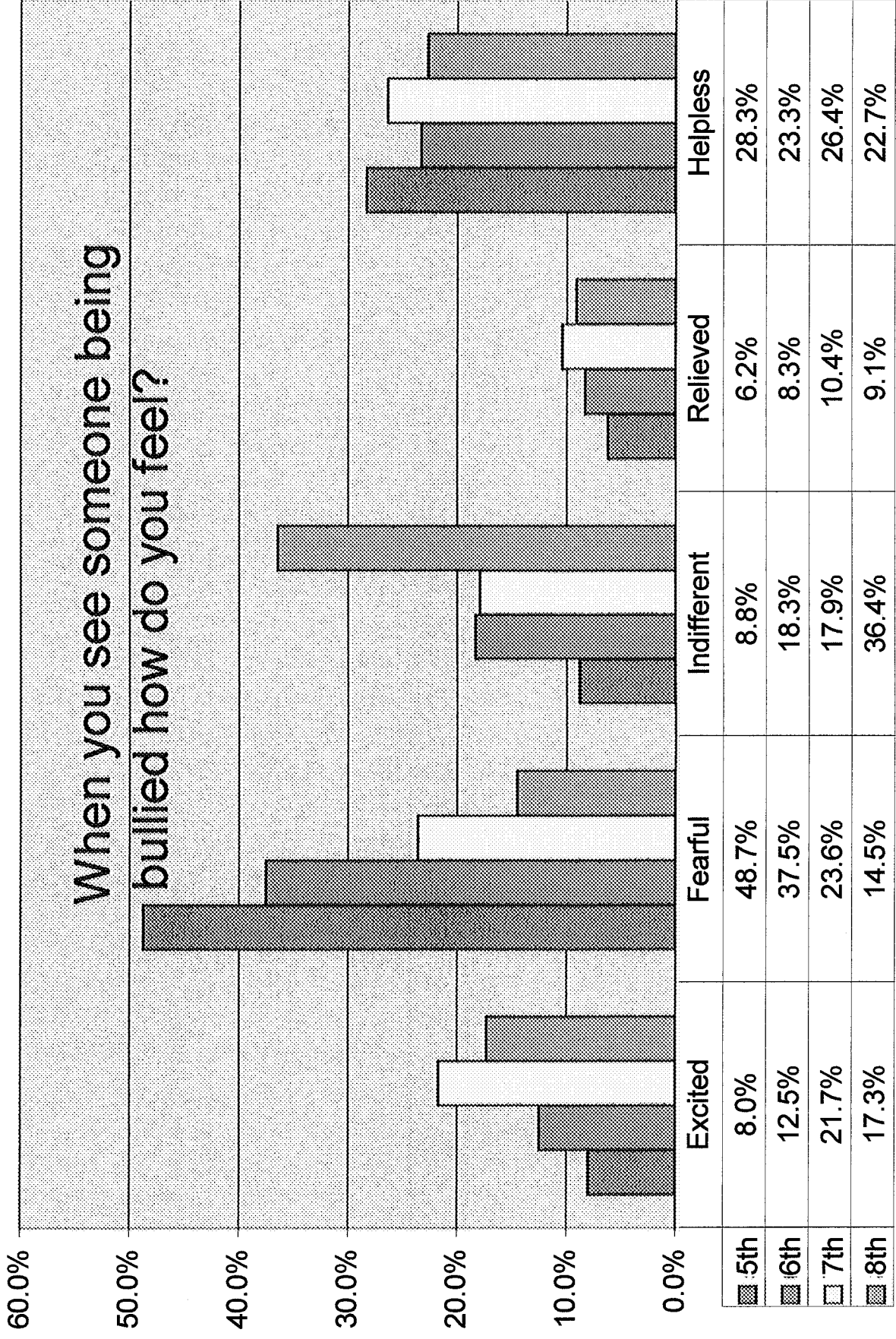
# Have you been bullied?





