

**PEER RESPONSE TO BULLYING CONFLICT:  
IDENTIFYING EARLY ADOLESCENTS' STRATEGIES AND GOALS**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the role of peers in bullying and peer harassment situations. Specifically, the strategies students use when exposed to bullying conflict as observers as well as the motivation behind their behavior (or failure to respond) were of interest. In addition to examining whether students have or know about effective strategies for intervening when they are bystanders, the present investigation also looked at links between students' strategies and goals and their perceptions of how difficult it is to respond to bullying. In individual interviews students in grades six and seven ( $N = 140$ ) were asked to respond to nine hypothetical situations involving three types of bullying (direct physical bullying, direct verbal bullying, indirect relational bullying). For each scenario, students provided ratings of how difficult they thought it would be to respond to each situation and reported what they would say or do (strategy) as well as the desired outcome (goal) for their response for each situation. Results indicated that students were aware of a variety of response strategies, some of which served to encourage bullying. Students endorsed goals that reflected self-serving and antisocial as well as prosocial motivations. Both gender and type of bullying influenced the extent to which certain strategies and goals were endorsed as well as students' perceptions of how difficult it is to deal with bullying as bystanders. Discussion considers the implications of these findings for school-based interventions as well as directions for future research.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The impetus for new research on the problem of bullying in North American schools is likely connected to several well-publicized teen suicides and homicides that have been linked to this chronic form of peer harassment. In the US, the most notable instance of school violence occurred in the spring of 1999 in Littleton, Colorado when two teenagers went on a killing spree in their high school, killing 12 students and a teacher before ending their own lives. Although their actions are inexcusable, their behavior may be best informed by the fact that these teens were themselves victims of chronic peer harassment. In British Columbia, the serious nature of bullying is highlighted by recent court proceedings (April 2001) in which three girls were accused of bullying and being responsible for the subsequent death of a Mission teen who committed suicide as a result of being bullied. Furthermore, a recent report by the British Columbia Children's Commission (2001) indicated that out of 15 teen suicides in 1997 and 1998, bullying was associated with one third of the cases (i.e., though bullying may not have been a causal factor, reports indicate that these students had experienced peer victimization and/or had victimized others).

Clearly, in some circumstances, for some children, chronic peer victimization has life-threatening/lethal implications. Thankfully, it seems that society has taken serious notice of the problem of bullying in response to such cases. However, the vast majority of children who are constantly harassed at the hands of their peers will not take their own lives or react violently. Instead, these children are more likely to suffer in silence, sometimes throughout their school careers, with lasting negative outcomes. In fact, the effects of bullying are well documented, not only in terms of the psychological harm that

is inflicted upon victims, but also in terms of the negative outcomes for children who engage in bullying.

Students who are victimized typically experience internalizing difficulties, including greater depression (Callaghan & Joseph, 1995; Craig, 1998; Haynie et al., 2001; Kalliala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000; Rigby, 2000; Slee, 1995), greater anxiety (Craig, 1998; Kalliala-Heino et al., 2000; Rigby, 2000) and psychosomatic symptoms (Kalliala-Heino et al., 2000; Rigby, 2000). They also experience poorer health (both mental and physical) (Rigby, 2000, 2001) relative to students who are not involved in bullying (for an overview see Rigby, 2001). Research also indicates that victimized children have poorer self-concept (Callaghan & Joseph, 1995) and experience greater loneliness (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001) and social dissatisfaction (Haynie et al., 2001; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001). Some victimized children experience school-related difficulties including school avoidance (Hodges & Perry, 1996) and poorer school functioning (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2000).

In contrast, bullies are said to experience more externalizing difficulties (Kalliala-Heino et al., 2000) with greater risk for antisocial problem behaviors (e.g., substance abuse) and later criminality (Olweus, 1991; Pulkkinen & Pitkanen, 1993). However, bullies also experience internalizing difficulties including depressive symptoms (Kalliala-Heino et al., 2000; Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Henttonen, 1999; Slee, 1995) and anxiety (Kalliala-Heino et al., 2000).

A growing body of evidence suggests that children who are *both* bullies and victims (bully-victims) are at even greater risk than children who are either bullies or

victims (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Haynie et al., 2001; Kumpulainen et al., 1999; Nansel et al., 2001). For instance, Kaltiala-Heino and colleagues (2000) found that among over 26,000 14- to 16-year-olds surveyed, bully-victims reported greater anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic symptoms than did bullies or victims. Haynie et al. (2001) found that bully-victims also experienced greater problem behaviors (e.g., physical fighting, weapon carrying, theft), more positive attitudes toward deviant peers, and poorer school-related functioning (e.g., doing homework, getting along with classmates, doing well on schoolwork). Of additional concern is that bully-victims tend to remain involved in bullying over longer periods of time (Kumpulainen et al., 1999). Perhaps the consequences of bullying are negative for all those involved but most serious for a small minority who are bully-victims (across studies 1 to 7% of children are bully-victims, Haynie et al., 2001; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000; Nansel et al., 2001).

Formal investigation of bullying began about 30 years ago. Dan Olweus, a pioneer in this area, began his research in Norway in the 1970's. Later, in 1982, a national campaign aimed at reducing bully/victim problems in Norwegian schools was initiated in response to reported suicides that were associated with peer victimization (Olweus, 1991). More recently, many countries including England (e.g., Whitney & Smith, 1993), Australia, (Rigby & Slee, 1991), Finland (Kaltiala-Heino, et al., 2000), and Japan (Morita, Soeda, Soeda, & Taki, 1999) have initiated large-scale efforts to understand the problem of bullying<sup>1</sup>. It is only within the past five years that similar initiatives have been undertaken in North America (e.g., Nansel et al., 2001). Researchers have been able to shed much insight into the problem of bullying in schools. However, emphasis has primarily been placed on descriptive data,

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<sup>1</sup> To date, large-scale initiatives similar to those undertaken in other countries have not been initiated in Canada.

determining the incidence of bullying and the characteristics of bullies and victims (Tulloch, 1995). We know far less about how *other* children respond to bullying.

There is mounting concern among researchers and educators that the dynamics of the peer group contribute in very significant ways to bully/victim problems in schools. Recent Canadian observational data indicate that peers are present in about 85% of bullying episodes, but intervene only 10 to 11% of the time (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997). We presently have very little understanding of the reasons *why* children do what they do when exposed to bullying and *how* peer behavior contributes to the maintenance of bullying. We do know that peer involvement in the bullying process sometimes serves to encourage and perpetuate peer harassment (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). For instance, Pepler (2001) suggests that bully/victim episodes generate high levels of excitement that draw peers into the event. As well, bystanders are observed to be more respectful and friendly to the bullies than to victims following these episodes. What is less clear is why this is the case. It is critical to explain how such peer group dynamics impact bully/victim problems.

As a first step to uncovering the peer contribution to bullying, the purpose of the present study was to explore, through interviews, what children do when they observe bullying. Borrowing from a social problem-solving paradigm used most often to study more benign peer conflict (i.e., aggression, friendship conflict), this study served to uncover social strategies children use when exposed to bullying conflict as observers as well as the goals of their behavior. Students were presented with a series of hypothetical bullying vignettes, describing each of three forms of aggressive behavior: (1) direct physical aggression, (2) direct verbal aggression, and (3) indirect aggression (referred to as relational or social aggression). After each vignette, students were

asked to generate both strategies and goals by indicating (1) what they would do if were involved in the situation as an observer and (2) what would be their reason or goal for behaving in a particular way. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to explore peer behavior by highlighting the goals and strategies children use to deal with bullying conflict.

The present study allows us to begin to understand what it is that children try to do when exposed to bullying and, importantly, why. Without this insight we do not have an accurate understanding of their motivations in what should be considered very challenging and uncomfortable social situations. Bullying captures a series of complex social interactions that are perplexing for many children. Such situations require them to make difficult judgments and decisions, and to learn lessons about acceptable versus unacceptable social behavior. It is important to consider the process by which children come to intervene (or not) in order to understand the process of bullying and more importantly, to find new ways to support and encourage children in their efforts to act more prosocially.

A review of relevant literature is discussed in several sections. Sections include (1) an examination of definitional, measurement, and prevalence issues, (2) a discussion of the importance of studying the peer group in order to understand the bullying process, and (3) a brief overview of the literature on bullying and bystanders, reflecting what we currently know about how peers respond to bullying conflict. Next, a discussion of peer attitudes toward victims, which are currently thought to be important to understanding peer motivations in bullying conflict, is followed by consideration of parallels and inconsistencies with the social psychological research on bystander intervention. Finally, the social problem-solving paradigm is described and applied to

bullying and the present study. A statement of the problem follows the literature review sections.

## **Literature Review**

### *What is Bullying & How is it Measured?*

Peer harassment (or peer victimization) denotes both physical and psychological harm that children and adolescents inflict upon one another. Chronic peer harassment, generally referred to as bullying<sup>2</sup>, is a form of peer victimization involving a subset of aggressive behavior characterized by (a) a power differential between perpetrator and victim (whether physical or psychological) and (b) negative acts that are enacted repeatedly over time (Olweus, 1991, 1999; Smith & Morita, 1999). It is both the power differential and the chronicity of bullying that distinguishes it from other aggressive acts such as fighting and that make bullying such an egregious form of peer conflict. Moreover, in the case of bullying, aggressive acts are intended to harm, are typically unprovoked and unwanted, may be carried out by one or more perpetrators, and can take one of three forms including (1) direct physical aggression (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing), (2) direct verbal aggression (e.g., teasing, name-calling, verbal threats) and, (3) indirect/relational aggression (e.g., spreading rumors, social exclusion) (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Rivers & Smith, 1994).

Methods used to measure aggression and victimization have included self-report, peer ratings, peer nomination, teacher report, and more recently, naturalistic observation (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000; Pepler & Craig, 1995). Self-report questionnaires or surveys, perhaps the most widely used means of capturing the prevalence of bullying (Pellegrini, 1998), generally begin with a definition of bullying.

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<sup>2</sup> Note the terms bullying, peer harassment, and victimization are used interchangeably throughout this document.

Students are then asked to report the extent to which they themselves have been victimized or have participated in bullying (e.g., Nansel et al., 2001; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Although researchers typically promise anonymity to participants in order to promote honest responding, self-report data are considered an underestimation of the problem of bullying (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). In question is the extent to which children will admit to bullying or being victimized (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999). As an example, older children may be particularly reluctant to admit to being victimized out of embarrassment.

Few self-report studies deviate from the protocol of defining bullying and then asking students to report on their own behavior. However, certain researchers have criticized this approach, arguing that it is particularly susceptible to socially desirable responding (e.g., underreporting experiences of bullying and victimization) (e.g., Austin & Joseph, 1996). Addressing this problem by reducing the saliency of bullying-related items, Austin and Joseph (1996) embedded self-report bullying and victimization scales within a self-report measure of self-concept, Harter's Self-Perception Profile. However, one significant limitation of this study is that converging evidence (i.e., peer reports, teacher reports, or observation) were not used to validate the cut-off scores used to identify bullies and victims, making it impossible to evaluate whether or not the scales allow for appropriate identification.

