

**WITNESSING BULLYING AT SCHOOL: THE INFLUENCE OF BULLYING AND
VICTIMIZATION ON BYSTANDER BEHAVIOUR**

by

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B.A., The University of Western Ontario, 2006

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(School Psychology)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

July 2011

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Abstract

Bullying at school is a widespread and persistent problem facing Canadian youth today (Craig & Harel, 2004). In addition to the small but significant minority of students who are involved directly as bullies and victims, more than two thirds of youth are bystanders or witnesses to school-based violence (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, & Osterman, 1996; Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz, 1998), Given the high probability that students will at some point in their school career witness bullying, it is important to examine the risks and responsibilities associated with being a bystander. Successful efforts to reduce or eliminate bullying requires knowledge of the types of strategies peers are likely to use to respond to bullying, as well as the students who are most likely to engage in these behaviours. This research investigated how secondary students' bystander behaviour varied as a function of their age, gender, and concurrent experiences with bullying and/or victimization at school. In a school-based survey examining social experiences at school, Grade 8 to 12 students ($N= 50,334$, 49% male) who reported witnessing bullying ($n=18,839$) rated how often they had engaged in different bystander responses. Results of a series of hierarchical regressions indicated that student's gender and personal experiences with bullying and victimization each accounted for a small but significant proportion of variance for prosocial, aggressive and passive bystander responses; age was only a significant predictor for passive bystander behaviour. These results both confirm and extend the literature on bystanders and bullying, and suggest a number of important areas for future research. Gaining a better understanding of the individual characteristics and contextual factors that encourage or discourage bystander's defending behaviour can assist educators in developing and delivering effective school-based anti-bullying programs that promote safe and positive bystander intervention.

Preface

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the UBC Behaviour Research Ethics Board (BREB), Certificate Number H08-02742. Related Ethics Certificate Numbers: H06-03562 and B06-0028.

A version of this research was presented as part of a symposium on bystanders and bullying. Trach, J., Hymel, S., Gregory, S., & Waterhouse, T. (2011). Bullies, victims, and bystanders: Who helps, who hurts, and who walks away? *Society for Research in Child Development, Montreal, QB*. The research measures were developed by Dr. Terry Waterhouse and Dr. Shelley Hymel in collaboration with school personnel. Data were collected by school staff under the coordination of Dr. Terry Waterhouse. Sandra Gregory assisted with data analysis. I conducted the bulk of the analysis and wrote most of the manuscript.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my grateful thanks to my committee members, Dr. Kent McIntosh and Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl, for their positivity and encouragement throughout this process.

Thanks to the Canadian Prevention Science Cluster for the financial support that enabled me to conduct my Master's research.

Special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Shelley Hymel, for her guidance, patience (!), and unwavering support – for constantly pushing me to think in new and challenging directions, and always having my back. I thank you.

To my fellow students who listened to me talk too much, and for too long, about my thoughts, concerns, worries, and ideas – thank you! Your advice was more helpful than you will ever know.

Finally, thank you to my friends and family for your endless support and for sharing your joy at all of the little successes along the way. It's been a long road. Thanks for walking with me.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father, George Charles Trach, for loving me, supporting me, and believing that I would make it here long before I dared to dream it was possible. You always knew.

Big hugs.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Thou shalt not be a perpetrator; thou shalt not be a victim; and thou shalt never, but never, be a bystander” – Professor Yehuda Bauer (1998)

It is a basic, fundamental right of all children to receive an education in a safe and supportive school environment (Craig & Pepler, 2009; Olweus, 1993; 1995; U.N. General Assembly, 1989). This includes freedom from experiencing any and all forms of peer violence either as a victim, perpetrator, or as a witness to violent acts carried out against others. Yet despite almost four decades of research on bullying in schools, concerned parents, educators, and researchers continue to struggle to find a solution to this pervasive problem.

1.1. Bullying Defined

Bullying is a form of peer-directed violence with several defining characteristics. Although it may be direct or indirect, overt or covert, and although it may take the form of physical, verbal, social or cyber aggression, bullying is defined as aggressive actions that are intended to cause harm, are repeated over time, and that involve an imbalance of power between the perpetrator(s) and victim(s) (Olweus, 1993). Bullying is further conceptualized as a socially contextualised event that extends beyond the bully-victim dyad to include interactions at the level of the family, peer group, classroom, school, and the larger community (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Bullying does not occur as a single, isolated act. Although bullying is sometimes considered an underground activity with regard to adults, bullying commonly takes place in full view of other peers and happens over and over again, resulting in a cycle of trauma and abuse that can be difficult to escape (Beran, 2008; Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro,

& Bukowski, 1999; Nansel, Haynie, & Simons-Morton, 2003; Schafer, Korn, Brodbeck, Wolke, & Schulz, 2005).

1.2. Prevalence and Consequences of Bullying

It is an upsetting fact that the experience of being either a bully or a victim of bullying each represent reality for approximately one third of youth worldwide (WHO, 2008). Compared with other nations, Canada ranks in the top third in terms of prevalence rates for bullying and victimization (Craig & Harel, 2004). Approximately 21-39% of Canadian youth report that they sometimes bully others and 23-54% report having been victimized by their peers at least once in the past few months (Beran & Tutty, 2002; Craig & McCuaig Edge, 2007; Craig & Pepler, 2009; WHO, 2008). A small but significant proportion of Canadian youth (2-8%) are more frequently involved and report that they bully others or are bullied at least once a week (Craig & McCuaig Edge, 2007). Observations of bullying at school provide a more moderate estimate, indicating that 7-12% of children bully others and 9-18% are victimized (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997). Interestingly, regardless of the method of measurement, the percentage of children who fall into the category of bully-victim is relatively large in Canadian samples, with 24% of boys and 19% of girls saying that they experience both roles (Craig & McCuaid Edge), and 6-69% of children observed to both bully others and be bullied themselves (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997). Without a doubt, bullying at school is a widespread and persistent problem facing Canadian youth today.

The detrimental effects of bullying have been well-documented for both bullies and victims (see Card, Isaacs & Hodges, 2007; Hawker & Boulton, 2000, for reviews) and include increased risk for both internalising and externalising issues such as anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, somatic symptoms, hyperactivity, aggression, delinquency, substance use, interpersonal

difficulties, poor self-esteem, decreased academic engagement and impaired school functioning (Bollmer, Milich, Harris, & Maras, 2005; Espelage & Holt, 2001; Haynie et al., 2001; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Marttunen, Rimpela, & Rantanen, 1999; Karatzias, Power, & Swanson, 2002; Klomek, Marrocco, Kleinman, Schonfeld, & Gould, 2007; Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Henttonen, 2001; Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2001; Nansel et al., 2003; Rigby, 1998; Seals & Young, 2003; Slee & Rigby, 1993; Slee, 1995; Toblin, Schwartz, Gorman, & Abou-ezzeddine, 2005; Veenstra et al., 2005). Not surprisingly, children who are both bullied and victimized are at even greater risk for behavioural and psychosocial difficulties (Haynie et al., 2001; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Klomek et al., 2007; Kokkinos & Panayiotou, 2004; Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Nansel et al., 2001; Stein, Dukes, & Warren, 2007).

However, bullies, victims and bully-victims are not the only individuals involved. In fact, a much larger proportion of the school population is comprised of students who witness the victimization of others (Hazler, 1996). Using peer nomination procedures, researchers have classified over two thirds (66-79%) of students as bystanders (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, & Osterman, 1996; Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz, 1998), and observational studies indicate that peers are present in 79-88% of bullying incidents at school (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997; Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). Students themselves report witnessing bullying at school with alarming frequency, with 56-64% of elementary students, 79-83% of middle-school students, and 72-87% of secondary students saying that they have seen someone else being physically threatened or assaulted at school at least once in the past year (Flannery, Wester, & Singer, 2004). In Canada, 87% of youth in Grades 8-10 reported witnessing bullying at school at least once in the past year (Bonanno & Hymel, 2006a; Bonanno & Hymel, 2006b), whereas 93% of elementary children surveyed said

they witnessed another student being physically, verbally or socially victimized at least once in the past week (Rocke Henderson & Hymel, 2002). Given the high probability that students will at some point in their school career witness this incredibly prevalent form of peer violence, it is important to examine the risks and responsibilities associated with being a bystander.

1.3. Effects of Witnessing Bullying and Violence at School

Until recently it was assumed that children who were not directly involved in bullying incidents were spared from the negative developmental outcomes experienced by their more violent and victimized peers. Unfortunately, this assumption is false. For both victims and witnesses, exposure to school violence is associated with increased aggressive and violent behaviour and decreased psychological well-being (Carney, 2008; Slovak & Singer, 2002; Janson & Hazler, 2004). Witnessing violence at school has also been associated with increased feelings of insecurity, higher levels of aggressive and violent behaviour, more frequent school truancy, decreased school engagement and poorer academic achievement (Janosz et al., 2008), as well as feelings of depression and suicidal ideation (Bonanno, 2007; Bonanno & Hymel, 2010). Several studies have demonstrated that witnessing violence at school has an impact on children's behavioural and psychological well-being beyond actual victimization experiences (Bonanno & Hymel, 2009; Flannery, Wester & Singer, 2004; Rivers, Potteat, Noret & Ashurst, 2009). For example, Flannery et al. (2004) found that witnessing violence at school explained a larger proportion of the variance in violent behaviour (16%) and trauma symptoms (9%) as compared to actual victimization which accounted for 2% and 6%, respectively. Even after controlling for youth's concurrent experiences as a bully, victim or bully-victim, Rivers et al. (2009) found that witnessing the victimization of other students predicted a unique and significant proportion of variance in the majority of mental health indices assessed, including increased risk for somatic

complaints, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, paranoid ideation, psychoticism, substance use, and concerns about schoolwork, relationships, and body image. Similarly, Bonanno and Hymel (2009) found that, after controlling for gender as well as experiences as a bully or victim, witnessing bullying accounted for an additional 4.5% of the variance in reported depression and 8.3% of the variance in reported suicidal ideation among nearly 400 secondary students. The traumatic effects of being a witness to school bullying can also persist into adulthood (Janson & Hazler, 2004; Janson, Carney, Hazler & Oh, 2009). Like ripples on a pond, the negative social, emotional, educational, and physical and mental health repercussions of bullying carry far beyond both the immediate situation and the individuals who are directly involved as either bullies or victims.

