



# Changing The Narrative: Men and Their Emotions

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## INTRODUCTION

Mainstream culture in the United States tends to promote hyper-masculinity, which rewards the rejection of emotion ("real men don't cry") and embraces sexual conquest ("sleep with as many women as possible, treat them poorly"). By being encouraged to reject emotion, men are discouraged from developing deep friendships or connections. This can also lead to mental health issues. This project examines how boys are raised in America and what changes can be made to encourage boys to embrace their emotions in a healthy way.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Background Research

Survey

Analysis

I conducted research on why people cry and what affects it.

Surveyed Paly students to gather data on how willing they are to interact with their emotions

Analyzed findings to discover that Paly aligns with the norm that boys do not cry as much as girls

## DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

By surveying and interviewing 191 Palo Alto High School students, the data confirms that boys show their emotions less often than girls. When students were asked how comfortable they would be showing emotion (crying) to a close group of friends on a scale from 1-10 (1 being not comfortable and 10 being completely comfortable), the average response for girls was 6.775, and the average response for boys was 5.588. Some quotes from males during interviews and surveys:

Q: Is it okay for you to cry? Is it socially accepted?

A: 1. No. Not socially accepted.

2. Yes, I wish I could, but my depression meds don't let me.

3. I think it's okay for me to cry, but I've been so trained over the years to not show it that it doesn't happen.

4. Yeah. I just wish I could.

5. No. It makes everything awkward.

6. No, because it shows lack of self control.

7. I hate myself for crying.

These quotes show how hard it can be for some boys to show their emotions, even to a close group of friends.