Other researchers opt to exclude definitions of bullying. For instance, through interviews and surveys, Glover, Gough, Johnson, and Cartwright (2000) asked children to provide information about various types of behavior without specific reference to bullying (i.e., students indicated through surveys and interviews whether they had "mistreated others" or had been "mistreated themselves"). However, in both studies

information, and which approach provides the least subjective point of view. For instance, Pellegrini and Bartini (2000) examined the association between self-report and peer nomination techniques and found that a significant degree of association between techniques (i.e.,  $\chi^2$ 's ranging from 33.39 to 4.35). In contrast, Vaillancourt, McDougall, Bonanno, and Rocke Henderson (2001) have found that self-reports and peer nominations of bullying were *not* significantly associated and were only moderately correlated for victimization. In fact, they found that students identified as bullies or victims using one method were not necessarily identified using the other method. However, it is unclear whether intercorrelations were not found because of age differences among participants (students were in grades 6-10); in the former study (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000) only one age group was examined (students were in grades 6-8). Further research is needed to determine the extent of overlap and uniqueness of peer versus self-report. In deciding which approach to use, researchers must carefully consider the limitations of evaluating one perspective over the other (i.e., the bias of group perceptions versus the biases individuals might have and how this will affect results). Alternatively, researchers should carefully consider the benefits of conducting direct observations of bullying behavior.

Recently Canadian researchers successfully used naturalistic observation to examine bullying behavior in the school setting (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997; O'Connell et al., 1999; Pepler & Craig, 1995). Using remote audiovisual equipment (i.e., wireless microphones and video cameras), they have observed children on the playground as well as in the classroom. Behavior observed during the recorded episodes was later coded and analyzed. Interestingly, this body of research confirms that bullying is common in Canadian schools, both on the playground and in the



classroom, but it also indicates that children are observed to intervene far less frequently than might be expected based on attitudinal data (O'Connell et al., 1999). In spite of imposing ethical issues (e.g., obtaining consent, disclosure of potentially dangerous behavior, maintaining confidentiality), conducting naturalistic observation in this way has proven an invaluable tool for examining childhood aggression and bullying by providing an otherwise inaccessible perspective. Despite the advantages of studying children's behavior through naturalistic observation (e.g., greater external validity, comprehensive record of children's behavior that includes underground and infrequent behavior), the cost and difficulty of conducting such research explains the paucity of bullying studies employing this methodology (Pellegrini, 1998; Pepler & Craig, 1995).

Pellegrini (1998) has criticized the self-report questionnaire approach, arguing that it does not allow us to tap the complexity of bullying events and that direct observation is the best method of obtaining comprehensive information about bullying. However, given that the self-report approach allows detailed information to be gathered with large groups of students, self-report will likely continue to be the preferred method of obtaining prevalence and other types of data concerning bullying. In fact, much of what we know about bullying in schools has been learned from self-report questionnaires.

### *What is the Prevalence of Bullying in Schools?*

Within the past ten years, a substantial amount of cross-national research examining the prevalence of bullying has been conducted (for an overview, see Smith et al., 1999). As would be expected, prevalence rates tend to vary across samples due to differences in sampling (e.g., different time frames and/or conceptualizations of bullying may be employed) and methodological approaches (e.g., peer nomination versus self-

report, nature of questions asked) (Boulton & Smith, 1994). Overall this literature indicates that bullying is a fairly commonplace occurrence in schools.

Because self-report questionnaires can be used with large groups of students, the self-report questionnaire is the preferred method of measuring the incidence of bullying in schools. Dan Olweus, a prominent researcher in the area of bullying has created one such questionnaire (1989). The Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire has since been translated and adapted for use in other countries.

Although large-scale results are not yet available, research using surveys modeled after Olweus' measure suggests that bullying is common in Canadian schools. One Canadian survey of 211 students in grades 4 to 8 (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995) indicated that 8% of children reported being bullied on a regular basis (once a week or more). Fifteen percent of students admitted to bullying more than once or twice during the term, and 2% admitted to bullying others once a week or more. Obtaining similar results, Bentley and Li (1995) found that just over 9% of children between grades 4 to 6 ( $N = 379$ ) reported being bullied on a regular basis (once or more a week) and just over 5% reported bullying others on a regular basis (once a week or more). In both studies, although rates of self-reported victimization were equal among boys and girls, many more boys than girls reported bullying others (23% vs. 8%, respectively, in Charach et al., 9% vs. 2%, respectively, in Bentley & Li).

Canadian observational data also indicate that bullying occurs very frequently. On the playground, bullying occurred once every 7 minutes with the average episode lasting 38 seconds (Craig & Pepler, 1997). In the classroom, bullying episodes lasted an average of 26 seconds occur three to four times an hour (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). In the first large-scale US study to evaluate the prevalence of bullying, American youth

reported even greater involvement in bullying (Nansel et al., 2001). Among over 15,000 students surveyed, 13% reported being bullies, 10.6% reported being victims, and 6.3% reported being both perpetrators and targets of bullying ('sometimes' or 'once a week or more').

In Olweus' (1991) large-scale surveys completed by approximately 130,000 students in Norway, 9% of children between the ages of 8 and 16 reported being bullied "now and then" or more frequently, and 7% of students reported bullying others at this rate (Olweus, 1991). Five percent of students reported involvement in more serious and frequent bullying (as bullies, victims, or bully-victims) (Olweus, 1991, 1999). In comparison with Canadian and US prevalence data, bullying is less frequent among Norwegian students. However, other large-scale questionnaires studies modeled after Olweus' measure have reported prevalence rates similar and in some cases, higher than those obtained in North America. For instance, Borg (1999) determined that, among 6,282 Maltese students surveyed, as many as 19% experienced frequent (i.e., weekly or more) victimization and 14.2% admitted to frequent bullying. Though cross-national comparisons should be made with caution due to methodological and cultural differences, overall, research indicates that bullying is a common occurrence in schools worldwide.

Across studies, noteworthy age and gender trends have been found. In the UK, Whitney and Smith (1993) found that levels of bullying were highest among junior/middle school children, with an average of 10% of students reporting that they were bullied once a week or more. Substantially fewer secondary students reported being bullied (an average 4% of students reported being bullied on a weekly basis). Similar age trends were observed with respect to reports of bullying others. An average

of 4% of junior/middle, and 1% of secondary students admitted to bullying others at least once a week.<sup>3</sup> Thus, reports of bullying and victimization tended to decrease with age during later adolescence. Similar age trends have been reported in various studies using Olweus' measure (e.g., Borg, 1999; Olweus, 1991) as well as studies using other self-report questionnaires (e.g., in Australia: Rigby & Slee, 1991; in the US: Nansel et al., 2001).

Results of various studies also reflect certain gender differences. Specifically, boys tend to be more involved in bullying, both as perpetrators and victims, than are girls (for a review see Rigby, 1998) although there is also some evidence that *equal* numbers of girls and boys are victimized (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000; Whitney & Smith, 1993). The finding that boys bully more than girls ought to be more carefully scrutinized given evidence that aggression may be nearly as prevalent among girls when "relational" or "indirect" forms of aggression are considered in addition to physical aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). For instance, results of one Canadian study (Hymel, Bonanno, & Rocke Henderson, 2002) found that that when self-reports of bullying were compared across gender, boys and girls did not differ in the extent to which they self-reported being bullied or victimized by relational bullying.

Although it is generally accepted that relational aggression is one type of bullying behavior, a concerted effort to make a clear distinction among forms of bullying is rarely undertaken when bullying is measured. For instance, in Olweus' Bully/Victim Questionnaire, the most widely used bullying measure, a *single item* is used to capture relational aggression: "How often does it happen that other students don't want to spend recess with you and you end up being alone?" It is debatable whether this item readily

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<sup>3</sup> In the UK, using peer nominations to identify bullies and victims, Boulton and Smith (1994) found that 13% and 17% of children between eight and nine years of age were identified as bullies and victims, respectively.

captures the full range of relational/indirect aggression and, as a result, prevalence of this more “female” form of bullying remains unclear. Moreover, Pepler and Craig (1995) argue that because relational/indirect bullying behaviors are rather subtle, direct observation may be a better and more appropriate way of examining this particular form of aggression. Unless studies of bullying examine all forms of aggressive behavior, including relational/indirect aggression, we may continue to find misrepresentative and contradictory findings with respect to gender differences.

### *Bullying as a Group Process: The Importance of Studying Peers*

Researchers have increasingly come to view bullying as a group phenomenon (e.g., Bukowski & Sippola, 2001) and to examine the role that peers play in the process of bullying (for an overview see Salmivalli, 2001). Research indicates that in most cases (85-88% of incidents), bullying occurs in a social context in which peers are present and well aware of the problem (Craig & Pepler, 1995; Pepler, 2001; Whitney & Smith, 1993). The role peers play in the bullying process is likely multifaceted. For instance, Pepler (2001) presented observational evidence to show how only a minority of peers who observed bullying actually behaved in ways that supported the victim, and that nearly one quarter of students actually supported the bullying and sometimes even joined in. Peer support, in turn, has been associated with increased excitement and aggression on the part of the bully. Even when peers simply watch, they may inadvertently support bullying, as the mere presence of a peer audience serves to encourage bullies (O’Connell et al., 1999).

Even in his earliest work, Olweus (1978, 1991) was concerned with peers, particularly those who join in bullying. He suggested that certain principles known to guide group behavior operate to encourage other children to join in and participate in

bullying. Specifically, he described four “group mechanisms” which served to encourage “passive bullies” (children who do not initiate) to participate in bullying. *Social contagion* refers to the tendency for children to imitate aggressive models. Thus, children who observe a bully victimizing another child may be incited to model the bully’s behavior. Next, Olweus suggests that if an observer perceives a bully to be reinforced (e.g., gaining the attention of other peers) and to receive few negative consequences for their aggressive behavior, the observer will experience little *inhibition against acting aggressively* himself or herself, thereby weakening control against their impulse to behave aggressively. *Diffusion of responsibility* becomes likely when many children participate in bullying because individual participants become less inclined to feel personally responsible for the consequences of their own actions. Finally, Olweus refers to *cognitive changes*, which essentially represent gradual changes in attitudes toward the victims over time whereby some children come to view the victim as deserving of maltreatment. According to Olweus, passive bullies are most susceptible to these group mechanisms. Although Olweus did not extend and apply this reasoning to the larger peer group, these mechanisms likely also describe the behavior of other uninvolved members of the peer group.

Recently, Bukowski and Sippola (2001) have looked at group mechanisms involved in bully/victim problems. Applying social psychological principles to the study of peer victimization, they argue that not only does bullying occur in the context of peer groups but that it is best understood in light of specific group processes. In particular, they suggest that victimization occurs because victimized individuals, rather unintentionally, impede or threaten group functioning. Thus, children who inadvertently disrupt the cohesion, homogeneity or evolution of the group are likely to be victimized. It

follows from their argument that peer victimization occurs as a result of processes that take place in the context of the peer group.

Also noting that aggression typically occurs in the context of groups, DeRosier, Cillessen, Coie, and Dodge (1994) explored the relation between specific dimensions of the group context (i.e., negative affect, activity level, group cohesion, etc.) and aggressive behavior. Using experimental play groups with African American boys, they determined that negative affect, high aversive behavior, high activity level, low group cohesion, and competitiveness were group dimensions related to the display of aggressive behavior among the group members.

Overall, this body of research explores how group dynamics affect individual behavior. However, the connection between group behavior and the behavioral response of peers in the context of bullying is not yet clear and requires further investigation. In particular, it remains to be demonstrated precisely how these group mechanisms operate to perpetuate bully/victim problems.

Richard Hazler (1996) takes a different view of the contribution of peers to bullying. Recognizing that children who are not directly involved in bullying situations either as bullies or victims are a largely untapped resource for tackling the problem of "peer on peer abuse", he notes that peers are often reluctant to intervene on behalf of victimized others. Hazler speculates that there may be three main reasons why this is often the case: (1) they do not know what to do, (2) they are fearful of retaliation on the part of bullies, or (3) they become overly concerned that their actions will exacerbate the situation. As a result, bullying situations invoke a lot of anxiety on the part of observers and children ultimately find it easiest and safest to avoid getting involved. Although all

of these potential explanations are highly plausible, none have been examined empirically.

