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NOT MORE IMPORTANT - JUST DIFFERENT
CONCERNS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL
FEMALE AND MALE
STUDENTS

by
Marianne W. Gaffney

A Master's Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the
Master of Arts Degree in The Graduate School of
Rowan University
May 2000

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved May 2000

Abstract

Marianne W. Gaffney

Not More Important - Just Different
A Middle School Girl's Forum
Girls' Journal
2000
Ronald L. Capasso, Ed. D.
Educational Leadership

The purpose of this study was to identify the specific needs of middle school females in order to develop a curriculum for an after school female program. This program would enhance the growth of female students ages eleven to fourteen.

After school meetings were held weekly for three months with female students in Orchard Valley Middle School. Attendance at these meetings ranged from eight to twenty girls. From these meetings, concerns pertinent to female students were identified. A survey was developed to determine the focus of middle school student concerns. The hypothesis being that males and females in middle school would be concerned about different things.

The survey was reviewed and adjusted by approximately 26 male and female students and a middle school guidance counselor. It was then administered to 342 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders within the school.

53 survey returns were randomly selected from each grade level and sex. Results were manually tabulated. The major finding was that middle school students, male and female, are concerned about the same things: grades, future, friends, and death. However, as males progress through middle school they become less concerned, and as females progress through middle school they become more concerned.

Mini-Abstract

Marianne W. Gaffney

Not More Important - Just Different
A Middle School Girl's Forum
Girls Journal
Ronald L. Capasso, Ed. D.
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The purpose was to identify the needs of female middle school students and develop a program to address them; however, results indicated that all middle school students are concerned about the same things. The difference is that males become less concerned as they become older, and females become more concerned.

Acknowledgments

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Focus of the Study

Middle School is an important time in the successful development of a young adult's life. It is equally difficult for both male and female students. Males receive peer and parental pressure regarding sports, grades, muscles, and girlfriends. Females receive peer and parental pressure regarding clothes, grades, looks, and boyfriends. Each of these problems is important and unique.

Programs that are designed to elevate the self esteem and confidence of the average middle schooler are necessary but unfortunately at times ineffective. There are many issues that adolescents deal with where male adolescents may need one type of approach and female adolescents another. These are two separate research topics. They cannot and should not be formulated together.

Male and female adolescents are different from each other. No sex is better or worse, they are just different. The focus of this study is to identify a program in a middle school setting that will elevate the self esteem and confidence of the average middle school female. The female adolescent is different from the male and requires a unique approach.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the specific needs of middle school females in order to develop a curriculum for an after school female program. This program would be designed to enhance the growth of female students ages eleven to fourteen mentally, physically, emotionally, and socially.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to approximately 350 students attending Orchard Valley Middle School in Washington Township, New Jersey. Furthermore, the study was conducted through interviews and surveys of approximately twenty-five females that met weekly after school to discuss middle school issues. The students that participated in this club changed on a weekly basis depending on personal schedules.

Orchard Valley is one of three middle schools within the Washington Township School District, a predominantly white middle class community. It is hoped that the results of this study will be utilized by the other two middle schools within the district.

Setting of the Study

Washington Township, New Jersey, is located approximately thirteen miles southeast of the city of Philadelphia. It is 22.5 square miles and comprises the communities of Turnersville, Hurffville, Grenloch, CrossKeys, Mayfair, Bunker Hill and Chapel Heights. Out of Gloucester County's 24 communities, Washington Township is the largest with approximately 47,500 people or 24% of the county's population.

Washington Township strives to be a family community, providing all services in an environment conducive to outstanding educational, recreational and social activities and programs.

The Township has maintained a favorable tax rate and all properties are evaluated at 100%. Of the 24 communities in Gloucester County, Washington Township is number fourteen in the amount of property taxes paid. Property values continue to rise. There has been a 10% increase in property value between 1998 and early 1999. Presently, Washington Township offers

a variety of residential properties from condominiums and townhouses in the \$60,000.00 to \$100,000.00 range, to single family homes starting at \$120,000.00 upwards of \$1,000,000.00.

As of June 30, 1999 there were approximately 9500 students in the Washington Township School System. An additional 1000 students were transported to non public schools and 100 were transported to special education schools. The district houses eleven schools: one kindergarten center, six elementary schools grades 1-5, three middle schools grades 6-8, and one high school. The drop out rate is 3%, or approximately 50 students out of 2489. The staff is comprised of 847 professionals and 593 additional full or part time support staff. The average SAT scores are 510 on the verbal and 511 on the math.

The district has adopted the following goals for the '99 - '00 school year. This study addresses Goals 3 and 4.

- Improve student performance at all levels district-wide on the following tests: (1) ITBS by an aggregate gain of 1 to 3 percentile points measured longitudinally, (2) GEPA Grade 8 performance assessment by increasing the percentage of students scoring in Level One by 1 to 3 points, (3) HSPT Grade 12 maintain 98% passing rate, (4) SAT average score increase 1 to 3 points through collaboratively working with school and district administrators and staff to implement the following strategies:

- Ensure that students, staff, management, and facilities are prepared for any type of emergency and that our schools are safe.

- Develop and submit to the Board an aggressive and progressive plan to address substance abuse problems in our schools. The plan will reflect the inclusion of all available resources from within the district, community, local, State and Federal governments and all funding resources. The plan will reflect improved sophistication of search and seizure rules and

regulations as described in the New Jersey Administrative Code. Substance education efforts will be expanded and enhanced.

- Improve our co-curricular programs by providing professional development programs which emphasizes professional expectations which include: sensitivity and respect for students, and the understanding that co-curricular activities are viewed as an extension of the classroom in our district.

- Establish a "Board Notes" flyer to keep the lines of communication open between the public, staff, students, and the Board, and to address issues that we receive on a monthly basis.

- Increase "Alternative Revenue" district-wide by one cent or more on the current year rate.

The district can be distinguished by the following accomplishments:

- In 1999 Washington Township High School's library program was awarded the Progressive Media Award by the Educational Media Association of New Jersey, the state organization for the American Library Association.
- The Washington Township School District was listed as one of the best educational values in the state according to New Jersey Magazine. Our per pupil cost makes us the 13th lowest in the state for a K-12 school district with a student population of over 5000.
- Washington Township was also selected by the Courier Post's Reader's Choice poll as having one of the best school districts in South Jersey.
- The award winning Washington Township High School Minutemen Marching Band was only one of 13 bands nation-wide selected to perform in the 1998 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California. The students raised over \$100,000 to help finance this once in a lifetime trip.