1.4. Types of Bystanders

As bystanders, children and youth can behave in a variety of ways. The Participant Role Approach developed by Salmivalli and colleagues (Salmivalli et al., 1996; 1998) employs a peer nomination procedure to reliably categorize youth into one of four bystander roles, in addition to the traditionally examined roles of bully and victim, depending on how peers report that they typically behave in response to bullying situations. *Assistants* actively join in to help the bully or prevent the victim from seeking help, whereas *Reinforcers* actively or passively support the bullying by standing, watching, laughing and cheering on the bully. *Defenders* are those children who seek to support the victim and/or stop the bullying by directly intervening in the situation or telling an adult. Lastly, *Outsiders* are the group of students who either do nothing, try to avoid the situation, or are unaware that the bullying is taking place. Unfortunately, this last group represents the most common bystander role, with 24-30% of students classified as Outsiders, followed by 23-29% nominated as Assistants and Reinforcers of the bully, and Defenders

making up less than one fifth of the student population (Salmivalli et al., 1996; 1998).

Observational studies corroborate these findings, indicating that peers spend most of their time either passively reinforcing (54-55%) or actively joining the bully (21-62%)(Craig & Pepler, 1997; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999), and are only observed to intervene on behalf of the victim in 11-25% of bullying incidents (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Hawkins et al., 2001; O'Connell et al., 1999).

1.5. Influence of Bystanders

How peers respond to the victimization and harassment of others has important implications for school-based anti-bullying efforts. First, witnesses often display more respectful and friendly behaviour toward the bullies than victims (Craig & Pepler, 1997), thereby contributing to the power imbalance that perpetuates the bully-victim relationship. Second, there is a significant, positive relationship between the number of peers present and the length of the bullying episode, suggesting that the mere presence of witnesses exacerbates the problem by empowering bullies and prolonging the suffering of victims (O'Connell et al., 1999). Third, observational studies of witnessing behaviour among elementary school students has demonstrated that bystanders can also have a positive effect; when peers intervened on behalf of the victim, more than half of the time (57%), they were successful at stopping the bullying in under 10 seconds (Hawkins et al., 2001).

The manner in which bystanders respond to bullying has also been shown to influence students' beliefs about the victim and their school environment. In a series of studies with middle school students, Gini (2008) examined variations in student perceptions of victims as a function of the behaviour of bystanders in hypothetical bullying scenarios. Victim blame was highest in the passive bystander condition, whereas sense of safety at school was highest when bystanders

helped the victim and lowest when bystanders joined the bully. As both passive bystanders and active defenders, the behaviour of peers is a powerful force that influences how others perceive and respond to bullying incidents. As potential defenders, peers represent a significant intervention focus that is often underutilized in the fight against bullying (Hazler, 1996, Salmivalli, 1999).

1.6. Bystander's Beliefs, Attitudes and Behaviour

A small body of research has examined the specific strategies that bystanders use to intervene in bullying situations. The majority of children believe that bullying is wrong and that bystanders should do something to help (Baldry, 2004; Kanetsuna, Smith, & Morita, 2006; Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005; Rogers & Tisak, 1996; Stevens, Van Oost, & de Bourdeaudhuij, 2000), yet less than half of elementary and secondary students indicate that they would be likely to intervene on behalf of the victim (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Moreover, the types of strategies recommended by students to address bullying that they witness vary widely depending on the study methodology. When asked what other students *should do* when they witness someone else being bullied, the most common response offered by youth is direct involvement (i.e., telling the bully to stop or fighting back; 66% of youth surveyed), followed by seeking help from other students or adults (39%), and supporting the victim after the fact by talking to them, being their friend, or encouraging them to seek help (21%; (Kanetsuna et al., 2006). Similarly, when asked what they *would do* in response to real or hypothetical bullying situations, the most commonly endorsed behaviour includes helping the victim, talking to the bullies and telling an adult (Rocke Henderson & Hymel, 2002; Rocke Henderson, 2002). At least one third of students, however, indicated that they would do nothing or walk away (Rocke Henderson & Hymel, 2002), and students were equally likely to suggest that they would “do nothing” in response to bullying as

they would “tell an adult” (Rocke Henderson, 2002). Observational research further indicates that when peers did intervene they tended to respond aggressively, particularly when addressing the bully (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Hawkins et al., 2001). Finally, a small minority of youth have reported that they would act in ways that encourage the bully such as joining in or cheering (Doll, Song, & Siemers, 2004; Pellegrini & Long, 2004; Rocke Henderson & Hymel, 2002).

If relatively little is known about the strategies peers use to respond to bullying, even less is known about the factors that contribute to their behaviour. Several hypotheses have been offered to explain bystander’s inaction. Some suggest that children may avoid getting involved in bullying situations because they fear for their own safety, lack the knowledge and skills to be effective, or expect others to take responsibility (Hazler, 1996; O’Connell et al., 1999; Olweus, 1993; Slee, 1994). Other researchers have argued that avoidance may represent a “normal” developmental trend, with bystanders becoming increasingly passive in response to bullying as they get older (Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001; Stevens et al., 2000; Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse, & Neale, 2010). Based on the results of an exploratory survey of elementary and secondary students’ responses to bullying, Rigby and Johnson (2006) have hypothesized that helpful bystanders are more likely to be younger (i.e., elementary grades), to possess high levels of empathy for others, to be strongly committed to socially responsible behaviour, more likely to have helped victims in the past, and less likely to have bullied others or been a victim of bullying. To date, systematic studies examining the relative importance and interactive effects of these factors have yet to be conducted. Of interest in the current investigation were the impacts of age, gender, and student’s experiences with bullying and/or victimization on their responses to bullying that they witness. Research relevant to each of these is reviewed in the following sections.

1.6.1. Age and Gender Differences

Previous research has demonstrated that bystander behaviour varies across boys and girls and across grade levels. With respect to gender, girls are generally found to display more prosocial attitudes and behaviour towards victims, than boys (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005a; Camodeca & Goossens, 2005a; Jeffrey et al., 2001; Menesini et al., 1997; O'Connell et al., 1999; Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Rocke Henderson & Hymel, 2002; Rocke Henderson, 2002; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli et al., 1998). For example, girls indicate greater willingness to respond assertively to bullying by asking the bullying why they are doing it, explaining why their behaviour is wrong, and telling them to stop (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005). In contrast, boys are more likely to either fight back (Hawkins et al., 2001) or join in with the bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996; 1998). Although some studies show that girls may display more empathy for victims (Endresen & Olweus, 2001; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoè, 2008; Menesini et al., 1997), girls are not necessarily more likely to take direct action to stop the bullies or help their victims (Jeffrey et al., 2001; Menesini et al., 1997; Warden & Mackinnon, 2003). Still other studies have shown that girls and boys are equally likely to do nothing or pretend to ignore the situation (Jeffrey et al., 2001; O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996; 1998). Thus, the specific nature of gender differences in bystander behaviour may depend on the types of bystander strategies under investigation.

How children respond to bullying does appear to change with age, albeit not necessarily for the better. The few studies that have examined developmental changes in bystander behaviour suggest that, as children move from childhood to adolescence, and from elementary to secondary school, they become increasingly passive in their responses to bullying (Stevens et al., 2000). Whereas fifth grade students are characterized by feelings of fear, anger, and helplessness

when witnessing bullying and are more likely to report that they would defend the victim, students in eighth grade are more likely to report feeling indifferent about bullying and are more likely to identify themselves as outsiders or assistants to the bully (Jeffrey et al., 2001). Compared to elementary students, secondary students report less willingness to intervene (Menesini et al., 1997) and significantly lower rates of prosocial intervention in bullying situations (Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Stevens et al., 2000). Finally, in a cross-sectional study of youth in grades 4 to 11, Trach et al. (2010) found that students' age and sex interacted to predict their endorsement of specific bystander behaviours, such that female students and students in the elementary grades were more likely to endorse prosocial bystander behaviours such as *telling the bully to stop, helping the victim, or talking to an adult*. However, passive bystander behaviour in the form of *ignoring or avoiding the person(s) who bullied* was equally common for both boys and girls, and students' reports that they *did nothing* in response to bullying that they witnessed increased with grade level, confirming the hypothesis that passive bystander behaviour is more common among older students.