O'Connell and colleagues (1999) have also hypothesized about the reasons for peer inaction in bullying situations. Like Olweus (1978, 1991), they suggest that personal responsibility to intervene is "diffused" because of the presence of others, reducing the impetus for peers to intervene when bullying occurs. They also reason that children are intimidated by the power differential that exists between bullies and victims and are afraid of becoming victims themselves. Lastly, they suggest that children may not have a clear understanding the bullying process; they lack strategies for dealing with bullying and as a result, do not intervene.

The importance of studying peers is also highlighted by research that demonstrates that friendship is a protective factor against peer victimization (e.g., Boulton, Trueman, Chau, Whitehand, & Amatya, 1999; Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). For instance, Hodges, Malone, and Perry (1997) have found that a child is *more* likely to be victimized if aggressive others think that they can avoid getting into trouble and *less* likely to be victimized if aggressive others anticipate a negative response from the peer group. Thus, children who lack protective friendships, which is often the case with socially rejected children, are more likely to be victimized because bullies receive the implicit message from the peer group that it is permissible, even acceptable to victimize such children. Indirectly, the process of peer rejection enables bullying (Hodges & Perry, 1996).

As yet, we do not fully appreciate or understand the processes by which children attempt to inhibit, support, or fail to respond to incidents of bullying. In fact, though many researchers have speculated about how peer group mechanisms operate to



perpetuate bully/victim problems and more specifically, what leads to peer inaction, few have tested their hypotheses directly. Several key questions remain unanswered. For instance, do children's attitudes and beliefs about bullying, bullies, and victims create a school climate that either exacerbates or reduces the likelihood of bullying? Is there an explanation for the low level of altruistic involvement on the part of peer observers? How might we encourage children to act more prosocially on behalf of victimized children? Certainly, in order to elucidate the process of chronic peer harassment, it becomes important to look beyond the bully/victim dyad to the peer group (Sutton & Smith, 1999).

### *What is Known about Bystanders?*

Although observational data clearly indicate that peers are present when bullying occurs, few studies to date have examined how bystanders respond to bullying conflict. In fact, as previously discussed, Canadian observational data indicate that although peers witness 85% of bullying episodes, they intervene on behalf of the victim only 10 to 11% of the time (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997). If children are present, what do they do? A small number of researchers have attempted to address this question.

There is evidence to suggest that children generally play various roles in the bullying process (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Sutton & Smith, 1999). In a series of studies conducted in Scandinavia, Salmivalli and colleagues (Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli, Huttunen, & Lagerspetz, 1997; Salmivalli, Lappalainen, & Lagerspetz, 1998) have identified six distinct participant roles that children take in bully/victim situations. In addition to the roles of bully and victim, bystander roles include that of the Assistant (someone who assists the bully and joins in), the Reinforcer (someone who encourages

the bully by observing and laughing), the Defender (some who comes to the aide of the victim by siding with him/her or by trying to get others to stop), and the Outsider (someone who is generally removed from, avoids, or not aware bullying situations). In one study, Salmivalli et al. (1996) found that 87% of 573 sixth grade students could be assigned (through peer nominations) one of six participant roles in the following proportions: 8.2% Bullies, 19.5% Reinforcers, 6.8% Assistants, 17.3% Defenders, 23.7% Outsiders, 11.7% Victims, and 12.7% were not assigned a role. Nearly 35% of children in this sample displayed some level of "pro-bullying" behavior and were thereby more likely to perpetuate the bullying process. Notable gender differences also emerged. Whereas peers most often rated girls as fitting the roles of Defenders and Outsiders, boys were more frequently rated as Bullies, Reinforcers, and Assistants. However, the frequency with which boys and girls were nominated as Victims was almost equal. Interestingly, these results parallel prevalence research that indicates that boys are more often involved in bullying as bullies but that boys and girls are victimized equally (for a review see Rigby, 1998).

O'Connell and colleagues (1999) have observed children in grades 1 to 6 to examine peer involvement in school playground bullying episodes. Of 185 videotaped bullying segments, just over half (54%) contained a bully, a victim, and two or more peers. On average, four students (range = 2 to 14) were present during bullying episodes. Episodes lasted an average of 79.4 seconds. A small positive relationship ( $r = .23$ ) was found between the number of peers present and the duration of the bullying episode, suggesting that bullying episodes last longer as the number of peers present increases. Further analysis revealed that nearly 21% of the time peers physically or verbally joined in the bullying, 54% of time they watched, and peers intervened on behalf of the victim 25% of the time. These bystander roles varied, however, as a

function of age and gender. Specifically, a significantly larger proportion of older boys in their sample was observed to actively participate in bullying. Young girls and older girls were more likely to intervene on behalf of victims. From a social learning perspective, O'Connell and his colleagues suggested that these results lend support to their claim that the processes of modeling and reinforcement operate to maintain bullying. Specifically, they suggest that bullies model aggressive behavior and peers provide reinforcement to bullies by providing an audience for their aggression.

Atlas and Pepler (1998) have conducted naturalistic observation in the classroom and have found that peers were present in 85% of bullying episodes. Nearly one third of the time (32%) peers took part in the bullying, 27% of the time they were involved in a parallel activity, 13% of the time they were onlookers. Thus, peers are also involved in bullying even when it takes place in the classroom.

Overall, research indicates that peers are involved both directly and indirectly when bullying occurs. Many children are passive observers or active participants, fewer act in support of victims, and others altogether ignore or avoid bullying when it happens. With the exception of the observational research described above, our understanding of these processes has been informed by peer reports of 'adult-determined' roles. What is lacking is the child/adolescent's perspective of their own experiences. Though this research provides an important perspective on how children behave, it provides little information about why. A survey of the research on children's and adolescent's beliefs and attitudes regarding bullying provides some insights into their possible motivations.

### *Peer Attitudes*

Attitudes that peers have toward bullying and toward those who are involved both as bullies and as victims are viewed as critical to understanding peer motives in bullying

situations. For instance, Steven, Van Oost, and deBourdeaudhuij (2000) argued that children's social cognitions (attitudes) about bully/victim problems contribute to the maintenance of bullying in schools and that the process of *changing* attitudes is key to promoting peer intervention. They reason that behavioral change (i.e., more intervening) is more likely when a child's intention to intervene is high. Accordingly, they suggest that intervention efforts should emphasize teaching peers about the negative impact of bullying. If children know how hurtful and damaging these behaviors can be, their attitudes will change and they may become more inclined to intervene. They further suggest that behavioral change will not happen if social cognitions (attitudes) are not congruent with target behavior.

Research on peer attitudes toward bullying has uncovered certain trends. Numerous studies have found that most children tend to have empathic and supportive attitudes toward victims and negative attitudes toward bullying (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Charach et al., 1995; Menesini et al., 1997; Rigby & Slee, 1991; Steven et al., 2000; Tulloch, 1995; Whitney & Smith, 1993). For instance, Canadian research indicates that the majority of children reported that they disliked bullying and wanted to stop it (Charach et al., 1995). That is, 61% found bullying very unpleasant, 43% tried to help victims, and 33% did not try to help even though they thought they should. Hymel, Bonanno, and Rocke Henderson (2002) reported similar findings. They found that 78 to 80% of students reported being bothered when other students get bullied and 87% said that kids should protect one another. In addition, Rigby and Slee (1991) found girls and younger children to be more supportive of victims although they also reported that with age, both girls' and boys' attitudes became increasingly less supportive of victims.

Of even greater concern is that across studies, a small minority of children endorse pro-bullying attitudes and unsympathetic attitudes toward victims (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Hymel, Bonanno, Rocke Henderson, & McCreith, 2002; Menesini et al., 1997; Rigby & Slee, 1991; Tulloch, 1995). Hence, in every school there is likely to be a group of students whose attitudes towards bullying and victims support aggression and bullying. Obviously children who do not sympathize with victims and who also endorse positive attitudes towards aggression will not be likely to stop bullying when it occurs. In fact, data indicate that the children who endorse such attitudes are often those identified as bullies (Hymel, Bonanno, Rocke Henderson, & McCreith, 2002; Tulloch, 1995).

While research on children's attitudes indicates that most students disapprove of bullying, a substantial portion of children report being reluctant to intervene. Among middle school-aged children approximately 50% of students reported intervening (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Slightly fewer Canadian children reported intervening (43%) (Charach et al., 1994). Secondary students have been found to be the least inclined to intervene (Whitney & Smith, 1993). More recent Canadian research suggests that this age trend shows up in early adolescence. Rocke Henderson and Hymel (2002) surveyed children in grades 3 to 7 and found that students in higher grades (6, 7) were *less* likely to report trying to stop the bullying or to get help from an adult than children in lower grades (4, 5). Moreover, older children were *more* likely to cheer on/encourage the perpetrator(s) than were the younger children.

Other studies have indicated that approximately one third of students reported that they did not intervene even though they felt that they ought to (Boulton &

Underwood, 1992; Charach et al., 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Moreover, research generally shows that a small minority of students do not have a personal sense of responsibility for dealing with bullying (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Charach et al., 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993). In one Canadian study, the *majority* of students (54%) indicated that it was *not* their responsibility to intervene (Rocke Henderson, Hymel, Bonanno, & Davidson, 2002). Additionally, researchers have found that students feel more confident that teachers will intervene to stop bullying than other children (Menesini et al., 1997; Whitney & Smith, 1993). In light of observational research it seems that students overestimate the extent to which they *actually* intervene (Craig & Pepler, 1997). Research on children's attitudes strongly suggests that children's attitudes and beliefs create a climate in which bullying can thrive (Rocke Henderson et al., 2002).

Overall, research indicates that at least some children hold views about bullying that need to be changed if we want peers to take a prominent role in reducing bully/victim problems. Understanding their attitudes and beliefs is particularly important because it gives adults some indication of the culture and climate that exists in schools. However, understanding bystander behavior in bullying situations is complex. In order to gain full appreciation of peer responses to bullying, we likely need to look beyond peer attitudes.

### *The Social Psychology Tradition of Studying Bystanders*

Social psychologists have a long research tradition of examining bystander behavior. In a series of classic studies conducted over 30 years ago, John Darley and Bibb Latane (Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1968, 1970) manipulated situational factors that they hypothesized might impact on a person's decision to offer assistance in an emergency situation. The results of their research indicated that

bystanders are more likely to intervene when alone than when others are present. They also proposed the psychological process “diffusion of responsibility”, echoed in more recent discussions of bullying by Olweus (1978, 1991) and by O’Connell et al. (1999), arguing that a bystander will be less inclined to feel personally responsible for intervening when this responsibility is “diffused” among all those who are present and available to respond. Darley and Latane also provide a theoretical model for explaining the process by which bystanders arrive at the decision of whether or not to intervene. The series of steps include (1) noticing the event, (2) interpreting the event as an emergency, (3) feeling a sense of personal responsibility for dealing with the situation, and (4) having the necessary skills to take action. A person’s decision at any stage may divert the individual away from intervening. Finally, Darley and Latane argued that there are several basic characteristics of emergency situations. Characteristics include (1) that there be the likelihood of harm, (2) that emergency situations are rare and unusual occurrences, (3) that they differ from one another and subsequently require different actions, (4) that they are generally unforeseeable events, and (5) that an immediate action is required.