• Our Computer Technology Department is responsible for the day-to-day operation of over 3,000 IBM and Macintosh computers, 1,500 printers, 500 televisions, 600 miles of cabling and more than 15,000 phone/data and video jacks.

The middle school program distinguishes itself with the following programs.

- Introductory foreign language in seventh grade
- Eighth grade Spanish, Latin, German and French
- Teaming
- Interdisciplinary Exploratory Arts Program in technology, computers, home economics, music and art
- Interscholastic and intramural sports
- Developmentally advanced academic program in English, social studies, science, math and reading
- Gifted and Talented Programs
- Developmental reading in grades 6-8

The community has not passed a school budget for the past six years.

The following amounts were budgeted for the 1999-2000 school year for the major services provided:

Regular Instruction	\$28,272,054
Special Education	\$4,623,204
Building Administration	\$4,324,701
Special Schools and Projects	\$249,230
Transportation	\$4,007,507

Operations, Maintenance and Capital	\$7,405,958
Projects	
Business and other support services	\$1,654,417
Student Activities	\$1,119,752
Debt Service	\$6,207,886
Administration	\$1,128,322
Attendance and Health	\$171,297
Total 1999-2000 Budget	\$85,361,048

Approximately \$6,967 is spent on each pupil.

What sources fund the school budget?

State	\$42,755,765
Local	\$37,635,010
Federal	\$ 1,348,713
Surplus	\$ 2,911,458
Misc.	\$ 710,102

The school tax rate is \$1.66 per \$100.00 of assessed value. The average home owner with an assessed value of \$120,987 pays \$2009.00 a year in school taxes.

Significance of the Study

Middle school females have a special set of problems to overcome.

At the time of puberty, girls are experiencing many changes at once. They are caught in bodies that swell and expand in puzzling ways, and when they look ahead to options that are mysteriously shrinking, they must also deal with the shift to middle school. It is a larger, more complicated place and, many critics charge, harshly out of

touch with the needs of adolescence. In this more chaotic and alienating school, with new rules and uncharted social norms, it is easier to become both physically and emotionally lost.

Typically, boys reach puberty after they have made the shift to middle school, so they can cope with one change at a time. The trauma experienced by girls in dealing simultaneously with the metamorphosis of puberty and the adjustment to a new, more difficult school can be seen as a major contributor to the shattering of their fragile self-esteem. (Sadker, 1994, p.79)

Female students in middle school have a unique set of problems. They must deal with the changes in their bodies at the same time they are adjusting to a new school situation. These problems are special to females. Males do not begin menstruating between the ages of eleven and fourteen. This doesn't make the female problem bigger or more important, it just makes it different. The specific problems that females face must be dealt with in a way that is beneficial to females. Female students need an outlet where they are comfortable and can discuss these differences in a relaxed and safe atmosphere, where they will get sound advice and not misinformation from peers. Sometimes female students simply need other female students.

Many women report that when they were in adolescence, they had someone they could really talk to, who encouraged them to stay true to who they really were. Now, in our more chaotic, fragmented world, fewer girls have that option available. In the 1990's therapists often play this role. They are calm outsiders who can be trusted with the truth of each girl's experience. (Piper, 1994, pg. 284)

Teachers need tools to address these specific problems. A curriculum designed for an after school program would give teachers the tools they need to handle the self esteem and confidence slide of middle school females today.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 will contain a review of the literature. Available literature will be located, evaluated, and synthesized in order to clarify and define the purpose of the research.

Chapter 3 will elaborate the design of the study. It will begin with a description of the research design. A description of the development and design of the research instruments actually used in the study will also be included. The method of data collection will also be described along with the method of data analysis.

In Chapter 4 two important questions will be answered. What information was found? And, what type of evidence can be gathered to prove that the project is having an impact on a particular practice?

All conclusions and implications for further study will be discussed in Chapter 5. All major conclusions will be described along with their corresponding implications. The implications of the study on the intern's leadership development will also be detailed. Recommended organizational changes as a result of the study will be illustrated, and finally, Chapter 5 will address the need for further study.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Current research supports the fact that middle school is a critical time in any child's life. "Adolescence is a border between childhood and adulthood. Life like on all borders, it's teeming with energy and fraught with danger," (Pipher, 1994, pg. 292).

In their book, Failing at Fairness, the Sadker's explain, "For both girls and boys, adolescence is a time of confusion as their bodies and lives go through jarring transformations," (pg. 38). Each sex has problems, and this is carefully and repeatedly documented throughout research literature.

It seems though, in literature, some authors are forced to take one side or another. Males are worse off than females, or females have it harder than males. One must be careful when reading and analyzing research reports that are commissioned for a specific purpose. "When the American Association of University Women released a (badly distorted) survey in 1991 claiming that American girls suffer from a tragic lack of self-esteem, a New York Times reporter got AAUW President Sharon Shuster to admit that the organization commissioned the poll in order to get data into circulation that would support its officers' belief that schoolgirls were being short-changed," (Sommers, 1997).

Why do one set of problems need to be worse than another, why can't each identified set of problems be unique.

Many authors do acknowledge the uniqueness of males and females. "At a time when efforts are being made to eradicate discrimination between the sexes in the search for social equality and justice, the differences between the sexes are being rediscovered in the social sciences," (Gilligan, 1993, pr. 6). Much of the research indicates that these differences are

established as early as age three. “In her analysis, Chodorow relies primarily on Robert Stoler’s studies which indicate that gender identity, the unchanging core of personality formation, is ‘with rare exception firmly and irreversibly established for both sexes by the time a child is around three,’” (Gilligan, 1993, pg. 7).

Once the differences have been acknowledged, the problem becomes that their special traits create problems that cannot be fixed with a blanket solution for all. “‘The focus on girls has translated into the notion that somehow if you help girls, you hurt boys,’” says Susan Bailey, executive director of the Wellesley Centers for Women. “‘People want a quick fix, but there is no one-size-fits-all solution for either girls or boys,’” (Hornblower, 1998).

There is a need for gender specific self esteem programs in schools. “The statistics and the observations of youth workers suggest that, although girls may seem to be acting more like boys, their delinquent and criminal behaviors are still different and tackling those behaviors requires an approach built for girls,” (Boyle, 1999).

“What we may be discovering, at painful cost, is that you simply cannot educate boys and girls together. Each requires an utterly different approach. The teacher of girls must seek to eschew and avoid ‘violence.’ The teacher of boys must seek to channel, direct and use it-in sports and, yes, in discipline. But he must also seek to channel and direct the other “male” instincts which, believe it or not, are for the arts-music, painting and above all poetry.” (Byfield, 1999).