1.6.2. Bullying Experiences

At present, the relationship between children's bystander responses and their experiences as a bully or victim has remained largely unexplored. Commonsense suggests that children who bully others frequently are unlikely defenders. Indeed, compared with other children, bullies are characterized by higher scores on measures of proactive and reactive aggression (Camodeca, Goossens, Meerum Terwogt, & Scheungel, 2002; Camodeca & Goossens, 2005a; Craig, 1998; Espelage & Holt, 2001; Veenstra et al., 2005) and beliefs supporting violence (Espelage & Holt, 2001). Bullies tend to hold negative attitudes towards victims in general and are more likely to endorse the belief that victims are to blame for their own harassment (Hara, 2002). Higher pro-

bullying attitudes and behaviour have been linked to lower empathic concern and a disinclination to help other children in distress (Endresen & Olweus, 2001), and children who frequently bully others have been found to score lower on measures of empathy than their prosocial peers (Warden & Mackinnon, 2003). However, high levels of cognitive empathy, or emotion-recognition and perspective-taking skills, have been positively related to bullying behaviour in adolescents (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009), suggesting that bullies are skilled at recognizing and manipulating the emotions of others, but lack the emotional connection that prevents them from engaging in behaviour intended to cause harm, such as bullying. Finally, children who bully often enjoy relatively high status within the peer group (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Slee & Rigby, 1993; Veenstra et al., 2005; Warden & Mackinnon, 2003), and tend to be friends with other bullies (Espelage & Holt, 2001; Salmivalli, Huttunen, & Lagerspetz, 1997). Consequently, the social networks of children who bully are made up of peers who are likely to actively support, rather than discourage, their anti-social attitudes and behaviour. Accordingly, in the present study it was expected that youth who frequently bully their peers would be more likely to act in ways that assist or reinforce the bullying rather than defend the victim in a bystander situation.

Few studies to date have examined the links between bullying and bystander behaviour. Among 200 Australian schoolchildren, aged 11 to 13 years, Rigby and Johnson (2006) reported a small but significant, negative correlation ($r = -.19$) between bullying others and willingness to support the victim, although in subsequent hierarchical regression analyses bullying failed to predict a significant proportion of variance in student's intentions to help a victimized peer. Similarly, using a sample of nearly 1500 secondary school students from Bangladesh, Ahmed (2008) found that previous experience as a bully was negatively related to bystander defending

behaviour ($r = -.35$), although again, in regression analysis, the initial significant negative effect of bullying disappeared as additional variables were added to the equation. Both of these studies assessed students' responses to hypothetical bullying situations using a one-item measure of direct, prosocial bystander behaviour (i.e., "supporting the victim", Rigby & Johnson; and "telling the bully to stop", Ahmed). Unfortunately, effect sizes related to bullying experience were not reported and no explanations were offered for the lack of significant effects, despite hypotheses to the contrary.

Using a retrospective approach, Oh and Hazler (2009) asked adults to recall how they behaved when they witnessed an incident of bullying at school, and found that bystander's gender and past experience as a bully or bully-victim were significant predictors of prosocial bystander intervention. Specifically, women were more likely to report that they responded assertively to bullying than men, and participants who were bullies or bully-victims were more likely to endorse behaviours that assisted or reinforced the bullying. There are several limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from this data. One important limitation is that participants were asked to describe a single, specific bullying episode from their school years, which covers a relatively large developmental period (Grade 6 to 12).

A second limitation lies in the manner in which the different forms of bystander behaviour were classified. Oh and Hazler (2009) assessed adult's reports of bystander behaviour using a modified self-report version of the Participant Role Scale (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005b; Salmivalli et al., 1996), with responses assigned to ordinal categories according to the degree of help provided to the victim (i.e., 1 = Assistant, 2 = Reinforcer, 3 = Outsider, 4 = Defender). Analyses of these data revealed a negative relationship between bullying experience and bystander behaviour in that participants who said they had been bullies or bully-victims at

school were more likely to report bystander behaviours that involved joining in or encouraging bullying, and were less likely to report ignoring the situation or trying to help. According to this categorization, passive Outsider behaviour (pretending not to see the bullying) was considered a positive bystander response. However, when bystanders remain silent, they (perhaps inadvertently) offer encouragement for peer victimization by providing a supportive audience (Doll et al., 2004). By doing nothing, these witnesses communicate to other students that peer harassment is acceptable (Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, & Franzoni, 2008). This type of behaviour may also serve to strengthen the power imbalance between the bully and victim, and further isolate the victim from receiving the social support they desperately need (Demaray & Malecki, 2003). As mentioned previously, passive bystanders also contribute to students' feelings of insecurity at school (Gini, Pozzoli et al., 2008) and a negative school climate (Jeffrey et al., 2001). Given the fact that passive Outsider behaviour is the most common type of bystander response (Oh & Hazler, 2009; O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996), one could argue that remaining passive is not only unhelpful, but may be a very destructive form of bystander behaviour, even if unintended. Given the notable limitations of the few studies that have investigated this topic, the relationship between bullying and bystander behaviour remains unclear.

1.6.3. Peer Victimization Experiences

Of additional interest in the present study is whether the experience of being a victim of bullying would be associated with more or less positive bystander behaviour. Not surprisingly, victims strongly endorse anti-bullying attitudes (Cunningham, 2007), implying that they would be active participants in the fight against bullying. However, victims are also characterized by higher levels of anxiety and depression (Craig, 1998; Espelage & Holt, 2001; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Nishina, Juvonen, & Witkow, 2005; Rigby, 2000), and

low self esteem (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Karatzias et al., 2002; Rigby, 1998). They are also less popular (Cunningham, 2007; Eslea & Rees, 2001; Espelage & Holt, 2001; Slee & Rigby, 1993; Warden & Mackinnon, 2003), are lonelier and more socially isolated (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Nansel et al., 2001; Toblin et al., 2005; Veenstra et al., 2005), and report having more difficulty making friends than other children (Nansel et al., 2001). As a result, they may lack the confidence and the ability to be an effective defender.

Theoretically, having been a victim of bullying may produce greater empathy for other victims. At the same time, experience with victimization could have the opposite effect, causing bystanders to be less likely to intervene on behalf of victims due to fears of becoming further victimized themselves. In fact, despite their keen understanding of what it feels like to be the subject of peer harassment, victims do not score significantly differently from bullies on measures of empathy (Warden & Mackinnon, 2003), suggesting that, like bullies, victims may lack the emotion regulation skills or be disconnected from the emotional awareness that would motivate them to help a peer in distress. This hypothesis is further substantiated by the work of Dill and colleagues (2004) who found that increases in peer victimization over a school year significantly contributed to student's pro-bullying attitudes and beliefs, which subsequently predicted an increase in negative affect. Thus, over time, prolonged victimization may lead victims to believe that bullying is acceptable, perhaps making them less likely to intervene than if they viewed such behaviour as unjust. Finally, consistent with the view that victims tend to be submissive, withdrawn, and lack assertiveness skills (Olweus, 1993; Toblin et al., 2005), victims report higher rates of absenteeism and school avoidance than children who are not involved in bullying (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald, 2006; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996). Taken together, these findings suggest that, as a consequence of their own

experiences with bullying, victims may be no more likely than bullies to help a peer in distress. Rather, it seems likely that, as bystanders, victims would behave as passive outsiders who do nothing or try to ignore or avoid the situation entirely.

To date, only a handful of studies have examined the links between victimization and bystander behaviour. Of these, one study found a positive relationship between experience as a victim and willingness to help a victimized peer, but only for elementary girls, not boys (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Other studies reported no relationship between victimization and bystander's defending behaviour (Ahmed, 2008; Kokko & Pörhölä, 2009; Oh & Hazler, 2009). The present study investigates the degree to which experience as a victim or bully (or both) is associated with a variety of specific bystander behaviours in response to actual bullying events witnessed at school.

1.7. Present Research

The present thesis adds to the literature on bystanders and bullying by examining how secondary students' bystander behaviour varies as a function of their own concurrent experiences with bullying and/or victimization at school. Peers have been identified as an important tool in the fight against bullying (Hazler, 1996; Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2010). Successful efforts to reduce or eliminate bullying in today's schools requires knowledge of the types of strategies peers are likely to use to respond to bullying witnessed at school, the strategies that are successful at stopping bullying, and the students who are most likely to endorse and engage in these behaviours. Gaining a better understanding of the individual characteristics that encourage or discourage bystander's defending behaviour can assist educators in developing and delivering effective school-based anti-bullying programs that promote safe and positive bystander intervention.

1.8. Research Question

Do secondary students' bystander response strategies vary as a function of their age, gender, and experiences with bullying and/or victimization?

1.9. Hypotheses

First, it is expected that the previously documented relationships between age, gender and bystander behaviour will also be observed in the present study. Specifically it is predicted that:

1. Girls will be more likely than boys to endorse prosocial bystander behaviour, whereas boys will be more likely than girls to endorse aggressive bystander responses. There will be no gender differences in students' endorsement of passive bystander behaviour.
2. Students endorsement of prosocial bystander responses will decrease with age, and endorsement of passive bystander behaviour will increase with age.

In addition, based on a review of the literature, it is expected that secondary students' experiences as a bully and/or victim will be systematically linked to their behaviour as bystanders and that the relationship between students' bullying/victimization experiences and their bystander behaviour will vary depending on the type of bystander strategy being endorsed. Specifically, it is hypothesized that:

3. The frequency of bullying others will be negatively related to students' endorsement of prosocial bystander strategies and positively related to their endorsement of both aggressive and passive bystander responses.
4. The frequency of victimization will be negatively related to their endorsement of prosocial and aggressive bystander responses and positively related to students' endorsement of passive bystander behaviour.