How might this research inform the process of bystander intervention in bullying situations? Indeed, given Darley and Latane’s criteria for emergency situations, it is not clear that bullying would be considered by many students as an “emergency” situation given that such behavior is viewed by most students as normal and common (Rocke Henderson et al., 2002) rather than rare, unusual or unforeseeable. In fact, the only true similarity between bullying and emergency situations is that both involve the likelihood of harm. In the case of bullying, the likelihood of harm may not even be readily apparent to observers. If students do not view bullying as an “emergency”

situation, observers may not be inclined to act because there is no sense of imminent danger to the victim.

Nevertheless, Darley and Latane's work (Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1968, 1970) offers bullying researchers important insights into the reasons why students are reluctant to intervene. For example, the social psychology literature on bystanders suggests that observers might be more likely to intervene when alone than when others are present. In fact, as noted earlier, research indicates that bullying episodes tended to last longer as the number of peer observers increased (O'Connell et al., 1999). However, relationships and dynamics among victims, bullies, and peer bystanders are more complicated than are the relationships among strangers and, as noted earlier, likely play a crucial role in determining whether or not peers intervene. Though the process of diffusion of responsibility does not explain lack of intervention on the part of children who are friends with the victim, it may operate when there are low levels of affiliation between the victim and the bystander (e.g., when the victim and the bystander are acquaintances). Several investigators (e.g., O'Connell et al., 1999; Olweus, 1991) have considered the influence of "diffusion of responsibility", hypothesizing that children may not intervene, especially when there are others also observing bullying because they feel that it is not their responsibility to act on behalf of the victim. Indeed, Hymel and colleagues' (2002) research on students' attitudes and beliefs about bullying indicated that many students *do not* feel that it is their own personal responsibility to intervene when they see someone being bullied.

Darley and Latane's work (Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1968, 1970) is perhaps most useful for hypothesizing about the process by which bystanders in bullying situations might come to intervene. For instance, even though children generally notice bullying events (step 1) as evidenced by research that indicates that



85% of the time peers are present when bullying occurs (Pepler & Craig, 1997) and that 93% of students report having witnessed bullying (Rocke Henderson & Hymel, 2002), peers may not intervene because they do not perceive the event as an emergency (step 2). In fact, the likelihood that students would perceive bullying as an emergency is low, considering that many students view bullying as a “normal part of being a kid” (Rocke Henderson et al., 2002). If this is the case, then the critical issue for intervention becomes helping children to recognize the seriousness of bullying. Another possible reason children do not tend to intervene is that they do not feel that the responsibility for intervening is theirs. Again, survey research suggests that this is the case; a small but significant portion of children reported that when they observe bullying, it is none of their business (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Charach et al., 1994; Hymel, Bonanno, & Rocke Henderson, 2002; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Moreover, research indicates that children feel that teachers are more likely than peers to intervene when bullying occurs (Menesini et al., 1997). Thus, students may feel a sense of helplessness. Finally, it is possible that children do not intervene because they lack the skills or strategies necessary to take action and indeed, many students feel that there is nothing they can do (Rocke Henderson et al., 2002). Though it is important, even necessary, to work towards changing children’s attitudes about bullying, it is perhaps more important to increase children’s repertoire of strategies for dealing with bullying.

It should be recognized that the dynamics involved when peers hurt peers are much more complex than when strangers decide whether or not to intervene on behalf of strangers. Nevertheless, Darley and Latane’s work (Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1968, 1970) offers keen insights into the problem of lack of bystander intervention in bullying situations. Their research was conducted exclusively with

adults. However, several important parallels exist between what happens among adult strangers and what happens with children on the playground and in schools.

### *Social Problem-Solving Paradigm Applied to Bullying*

On a daily basis, children engage in countless social interactions with their peers. When minor conflict arises, most children generally arrive at socially appropriate responses. Social information processing, which refers to both the cognitive and emotional processes that determine children's social behavior (Coie & Dodge, 1998), has been used to explain how it is that some children do not arrive at socially appropriate behavioral responses. According to Dodge (as cited in Dodge, Asher, & Parkhurst, 1989), a child's behavioral response is strongly influenced by how he or she perceives and interprets social cues and, in turn, how he or she chooses to respond in light of this information.

The process of perceiving, interpreting, and reacting to social situations is captured in Crick and Dodge's (1994) social information processing model (for a review, see Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). Acknowledging that children bring certain biologically determined predispositions and memories of past experiences to social situations that guide their actions, and that in each social situation, children are inundated with a variety of social cues, their model involves the following steps. In step one, social cues are encoded, and in step 2, cues are interpreted. After interpreting the situation, in step 3, the desired outcome or goal is selected. Step 4 involves generating response strategies and alternatives. In step 5, response strategies are evaluated and the individual chooses a response. Finally, in step 6, the behavioral response is carried out.

Goal and strategy generation, described in steps 3 through 5, are integral parts of Crick and Dodge's (1994) social information processing model. In fact, Dodge, Asher, and Parkhurst (1989) argue that consideration of children's goal selection is critical to understanding social behavior because goals reflect children's underlying motivations (i.e., goals are "desired outcomes"). By closely examining children's goals, we gain understanding not only of the complexity of the choices they make but the reason for, or the intention behind their behavior. Of particular interest to the proposed study is how understanding children's *goals* might be useful for understanding peer responses to bullying. Also of interest are the *strategies* that children employ. Examining both strategies and goals allows us to understand *what* children try to do when bullying occurs as well as *what* it is they hope to accomplish. Crick and Dodge's (1994) model has been useful in helping us to understand what leads children to unskilled or inappropriate behavioral responses in social situations. For instance, within the aggression literature, it has been found that aggressive children have difficulty at all stages of social information processing (for a review, see Coie & Dodge, 1998) and, in turn, exhibit inappropriate responses to social problems.

The social problem-solving (SPS) paradigm, described in the social information-processing literature (for reviews, see Coie & Dodge, 1998; Rubin et al., 1998) involves presenting children with hypothetical vignettes describing particular social situations, followed by questions that elicit information about the strategies children would use and their goals or desired outcomes in the situation described. This approach, which initially relied on interview data to elicit strategies and goals (e.g., Renshaw & Asher, 1983) and later, ratings of strategies and goals (e.g., Rose & Asher, 1999), has proven to be successful in understanding children's behavior in a variety of social contexts and conditions (e.g., Chung & Asher, 1996; Erdley & Asher, 1996; Rose & Asher, 1999;

Hopmeyer & Asher, 1997). This research paradigm has enormous utility as a method for examining precisely the strategies children use in *bullying conflict situations* and the reasons for their behavior or inaction.

Following the SPS paradigm, children in the present study were asked to respond to vignettes about hypothetical bullying situations. For each vignette, students were asked to explain what they would say or do in response to the bullying situation as bystander in a series of open-ended questions. Multiple responses were solicited in order to obtain information on the broad range of options students perceived themselves to have. For each strategy, students were also asked to explain *why* they would say or do that (goal, motivation), which would be their "most likely" response, and to rate how difficult they think the situation would be for them to deal with.

The main objectives of the proposed study were to describe the strategies that peers use in response to observed bullying and to describe their motivations or goals in bullying situations. Of further interest is whether children's responses vary as a function of the type of bullying that occurs (i.e., physical versus verbal versus relational bullying). For children to deal with bullying successfully without adult intervention requires a sophisticated understanding of a very complex social situation. It was expected that children's responses to hypothetical bullying incidents would provide insights into their sensitivity to the complexities of bullying as a "social problem". Such information also helps us to identify the strategies (and goals) they feel the most competent at implementing and the reasons why some children's repertoire for coping with bullying may be limited.

Thus, the present study examined student's own reports of their responses to bullying that they observe, with a primary goal of describing children's strategies and

goals in responding to bullying. Understanding the goals and strategies students employ will inform efforts to empower students to deal effectively with bullying and eliminate barriers to appropriate and active responding.

### **Statement of the Problem**

We are just beginning to understand the complex but critical role peers play in the maintenance of bully/victim problems. However, despite the fact that researchers have argued rather consistently and convincingly for the need to understand and study peer involvement in the bullying process, few studies have examined how children deal with bullying when they observe such harassment in the schools. Craig and Pepler's (1997) seminal observational study demonstrated that although peers witness 85% of bullying episodes, they intervene only 11% of the time. These findings prompt several important unanswered questions. First, if children are generally present and do not tend to intervene, what do they do? Second, what strategies (if any) do those who attempt intervention employ? Third, what are their reasons for responding in a particular way?

Several researchers suggest that "diffusion of responsibility" may be an important reason why children do not intervene on behalf of victimized peers (e.g., O'Connell et al., 1999; Olweus, 1978, 1991). In the current study, it is argued that regardless of whether children can be encouraged to take personal responsibility when bullying occurs as is advocated in many anti-bullying programs, children must have effective strategies for dealing with bullying conflict. If children lack appropriate strategies for intervening, as Atlas and Pepler (1998) suggest, then the success of intervention efforts aimed at reducing bullying through peer support will be undermined. To date, no one has asked children directly what they do when they observe bullying, and why.

In the current study, it is suggested that an examination of the goals and strategies children use to deal with bullying conflict is a necessary first step toward explaining peer involvement in the bullying process. More importantly, it allows us to understand *what* children do and *why*, thereby improving our capacity to promote more prosocial responding. The present investigation involved students in grades 6 and 7. In individual interviews, students were asked to respond to different vignettes about different types of bullying. Specifically, hypothetical vignettes described direct physical bullying, direct verbal bullying, and indirect relational bullying, which have been identified as the major forms bullying takes. For each vignette, students were asked to imagine being present in the situation and to describe *what* they would say or do. For each strategy that students generated they were also asked to explain their goal or reason for their response (*why*). In addition to providing strategies and goals, for each vignette students were asked which would be their most likely strategy, and to rate how difficult they would find it to respond to the bullying situation.

Of additional interest in the present study was how children responded to different types of bullying (e.g., direct physical, direct verbal, indirect relational). Although research indicates that all three forms occur to varying degrees among children of different ages and genders (for a review, see Underwood, Galen, & Paquette, 2002), it remains to be seen whether children respond in particular ways to certain types of bullying situations. In the current study, children's reactions to each type of bullying were considered collectively and independently. Thus, as an extension of the literature on peer involvement in the bullying process, the main purpose of this research was to examine children's goals and strategies for dealing with three forms of bullying conflict among peers. A series of questions were formulated to guide discussion of the foci, rationale, and design of the present investigation.

## *Research Questions*

### ***What are children's perceptions of how difficult it is to respond to bullying?***

Given research indicating that most children find bullying unpleasant and recognize that they ought to help when bullying occurs (e.g., Charach et al., 1995; Rocke Henderson et al., 2002), it was expected that most children would find it difficult rather than easy to deal with all forms of bullying. Also of interest was whether perceived difficulty varied as a function of the type of bullying that was observed or the gender of the participant. Considering the exploratory nature of the present study, no specific hypotheses were made.

### ***How do peer observers respond to bullying conflict?***

Given that previous research has not examined students' reports of their responses to bullying that they observe, the present research was considered exploratory in nature, with no specific expectations regarding the nature of children's reported strategies or goals in dealing with bullying they witness. However, children's responses were expected to be similar and to overlap with those reported in previous social problem-solving research on how children typically respond to peer conflict situations, given the overlap between bullying and peer conflict.