A curriculum designed specifically for females in middle school may or may not help males of the same age. A curriculum designed to aid males in middle school may or may not help females. Each of these paradigms would require separate study; however for purposes of

this study, current research literature does document the need for a gender specific program for middle school females only.

“‘By the early 2000s, girls will surpass boys in tobacco and alcohol use, and will be pulling even with them in marijuana use,’ said Drug Strategies President Mathea Falco, ...According to the FBI, the number of under-18 girls arrested rose 59.8% from 1988 to 1997, while the number of boys rose 27.9%. Girls are also using drugs earlier and more often. The percentage of 10- to 14-year-old girls who have tried alcohol and marijuana is increasing faster than the rate for boys, according to the Drug Strategies report, ‘Keeping Score 1998’” (Boyle, 1999).

Female middle school students have a unique set of problems that must be addressed. One way might be an after school program designed specifically for females.

CHAPTER 3

THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

General Description

Preliminary research took place after school in weekly meetings conducted by the intern. The meetings were announced during the school's general announcement procedures. All female students were invited to attend the Journal Club. The meetings were held once a week from 2:45pm to 3:45pm in room 223 at Orchard Valley Middle School. Upon arrival, each girl was given a journal. Refreshments were served.

One person was picked, or volunteered, to write areas of concern on the chalkboard. These topics were recorded by the intern. The entire group then took approximately ten to fifteen minutes to write about their individually chosen topic.

After everyone completed their writing, discussion ensued. Anyone who wanted to read her journal did so. Following the reading, any female who wanted to comment was invited to do so. Discussion began and ended, and the next female member was encouraged to read. From these topics and discussions, the intern gathered data.

Because of this process, the research was historical in nature and qualitative in design, a descriptive narrative where no one answer was correct and all different answers are reported. The intern did not attempt to create information, but documented and discovered information from and about middle school females.

Areas of internal validity were established first by collecting the data accurately. All meetings were conducted by the same person. Dates, times, the number of subjects present, and the length of time of the meeting were recorded.

The data was analyzed using a constant comparative approach to qualitative data analysis. Data was collected from several subjects. Important issues and recurring responses were identified and used to create categories. Responses were carefully reviewed several times before being categorized and coded. Possible categories were topics that were identified repeatedly by the subjects. Responses to each question were listed separately and similar responses recorded only once, detailing the numerical number of participants that responded accordingly. Additionally, categories were added or deleted during the analysis stage depending upon the nature of the data gathered.

Design of the Research Instrument

Several research instruments were used. Each week the female students attending the meetings wrote in journals. From the data gathered during discussion, a survey was developed.

The survey was based on topics that were identified and explored in the weekly meetings. Topics that were repeatedly discussed on a weekly basis were included in the survey. The survey was designed to fit on one sheet of paper and take approximately five minutes to complete. The intern recruited two teachers to assist in the administering of the survey. All information from the survey was collected and collated by the intern. An example of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

Sample Description

The survey was administered to five classes at each grade level. Students were observed, and responses and reactions to the survey were recorded as well as survey results. A total of fifteen classes were surveyed, five sixth grade classes, five seventh grade classes, and five eighth grade classes. The total number of students surveyed was 342.

Data Collection

Returned surveys were separated by grade and then by sex. All responses from each individual survey return were recorded on a master sheet for each grade and sex. There was one sheet for sixth grade females, another for sixth grade males, another for seventh grade females, etc. The level of concern, 3,2,or 1 was recorded for each question. All responses were totaled to ensure accuracy. From the totals, the highest areas of concern for each grade and sex were identified.

Data Analysis

Once the top areas of concern were identified for each grade and sex, the different grades and sexes were compared against each other. Responses were compared between males and females of the same grade level. Responses were also compared between females in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, along with males in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Patterns, similarities, and differences were noted and conclusions were drawn.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Exactly 342 students were surveyed. Of the 342, 53 responses were received from eighth grade boys. This was the smallest reporting group; therefore, 53 responses were randomly selected from each grade and sex level making a total of 318 surveys for information reporting purposes. In Appendix B, Chart I on page 31 illustrates the recorded responses.

Within the chart, the grades are separated. Also the students are separated within their grade by sex. The female response for each grade is listed first. The amount of concern registered by question is expressed by a 3 (very concerned), 2 (somewhat concerned), and 1(not concerned).

The total number of responses for each category are added up to the right and bottom of each question. For example, the total number of 3 responses from the sixth grade females was 269 out of a possible 795. The total number of 3 responses from the males in sixth grade was 314.

Four factual questions were asked of each student and fifteen areas of concern were addressed. The first factual question was grade, the second was sex. The last two factual questions concerned what the student's grades were, and who the student talked to about his/her problems.

The first area of concern addressed in the survey was grades. Out of the total 318 students surveyed, 242 registered a level 3 concern regarding their grades. Correspondingly, 212 of the students receive A's and B's. The most interesting grade and sex associated with these concerns were the seventh grade males. Forty-five seventh grade male students expressed a high degree of concern about their grades while only 21 seventh grade male students received A's and

B's. The female numbers in every grade level were in sync. Forty-four sixth grade females expressed a level 3 concern, and 44 sixth grade females said they receive A's and B's. In seventh grade 41 female students expressed a level 3 concern and 41 female students said they received primarily A's and B's. In eighth grade 42 female students expressed a level 3 concern and 36 receive A's and B's.

For the male students, 34 in sixth grade expressed a level 3 concern, and 38 received A's and B's. And in eighth grade, 36 male students expressed a level 3 concern and 32 received A's and B's. This response is displayed on the Concern about Grades graph on page 32 in Appendix B.

The second area of concern dealt with popularity. No one in middle school seems to have a high degree of concern about popularity. The responses were mostly level 2's (somewhat concerned) ranging from 32 and 31 respectively for sixth grade females and males, to 35 and 22 for seventh grade females and males, to 39 and 32 for eighth grade female and male students. The students perceive themselves as being only moderately concerned with popularity.

The third area dealt with appearance. All students scored relatively the same in this area. The range of scores regarding a level 3 concern was a low of 19 with the eighth grade boys, to a high of 27 from the seventh grade girls. All other scores fell somewhere in between.

Weight was the fourth area on the survey. Twenty-two percent of the males were very concerned about their weight along with 33% of the females. The male numbers held rather steady, proceeding from 14 in sixth, 10 in seventh, to 11 in eighth. The female numbers however make a dramatic leap from 10 in sixth, to 23 in seventh, and settle at 20 in eighth.