## DATA AND FINDINGS

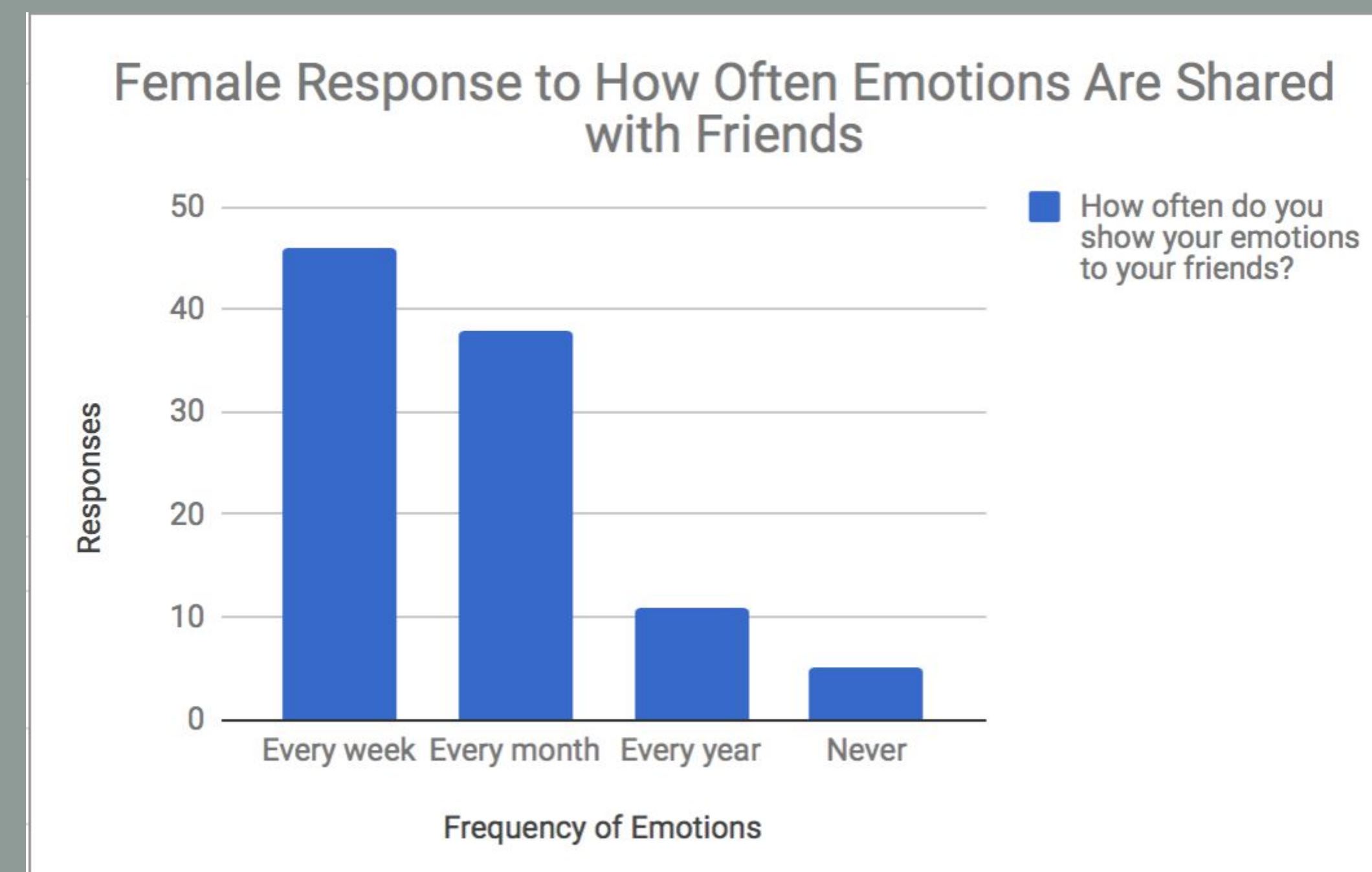


Figure 2. Paly females' response to how often emotions are shared with friends.

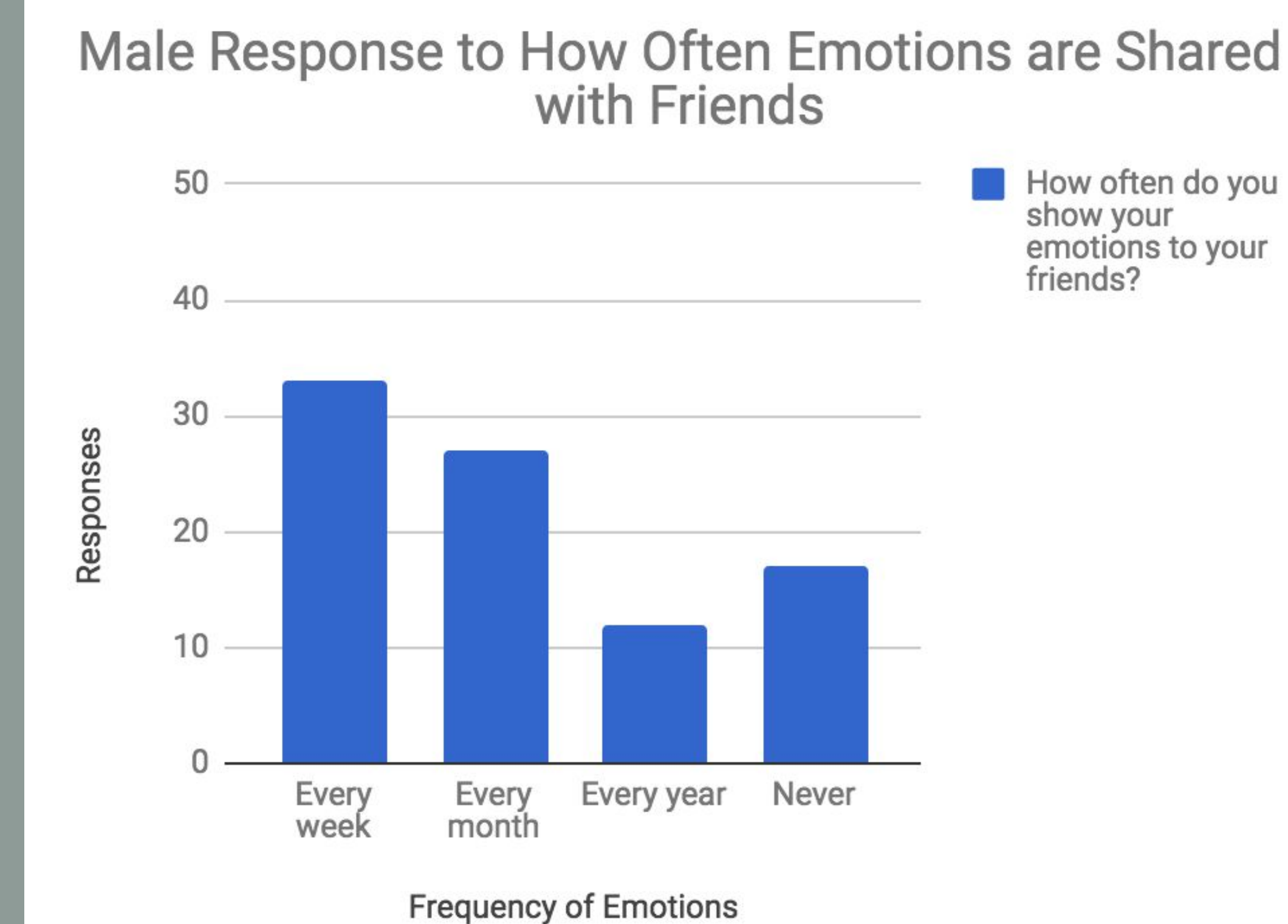


Figure 2. Paly males' response to how often emotions are shared with friends.