*Strategies.* Specifically, it was expected that children might suggest strategies such as physical aggression, verbal aggression, passive reaction (i.e., ignoring it), avoidance, problem-solving behavior, requesting clarification (as reported by Erdley & Asher, 1996), or additional strategies suggested by others including prosocial, adult seeking (as reported by Chung & Asher, 1996), initiating discussion, offering distraction, leaving (as reported by Rose & Asher, 1999 a, b), and enlisting peer support (as reported by Hopmeyer & Asher, 1997). In addition, children's strategies were expected

to reflect responses and participant roles suggested by current researchers within the bullying literature, including assisting the bully, encouraging the bully by laughing or joining in, aiding the victim by siding with him/her or getting the bullying to stop, avoiding the bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996, 1997, 1998), and not intervening (Hazler, 1996; O'Connell et al., 1999).

*Goals.* Based on a review of the SPS literature, it was expected that children's goals would involve pursuing self-interest, avoiding trouble, pursuing fairness, and avoiding injury (as reported by Delveaux & Daniels, 2000) as well as moral, retaliatory, tension reduction, and relationship maintenance goals (as reported by Rose & Asher 1999a). Additionally, a review of the bullying literature suggests children will be motivated to avoid distress (i.e., anxiety, humiliation, feeling a sense of responsibility) (Hazler, 1996; O'Connell et al., 1999; Olweus, 1991).

Of additional interest was whether the strategies and goals children reported varied as a function of the gender of the respondent and/or the type of bullying that was witnessed (physical, verbal, or relational). Given the exploratory nature of this research, no specific hypotheses were made regarding gender or bullying type effects.

### ***What are the links among children's goals and strategies?***

To what extent did strategies and goals correspond? Given the exploratory nature of the current research the following predictions are speculative and based on the author's ideas. It was expected that children who endorsed outsider/avoiding strategies would endorse more avoidant goals; those who endorsed more assisting and reinforcing strategies would report more self-serving goals, referring to such things as personal gains and maintenance of one's own status, safety, etc. Children who endorsed defending strategies to a greater extent would also endorse more moralistic



goals such as wanting to do the right thing or to be fair. Overall, it was expected that children who were less likely to defend victims would endorse more goals around self-protection and self-interest.

## CHAPTER 2

### Method

#### *Participants*

Participants included 140 students (80 girls, 60 boys) in grades 6 and 7. Students were recruited from three elementary schools within a large urban school district in British Columbia.<sup>4</sup> The majority of participants were Caucasian (60%). The rest of the sample included 18% Asian, 14% mixed ethnic background, and 8% belonging to other ethnic groups including Latin, Black, Filipino, and East Indian. Seventy-four percent of students spoke English at home, 11% spoke Chinese, and the remaining 15% spoke various other languages. Twenty-two percent of students spoke a second language at home. A small minority of students (6%) had been in Canada less than five years while the vast majority (84%) had lived in Canada longer than 10 years. With respect to family composition, 70% of students reported living with two parents (i.e., intact, blended or joint/shared custody arrangements), 21% with a single-parent, 7% with a combination of caregivers (e.g., both parents and a grandparent), and 1% with adults other than parents (e.g., grandparent). All of the demographic information described above was based on student self-report.

Students ranged in age from 10 to 13 years ( $M = 12.58$ ,  $SD = .56$ ). This age group was selected for several reasons. First, bullying has generally been found to be most prevalent among children within this age range (e.g., Nansel et al., 2001). As well, bullying tends to decrease past this age, particularly among later secondary school-aged children (e.g., Whitney & Smith, 1993). Thus, bullying was more likely to be a

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<sup>4</sup> In comparison with 1996 census data which indicated that provincially, 28% of families have household incomes less than \$30,000, percentages of families with household incomes less than \$30,000 were 35%, 30%, and 17%, respectively, in each of the three participating schools (British Columbia Ministry of Education).

salient social issue among children within the selected age range. A second reason for this age group is that, in British Columbia schools, students typically transition from primary to secondary school between grade 7 and 8. In order to avoid any confounds associated with this transition, all students were interviewed before this transition. Another reason this age was chosen related to the three forms of bullying that were considered (i.e., direct physical aggression, direct verbal aggression, and indirect relational aggression). Though both direct forms of aggression emerge much earlier, indirect relational aggression that requires greater social and verbal sophistication, emerges later and is not fully developed until the age of 11 (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992). Finally, it was hoped that students at this age would be more willing to talk about their experiences, whereas older students might be inhibited.

Students were recruited from six classrooms. The author distributed a letter outlining the research purpose and procedure and a parental consent form (Appendix A) to a total of 165 students. As an incentive for returning parental consent forms, students at two of the participating schools were told that a pizza party would be held at the end of the study for those who returned signed parental consent forms regardless of whether their parents did or did not give consent. Upon the request of staff at the third school no compensation or incentives were offered. All 165 students returned their signed consent forms and 85% received parent permission to participate (range : 70% to 96%). Only those students who both received parental permission to participate and who verbally agreed to participate were included in the study.

### *Procedure*

Students were interviewed individually by the author in 20- to 30-minute sessions. Interviews took place during regular classroom hours in a quiet, private space within the school and were audiotaped. All interviews were conducted in the late spring.

In the first part of the interview, students were informed of their rights as research participants (i.e., confidentiality of their responses, voluntary participation) and asked for verbal assent for participation. Next, participants were asked to provide information about their gender, age, grade, ethnicity, and family composition (Appendix B).

In the third and final part of the interview session, students were read 10 hypothetical vignettes (1 sample, 9 target vignettes) describing bullying conflicts involving moderately serious direct physical, direct verbal, or indirect relational aggression (3 target vignettes of each type, as described in Table 1) (see Appendix C for complete vignettes). For each vignette, participants were asked to imagine that he or she had *witnessed* or was privy to an impending bullying situation involving a bully or bullies and another student (victim). Students were provided with copies of each vignette so that they could follow along as each vignette was read out loud to them.

Table 1.

*Bullying vignette synopses.*

Vignette		Synopsis
Physical	1 "Hit with a book"	Bully hits victim on the head with a textbook.
	2 "Pantsed"	Victim has pants pulled down by bully in front of kids in their gym class.
	3 "Lunch hassle"	Victim is confronted by a group of bullies. One bully takes a bite of victim's sandwich and spits it out.
Verbal	4 "Name calling"	Group of bullies calls victim names near the end of recess.
	5 "Extortion for \$10"	Bully threatens to beat victim up if he/she doesn't give \$10.
	6 "Verbal threats"	Bully tells subject about intentions to beat victim up after school.
Relational	7 "The note"	Bully starts a note telling people who hate victim to sign the note.
	8 "Gossip in the library"	Group of bullies is gossiping about victim in the library.
	9 "Don't talk to So-and-so"	Bully tries to exclude victim by telling others not to talk to him/her.

As in previous research using hypothetical vignettes, the story grammar method was employed to develop the vignettes (Stein, 1980 cited in Renshaw & Asher, 1983). That is, in each vignette, information about the *setting* was followed by an *initiating event*. Additionally, vignettes were designed to reflect several common elements including (1) the repetitive nature of bullying, (2) a power differential between the bully and the victim (note that (1) & (2) are consistent with the definition of bullying), (3) low adult supervision (bullying tends to occur most often when adult supervision is low, see

Atlas & Pepler, 1998), and (4) same-sex characters. Level of affiliation on the part of the observer with both the victim and the bully was left ambiguous in order to obtain as wide a range of responses as possible. Twenty vignettes were created by the author and piloted with a small group of students in the same age range. Students indicated that all vignettes were plausible. Ten vignettes were finally selected for administration in the present study.

Following the oral presentation of each vignette, students were asked a series of questions about (1) how difficult it would be for them to deal with the situation if they saw it happen (students were asked to provide a rating on a 4-point Likert scale where 1=EASY, 2=easy, 3=hard, 4=HARD) (2) what they would say or do in that situation if they saw it happen (strategy probe), (3) what would be their reason for saying or doing that (goal probe), and (4) what strategy would they be *most likely* to use in the situation (see Appendix D for interview protocol). Students were asked to provide as many responses to the strategy and goal probes as possible. Strategies were elicited first because past research has indicated that children have difficulty providing goals first and tend to spontaneously provide strategies even when goals are requested (Renshaw & Asher, 1983).

### ***Coding for Idea Units***

After transcribing students' responses to strategy and goal probes, transcripts were coded into separate idea units (i.e., individual clauses or ideas) (Bream, 1988; Renshaw & Asher, 1983) by the author. This involved coding responses as *separate* idea units when two distinct actions were described or when two distinct responses or statements reflecting different ideas were made. Responses that included elaborations with irrelevant details were coded as a single idea unit. When students initially said they

'don't know' but then immediately provided a response, their elaboration was considered one idea unit. Similarly, if a vague response was later elaborated, it was coded as one idea unit. Finally, when more than one statement expressing the same idea was provided, it was coded as one idea unit.

In order to establish inter-rater reliability, an independent rater (a trained graduate student) coded 25% of the data for the number of idea units in each response. Percent agreement (number of agreements divided by the number of agreements plus disagreements) between the author and the second rater was high (93%). Disagreements were resolved through discussion.

### ***Coding for Strategies and Goals***

Given categories for describing children's responses to bullying did not already exist, separate coding schemes for students' responses to strategy and goal probes were developed by the author. An iterative process, guided initially by previous social problem-solving (Chung & Asher, 1996; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Delveaux & Daniels, 2000; Erdley & Asher, 1996; Hopmeyer & Asher, 1997; Renshaw & Asher, 1983; Rose & Asher, 1999a,b) and bullying research (Hazler, 1996; O'Connell et al., 1999; Olweus, 1978, 1991; Salmivalli et al., 1996, 1997, 1998), was used to identify strategy and goal categories. Categories for strategies and goals were created separately.

First, an initial list of possible categories were derived from previous studies of the strategies and goals children report in dealing with social problems and conflicts (Chung & Asher, 1996; Erdley & Asher, 1996; Hopmeyer & Asher, 1997; Rose & Asher, 1999 a, b) (see Appendix E for overview) as well as previous suggestions regarding how children respond to bullying (Hazler, 1996; O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996, 1997, 1998) (for an overview, see Appendix F). Subsequently a master list of the

strategies and goals children reported in the present study was created by systematically reading through all transcripts (previously organized into idea units) and adding new strategies and goals to lists as they appeared. During a second reading of the transcripts, a code corresponding to the master list was assigned to each response (1 code per strategy or goal). Any additional strategies and goals were added to their respective lists and assigned a new code. During this process, the number of times each strategy and goal appeared was also tallied to obtain a rough estimate of the frequency with which each strategy and goal was mentioned. Final lists yielded 64 different strategies and 69 different goals.

Strategies and goals were then printed onto separate sets of cards and sorted into conceptually meaningful and distinct categories. In some instances, high frequency responses were used to guide the categorization process while an attempt was made to collapse lower frequency responses into superordinate categories if appropriate. This process yielded 10 superordinate strategy categories including (1) seeking adult involvement, (2) seeking peer involvement, (3) talking to the bully, (4) gaining further information, (5) use of hostile/retaliatory behavior, (6) prosocial behavior towards the victim, (7) direct intervention, (8) enabling bullying behavior, (9) inaction, and (10) 'other'.

After initial unsuccessful attempts to categorize the goals into meaningful and distinct categories, it was clear that in response to the goal probe, many students had not provided goals (statements reflecting a desired outcome). Instead, many students provided non-goal responses that described reasons, rationales, or commentary that did not reflect a goal per se. Rather than force non-goal responses into goal categories, a separate coding scheme was developed for the non-goal statements. In the end, seven



goal categories and five non-goals categories were identified<sup>5</sup>. Goal categories included (1) getting the harassment to stop, (2) helping the victim, (3) avoiding involvement, (4) general self-interest, (5) general prosocial, (6) negative outcomes for the bully, and (7) 'other'. Prior to coding responses to the goal probe, the author divided goal and non-goals statements and then each was coded separately. A complete coding manual can be found in Appendix G.