The fifth area of concern was being athletic. The female number in every grade was much lower than the male number. What is interesting to note is that the male number went

down as the grade level increased, and the female number increased as the grade level increased. To male students athletics became less important as they became older, and for female students it was the exact opposite. This question's response is illustrated in the graph Concern About Athletics on page 33 in Appendix B.

Getting in trouble was the next area of concern. The students were both fairly equal with respect to grade and sex across the board. As both sets of students matured, getting in trouble became less of a problem.

Similarities between the sexes could also be found in the level of concern associated with having a boyfriend or girlfriend. The sixth grade male students started out with a high of 16 but then settled down to 9 in seventh grade and 12 in eighth. The female students started out with 4 level 3 responses in sixth grade, moved to 6 in seventh grade, and 10 in eighth grade. Both sexes had a much higher level 2 response for this question.

What other people think, family problems, and questions about sex were the next three areas of concern. The students scored basically the same within each grade level in these three areas.

Concern about friends was the eleventh category and here there were major discrepancies between the reported responses. This is illustrated in the Concern About Friends graph on page 34 in Appendix B. Male students in sixth grade exhibit a higher concern for friends than female students do; however in eighth grade the situation is exactly the opposite to an extreme. Female students are much more concerned about friends than males are. In addition, females are much more likely to talk to their friends about problems than to anyone else.

What is also alarming is that 2 out of every 10 boys talk to no one about their problems. In sixth grade the males rely fairly heavily on their parents, but that relationship weakens as the

males become older. The female students that speak to their parents stays relatively the same 15 in sixth grade, 14 in seventh grade, and 10 in eighth grade. This is not as dramatic a decline as that evidenced by the males, 27 in sixth, 15 in seventh, and 11 in eighth.

Female students are slightly more concerned about death than their male counterparts. To see this more clearly, view the Concern about Death graph found on page 35 in Appendix B. The female students also show an increase in the level of concern about death as they become older, and the male students show a decrease in the level of concern from sixth to eighth grade.

Concern about the future was the second highest area recorded by the survey. The Concern About Future graph is located on page 36 in Appendix B. Of the 318 students surveyed, 220 students registered a level 3 concern regarding their future. If you add the level 3 and level 2 concerns together for each sex at each grade level the scores read as follows:

Female 6	Male 6	Female 7	Male 7	Female 8	Male 8
49	47	50	50	50	49

Physical changes were only significant if you added the level 2 concern in. The majority of the students were only somewhat concerned about the physical changes associated with the middle school age and puberty.

Drugs were more of a concern in sixth grade than eighth grade for both sexes.

The total number of level three responses for each sex and grade are as follows:

Female 6	Male 6	Female 7	Male 7	Female 8	Male 8
269	314	291	307	301	270

The female number of level 3 concerns increases every year and the male number decreases.

What does all this mean? Male and female students in middle school are concerned about the same things. Female students are becoming more concerned and not more at ease as they progress through the middle school environment. Friends become more important and more of an influence for females than males. The research also suggests that seventh grade is a very difficult year for the male student.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FURTHER STUDY

The first conclusion of the intern is that an after-school program designed specifically for girls might very well be declared unconstitutional according to the legal restrictions of Title IX. Therefore, all concerns expressed by the students should be addressed in the formal curriculum of the school. Equal consideration could then be given to both male and female concerns.

The conclusions of the study are many. The main one being that the thesis of the study was both correct and incorrect. Males and females in middle school are concerned about the same things: grades, their futures, their friends, and death. The major difference between the males and females is that the males show the highest level of concern in sixth grade, and by eighth grade they have relaxed to some degree. The females are the exact opposite. The females show the lowest level of concern in sixth grade, and the highest level of concern in eighth grade.

There could be many reasons for this discrepancy. One could be a rise in confidence from the young males and a decline in confidence from the young females. Another reason could be that the males are not as emotionally mature and do not realize what is at stake, while the females do realize what is at stake, and therefore, become more concerned. At this time the intern is not prepared to decide which is the true answer.

The highest area of concern for the most students was grades. It is very important that the volume of students who are very concerned about their grades be appreciated. Out of 342 students surveyed, 242 registered a high degree of concern about their grades. That is seventy percent. At present, Orchard Valley Middle School offers no study skills class. This is a problem. As a matter of fact, in the entire Washington Township Public School curriculum, there is no study skills class offered. This should be corrected.

A total of 220 students registered a level 3 concern regarding their futures. Again, there is no career class, or career counseling completed in the middle school. Students are clearly worried about tomorrow, and many do not see the connections between what they are doing in class today and how it will be useful tomorrow. In the past five years, OVMS has had only one career day. Clearly, more is required from the school in this area.

Friends or communication is the next issue. There is a difference here between males and females and a unique set of problems was easily identified for each sex. The males do not communicate enough. Many do not talk with anyone. Seventh grade seems to be the worst year for this. Males should be taught communication skills by the guidance counselors early on. Communication with friends, families, teachers, etc. could be explored and reviewed. The male students need to learn why they should share their burdens and how to do it successfully.

Female students on the other hand, appear to communicate too much with their friends and too little with their parents. They need to be instructed on the importance of family and the importance of communication within the family. Friends are for now, families are forever.

The last area of concern was death. This was a surprise; however, looking back, all the signs were there.

Every meeting that we had in the afternoon, all the females talked about were boyfriends, popularity, and things like that. We had one conversation about death. One young lady was afraid that her great grandmother would be angry because her family knocked down the great grandmother's house and built a new one. She felt that her great grandmother might come back to haunt her. The same young lady on the same day also talked about having German relatives and being afraid that Jewish people that died in WWII would come back to haunt her. Each girl present at this meeting had a story to tell about a friend or relative dying and how

ghosts related to the story. We discussed what everyone believed about ghosts and their reasons for returning and who was to blame for different things that have happened in history.

There are 139 students on team 7O at Orchard Valley Middle School. Of the 139, 11 students have lost a grandparent this year. Many of these students have had the grandparent living in their homes at the time of death. One student lost a brother to a lifelong illness. The brother was also cared for in the home. He was nineteen years of age at the time of his death. Information gathered from the survey suggests that these deaths, and others that have not been revealed in this study, are weighing heavily on the minds of middle school students.