5. Not having been involved in bullying, as a victim or perpetrator, will be positively related to student's endorsement of prosocial bystander strategies, and negatively related to their endorsement of aggressive and passive bystander behaviour.

Chapter 2: Method

2.1. Background

The Safe and Caring Schools movement began in 1989 when British Columbia's *Mandate for the School System* specified human and social development as major goals of BC school system (BC Ministry of Education, 1989). In 2001 the BC Ministry of Education established *social responsibility* as one of four "foundational skills" in education, as important as reading, writing and numeracy. As part of this initiative, the Ministry created the BC Performance Standards for Social Responsibility to provide educators with a common set of expectations and vocabulary regarding school and community efforts to promote social responsibility, as well as suggested guidelines with which teachers and school administrators could monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts (BC Ministry of Education, October, 2001).

In 2003, the Safe Schools Task Force interviewed students, parents and educators across British Columbia as part of a provincial report on bullying, harassment, and violence in schools (Mayencourt, Locke, & McMahon, June, 2003). This report provided a number of recommendations for the BC Ministry of Education, including developing clearer policies surrounding bullying, providing explicit procedures that students, parents, and school administrators should follow when reporting and responding to bullying incidents, and initiating regular public reports of school boards' efforts to address bullying. These recommendations led to the development of BC's Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools Strategy, an ongoing project which states that "schools must strive to create and maintain environments that support student achievement by addressing safety issues that can become barriers to optimal learning" (BC

Ministry of Education, November, 2008). This strategy describes the characteristics of safe, caring and orderly schools with an emphasis on accountability reporting to promote safe schools by identifying successful practices and areas in need of improvement.

In response to demands for school accountability, the Vancouver School District developed an extensive survey of secondary youth in 2005 in order to evaluate student perceptions of the social climate of their school and their own social behaviour, including bullying and victimization as well as bystander behaviour (as described below). The “Safe Schools and Social Responsibility Survey for Secondary Students” (SSSRS) was developed by a committee of educators including secondary school administrators, counselors, teachers and the district’s social responsibility committee, and in consultation with university researchers, Terry Waterhouse, University of the Fraser Valley and Shelley Hymel, University of British Columbia. The SSSRS taps a broad range of both school climate factors as well as adolescent risk behaviour. In 2006, 2007 and 2008, the SSSRS was administered to secondary students in numerous districts across the lower mainland of British Columbia. Data from the 2008 survey was used for the current study.

2.2. Procedure

All secondary students who were present on the day of testing were asked to complete the SSSRS. The survey was administered by classroom teachers during regular school hours in the winter of 2008. As the data were collected by and for the schools, passive consent procedures were employed. Parents were informed of the survey through Parent Advisory Council meetings, newsletters (translated into different languages in particular districts) and computer announcements, and could request that their child(ren) not participate. Students whose parents withdrew consent or who themselves declined to participate were excluded without penalty.

Students completed the survey anonymously (no names provided) and were assured of the confidentiality of their individual responses, with interest only in group results. To maintain confidentiality, completed surveys were scanned and numerical responses entered into computerized data bases, with data entry overseen by one of the university researchers, Dr. Terry Waterhouse. Each school and district was provided with summaries of student responses across all students in their school, along with documentation of age and sex differences in responses for the major composite scores considered.

2.3. Participants

The total sample included 50,334 secondary students (grades 8-12; 49% male, 48% female, 3% did not report their gender) from 76 schools, with a range of 8 to 2,055 students per school¹ and an overall participation rate of about 80%. For the purposes of the present study, a subsample of students was identified who indicated that they had witnessed bullying at school in the past year and who responded to a series of items regarding bystander behaviour on the survey ($n = 18,839$; 46% male, 52% female, 2% did not report their gender). This subsample was similar to the total sample in terms of grade (21% Grade 8, 21% Grade 9, 22% Grade 10, 21% Grade 11, 15% Grade 12, <1% missing), and racial/ethnic diversity (39% Caucasian, 29% Asian, 12% Mixed, 6% South Asian, 3% Aboriginal, 2% African/Caribbean, 2% Latin American, 2% Middle Eastern, 4% “Don’t Know”, and 4% did not report their racial/ethnic background).

¹ Schools included alternate high school programs with low student enrollments.

2.4. Measures

2.4.1. Bullying and Victimization

Students were asked to report on their experiences with bullying and victimization at school as well as their behaviour as bystanders. Following Vaillancourt et al. (2008), students were given a written definition of bullying and asked about the frequency with which they (a) had been bullied by other students this school year and (b) had taken part in bullying others this school year. Students responded to both of these questions for bullying in general and for each of three different forms of bullying—physical, verbal, and social bullying—with examples provided for each type. Responses were made on a 4-point scale (1= Never, 2= Once or a Few Times, 3= About Once a Month, 4= Every Week or More), with higher scores reflecting greater involvement as a bully or victim, respectively.

For the regression analyses composite measures for bullying and victimization were created. Results of a principal components factor analysis using a promax oblique rotation on responses to the six specific bullying and victimization items by the total sample of students ($n=46,504$) revealed two separate subscales: a 3-item Bullying subscale (one item each physical, verbal, and social bullying; $\alpha=0.84$), and a 3-item Victimization subscale (one item each physical, verbal, and social victimization; $\alpha=0.79$). Factor analysis of responses from the bystander subsample ($n=17,983$) revealed an identical factor structure regarding the Bully/Victim items, with α of 0.84 and 0.79 respectively. In both cases, the 2-factor solution explained 73% of the variance. Table 1 presents the factor loadings for both the total sample and the bystander subsample.

Table 1. Bullying and Victimization Items Principal Components Factor Analysis Using Promax Oblique Rotation

Item	Total Sample (<i>n</i> = 46,504) Factors		Bystander subsample (<i>n</i> = 17,983) Factors	
	1	2	1	2
Verbal bullying to others	.88		.89	
Social bullying to others	.88		.88	
Physical bullying to others	.85		.84	
Verbal bullying to me		.90		.90
Social bullying to me		.86		.85
Physical bullying to me		.76		.75
Total Variance Explained	54%	19%	53%	20%
Internal Consistency (α)	0.84	0.79	0.84	0.79

Based on results of the factor analyses, composite scores for bullying and victimization were created by averaging students' responses on the bullying and victimization subscales, respectively. With regard to both bullying and victimization, the composite scores could range from 1-4, with higher composite scores reflecting greater self-reported experiences with bullying and victimization, respectively.

Evidence for the construct validity of the bullying and victimization scales used in the present study was collected using a series of Pearson product-moment correlations. Similar to the rationale employed by Solberg and Olweus (2003), these analyses were conducted on the total sample to examine the relationship between student's scores on the general bullying and victimization items, bullying and victimization composite scores, and other conceptually-related variables (i.e., self-esteem, belonging, aggressive/violent behaviour, and experiences with other forms of peer harassment related to one's gender, race, or sexual orientation as either a perpetrator or a victim). Due to the large sample sizes, even small correlations were found to be significant at $\alpha = .01$ (see Table 2). Consequently, these results were interpreted based on

Cohen's (1988) criteria for designating large coefficients as those with $r \geq 0.50$, medium coefficients as $0.30 \leq r < 0.50$, and small coefficients as $0.01 \leq r < 0.30$. Not surprisingly, large, positive correlations were observed between student's reports of bullying others and perpetrating other forms of peer harassment (r 's ranging from 0.52 to 0.69) and violence at school ($r = 0.50$).

In general, the victimization scores were moderately positively correlated with other forms of peer victimization (r 's ranging from 0.37 to 0.49) with the only large correlation observed between scores on the victimization composite and being a victim of gender harassment ($r = 0.60$). Victimization was also moderately, negatively correlated with belonging. Somewhat unexpectedly given previous research by Olweus and Solberg (2003), the correlation between victimization and self-esteem, although negative, was quite small for both the general item and composite measure ($r = -0.16$ and $r = -0.19$ respectively). A similar relationship was observed between self-esteem and bullying others (general item $r = -0.12$; composite $r = -0.13$). Nevertheless, this pattern of results indicates that the composite scores of bullying and victimization used in the present study behave similarly to the single-item measures of general bullying and victimization employed in previous studies.

2.4.2. Bystander Behaviour

The SSSRS also asked students to indicate if they had "seen others being picked on, discriminated against, bullied, harassed or attacked" at school or school events this year. Those students who indicated that they had witnessed bullying (approximately 54% of the total sample) were then asked to rate how often they engaged in each of 16 bystander responses on a 5-point scale (1= never, 2= hardly ever, 3= some of the time, 4= most of the time, 5= always), with

Table 2. Concurrent Validity for Bullying and Victimization Composites using Pearson Product-Moment Correlations*

	Bullying General single- item	Bullying Composite	Victim General single- item	Victim Composite	n
Bullying General	--	.79	.41	.40	47958
Bullying Composite		--	.34	.49	48344
Victim General			--	.74	48465
Victim Composite				--	48841
Protective Factors					
Self-Esteem	-.12	-.13	-.16	-.19	50187
Belonging	-.18	-.18	-.32	-.35	50018
Risk Factors for Bullying					
Others					
Violence at school	.47	.50	.34	.43	48906
Violence at school events	.40	.43	.28	.36	48229
Violence in the community	.45	.49	.31	.39	48220
Gender Harassment - Perpetrator	.61	.69	.28	.37	47552
Sexual Imposition - Perpetrator	.52	.59	.25	.33	47313
Racial Discrimination - Perpetrator	.53	.59	.25	.33	46978
Sexual Orientation Discrimination - Perpetrator	.52	.58	.24	.32	47298
Risk Factors for Victimization					
Gender Harassment – Victim	.36	.41	.49	.60	48226
Sexual Imposition – Victim	.34	.39	.37	.49	47983
Racial Discrimination - Victim	.33	.36	.37	.48	47428
Sexual Orientation Discrimination - Victim	.31	.35	.37	.47	47298

* All correlations significant at $\alpha=0.01$

higher scores reflecting greater endorsement of a particular behaviour. Given the large number of bystander responses measured, initial analyses focused on data reduction via factor analysis.