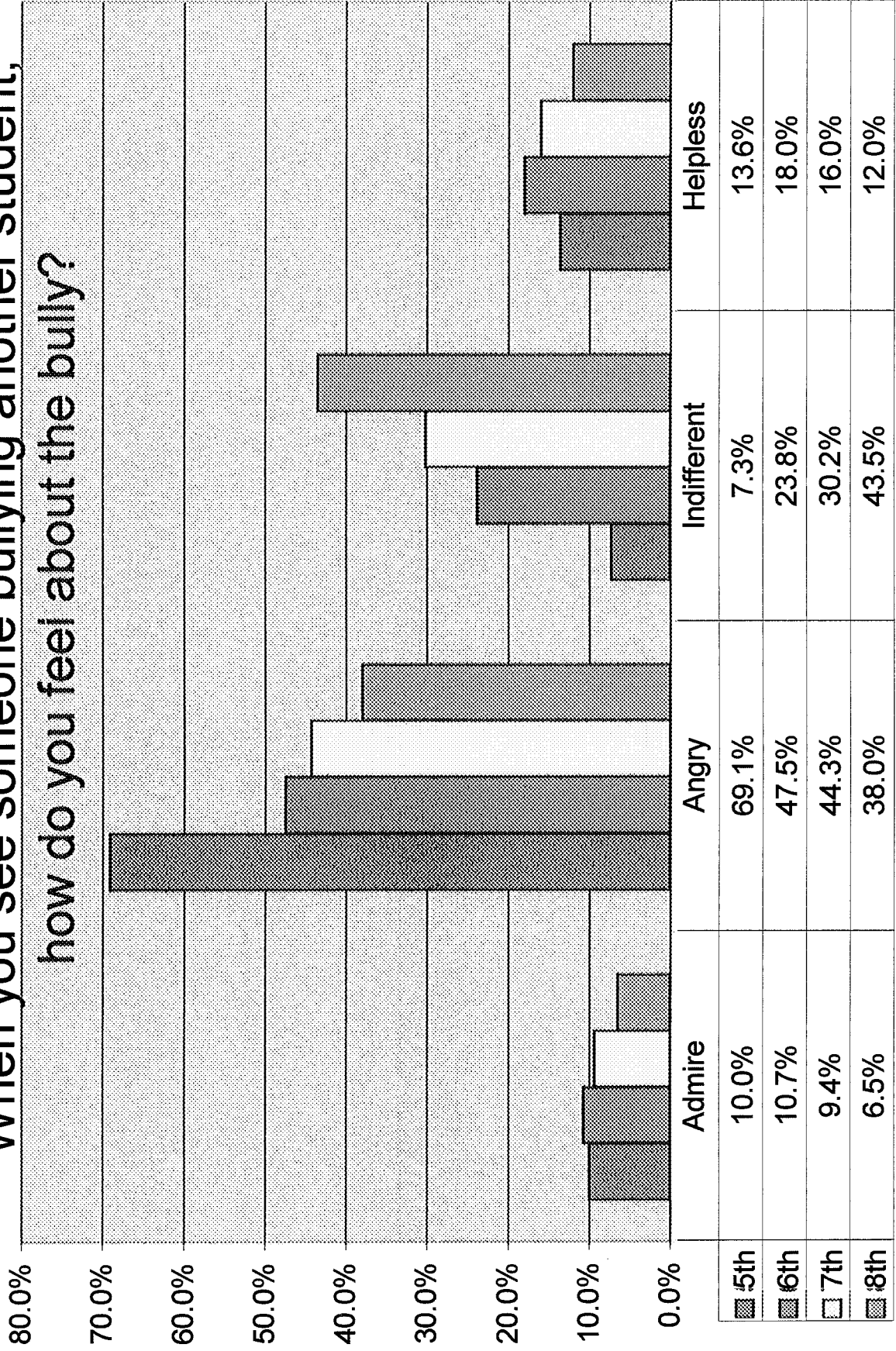




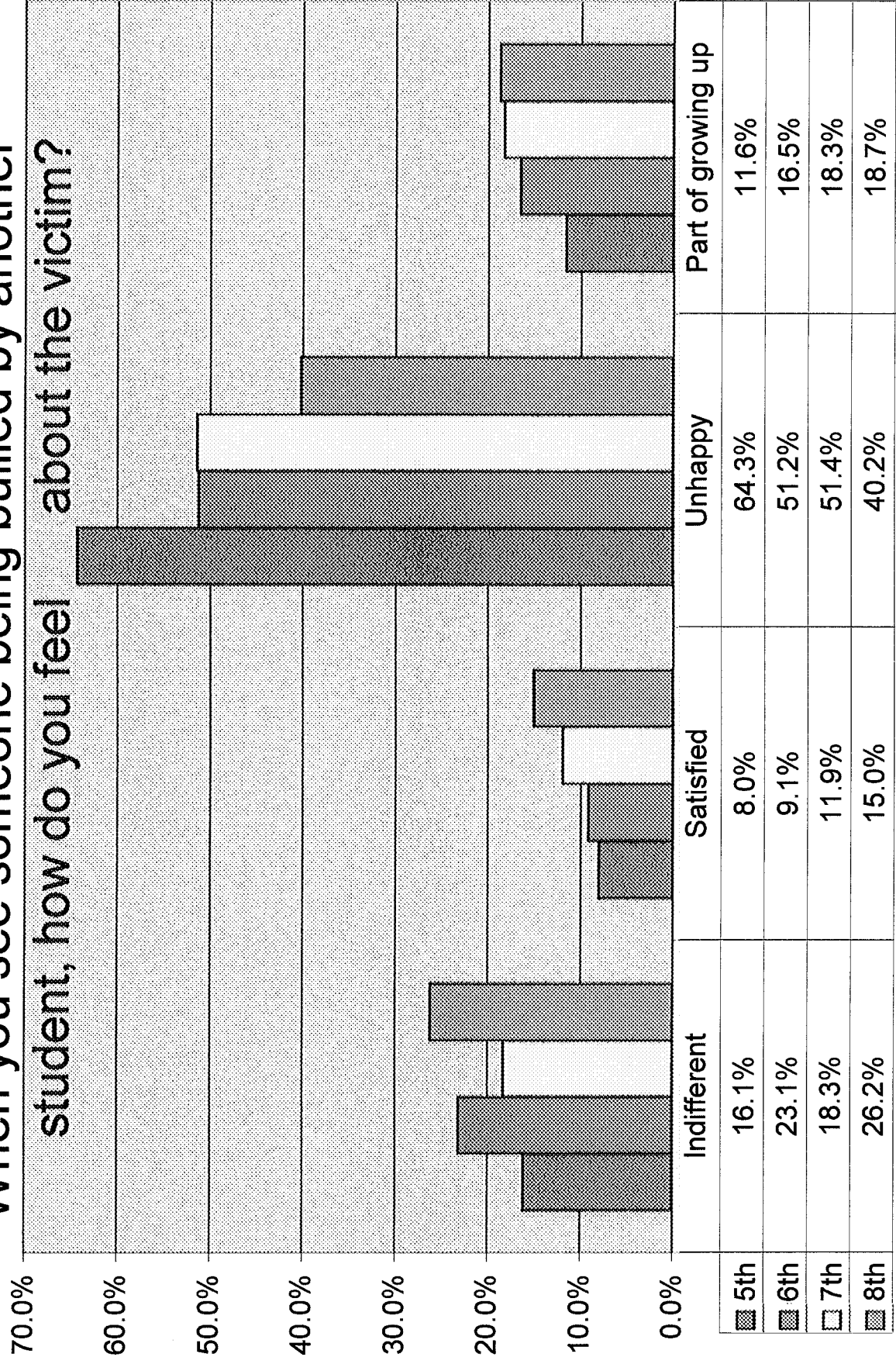


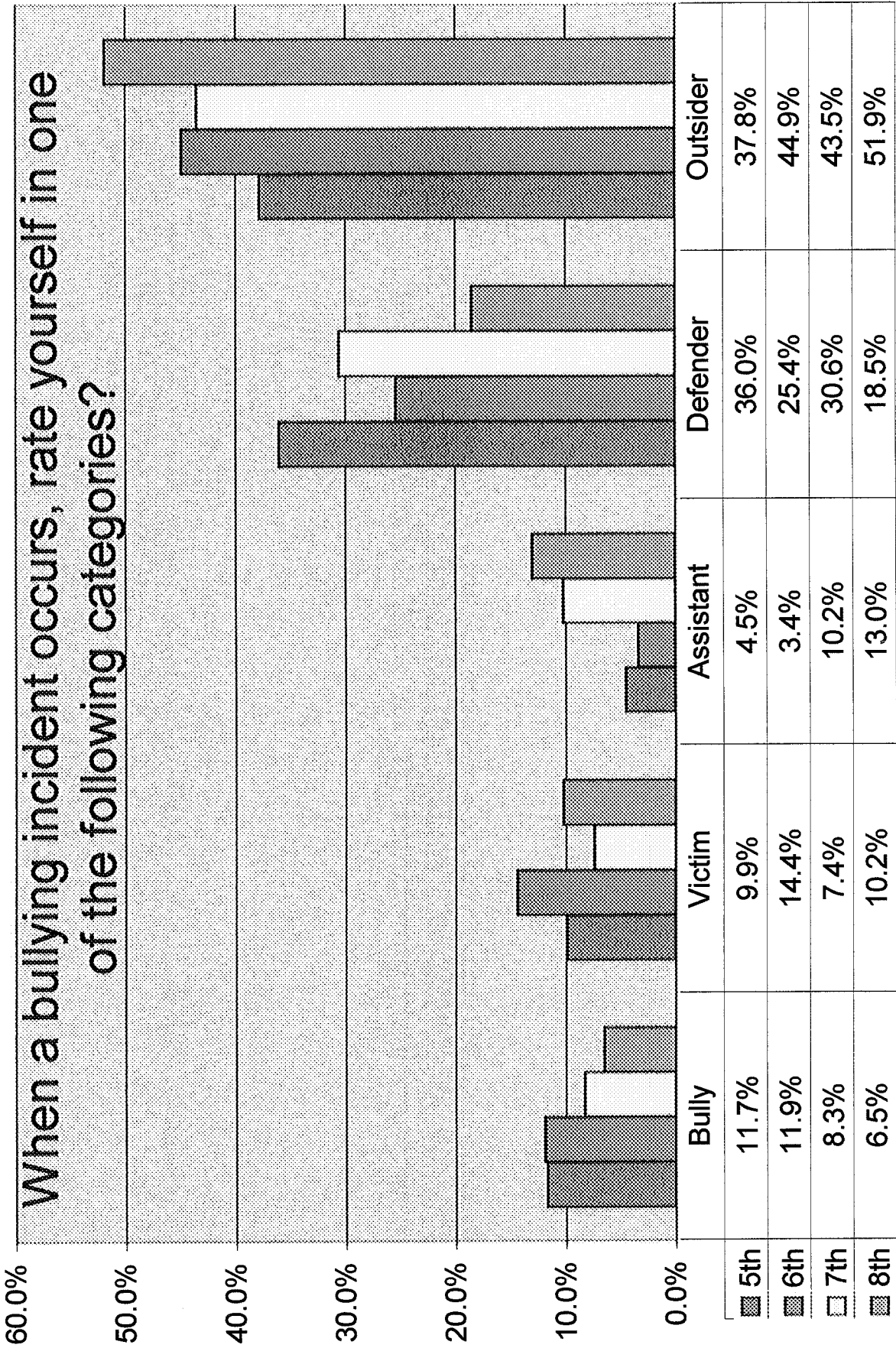


# When you see someone bullying another student, how do you feel about the bully?



# When you see someone being bullied by another student, how do you feel about the victim?





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## APPENDIX A

**Bullying**-----is a form of aggressive behavior with an imbalance of power, where the dominant person/s intentionally and repeatedly cause distress by tormenting or harassing another less dominant person/s. Bullying can be expressed physically (e.g., kicking, hitting) or verbally (e.g., name-calling). Bullying behavior can be direct or indirect. Direct bullying refers to open attacks on the victim-----kicking, pushing, hitting, teasing, taunting, mocking, threatening, and intimidating. Indirect bullying refers to social isolation, social ostracism, exclusion, and nasty gossip (Olweus)

## APPENDIX B

### Group Processes Role Categories

1. **Bully**- Any deliberate negative act against a victim by a child who is physically or psychologically stronger and who repeats these behaviors across time is considered a bully (Olweus). The bully gets others to join in, always thinks of new ways of picking on a victim, or leads a gang.
2. **Victim**- Any child who is called names, pushed around, or harassed on an ongoing basis is considered a victim (Olweus). The victim is usually passive or non-confrontational.
3. **Assistant**- Any child who helps the bully complete his tasks, either by catching or holding the victim, or by verbal encouraging. An assistant will join in bullying if someone else has started it.
4. **Defender**- The defender will tell an adult about the bullying, will attempt to make others stop the bullying, try to cheer the victim up, get others to help, or verbally stick up for the victim.
5. **Outsider**- The outsider is a child who pretends not to notice what is happening, does not do anything at all, or take sides, is not usually there, or stays away, or does not even know about the bullying.

