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## RESEARCH SUMMARY

Our research on teasing and bullying was conducted in racially, culturally, and economically diverse public schools in New York City and Framingham, Massachusetts. A diverse team of research assistants was hired and trained in both locations to carry out the study, which included:

- 1) Classroom observations in grades K-3;
- 2) Interviews with students from those same K-3 classrooms;
- 3) Focus groups with teachers from K-3 classrooms; and
- 4) Focus groups with parents across grades K-5.

The data from 25 K-3 classrooms showed that gender is a subtle but relevant factor in incidents of teasing and bullying. In most cases, it is the gender of the participants and how the incident is perceived, rather than the content itself, that is significant.

Seventy-eight percent of the 321 observed incidents were initiated by boys, although boys and girls were equally likely to be recipients or bystanders regardless of the gender of the initiator(s). A small number of gender-explicit or sexual incidents occurred (26), 80% of which were initiated by boys, but with boys and girls equally likely to be the recipients of such incidents. The fact that both girls and boys are bullied more by boys is in keeping with the research on bullying conducted by researchers in Europe, Canada, and the United States.

Teachers and other adults in the classroom were uninvolved in or ignored a large majority (71%) of the observed incidents. Dr. Dan Olweus, who has researched bullying for more than 20 years, also has found that students report that teachers do relatively little to put a stop to bullying behavior.(1)

When interviewed, a sample of boys from the classrooms in which the observations occurred described incidents in which 95% of the initiators were boys and 91% of the recipients were also boys. The sample of girls who were interviewed described incidents in which only 54% of the initiators were boys but 76% of the recipients were girls. The majority of boys (81%) and girls (62%) believed that teachers were looking when these incidents occurred. They uniformly expressed the desire that teachers intervene rather than ignore teasing and bullying situations.

The focus group meetings indicated that both teachers and parents are very aware of and concerned about bullying and teasing. Teachers reported that among K-3 students any observable difference can be a trigger for teasing and bullying; that it has an impact on their ability to teach; that there is a need for consistent school policies to address such incidents; and that early intervention is important. Parents were concerned with how to help their children deal with teasing and bullying, particularly when a verbal response does not stop the initiator. They were concerned about what to do when school policies conflict with their beliefs about how to address this issue.

1. D. Olweus, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993).