All of the information gathered clearly implies that there is room for change in the middle school curriculum for the Washington Township School System. A study skills class should definitely be added as an exploratory class. It is the recommendation of the intern that this class be a mandatory exploratory similar to computers whereby every student must take the class. Within this study skills class, different career options could be explored. The amount of education required for different job positions, salaries, and the subjects in school that are related to these jobs could be discussed. What jobs require a solid math background, what jobs require a solid language arts background, what jobs require a solid art background, or music, etc. Students need to identify and relate to goals in their futures that are connected to the curriculum they are studying today.

Friends and communication is an area that could be addressed by the school guidance department. In sixth and eighth grade, the students are divided by sex for health classes. It is the recommendation of the intern that the guidance department use these classes to instruct the students on the importance of family, friends, and communication. Since the concerns are different for males and females, this set up would be the ideal location for this lesson.

Death is something both sexes are concerned about; therefore, separate sex classes would not be required here. If the guidance department adds friends and communication to the sixth and eighth grade health curriculums, then the logical place for death would be seventh grade. Grief counseling that is not religion based could be incorporated into guidance lessons at this time.

The completion of this study impacted the leadership growth of the intern in several ways. The intern's ability to relate with middle school students was strongly tested in the journal club meetings after school. It was a challenge to keep the girls interested, discussions lively, and not have anyone criticizing or correcting another girl's opinion or suggestions at the meetings. Conflict resolution techniques were constantly in use. The intern's ability to develop leadership in others was tested also. Leaders needed to be picked from the group to spread the word about meetings, topics, speakers, etc., because many girls did not pay attention to the announcements.

Human relations, organization, and communication skills were also utilized by the intern in gaining the cooperation of the teachers required to pass out and administer the surveys in their classes.

As a result of this thesis, the organization has changed in the following ways. These results were shared with the seventh grade guidance counselor at the school. The guidance counselors are considering incorporating the results into their programs for next year. The "Journal Club" will no longer just be for girls. Anyone that would like to discuss and write about middle school concerns will be included. The results of this survey were also presented to the building principal. He will bring the concerns of the students up at the next nine-period day committee meeting as a possible curriculum addition.

There is a need for further study in this area. There are reasons why female students become more worried and stressed as they pass through sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. The recommendation of the intern is that a study be conducted over a three year period using the same students, male and female, as they pass from sixth, to seventh, and then finally eighth grade. In this study, it would be beneficial to notice exactly what areas of concern are changing for the females and why. A different survey instrument should be developed that elicits more why responses from the students. Once the reasons behind the increased level of concern are identified, they can be addressed in the curriculum.

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Appendix A
Research Instrument

In an effort to better serve the students of OVMS, the following information is being gathered in a survey. Survey results will be used to affect after school clubs and curriculum. Please answer each question carefully and honestly and **do not put your name anywhere on this paper.**

What grade are you in?

____ 6th grade

____ 7th grade

____ 8th grade

What sex are you?

____ Girl

____ Boy

Some students have expressed concern about the following items. To be concerned about something means that you think or worry about it some of the time. Please write a 1 next to each item that you are not concerned about at all. Please write a 2 next to each item that you are somewhat concerned about. Please write a 3 next to each item that you are very concerned about.

1 - not concerned

2 - somewhat concerned

3 - very concerned

____ your grades

____ getting in trouble

____ friends

____ being popular

____ having a boyfriend/girlfriend

____ death

____ your appearance

____ what other people think of you

____ your future

____ your weight

____ family problems

____ physical changes

____ being athletic

____ questions about sex

____ drugs

What are your grades like? Please check only one.

____ A's and B's

____ B's and C's

____ C's and D's

____ D's and F's

Who do you talk to the most about your problems? Please check only one.

____ friends

____ teachers/guidance

____ parents

____ no one

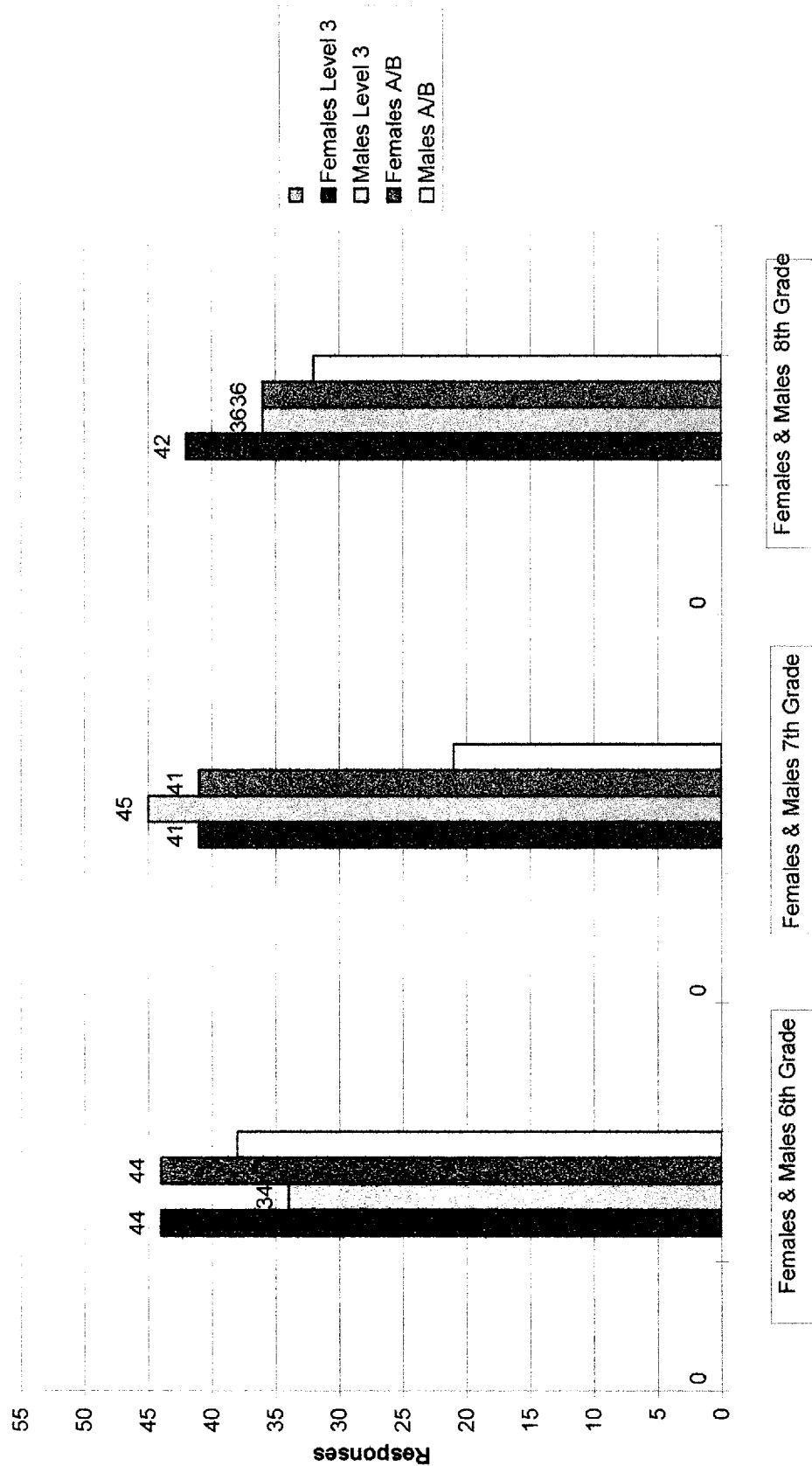
Please write down a list of topics that are not taught in middle school and you think should be taught and discussed, either in the classroom or in an after school program.