## APPENDIX C

### Types of Bullies

1. **Physical Bullies**- Bullies that are action-oriented. This type of bullying includes hitting or kicking the victim, or, taking or damaging the victim's property. This is the least sophisticated type of bullying because it is so easy to identify. Physical bullies are soon known to the entire population in the school. As they get older, their attacks usually become more aggressive. These aggressive characteristics manifest themselves as bullies become adults.
2. **Verbal Bullies**- Verbal bullies use words to hurt or humiliate another person. Verbal bullying includes name-calling, insulting, making racist comments and constant teasing. This type of bullying is the easiest to inflict on other children. It is quick and to the point. It can occur in the least amount of time available, and its effects can be more devastating in some ways than physical bullying because there are no visible scars.
3. **Relational Bullies**- Relational or relationship bullies try to convince their peer to exclude or reject a certain person or people and cut the victims off from their social connections. This type of bullying is linked to verbal bullying and usually occurs when children (often girls) spread nasty rumors about others or exclude an ex-friend from the peer group. The most devastating effect with this type of bullying is the rejection by the peer group at a time when children most need their social connections.

## APPENDIX D

### Types of Victims

1. **Passive Victims**- Most passive victims are extremely timid, shy, non-confrontation and almost never behave aggressively. This type of victim tends to be insecure, do not defend themselves, and are rejected by their peers. Passive Victims tend to be sensitive, cautious, and unassertive. They tend to be less able to control their feelings and are more likely to seek attention than other children. According to Olweus, this type of victim tends to be physically smaller and weaker than their peers.
2. **Provocative Victims**- The second category of victim is the provocative or highly aggressive victim. Aggressive victims tend to be hyperactive and hot tempered. They also are unable to control their feelings and are more likely to seek attention than other children. Provocative victims are among the most rejected of the children, surpassing both bullies and the more passive victims. Provocative victims are impulsive and react quickly to intentional and unintentional physical encounters. They are often the most difficult to identify, because they straddle the fence of being a bully and or victim.



## APPENDIX E

### **Components of School-Wide Intervention Program**

1. **Philosophical Component**- Counselors, teachers, school administrators must find ways to affirm their opposition to bullying publicly and to act on that opposition on a continuing and viable basis. Schools must develop policies prohibiting bullying, and a code of conduct that all members of the school community act with respect for the human rights of everyone.
2. **Educational Component**- Students, school personnel, parents, and the Board of Education need to be educated about bullying behavior, the characteristics of bullies and victims, a code of conduct and procedures for responding to and reporting incidents of bullying.
3. **The Consistency Component**- Sanctions must be administered for all violations of the code of conduct, with no exceptions. Policies pertaining to bullying MUST be enforced consistently.
4. **Adult Supervision Component**- Olweus (1994) found that there is an inverse relationship between the number of supervising adults present and the number of bully/victim incidents. Since the presence of adult supervisors inhibits the expression of bullying, schools should increase the amount of adult supervision provided throughout the school day.

5. **Primary Prevention Component**- Schools need to teach self-enhancing social skills to prevent children from becoming bullies or victims. Young children should be taught prosocial alternatives to aggressive behavior, assertiveness skills to avoid becoming victims, anger management, and conflict resolution skills. Early school-based primary prevention programs is the best solution, because behavior is malleable early in life.
  
6. **The Assessment Component**- A school-wide assessment of bullying is required to ascertain the current extent of the problem and to identify perpetrators and victims who require counseling. Questionnaires should include a clear definition of bullying with many examples of this behavior.
  
7. **The Supportive Counseling and Training Component**- Because bullies and victims are at risk to suffer a variety of immediate and long-term adjustment difficulties, both would benefit from supportive counseling and training designed to teach them adaptive skills for coping with their respective difficulties.

(Clarke & Kiselica)

## APPENDIX F

### Characteristics of Safe Schools

The United Nation Charter of Rights for Children states:

- Every child has the right to an education
- Every child has the right to be safe

Safe Schools:

- Are free from violence
- Are nurturing, caring and respectful of everyone
- Are physically and psychologically healthy
- Promote sensible risk taking
- Enhance the self-esteem of all
- All schools should clearly say **NO TO BULLYING**
- Get everyone involved in tackling bullying
- Find out how much bullying goes on in school
- Schools should have a good selection of anti-bullying material, run an anti-bullying week, and have assemblies and discussions about bullying.
- Older children can help younger children, and passive observers can be mobilized to help. Peer counseling schemes run by the pupils should be created to help children who

are being bullied. Students need to promote the concept that caring for others is a valued quality, one that they accept and encourage.

#### Zero-Tolerance For Bullying

- Bullying can be significantly reduced in schools if teachers, support staff, parent groups, student councils and administrators join together to take action against bullying. Once the issue of bullying is brought into the open by the school, and the community is made aware of a No Bullying Policy, the school gains the reputation of being safe for all children and is seen as an active partner in taking care of children. When children know that the school they attend will not tolerate bullying, they can relax their guard and divert their attention to learning rather than feeling safe.