Table 3. Bystander Responses Principal Components Factor Analysis using Promax Oblique Rotation ($n=18,839$)

Item	Factor		
	1	2	3
Told the bully to stop	.87		
Talked to the victim afterwards	.85		
Helped the victim	.84		
Talked to the bully	.83		
Got friends to help solve the problem	.68		
Talked to the bully's friends	.58		
Distracted the bully	.53		
Talked to an adult at school		.93	
Reported it to an adult at school		.92	
Talked to an adult at home		.79	
Stayed home from school		.70	
Talked to another student	.38	.39	
Walked away			.85
Ignored or avoided the bully			.75
Did nothing			.74
Got friends to get back at the bully	--	--	--
Percentage of Total Variance Explained	39	13	8
Internal Reliability (α)	.88	.84	.68

Results of a principal components factor analysis using a promax oblique rotation ($n=18,839$) revealed three factors explaining 60% of the variance (subscale items and factor loadings are presented in Table 3). The first factor included seven items representing direct or indirect prosocial intervention on the part of the bystander in an attempt to stop the bullying or help the victim. Student responses to these seven items were averaged to create a composite index of prosocial bystander behaviour ("Did Something"; $\alpha=0.88$). The second factor included five items that involved staying home or telling someone about the bullying witnessed. Student responses to these five items were averaged to create a second composite index of bystander behaviour which largely reflected student efforts to talk to someone about the bullying that they witnessed (adult at school, adult at home, peer) ("Told Someone"; $\alpha=0.84$). The third subscale was made up of three items representing a lack of bystander involvement or passive bystander

behaviour. Student responses to these three items were averaged to create a single composite of passive bystander behaviour (“Did Nothing”; $\alpha = 0.68$). A final item, *got your friends to get back at the person(s) who bullied*, did not load on any of the factors and therefore was not included in any of the composite indices. However, given the unique and negative nature of this particular item, it was included as a separate, distinct form of aggressive bystander behaviour in subsequent analyses, labelled “Sought Revenge”. Separate factor analyses conducted with subjects from each grade level revealed the same factor structure across grades, suggesting that the 3-factor solution represented a good fit to the data throughout the secondary school years.

Chapter 3: Results

3.1. Bullying and Victimization Experiences

The table of proportions provided in Table 4 reveals that 59% of students surveyed were not involved in bullying as either a victim or a bully (see Table 4). By comparison, 6% of students reported that they both bullied others and were bullied at least once a month or more during the previous school year. Approximately 35% of students indicated that they were involved at least some of the time as a bully, victim, or both. As shown in Table 5, when asked about bullying and victimization in general, approximately 14% of secondary students in BC reported that they frequently bullied others (i.e., at least once per month) and 11% reported that they were frequently victimized. An additional 30% of students indicated that they experimented with bullying others (i.e., once or a few times in the past school year) and 36% had experienced this level of victimization. These rates are consistent with the WHO national prevalence estimates of bullying and victimization among Canadian youth (Craig & Harel, 2004; Currie et al., 2008). When asked about their experiences with specific types of bullying, secondary students reported that verbal and social bullying and victimization were more common than physical bullying and victimization (see Table 5). Overall, the same pattern of responses was observed for students in the bystander subsample (see Table 5), although the percentages of students who reported that they bullied others or were bullied once per month or more were slightly higher than the rates for the total sample.

Table 4. Table of Proportions of Bullying and Victimization (n=46,504)

Victimization Frequency	Bullying Frequency		
	Never	Once or a Few Times	At Least Once a Month or More
Never	59%	9%	4%
Once or a Few Times	8%	8%	2%
At Least Once a Month or More	2%	2%	6%

Table 5. Percentage of Students Reporting Bullying and Victimization across Types of Bullying for both the Total Sample and Bystander Subsample

Total Sample	n	Never	Once or a Few Times	At least Once per Month	Every Week or More
Bullying					
General	47,958	56%	30%	7%	7%
Physical	47,887	65%	23%	6%	6%
Verbal	47,871	49%	32%	9%	10%
Social	47,840	59%	25%	8%	8%
Victimization					
General	48,465	53%	36%	6%	5%
Physical	48,310	71%	21%	4%	4%
Verbal	48,346	47%	36%	9%	8%
Social	48,315	57%	29%	7%	6%
Bystander Subsample					
Bullying					
General	18,504	45%	36%	10%	9%
Physical	18,473	57%	27%	8%	8%
Verbal	18,493	38%	36%	12%	14%
Social	18,498	49%	30%	10%	11%
Victimization					
General	18,668	42%	43%	8%	7%
Physical	18,621	64%	26%	5%	5%
Verbal	18,645	36%	42%	12%	11%
Social	18,638	47%	35%	10%	8%

Separate 2 (Sex) x 5 (Grade) univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA's) were conducted on the total sample to examine individual differences in student's experiences with bullying and victimization. Students' composite scores for bullying and victimization were used for these and all subsequent analyses ($\alpha = 0.01$). Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 6.

For bullying others, significant main effects of gender, $F(1, 45\ 873) = 108.64$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.004$, and grade, $F(4, 45\ 873) = 19.40$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$, indicated that boys reported bullying others more frequently than girls and post-hoc analyses using Scheffé's criterion revealed that students in Grades 9 and 10 bullied more than students in Grades 8, 11 and 12. However, these main effects were qualified by a significant sex by grade interaction, $F(4, 45\ 873) = 12.06$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$. Two sets of post hoc analyses were conducted to investigate the interaction effect. First, a series of independent t-tests conducted to examine sex differences within each grade level indicated that boys in Grade 11, $t(1, 8873) = 9.46$ and Grade 12, $t(1, 6602) = 8.01$, reported bullying others more frequently than girls in the same grade. There were no gender differences in bullying frequency among boys and girls in grade 8, $t(1, 9792) = 1.32$, *n.s.*, Grade 9, $t(1, 9788) = 3.67$, *n.s.*, or Grade 10, $t(1, 9688) = 6.49$, *n.s.* Secondly, one-way ANOVA's were conducted separately for boys and girls to examine grade differences within each gender. Among boys a significant main effect of grade, $F(4, 22\ 843) = 12.27$, followed by further post hoc analyses using Scheffé's criterion indicated that boys in Grade 8 reported bullying others significantly less often than boys in Grades 9 to 12. For girls, a significant main effect of grade, $F(4, 23\ 030) = 20.69$, followed by Scheffé's post hoc analyses indicated that girls in Grade 8 bullied others less than girls in Grade 9, but girls in both grades were significantly more likely to report bullying others than girls in Grades 11 and 12.

Table 6. Degree of Bullying and Victimization Reported by Secondary Students in British Columbia

Bullying M(SD)	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	All Grades
Boys	1.63 (0.78)	1.73 (0.86)	1.73 (0.85)	1.71 (0.85)	1.69 (0.87)	1.70 (0.84)
Girls	1.61 (0.75)	1.66 (0.79)	1.63 (0.74)	1.56 (0.70)	1.54 (0.72)	1.60 (0.74)
Combined	1.62 (0.77)	1.70 (0.82)	1.68 (0.80)	1.64 (0.78)	1.61 (0.80)	1.65 (0.79)
Victimization						
M(SD)						
Boys	1.62 (0.73)	1.66 (0.77)	1.63 (0.76)	1.59 (0.74)	1.59 (0.79)	1.62 (0.75)
Girls	1.62 (0.68)	1.63 (0.68)	1.60 (0.64)	1.52 (0.59)	1.50 (0.62)	1.58 (0.65)
Combined	1.62 (0.70)	1.65 (0.73)	1.61 (0.70)	1.56 (0.67)	1.54 (0.70)	1.60 (0.70)

Results of the 2 (Sex) x 5 (Grade) univariate ANOVA on victimization revealed significant main effects of gender, $F(1, 46\ 398) = 45.00$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$, and grade, $F(4, 46\ 398) = 34.21$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, indicated that boys reported being bullied by others more frequently than girls and post-hoc analyses using Scheffé's criterion revealed that students in Grades 8, 9 and 10 were bullied more than students in Grades 11 and 12, and students in Grade 9 were bullied more than students in Grade 10. However these main effects were qualified by a significant sex by grade interaction, $F(4, 46\ 398) = 5.87$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$. The interaction effect was examined in the same manner as above. First, a series of independent t-tests indicated that boys in Grade 9, $t(1, 9842) = 2.21$, Grade 10, $t(1, 9720) = 2.35$, Grade 11, $t(1, 8860) = 4.79$, and Grade 12, $t(1, 6504) = 5.51$, reported being bullied by others more often than girls in the same grade. There were no gender differences in reports of victimization for students in Grade 8, $t(1, 9905) = -0.26$, *n.s.* One-way ANOVA's conducted separately for each gender revealed a significant main effect of grade for

boys, $F(4, 23\ 135) = 7.37$, and girls, $F(4, 23\ 263) = 37.89$. Follow-up post hoc analyses using Scheffé's criterion indicated that Grade 9 boys reported more frequent victimization than boys in Grades 11 and 12, whereas girls in Grades 8, 9 and 10 reported more victimization than girls in Grades 11 and 12.