In order to establish inter-rater reliability for strategy and goal categories, a trained rater independently coded 25% of the transcripts. Strength of agreement for strategy coding as indicated by percent agreement (92%) and kappa ( $k = .91$ ) was very good<sup>6</sup>. Strength of agreement among goal statements although lower than that obtained for strategies was respectable (percent agreement: 83%) and (kappa:  $k = .80$ ). Codes assigned by the author were used in all subsequent analyses.

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<sup>5</sup> Results pertaining to non-goal categories were not anticipated in the original conceptualization of this study and are not included in this report.

<sup>6</sup> Kappa statistics between .81 and 1.00 are considered 'almost perfect' (Stemler, 2001). Percent agreement above 90% is generally suggested (Stemler, 2001).

## CHAPTER 3

### Results

Of interest in the present study was whether children's perceptions of difficulty and their responses to bullying varied as a function of gender (boys versus girls) and type of bullying (physical, verbal, relational). Data were analyzed using a series of 2 (gender) X 3 (type of bullying) mixed analyses of variance. Dependent variables included (a) ratings of difficulty (b) the strategies proposed for addressing bullying, and (c) the goals underlying student responses average across the three hypothetical vignettes included for each of the three types of bullying. Independent variables included gender (between-subjects factor) and type of bullying situation (within-subjects factor). In cases where the assumption of sphericity was violated, Greenhouse-Geisser corrected values were reported in lieu of traditional, uncorrected values. When appropriate, significant effects were followed up using Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc analyses. Given the number of analyses conducted for both strategies and goals, marginally significant effects were not interpreted. Of additional interest were the links between proposed strategies and goals, which were analyzed using correlational analyses.

In order to examine children's proposed strategies and goals it was necessary to convert categorical data into proportion scores, an approach commonly used within the social problem-solving literature (e.g., Bream, 1988; Renshaw & Asher, 1983). This was achieved by dividing the number of strategies (or goals) a participant generated *within* each category by the *total* number of strategies (or goals) she or he generated. Thus, each proportion score reflected the extent to which a participant proposed or endorsed a particular strategy type (or goal type) relative to other strategies (or goals).

Proportion scores were first calculated for each strategy category and goal category proposed for each hypothetical bullying situation. Scores were then averaged across the three situations included in evaluating each of three different types of bullying (physical, verbal, relational). Of interest was whether responses varied across types of situations rather than within particular bullying situations. For ease of interpretation, all proportion scores are reported as percentages, reflecting the degree to which a particular response was emphasized relative to other responses.

Results of these analyses are presented in four sections. First, variations of students' perceptions of difficulty as a function of gender and type of bullying are examined. In the second section, children's *strategy knowledge* is considered, including descriptive data regarding the number of strategies students generated and analyses examining whether proposed strategies differed for boys and girls and across physical, verbal, and relational bullying. In section three, students' *goal knowledge* is explored, with descriptive data on the number and type of goals generated by students and analyses examining variations in goals as a function of gender and type of bullying. In the final section, correlational analyses examining the *links between students' goals and strategies* in bullying conflict are described.

### *Students' Perceptions of Difficulty*

Participants were asked to rate how difficult they felt it would be for them to deal with each bullying situation. Across situations, students provided an average difficulty rating of 2.69 (range = 2.24 to 3.00), suggesting that students perceived bullying to be only somewhat difficult to handle. Means and standard deviations for difficulty ratings across situations are provided in Table 2.

Table 2.

*Means and standard deviations for difficulty ratings*

Type of Bullying	Vignette	Total		Girls		Boys	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Physical Bullying	1	2.63	0.78	2.76	0.76	2.46	0.77
	2	2.69	0.91	2.91	0.87	2.39	0.89
	3	2.88	0.75	2.92	0.72	2.81	0.80
	<b>Average</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>0.58</b>	<b>2.58</b>	<b>0.60</b>
Verbal Bullying	1	3.00	0.79	3.06	0.76	2.92	0.83
	2	2.97	0.83	3.06	0.74	2.85	0.93
	3	2.71	0.82	2.89	0.80	2.47	0.80
	<b>Average</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>0.55</b>
Relational Bullying	1	2.24	0.90	2.36	0.87	2.08	0.92
	2	2.56	0.84	2.69	0.84	2.39	0.82
	3	2.49	0.82	2.65	0.75	2.28	0.85
	<b>Average</b>	<b>2.44</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>0.61</b>

As can be seen in Table 2, there was some variation across situations in perceived difficulty across specific bullying situations. However, given my interest in differences across types of bullying rather than specific situations, difficulty ratings were averaged across all three situations within each type (physical, verbal, relational).

Variations in students' perceptions of difficulty as a function of gender (girls, boys) and type of bullying (physical, verbal, relational) were examined in a mixed ANOVA. Significant main effects were observed for both type of bullying,  $F(1, 240) =$

30.98,  $p < .01$ , and gender,  $F(1, 120) = 10.64$ ,  $p < .01$ . Post hoc analyses (LSD) revealed that students rated verbal bullying situations as significantly more difficult ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = .59$ ) than physical bullying situations ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = .60$ ) which in turn were rated as significantly more difficult than relational bullying situations ( $M = 2.44$ ,  $SD = .63$ ). Girls rated bullying as significantly more difficult to respond to than did boys ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = .47$ , and  $M = 2.51$ ,  $SD = .48$ , respectively). The gender by type of bullying interaction did not reach significance,  $F(1, 240) = .14$ ,  $p = .87$ .

### *Strategy Knowledge*

Overall, students generated an average of 1.95 strategies per bullying situation. Means and standard deviations for the number of strategies students suggested for each vignette are provided in Table 3.

Table 3.

*Means and standard deviations for strategies proposed for each bullying situation*

Type of bullying	Vignette	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Physical Bullying	1	2.00	0.88
	2	1.99	0.88
	3	1.83	0.80
	<b>Average</b>	<b>1.95</b>	<b>.62</b>
Verbal Bullying	4	1.88	0.85
	5	1.91	0.86
	6	2.18	0.95
	<b>Average</b>	<b>1.99</b>	<b>.64</b>
Relational Bullying	7	1.95	0.99
	8	2.01	0.94
	9	1.82	1.02
	<b>Average</b>	<b>1.93</b>	<b>.69</b>

Student responses were subsequently coded into one of ten strategy categories: seeking adult involvement, seeking peer involvement, talking to the bully, gaining further information, use of hostile/retaliatory behavior, prosocial behavior towards the victim, direct intervention, enabling bullying behavior, inaction, and 'other'. Examples of strategies proposed within each category, percent of students who mentioned each category, and proportion of responses within each category are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

*Categories of response strategies for dealing with bullying among peers*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Percent of Students Endorsing Strategy at Least Once</b>	<b>Proportion over all Responses</b>
Seeking adult involvement	Telling, informing, or getting an adult Accompanying or offering to accompany victim to tell an adult	68%	13%
Seeking peer involvement	Telling or soliciting the advice of peers; discussing the situation Intervening with peers Influencing peer response (getting peers to intervene, reasoning with peers, actively discouraging peers from joining in)	64%	5%
Talking to the bully	Telling or asking bully to stop; telling bully not to engage in behavior in the future (no reason specified) Reasoning with bully, making an appeal to stop (may include voicing disapproval) Saying positive things about victim Communicating to bully that SS won't participate	86%	18%
Gaining information	Gaining information from the bully, from the victim, from the peer group, or some unspecified individual(s)	65%	10%
Use of hostile/retaliatory behavior	Using physically (hit, push, fight) or verbally (insult, yell, threaten) hostile behavior Retaliating (doing what bully has done to victim)	38%	3%
Prosocial behavior towards the victim	Comforting victim; inquiring whether or not victim is okay; talking to victim; some other situation-specific act of kindness Warning or informing victim; giving advice to victim	90%	18%
Direct intervention	Situation-specific intervention strategy Hanging around, playing with victim; being victim's friend Getting victim out of situation Actively choosing to not join in or laugh	92%	13%
Enabling bullying behavior	Watching; listening in Laughing Joining in; actively participating Going along with it; pretending to go along with it	39%	4%
Inaction	Avoiding the bully Leaving; ignoring the situation (or the bully); avoiding involvement Treating the victim the same as before	68%	13%
Other	Not captured by existing categories Vague or uninterpretable response 'Don't know'; no response 'I wouldn't ____.' (does not include instances where students report not getting involved)	27%	2%

Results indicated that the majority of students proposed talking to the bully (86%), seeking adult involvement (68%), inaction (68%), gaining information (65%), and seeking peer involvement (64%) at least once. Although nearly all students proposed strategies involving direct intervention and prosocial behavior towards victim at least once (90% and 92%, respectively), over one third of students proposed enabling bullying behavior and hostile/retaliatory behavior strategies at least once (39% and 38%, respectively). An examination of proportion scores indicated that the most common strategies students proposed including, talking to the bully (18%), prosocial behavior towards the victim (18%), seeking adult intervention (13%), direct intervention (13%), inaction (13%), and gaining information (10%). Students were less likely to suggest seeking peer involvement (5%), enabling bullying behavior (4%), use of hostile/retaliatory behavior (3%), and 'other' strategies (2%).

Variations in students' responses to bullying as a function of gender (male, female) and type of bullying (physical, verbal, relational) were examined in a series of two-way mixed ANOVAs, one for each strategy category. Results of these analyses indicated no significant main effects or interactions for four of the strategy categories including seeking adult involvement ( $F_{Type}(2, 268) = 2.15, p = .12$ ;  $F_{Gender}(1, 134) = 3.17, p = .08$ ;  $F_{Interaction}(2, 268) = .44, p = .64$ ), seeking peer involvement ( $F_{Type}(2, 270) = .94, p = .39$ ;  $F_{Gender}(1, 135) = 1.95, p = .17$ ;  $F_{Interaction}(2, 70) = .50, p = .61$ ), talking to the bully ( $F_{Type}(2, 270) = 1.34, p = .26$ ;  $F_{Gender}(1, 135) = .003, p = .96$ ;  $F_{Interaction}(2, 270) = .67, p = .51$ ), and direct intervention ( $F_{Type}(2, 270) = 2.53, p = .08$ ;  $F_{Gender}(1, 135) = .21, p = .65$ ;  $F_{Interaction}(2, 270) = .60, p = .55$ ). Thus, the extent to which students proposed seeking adult involvement, seeking peer involvement, talking to the bully, and direct intervention strategies did not vary significantly by type of bullying or gender.



Significant differences were observed, however, for several response strategies. First, for use of hostile/retaliatory behavior, the main effect of type of bullying was significant ( $F(2, 270) = 3.28, p = .04$ ). Post hoc comparisons (LSD) indicated that use of hostile/retaliatory behavior strategies were reported significantly less often for situations involving physical bullying ( $M = 5.28, SD = 10.69$ ) than for either verbal ( $M = 6.26, SD = 13.84$ ) or relational bullying ( $M = 6.40, SD = 14.02$ ) situations, with no significant differences between the latter two types. The main effect of gender  $F(1, 135) = .19, p = .66$  and the interaction of the two factors,  $F(2, 270) = .59, p = .56$ , were not significant.