Additional Comments:

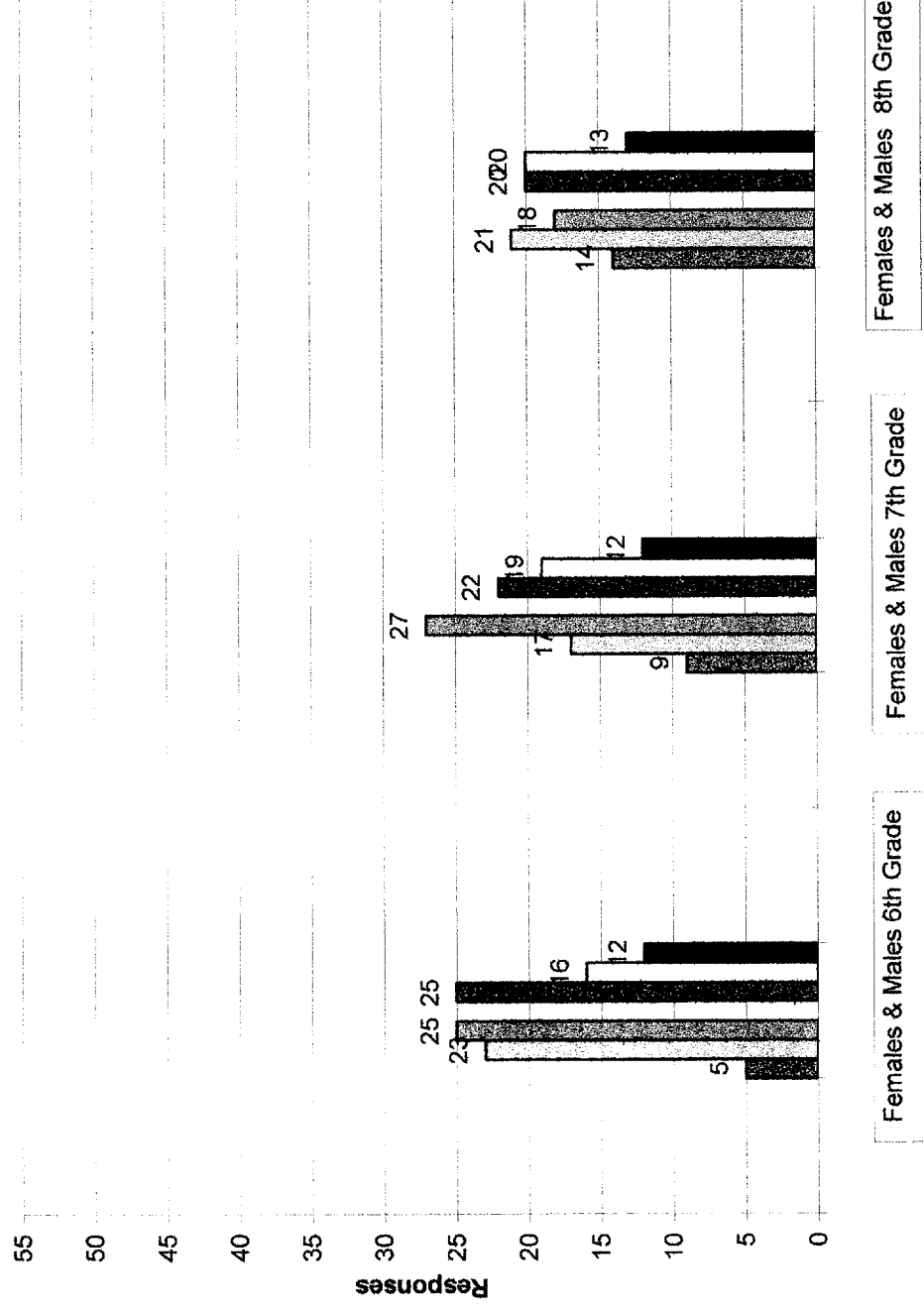
Appendix B
Survey Results

Concern	FEMALES 6				MALES 6				FEMALES 7				MALES 7				FEMALES 8				MALES 8				
	3	2	1	T	4	3	2	1	T	4	3	2	1	T	4	3	2	1	T	4	3	2	1	T	4
1. Grades	44	7	2	53		34	15	4	53		41	11	1	53		45	7	1	53		42	8	3	53	
2. Popular	8	32	13	53		9	31	13	53		8	35	10	53		15	22	16	53		2	39	12	53	
3. Appear	21	28	4	53		21	22	10	53		27	25	1	53		25	23	5	53		22	29	2	53	
4. Weight	10	26	17	53		14	16	23	53		23	19	11	53		10	20	23	53		20	24	9	53	
5. Athletic	5	23	25	53		25	16	12	53		9	17	27	53		22	19	12	53		14	21	18	53	
6. Trouble	24	21	8	53		23	18	12	53		19	17	17	53		16	24	13	53		15	24	14	53	
7. BF/GF	4	35	14	53		16	22	15	53		6	31	16	53		9	28	16	53		10	29	14	53	
8. Oth Peo	15	20	18	53		16	22	15	53		22	23	8	53		17	22	14	53		12	29	12	53	
9. Fam. Pr	13	28	12	53		18	15	20	53		20	19	14	53		18	17	18	53		22	18	13	53	
10. Sex	9	19	25	53		4	17	32	53		4	19	30	53		7	18	28	53		4	22	27	53	
11. Friends	27	22	4	53		33	12	8	53		30	21	2	53		28	20	5	53		42	11	0	53	
12. Death	23	13	17	53		28	7	18	53		24	18	11	53		24	13	16	53		31	14	8	53	
13. Future	30	19	4	53		36	11	6	53		40	10	3	53		39	11	3	53		38	12	3	53	
14. Phys C	14	24	15	53		15	20	18	53		8	29	16	53		15	23	15	53		10	30	13	53	
15. Drugs	22	10	21	53		22	14	17	53		10	18	25	53		17	9	27	53		17	11	25	53	
Totals:	269	327	199			314	258	223			291	312	192			307	276	212			301	321	173		
	A/B	B/C	C/D	D/F		A/B	B/C	C/D	D/F		A/B	B/C	C/D	D/F		A/B	B/C	C/D	D/F		A/B	B/C	C/D	D/F	
16. Grades	44	6	1	2		38	14	1	0		41	11	1	0		21	26	5	1		36	14	3	0	
	Fr.	T/G	PAR	NO		Fr.	T/G	PAR	NO		Fr.	T/G	PAR	NO		Fr.	T/G	PAR	NO		Fr.	T/G	PAR	NO	
17. Talk to	33	2	15	3		15	1	27																	