3.2. Bystander Behaviour

The frequency with which students endorsed each of the 16 bystander items on the SSSRS are presented in Table 7. Helping the victim or telling the bully to stop were the most commonly endorsed behaviours among the youth surveyed. However, only 11% and 12% of students respectively reported that they *always* engaged in these behaviours when they observed bullying. The least common bystander strategies involved staying home from school or talking to an adult about what they saw, with approximately 50% to 75% of secondary students reporting that they *never* engaged in these behaviours.

Preliminary analyses investigated grade and sex differences in secondary students reports of prosocial ("Did Something" and "Told Someone"), aggressive ("Sought Revenge") and passive ("Did Nothing") bystander behaviour. Means and standard deviations for the bystander subscale scores are presented in Table 8. Results of a series of 2 (Sex) x 5 (Grade) univariate analyses of variance indicated significant main effects of gender for all four dependent variables. Specifically, boys were less likely than girls to say that they "Did Something", $F(1, 20\ 606) = 335.53$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$, "Told Someone", $F(1, 20\ 164) = 123.49$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$, and "Did Nothing", $F(1, 20\ 390) = 8.57$, $\eta_p^2 = 0$, but were more likely to report that they "Sought Revenge", $F(1, 19\ 973) = 125.67$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$, when they witnessed someone else being bullied.

Table 7. Frequency of Students Endorsement of Bystander Responses (n=18,839)

Item	Never	Hardly ever	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
Did Something					
Told the bully to stop	19%	18%	31%	21%	12%
Talked to the victim afterwards	21%	17%	29%	22%	11%
Helped the victim	24%	19%	31%	18%	8%
Talked to the bully	27%	25%	28%	14%	6%
Got friends to help solve the problem	31%	21%	27%	14%	6%
Talked to the bully's friends	37%	24%	24%	10%	5%
Distracted the bully	37%	24%	25%	9%	4%
Told Someone					
Talked to an adult at school	55%	20%	15%	6%	4%
Reported it to an adult at school	51%	21%	16%	7%	5%
Talked to an adult at home	51%	19%	17%	8%	5%
Talked to another student	31%	18%	27%	15%	8%
Did Nothing					
Walked away	23%	23%	31%	17%	6%
Ignored or avoided the bully	29%	23%	29%	13%	6%
Did nothing	35%	20%	25%	13%	7%
Sought Revenge					
Got friends to get back at the bully	50%	23%	17%	6%	4%
Other					
Stayed home from school	75%	11%	9%	3%	3%

A significant main effect of grade was obtained for the “Did Nothing” subscale only, $F(4, 20\ 390) = 8.53$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$; “Did Something”, $F(4, 20\ 606) = 0.62$, *n.s.*; “Told Someone”, $F(4, 20\ 164) = 2.06$, *n.s.*; “Sought Revenge”, $F(4, 19\ 973) = 2.44$, *n.s.* Post-hoc analyses using Scheffé’s criterion indicated that students in Grade 8 were significantly less likely to endorse passive bystander behaviour than students in later grades.

Significant main effects were qualified by a significant sex by grade interaction for the variables “Did Something”, $F(4, 4.96)$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$, and “Sought Revenge”, $F(4, 19\ 973) = 3.71$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$; “Told Someone”; $F(4, 20\ 164) = 0.72$, *n.s.*; “Did Nothing”, $F(4, 20\ 390) = 0.70$, *n.s.*

Table 8. Means and Standard Deviations for Bystander Subscales

Did Something M(SD)	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	All Grades
Boys	2.38 (.99)	2.42 (.95)	2.41 (.96)	2.46 (.97)	2.43 (.98)	2.42 (.97)
Girls	2.72 (.90)	2.63 (.89)	2.65 (.86)	2.64 (.87)	2.64 (.90)	2.66 (.88)
Combined	2.56 (.96)	2.53 (.93)	2.54 (.92)	2.55 (.92)	2.55 (.94)	2.54 (.93)
<hr/>						
Told Someone M(SD)						
Boys	1.85 (.93)	1.89 (.99)	1.89 (.96)	1.92 (.99)	1.89 (.97)	1.89 (.77)
Girls	2.03 (.85)	2.04 (.85)	2.04 (.84)	2.08 (.90)	2.04 (.86)	2.04 (.86)
Combined	1.96 (.90)	1.97 (.92)	1.98 (.92)	2.00 (.95)	1.97 (.92)	1.97 (.92)
<hr/>						
Did Nothing M(SD)						
Boys	2.39 (1.00)	2.45 (1.00)	2.44 (1.00)	2.50 (1.02)	2.49 (1.00)	2.45 (1.01)
Girls	2.43 (.92)	2.50 (.93)	2.51 (.90)	2.55 (.90)	2.49 (.92)	2.49 (.91)
Combined	2.41 (.96)	2.48 (.96)	2.48 (.95)	2.53 (.96)	2.49 (.96)	2.47 (.96)
<hr/>						
Sought Revenge M(SD)						
Boys	1.99 (1.18)	2.06 (1.22)	2.05 (1.19)	2.06 (1.23)	2.00 (1.23)	2.04 (1.21)
Girls	1.92 (1.11)	1.87 (1.11)	1.84 (1.05)	1.84 (1.06)	1.77 (1.07)	1.86 (1.08)
Combined	1.95 (1.15)	1.96 (1.16)	1.94 (1.12)	1.95 (1.15)	1.88 (1.15)	1.94 (1.15)

Results of a series of t-tests investigating gender differences within grade revealed that at all grade levels boys were less likely than girls to endorse behaviour that involved doing something to stop the bullying or help the victim, Grade 8, $t(1, 4296) = -12.05$; Grade 9, $t(1, 4255) = -7.89$, Grade 10, $t(1, 4373) = -9.10$; Grade 11, $t(1, 4028) = -6.13$, Grade 12, $t(1, 2869) = -6.16$. On the other hand, boys in Grade 9, $t(1, 4015) = 5.17$, Grade 10, $t(1, 4212) = 6.42$, Grade 11, $t(1, 3878) = 6.17$, and Grade 12, $t(2, 2739) = 5.34$, were more likely to seek revenge than girls

in the same grade. Boys and girls in Grade 8 were equally likely to say that they would try to get back at the bully, $t(1, 4163) = 1.83$, *n.s.* Separate one-way ANOVA's revealed significant effects of grade among girls for the bystander strategies "Did Something", $F(4, 10\ 849) = 3.66$, and "Sought Revenge", $F(4, 10\ 545) = 4.80$, but not for boys, "Did Something", $F(4, 9757) = 2.11$, *n.s.*; "Sought Revenge", $F(4, 9428) = 1.78$, *n.s.* However, follow-up post-hoc analyses using Scheffé's criterion did not reveal any significant grade differences among girls for bystander behaviours that involved doing something, and only one significant grade difference for aggressive bystander behaviour – girls in Grade 8 were more likely to say that they "Sought Revenge" than girls in Grade 12.

3.3. The Relationship between Bullying, Victimization and Bystander Behaviour.

To test the relationship between secondary student's experiences with bullying as a perpetrator, victim, or both, four hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted using the bystander responses "Did Something", "Told Someone", "Did Nothing" and "Sought Revenge" as dependent variables. These regressions were performed to assess whether student's experiences with bullying and victimization at school predict unique variance in students endorsement of bystander response strategies. Grade and sex were entered in Step 1 of the models to control for the effects of these variables on the endorsement of the various bystander strategies. Self-reported frequency of bullying others, victimization by peers, and the interaction term bullying X victimization were entered in Step 2 of the analyses.

The assumption of normality was tested by examining histograms, boxplots and probability plots (P-P plots) of raw scores, residuals plots, and statistics for skewness and kurtosis for the four different types of bystander behaviour. In all cases these methods revealed that student reports of bystander behaviour were somewhat positively skewed. However, it was

determined that any deviations from normality were not problematic to the subsequent analyses given the large sample size. Further examination of the residuals plots indicated that the assumption of linearity was met for all dependent variables. The assumption of homoscedasticity was tested by examining scatterplots of the standardized residuals versus the predicted residuals and was determined to be violated for each of the dependent variables. Violation of this assumption means that the residuals do not have a constant variance. In each case, the value of the residuals was smaller for higher values of the dependent variable. Examination of the Tolerance Index and variance inflation factor (VIF) revealed that the amount of multicollinearity among the predictors was tolerable (i.e., Tolerance Index > 0.20, VIF < 4). As a further caution against multicollinearity the bullying, victimization, and bullying X victimization predictor terms were centered (the mean score for each variable was subtracted from each individual's score on that variable), and the centered terms were entered into the regression equation. The Durbin-Watson statistic indicated that there was no serial correlation among the residuals (i.e., the residuals are independent).