For strategies involving prosocial behavior towards the victim, the main effect of gender was significant,  $F(1, 135) = 8.61, p < .01$ , with girls ( $M = 20.40, SD = 10.89$ ) being significantly more likely to propose prosocial behavior towards the victim than boys ( $M = 15.46, SD = 10.32$ ). The main effect of type of bullying and the interaction of the two factors were not significant,  $F(1.77, 239.19) = 2.24, p = .12, F(1.77, 239.19) = .61, p = .53$ , respectively (Greenhouse-Geisser corrected statistics used).

Main effects for gender,  $F(1, 134) = 8.35, p < .01$ , and type of bullying  $F(2, 268) = 4.44, p = .01$ , were significant for strategies involving inaction. Boys ( $M = 17.72, SD = 18.74$ ) were significantly more likely to propose inaction strategies than girls ( $M = 9.98, SD = 11.38$ ). Additionally, post hoc analyses (LSD) indicated that inaction was proposed as a strategy significantly more often for situations involving relational bullying ( $M = 15.76, SD = 23.70$ ) than verbal bullying ( $M = 13.38, SD = 19.53$ ). The type of bullying by gender interaction was not significant,  $F(2, 268) = 2.72, p = .07$ .

For gaining information strategies, main effects for type of bullying,  $F(1.84, 247.93) = 2.22, p = .12$ , and gender,  $F(1, 135) = 1.60, p = .21$ , did not reach

significance. However, a significant gender by type of bullying interaction was obtained,  $F(1.84, 247.93) = 4.44, p = .02$  (Greenhouse-Geisser corrected statistics reported). Follow-up analyses were conducted to examine the nature of this interaction. This interaction is presented in Figure 1. First, independent t-tests were used to examine gender differences in proposed gaining information strategies considering each type of bullying separately. Results of these analyses indicated no significant sex differences for physical bullying,  $t(135) = -1.19, p = .24$ , or verbal bullying,  $t(135) = -.76, p = .45$ , although a marginally significant effect was observed for relational bullying,  $t(135) = -1.70, p = .09$ , with boys tending to propose gaining information more often than girls in response to relational bullying. One-way repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to follow-up differences in proposed gaining information strategies across types of bullying for boys and girls separately. Results of these analyses indicated that girls did not differ in their use of gaining information strategies across physical, verbal, relational types of bullying,  $F(1, 34) = 1.34, p = .27$ . However, significant differences did emerge for boys,  $F(1.64, 93.35) = 3.27, p = .05$ . Follow-up paired t-tests revealed that boys were significantly more likely to use gaining information strategies for situations involving relational bullying than for those involving both physical bullying  $t(57) = -2.03, p = .05$ , and verbal bullying,  $t(57) = -1.99, p = .05$ , with no significant differences between the latter two types,  $t(57) = .45, p = .66$ . No significant differences were observed for girls between physical and verbal bullying,  $t(78) = -1.35, p = .18$ , between physical and relational bullying,  $t(78) = -.10, p = .92$ , or between verbal and relational bullying  $t(78) = 1.35, p = .18$ .

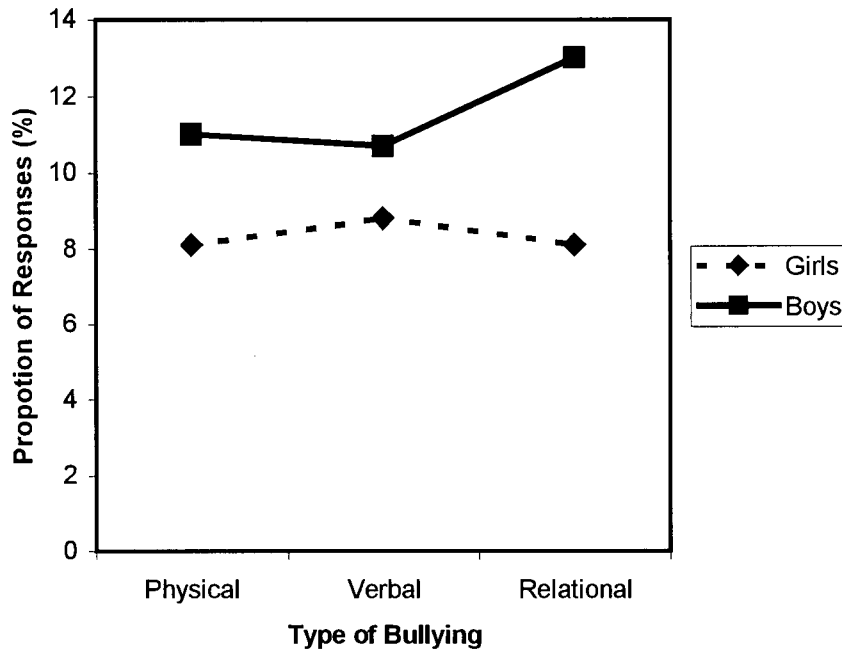


Figure 1. Variations in gaining information strategies as a function of gender and type of bullying.

Similarly, the main effects for type of bullying,  $F(1.40, 188.58) = .78, p = .42$ , and gender,  $F(1, 135) = .58, p = .45$ , did not reach significance for strategies involving enabling bullying behavior. However, a significant type of bullying by gender interaction was obtained,  $F(1.40, 188.58) = 4.62, p = .02$ . This interaction is depicted in Figure 2. Follow-up analyses were conducted to examine the nature of this interaction. First, independent t-tests were used to examine gender differences in proposed enabling strategies considering each type of bullying separately. Results of these analyses indicated no significant sex differences for physical bullying,  $t(135) = .01, p = .99$ , verbal bullying,  $t(135) = -.82, p = .41$ , or relational bullying,  $t(135) = -1.48, p = .14$ . One-way repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted to examine differences in enabling strategies across types of bullying for boys and girls separately. Results of these analyses indicated that girls did not differ in their use of enabling situations across physical, verbal, and relational types of bullying,  $F(1.20, 93.66) = 1.52, p = .22$ .

However, significant differences emerged for boys,  $F(1.47, 83.86) = 4.62, p = .02$ .

Follow-up paired t-tests revealed that boys reported enabling strategies significantly more often for situations involving relational bullying than for situations involving physical,  $t(57) = -2.34, p = .02$ , or for situations involving verbal bullying,  $t(57) = -2.28, p = .03$ . No significant differences were found between physical and verbal situations,  $t(57) = -1.07, p = .29$ . For girls, no differences were found between physical and verbal bullying  $t(79) = 1.24, p = .22$ , between physical and relational bullying  $t(79) = 1.30, p = .20$ , or between verbal and relational bullying  $t(79) = .46, p = .65$ .

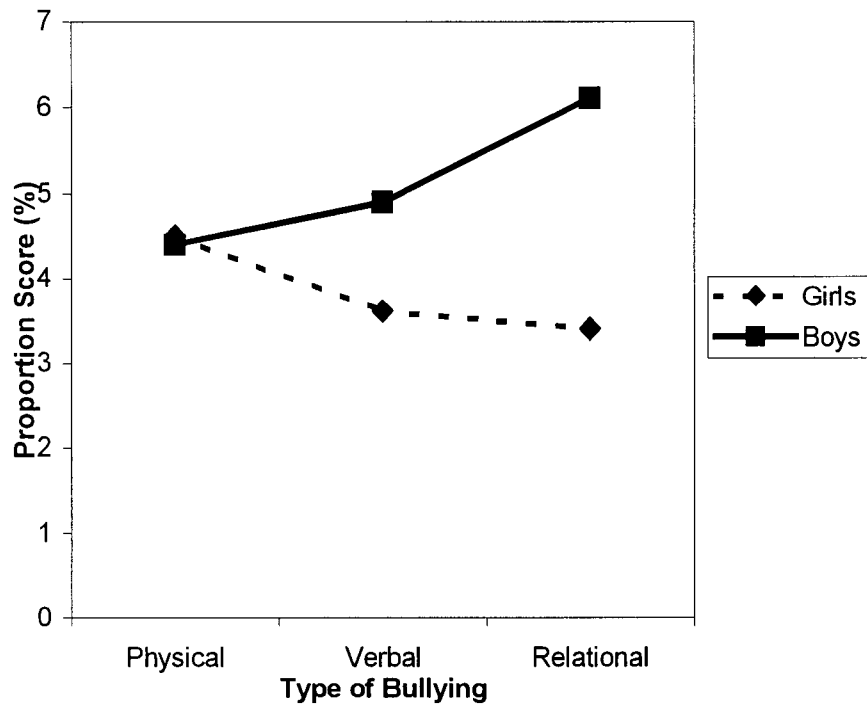


Figure 2. Variations in enabling strategies as a function of gender and type of bullying.

#### *Goal Knowledge*

Across bullying situations, students generated an average of 1.57 goals per situation. Means and standard deviations for the number of goals students suggested for each vignette are provided in Table 5.

Table 5.

*Means and standard deviations for number of goals proposed for each bullying situation*

Type of Bullying	Vignette	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Physical Bullying	1	1.50	1.05
	2	1.44	1.11
	3	1.41	1.04
	<b>Average</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>.77</b>
Verbal Bullying	4	1.58	1.15
	5	1.64	1.07
	6	1.86	1.10
	<b>Average</b>	<b>1.69</b>	<b>.80</b>
Relational Bullying	7	1.64	1.16
	8	1.53	1.04
	9	1.49	1.32
	<b>Average</b>	<b>1.55</b>	<b>.86</b>

Student responses to goal probes that were considered goal statements were coded into seven goal categories: getting the harassment to stop, helping the victim, avoiding involvement, general self-interest, general prosocial, negative outcomes for the bully, and 'other'. Examples within each category, percentage of students who mentioned each category, and proportion of responses within each category are shown in Table 6.

Table 6.

*Categories of goals students provided for their strategy responses*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Examples Wanting to...</b>	<b>Percent of Students Endorsing Goal at Least Once</b>	<b>Proportion over all Responses</b>
Getting the harassment to stop	...stop bully; prevent further harassment ...resolve the problem ...get bully to listen, calm down, or forget about it ...prevent victim from getting hurt (physically or emotionally)	88%	25%
Helping the victim	...comfort victim; make victim feel better; make sure victim is alright ...address a specific emotional or physical need ...help victim in general ...help victim by being his/her friend ...help victim by informing him/her	74%	13%
Avoiding involvement	...avoid being involved; avoid having to participate/join in ...disassociate oneself from bully or bully's actions ...avoid having to pick sides ...defer to adults; make adults aware of situation ...get/let victim to take own action	83%	20%
General self-interest	...avoid trouble or retaliation from bully or peers; avoid being viewed as a tattletale ...avoid trouble with adults ...reduce personal distress; do what's easiest; to maintain independence ...maintain positive relationships with bully, victim, or peer group members ...find out motivations or details of the situation ...gain information and figure out next move	76%	18%
General prosocial	...make sure no one (individual not specified) gets hurt, that situation doesn't get worse ...try to be nice or not mean ...avoid hurting victim personally ...get bully to realize the error in his/her ways, get bully to think about what they're doing, get bully to change their mind about victim ...prevent/discourage others from joining in; influencing peers to be more positive toward victim ...convey that bully's actions are not condoned; convey that I won't go along with it	81%	15%
Negative outcomes for the bully	...get back at bully ...make bully feel bad, scared, or intimidated; so bully knows what it feels like ...get bully in trouble ...teach bully a lesson	36%	4%
Other	Not captured by existing categories Vague or uninterpretable responses	46%	5%

Results indicated that the vast majority of students reported the following goals at least once: getting the harassment to stop (88%), avoiding involvement (83%), general

prosocial outcome (81%), general self-interest goal (76%), and helping the victim (75%). A smaller percentage of students suggested that they wanted negative outcomes for the bully (36%) and few endorsed 'other' goals (5%). Proportion scores indicated that the largest percentage of goals reported by students involved getting the harassment to stop (25%). Goal selection was nearly evenly distributed across avoiding involvement (20%) and general self-interest (18%) goals, and between general prosocial goals (15%) and helping the victim (13%). Low proportion scores were obtained for negative outcomes for the bully goals (4%) and 'other' goals (5%).