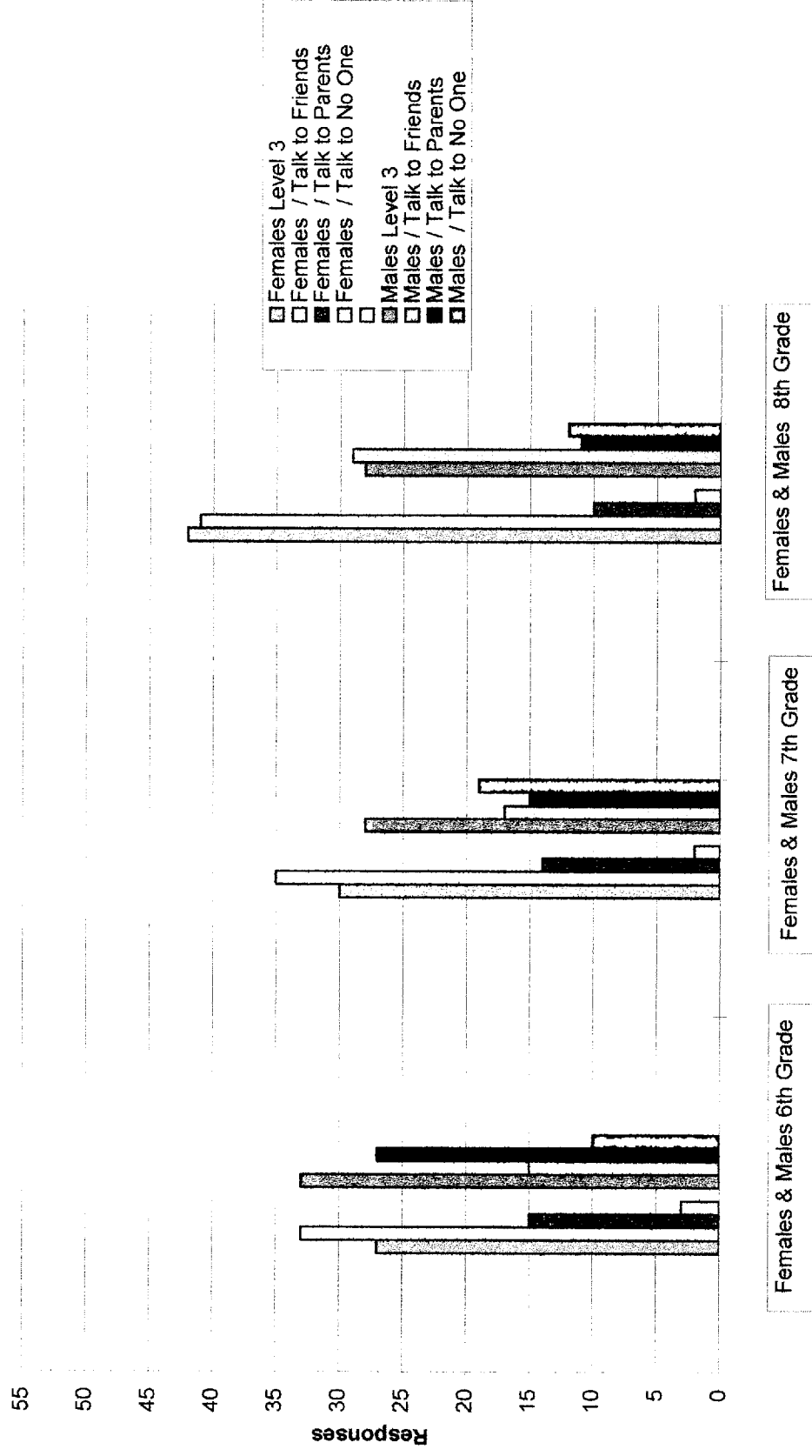
CONCERN ABOUT GRADES / A & B ACHIEVEMENT



