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Who are the bullied?

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While the methods of bullying are changing somewhat from playground conflicts to Internet torment, the faces of those who are bullied haven't changed much over time.

We've all seen them. They often are perceived as geeky, nerdy, poor, different, gay, weird, shy ... the list goes on, and it's largely superficial.

"People are separated by their haircuts and clothing and not much more," said Hank Nuwer, a journalist and author on hazing.

Eric Kisley, formerly of Woodstock, suffered from Asperger's syndrome. The disorder made him appear "weird" to his classmates and put a bullying target on his back. He struggled to fit in most of his life. A misunderstanding of the syndrome stayed with him through his life until he committed suicide earlier this year.

Leading research says children who are insecure or cry often, or those who act submissively or anxious, tend to get the brunt of bullying. Those who react often get it worse.

"I think when it comes to teasing, kids generally will react ... they typically will get mad and tease back or be physically aggressive," said Judy Freedman, bullying expert and author of "Easing the Teasing." "Other kids will turn the feelings inward and feel badly about themselves, feel embarrassed."

Children who have physical signs of stress, such as stomachaches or headaches, often are targets for bullying. Most often, bullying is the cause of their stress.

According to a survey conducted by the Northwest Herald and the McHenry County Regional Office of Education, county educators reported that girls had both the greater tendency to bully, as they did to being bullied. An overwhelming majority, nearly 79 percent, said that girls tended to be the primary targets of bullying.

Students with at-risk behaviors make up another group that frequently is bullied, the survey found.

Those who are bullied tend to have fewer friends.

"Students who are not in the 'in' crowd," one survey respondent wrote of those who often are

bullied, while another wrote, “Students who do not fit the norm.”

With cyberbullying on the rise, it’s not just the bigger and meaner students who are bullying, McHenry High School – West Campus Assistant Principal Carl Vallianatos said.

“People don’t have to be strong and tough, all they have to do is be able to type on a computer,” he said.