The results of these regressions are presented in Table 9. The control variables (grade and sex) were significant predictors of all four forms of bystander behaviour ($\alpha = 0.01$): "Did Something", $F(2, 19\ 489) = 172.60$; "Told Someone", $F(2, 19\ 132) = 69.36$; "Did Nothing", $F(2, 19\ 332) = 17.04$; and "Sought Revenge", $F(2, 18\ 978) = 60.76$. Together, these variables accounted for a very small proportion of the variance in these variables: 2%, 1%, <1% and <1%, respectively. Inspection of the regression coefficients and semi-partial correlations revealed that gender was a significant predictor for all four dependent variables. However, student's grade was only a significant predictor for passive bystander behaviour. The addition of bullying and victimization experiences in Step 2 was also significant for all forms of bystander behaviour:

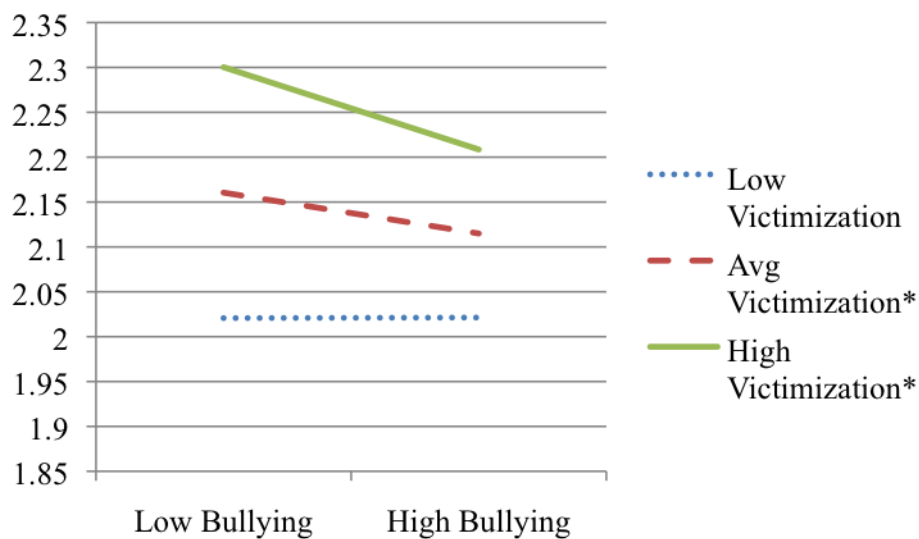
“Did Something”, $F(5, 19\ 486) = 112.66$; “Told Someone”, $F(5, 19\ 129) = 55.41$; “Did Nothing”, $F(5, 19\ 329) = 48.23$; and “Sought Revenge”, $F(5, 18\ 975) = 133.67$. These variables accounted for an additional 1%, 1%, 1% and 3% of the variance in bystander responses, respectively. Examination of the regression coefficients and semi-partial correlations revealed that students’ frequency of bullying and victimization each accounted for a small but significant proportion of unique variance in all four forms of bystander behaviour. As expected, bullying was negatively related to student’s reports that they “Did Something” and “Told Someone”, and positively related to reports that they “Did Nothing” or “Sought Revenge”. Victimization was also positively related to students’ reports that they “Did Nothing” when they witnessed bullying. Contrary to expectations, victimization was also positively related to students’ endorsement of prosocial (e.g., “Did Something”, “Told Someone”) and aggressive (e.g., “Sought Revenge”) bystander responses. The addition of the interaction between bullying and victimization in Step 3 of the regression model was a significant predictor for prosocial bystander responses only (i.e., “Did Something” and “Told Someone”), and explained less than 1% of additional variance in the dependent variables. Interestingly, the direction of the relationship when frequency of bullying was moderated by frequency of victimization was negative for students’ reports that they “Did Something”, and positive for reports that they “Told Someone”. Significant interaction terms were investigated by plotting the regression lines for values one standard deviation above and below the mean level of victimization and bullying. Following the procedure recommended by Cohen, Kasen, Chen, Hartmark, and Gordon (2003), t-tests were conducted to test the simple slopes of the regression lines. Results are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

As shown in Figure 1, students who reported average to high levels of victimization were the **most likely** to report that they “Did Something” when they witnessed another student being bullied, but this tendency decreased significantly for those students who indicated that they also bullied others. Students who reported low levels of victimization were the **least likely** to report that they “Did Something” when they witnessed another student being bullied, regardless of whether or not they also participated in bullying others. Figure 2 shows a slightly different pattern of effects. In this case, students who reported high levels of victimization were the **most likely** to report that they “Told Someone” when they witnessed bullying at school, regardless of whether or not they also bullied others. At low to average levels of victimization, students who reported bullying others were significantly less likely to say that they “Told Someone” about witnessing bullying than students who did not bully.

Table 9. Regression Results for Bystanders' Responses to Bullying Witnessed

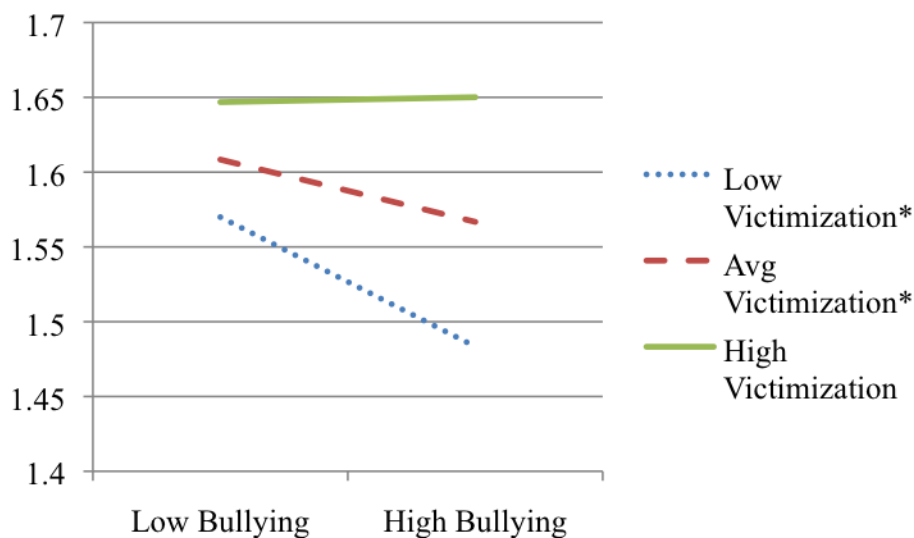
	"Did Something"				"Told Someone"				"Did Nothing"				"Sought Revenge"			
	R ²	B	t	sp ²	R ²	B	t	sp ²	R ²	B	t	sp ²	R ²	B	t	sp ²
	Chng				Chng				Chng				Chng			
Step 1																
Grade		.004	.60	0		.02	2.45	0		.04	4.97*	.001		-	-2.19	0
														.02		
Gender		.13	18.46*	.02		.09	11.89*	.01		.03	4.31*	.001		-	-9.44*	.005
														.07		
R ² Chng	.02				.007				.002				.01			
Step 2																
Bullying		-.03	-2.96*	0		-	-2.71*	0		.08	9.63*	.005		.13	15.05*	.01
						.02										
Victimization		.13	14.37*	.01		.07	7.50*	.003		.04	4.92*	.001		.05	5.25*	.001
R ² Chng	.01				.006				.01				.03			
Step 3																
Bullying X Victimization		-.04	-4.34*	.001		.04	4.23*	.001		-	-.98	0		.02	2.54	0
										.01						
R ² Chng	.001				.001				0				0			
R ² Total (adj)	.03				.01				.01				.03			

*Significant at $\alpha = 0.01$



* Simple slope significant at $\alpha=0.01$

Figure 1. Interaction between Bullying and Victimization Experiences on Students' Responses that they "Did Something"



* Simple slope significant at $\alpha=0.01$

Figure 2. Interaction between Bullying and Victimization Experiences on Students' Responses that they "Told Someone"

Chapter 4: Discussion

The primary purpose of the present study was to provide a better understanding of how secondary students' personal experiences as a perpetrator and/or victim of bullying influenced their behaviour as bystanders when they witnessed peer-directed violence at school. Student's endorsement of a variety of positive and negative categories of bystander behaviour were considered in response to actual bullying incidents witnessed at school, including students' reports that they did something to stop the bullying or help the victim, told someone about what they saw, sought revenge on behalf of the victim, or remained passive and did nothing. A secondary purpose of the current study was to replicate previous findings of grade and gender differences in youth's endorsement of various bystander response strategies (see Trach et al., 2010).

Consistent with previous research (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005a; Menesini et al., 1997; Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Salmivalli et al., 1996), girls in the present sample were more likely than boys to report that they engaged in prosocial bystander behaviour, including direct intervention (i.e., telling the bully to stop, helping the victim) as well as the more indirect strategy of telling an adult or peer about the incident. Boys were generally more likely than girls to report aggressive or retaliatory behaviour (i.e., they tried to get back at the bully). Unexpectedly, secondary-school girls were more likely than boys to endorse passive bystander response strategies. As expected, passive witnessing was more common among older students (i.e., Grades 9 and up). However, the hypothesized decrease in older students' endorsement of prosocial bystander strategies was not observed in the present study.