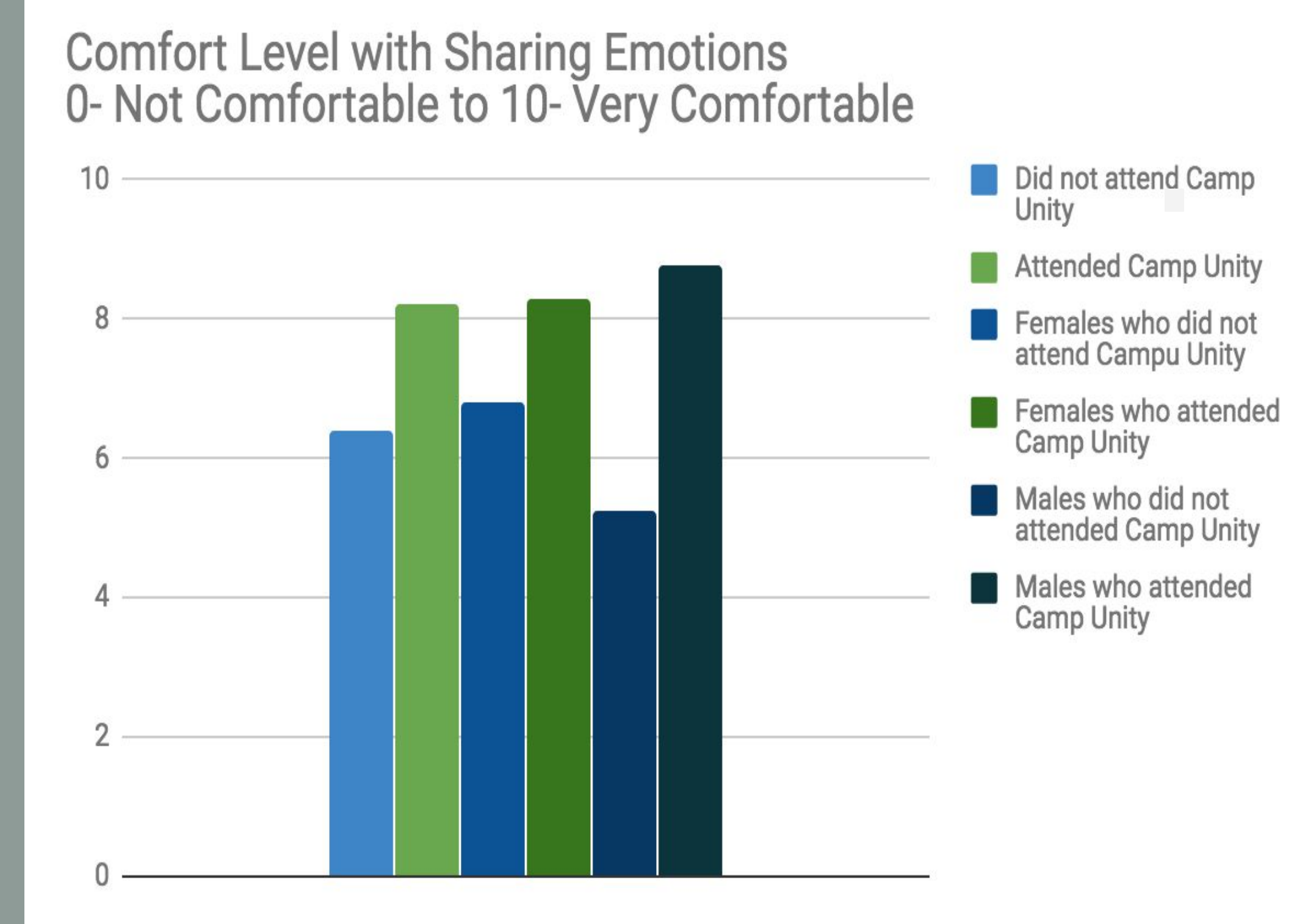


Figure 3. Paly students' average comfort level with sharing emotions.

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

Do you ever wonder why almost all mass shooters are men?

"Boys who don't cry, shoot bullets" -Joe Ehrmann.

While boys who do not cry are not all mass murderers, this powerful quote illustrates the harm in boys keeping quiet about their feelings. 80% of men in America suffer from a disease called Alexithymia, which is the inability to put your emotions into words.

It is more difficult for men to have a self-understanding of themselves because they never interact with their emotions. This creates a lack of empathy because the key to understanding others is to understand yourself. One possible solution to this issue is education on the subject. The culture is what needs changing. There will not be any laws that can solve this issue. At Palo Alto High School, there is a camp hosted every year called Camp Unity. This camp is a getaway where students talk about their issues and emotions. Students who attended Camp Unity had a higher average rate of comfort with showing emotion to a close group of friends, as shown in Figure 3. The students who attended camp unity also went into greater detail in their survey responses.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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