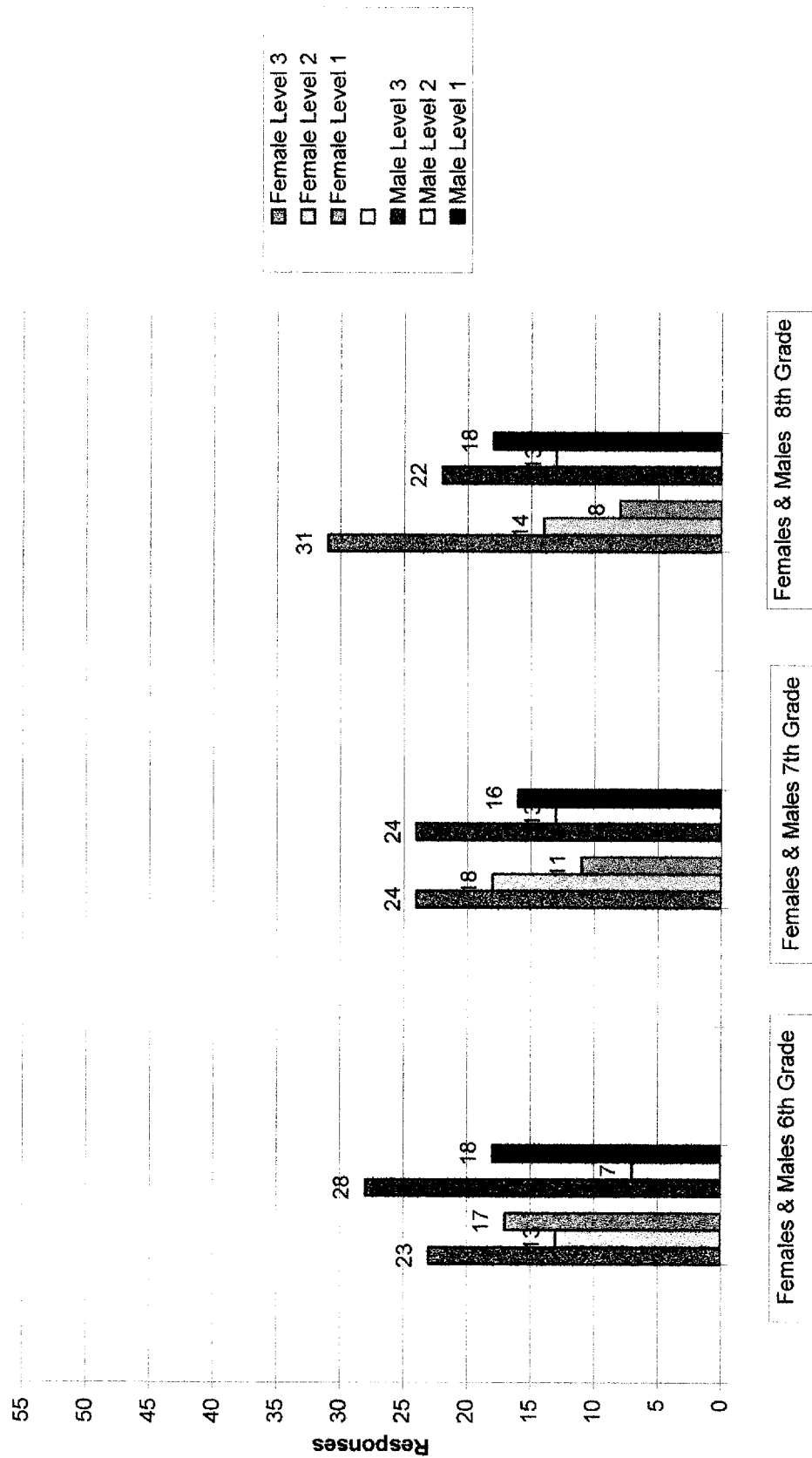
CONCERN ABOUT BEING ATHLETIC



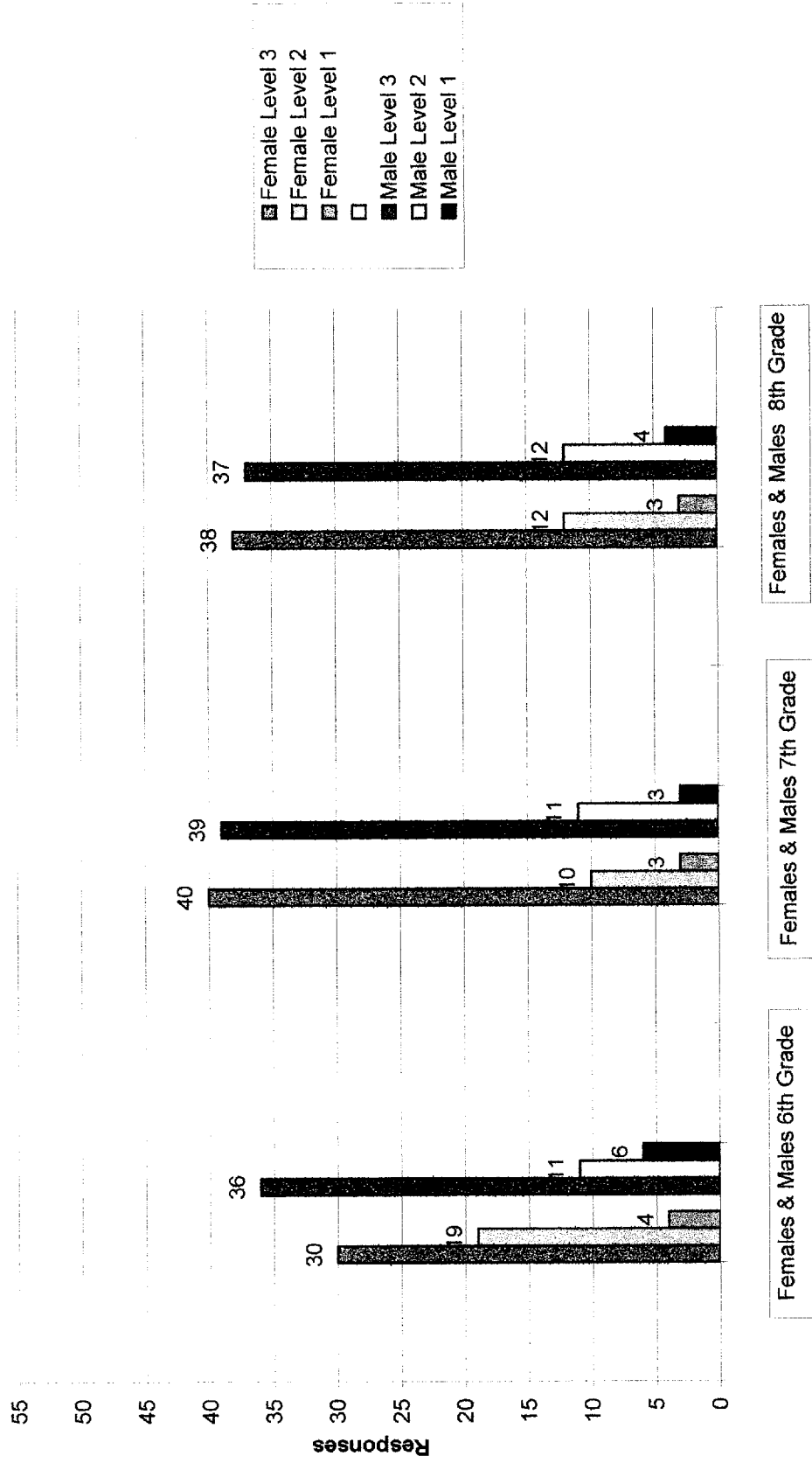
CONCERN ABOUT FRIENDS / TALK TO FRIENDS or PARENTS



CONCERN ABOUT DEATH



CONCERN ABOUT FUTURE



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