With respect to the relationship between students' social experiences at school and their behaviour as bystanders, bullying and victimization each accounted for a small but significant

proportion of variance in all four forms of bystander behaviour. Not surprisingly, more frequent reports of bullying others was positively related to students' endorsement of both passive and aggressive bystander responses (i.e., "Did Nothing" and "Sought Revenge"). Peer victimization was also a positive predictor of both passive and aggressive bystander strategies. Consistent with hypotheses, students who did not bully and were not victimized were the least likely to endorse these types of negative bystander response strategies. These results lend support to the theory that children who are involved in bullying may share deficits in emotion regulation skills that affects their behaviour as bystanders. For example, research has shown that both bullies and victims possess less empathic concern for the well being of others than students who are not involved in bullying (Warden & Mackinnon, 2003), which likely contributes to their tendency to engage in passive bystanding behaviour. At the same time, children who bully others also tend to be more aggressive than their peers (Camodeca, Goossens, Meerum Terwogt, & Scheungel, 2002; Camodeca & Goossens, 2005a; Craig, 1998; Espelage & Holt, 2001; Veenstra et al., 2005), which may result in retaliatory or aggressive bystander responses in some situations.

It is important to note that the youth who participated in this study were asked to indicate all of the strategies that they used when they witnessed bullying during the previous year, so it is not surprising that in some cases bullies would respond passively, while in others they may choose to seek revenge. Similarly, in many cases victims may choose to avoid getting involved, either because they lack the self-esteem (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Karatzias et al., 2002; Rigby, 1998) or social power (Cunningham, 2007; Eslea & Rees, 2001; Espelage & Holt, 2001; Slee & Rigby, 1993; Warden & Mackinnon, 2003) to feel like they can make a difference. Although somewhat unexpected, victims' greater endorsement of aggressive bystander behaviour in this study is consistent with Olweus's (1993) distinction between passive and reactive victims. Some

victims will, at times, respond aggressively when they are bullied. Intuitively it makes sense that these same individuals may also react aggressively when they see someone else being bullied. Youth who are victimized may have greater difficulty effectively regulating their emotions and behaviour in situations that cause them to feel distressed. For example, research has shown that youth are more upset when they witness a friend being bullied than if the victim is a non-friend (Bonanno & Hymel, 2006a; Bonanno & Hymel, 2006b). Future research is needed to examine the various situational factors, such as the witness's relationship with the victim, bully, and other bystanders, that cause adolescents to either disengage or retaliate when they observe peer-directed violence.

With respect to prosocial bystander behaviour, the significant interaction between bullying and victimization experiences found in the present study indicates that students who reported relatively low levels of bullying others but average to high levels of victimization were more likely to endorse responses that involved doing something to stop the bullying or help the victim than those who were not victimized. Similarly, students who bullied others but experienced low to average levels of victimization were significantly less likely than their more frequently victimized peers to say that they told an adult or peer when they witnessed someone else being bullied. Taken together, this pattern of effects suggests that the experience of being victimized at least occasionally may offset the tendency for bullies to either avoid getting involved or to respond aggressively when they witness another student being bullied. The experience of being bullied may heighten a victim's empathy for other victims, motivating them to respond when they witness the victimization and harassment of others. However, students' degree of empathic responsiveness does not effectively distinguish active defenders from passive bystanders (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoè, 2008).

An alternative explanation may be that the experience of being victimized lessens bullies' ability to morally disengage when they witness harm inflicted upon another person. Defenders have been shown to possess higher levels of moral responsibility than bullies, assistants and reinforcers (Gini, 2006). In addition, (Hymel, Rock-Henderson, & Bonanno, 2005) determined that the degree of moral disengagement among adolescent's who bullied some of the time decreased as their frequency of victimization increased. Greater moral engagement as a bystander may help to explain why youth who bully in some situations choose to intervene on behalf of the victim in others. However, as mentioned previously, the interaction between individual and situational characteristics that promote this type of response are not yet fully understood.

Contrary to hypotheses, uninvolved youth were the least likely to engage in active defending behaviour. Thus, although uninvolved youth indicated that they were less likely to endorse passive or aggressive bystander strategies than bullies and victims, they were not more likely to actually do something when they witnessed another student being bullied. It may be that uninvolved youth do not witness bullying as often as their peers, and therefore are less experienced at identifying it when it occurs. Another possible explanation is that they do not view bullying as a problem that requires their involvement. Educators concerned with creating safe schools and socially responsible citizens need to develop strategies that encourage uninvolved students to take a more active role in addressing bullying (Kärnä et al., 2011). If bullying is indeed a group problem, then effectively preventing bullying will require the committed involvement of each and every member of the school community.

4.1. Limitations

A number of limitations to the current study should be noted. First, this project made use of secondary student's self-reports of bullying experiences based on retrospective accounts of the strategies that they used to address bullying during the previous school year. Despite the fact that such data is vulnerable to social desirability and memory biases, the overall consistency between the current findings and results of previous research (i.e., Trach et al., 2010) in terms of both the pattern and size of effects suggests that these results provide a meaningful and replicable account of student's interrelated experiences as bullies, victims, and bystanders.

Second, given the concurrent and cross-sectional nature of the data used in this study, it is not possible to determine if student's experiences as a bully and/or victim caused them to respond differently as bystanders. It is also feasible that witnessing bullying places bystanders at greater risk of becoming bullies or victims themselves, thereby perpetuating an ongoing cycle of peer violence. Exposure to violence at school has been associated with increased aggressive and violent behaviour (Carney, 2008; Janosz et al., 2008; Slovak & Singer, 2002; Janson & Hazler, 2004), as well as feelings of insecurity (Janosz et al., 2008), depression and suicidal ideation (Bonanno, 2007; Bonanno & Hymel, 2010). As a consequence of observing violence at school, youth may be more likely to experience violence and respond in kind. For example, approximately 21-30% of elementary students have been observed joining in when they see bullying, and peer nomination research indicates that 21-28% of youth are classified by peers as Assistants or Reinforcer's who actively support or encourage bullying as bystanders (Salmivalli et al., 1996;1998). Given that youth who bully tend to hang out with other bullies (Salmivalli, Huttunen, & Lagerspetz, 1997), students who are involved in bullying are likely centrally located within the bullying activities of their school's social networks. Due to their overlapping

experiences with multiple participant roles, students who both bully others and are victimized at moderate to high levels may also be the most likely to witness and recognize bullying. Therefore, regardless of the direction of this effect, these findings suggest that students who often witness bullying are an important target for anti-bullying intervention efforts.

Finally, as with previous research employing a similar survey (Trach et al., 2010), the effect sizes observed in the present study were relatively small, ranging from 0.001 to 0.03 across bystander responses. Interestingly, these effects are similar in size to the small effects observed for grade and gender differences across bullying and victimization experiences in the present study, which ranged from 0.001 to 0.004. It should be noted that the patterns of grade and gender differences obtained in the current study were consistent with well-documented grade and gender-related differences of bullying and victimization experiences reported by children and adolescents using a variety of different methodological approaches (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997; Craig & McCuaig Edge, 2007; Salimvalli, 1998; WHO, 2008). Therefore, if we are willing to accept the importance and robustness of findings such as the fact that boys are more likely to bully than girls, or that bullying peaks around the transition from elementary to secondary school for both sexes, then perhaps we should pay similar attention to the small but meaningful effects associated with individual differences in bystander behaviour. That being said, the small effect sizes observed in this study in combination with the variety of strategies endorsed by different sub-groups suggests that other contextual factors may influence the types of bystander response strategies youth choose in a given situation.

4.2. Conclusion, Implications, and Future Directions

This research demonstrated that adolescent bystanders employ a variety of strategies when dealing with school bullying, and that their choice of response depends, in part, on their

own experiences with bullying. These findings have a number of important implications for both school-based anti-bullying initiatives and future research.

First, students who were involved in bullying were more likely than those who were uninvolved to respond aggressively to bullying witnessed at school. These youth need effective prosocial strategies for responding to bullying, as well as the support of adults and peers to encourage prosocial bystander intervention. Interventions should focus on teaching and providing opportunities for students to practice effective, assertive anti-bullying responses. Future research should investigate the impact of student's perceptions of their school climate on their endorsement of various bystander response strategies.

Second, across groups, secondary students reported relatively low levels of talking to adults about bullying witnessed at school, with fewer than half of students surveyed indicating that they used this type of strategy at all. When students do report witnessing bullying, it is vitally important for adult's to respond. It is imperative that schools develop anti-bullying policies that provide their staff with the tools to respond effectively to bullying. Further research is needed to determine the types of responses that are indeed effective at addressing bullying from the perspective of both students and teachers.

Finally, uninvolved youth made up 59% of the present sample. Although they were the least likely to endorse passive bystander behaviour, they were in fact the most passive, reporting the lowest levels of endorsement on all other forms of bystander behaviour. Intervention efforts should focus on activities that will motivate uninvolved students to get involved as proactive bystanders. Possibilities include interventions that focus on increasing awareness about bullying and understanding the negative effects of bullying on everyone, including bystanders.

Individual differences do play a role in youth's behaviour as witnesses to school-based violence, but it is also clear from this research that they are not the only factors that matter. In addition to personal characteristics like social status and self esteem, future research should also consider contextual factors that likely impact student's behaviour as bystanders, including perceptions of school climate, group norms regarding bullying and bystander behaviour, intra-group relationships, and inter-group processes. Interventions also need to address the role of positive relationships and healthy school climate in order to reduce the negative effects of bullying for everyone involved. Theoretically, interventions that are committed to enhancing school climate and students' bonds to one another should also increase proactive bystander behaviour (i.e., student's dedicated to protecting students). It is up to future research to determine if this is, in fact, the case.

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