Variations in students' goals as a function of gender and type of bullying were examined in a series of two-way mixed ANOVAs, with gender and type of bullying situations as independent variables. Individual ANOVAs were performed for each goal category. The results from these analyses did not yield significant main effects or interactions for two of the goal categories: avoiding involvement ( $F_{Type}(1.75, 222.40) = 1.67, p = .19$ ;  $F_{Gender}(1, 127) = 1.45, p = .23$ ;  $F_{Interaction}(1.75, 222.40) = .14, p = .84$ ) and 'other' goals ( $F_{Type}(2, 254) = .65, p = .52$ ;  $F_{Gender}(1, 127) = .05, p = .83$ ;  $F_{Interaction}(2, 254) = .74, p = .48$ ). Thus, the extent to which students' reported wanting to avoid involvement did not vary significantly as a function of type of bullying or gender.

In the same series ANOVAs, several significant findings emerged. First, for the goal of getting harassment to stop, the main effect of type of bullying was significant,  $F(2, 254) = 8.82, p < .01$ . Follow up post hoc comparisons (LSD) indicated that getting harassment to stop goals were reported more often for situations involving verbal ( $M = 29.68, SD = 24.35$ ) than either relational ( $M = 19.25, SD = 23.50$ ) or physical bullying ( $M = 22.5, SD = 24.16$ ), with no difference between the latter two. The main effect of



gender,  $F(1, 127) = .10$ ,  $p = .32$ , and the interaction of the two factors,  $F(2, 254) = .75$ ,  $p = .47$ , were not significant.

For goals involving helping the victim, the main effect of type of bullying was significant,  $F(2, 254) = 4.91$ ,  $p < .01$ , although the main effect of gender,  $F(2, 127) = 1.39$ ,  $p = .24$ , and the interaction of the two factors were not significant,  $F(2, 254) = 2.56$ ,  $p = .08$ . Follow-up post hoc comparisons (LSD) revealed that the goal of helping the victim was reported less often for situations involving verbal bullying ( $M = 9.86$ ,  $SD = 15.03$ ) than for situations involving physical ( $M = 16.99$ ,  $SD = 21.10$ ) and relational bullying ( $M = 14.71$ ,  $SD = 20.55$ ), with no significant differences between the latter two.

For general self-interest goals, the main effect for gender was significant,  $F(1, 127) = 5.56$ ,  $p = .02$ , with boys ( $M = 21.53$ ,  $SD = 22.03$ ) reporting general self-interest goals more often than girls ( $M = 14.93$ ,  $SD = 13.51$ ). Neither the main effect for type of bullying,  $F(1.81, 229.67) = .72$ ,  $p = .48$ , nor the interaction of both factors,  $F(1.81, 229.67) = 1.21$ ,  $p = .30$ , was significant.

For general prosocial goals and negative outcomes for the bully goals, both main effects were significant. More girls ( $M = 17.37$ ,  $SD = 10.61$ ) than boys ( $M = 11.27$ ,  $SD = 12.88$ ) proposed general prosocial goals,  $F(1, 127) = 11.46$ ,  $p < .01$ . As well, general prosocial goals were reported more often for situations involving relational bullying ( $M = 20.57$ ,  $SD = 22.20$ ) than for situations involving verbal ( $M = 13.11$ ,  $SD = 17.50$ ) or physical bullying ( $M = 10.80$ ,  $SD = 16.80$ ) ( $F(2, 254) = 10.49$ ,  $p < .01$ ), with no differences between the latter two. In contrast, boys ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 7.03$ ) reported wanting negative outcomes for the bully significantly more often than did girls ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 6.00$ ),  $F(1, 127) = 6.49$ ,  $p = .01$ . The goal of wanting negative outcomes for the bully was reported most often for physical bullying situations ( $M = 7.27$ ,  $SD = 16.23$ ),

followed by verbal bullying situations ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 8.89$ ) and finally, for relational bullying situations ( $M = 2.01$ ,  $SD = 6.65$ ),  $F(1.46, 185.06) = 8.40$ ,  $p < .01$ , with significant differences across all three types. Interactions were not significant for either goal (general prosocial,  $F(2, 254) = .44$ ,  $p = .64$ , negative outcomes for the bully,  $F(1.46, 185.06) = 1.12$ ,  $p = .31$ ).

#### *Links among Students' Strategies and Goals?*

Correlation coefficients were computed among goal and strategy proportion scores. To control for Type I error, significance levels were adjusted using the Bonferroni approach ( $p$ -values  $< .0007$  were required for significance). The results of this analysis are summarized in the table below (Table 7).

Table 7.

*Correlations among strategy and goal proportion scores (n = 136)*

Strategies	Goals					
	Getting harassment to stop	Helping the victim	Avoiding involvement	General self-interest	General prosocial	Negative outcomes for bully
Seeking adult involvement	.02	-.04	<b>.45*</b>	<b>-.34*</b>	-.08	.09
Seeking peer involvement	.00	.07	-.04	-.15	.06	-.06
Talking to the bully	<b>.39*</b>	.01	-.06	-.26	.05	-.11
Gaining information	-.02	.03	<b>-.32*</b>	.09	.20	.01
Hostile/retaliatory behavior	.04	.04	-.24	.00	.02	<b>.41*</b>
Prosocial behavior towards the victim	.04	<b>.38*</b>	-.11	-.20	.12	.00
Direct intervention	.05	.13	-.12	-.06	-.01	.02
Enabling bullying behavior	<b>-.31*</b>	-.13	-.12	<b>.45*</b>	-.05	-.05
Inaction	-.23	-.29	.20	<b>.44*</b>	-.20	-.08
'Other'	-.18	-.07	-.04	.18	.02	-.09

\* $p < .0007$  required for statistical significance.

Highlighting the links between students' strategies and goals, nine correlations were statistically significant. The goal of getting the harassment to stop was positively associated with strategies involving talking to the bully ( $r = .39$ ) and negatively associated with those involving enabling bullying behavior ( $r = -.31$ ). Wanting to help the victim was most strongly associated with strategies involving prosocial behavior towards the victim ( $r = .38$ ). The goal of avoiding involvement was positively associated with seeking adult involvement ( $r = .45$ ) and negatively associated with gaining information strategies ( $r = -.32$ ). An interesting finding was that general self-interest goals were positively associated with both enabling bullying behavior ( $r = .45$ ) and inaction strategies ( $r = .44$ ) and negatively associated with seeking adult involvement strategies ( $r = -.34$ ). Finally, students who reported wanting negative outcomes for the bully were more likely to report using hostile/retaliatory behavior strategies ( $r = .41$ ).

## CHAPTER 4

### Discussion

#### *Summary of Findings*

The basic premise of the present study was that an examination of the strategies and goals children use to deal with bullying conflict would contribute to our understanding of *what* children do in such situations and what motivates them to respond in particular ways. First, students' perceptions of how difficult it is to deal with bullying as a bystander were examined. Results indicated that most students found it somewhat difficult to deal bullying episodes. However, difficulty ratings hovered around the midpoint of a 4-point scale ( $M = 2.69$ ) suggesting that students do not find it particularly easy or difficult to deal with bullying among one's peers. These findings are as one might expect given evidence that many students view bullying as commonplace and a "normal part of being a kid" (Rocke Henderson et al., 2002).

Interestingly, students' difficulty ratings varied both as a function of gender and the type of bullying. In general, girls reported that responding to bullying was more difficult than boys, suggesting that girls are more bewildered by bullying or perhaps, more attuned to or distressed by the complexities of such conflict. Moreover, verbal bullying, involving name calling, extortion, and threats was rated as most difficult to deal with as a bystander, followed by physical bullying, involving various types of physical assault and, in turn, relational bullying, involving gossip and social exclusion. These results suggest that the "demand characteristics" of bullying episodes that involve verbal aggression are more difficult for students. In such situations, the likelihood of overreacting, and thus, looking foolish in front of peers is a real possibility. At the same time, students appeared to be aware that minimizing the seriousness of the situation

might be bad if the victim really is in danger. The ambiguities of such situations are quite perplexing and may explain why students rated situations involving verbal bullying as the *most* difficult to deal with.

After verbal bullying, situations involving physical bullying were considered more difficult than those involving relational bullying. One might expect that students would find it more difficult to figure out how to confront someone who is physically harassing another student than someone who is being unduly relationally aggressive. However, it is worth noting that in *all* instances, although statistically significant differences were found (i.e., across gender and type of bullying), mean difficulty ratings remained within the middle of the rating scale. Thus, these results may not be of great practical importance.

The serious nature of bullying was not lost on all students in the present study. In fact, during many of the interviews, it was only after careful consideration of the situation that students provided a difficulty rating. For instance, one grade seven girl offered the following commentary about a situation involving a group of bullies calling another student (victim) names.

"That'd be really hard because if people always pick on a kid, they can go kinda crazy. Like when people always tell someone that they're fat or they're a fag or they're ugly or a loser, then they'll start to believe it and it will start to get into their daily routine...and they'll be like, 'Why am I living?' "

Indeed, for this student the seriousness of the situation weighed heavily. As a result, she found it difficult to figure out what she would do.

The larger focus of the present study was to examine students' strategies for dealing with bullying they witness among their peers. Overall, results indicated that

students were aware of a variety of strategies for dealing with bullying. Strategies students generated included *seeking adult involvement*, *seeking peer involvement*, *talking to the bully*, *gaining information*, *hostile/retaliatory behavior*, *prosocial behavior towards the victim*, *direct intervention*, *enabling behavior*, and *inaction*. However, despite being able to demonstrate an awareness of an array of responses, overall, students only came up with one or two strategies per situation. This finding may reflect the cognitive demands of the task (i.e., students found having to reason hypothetically cognitively demanding) or the limited repertoire of responses students perceived as available to them. More importantly, it means that for any given situation, students are choosing between one or two alternative responses, some of which can serve to undermine bullying, and others that serve to encourage bullying. Still other strategies do not have a clear positive or negative outcome.

According to peer perceptions (Salmivalli et al., 1996, 1997, 1998), approximately 17% of students participate in bullying situations as defenders, supporting the victim. Results of the present study suggest that students may have several different strategies for doing so, including seeking peer (5%) or adult involvement (13%), talking to the bully (18%), or gaining information (10%) in addition to direct intervention (13%), prosocial behavior towards the victim (18%) or hostile/retaliatory behavior (3%). In Salmivalli's research (1996), almost 24% of students were viewed as uninvolved outsiders by peers. However, in the present study only 13% of the strategies suggested emphasized inaction. Finally, Salmivalli found that over 19% students were viewed by peers as reinforcing bullying and nearly 7% were viewed as assisting in bullying. In the present study, only 4% of the strategies suggested were considered to enable or support bullying, and these were mentioned by 39% of participants at least once. In comparing results of the present study with

Salmivalli's work described above, it seems that although participant roles may be salient to peers, roles as perceived by peers may not be of much use in terms of predicting what strategies students might *actually* use as bystanders. That is, student reported strategies corresponded with peer nominated participant roles only to some extent. What accounts for this difference? One possibility is that the differences reflect, at least in part, variations in data and method. With self-reports, as used in the present study, concerns regarding socially desirable responding can be raised, resulting in reduced likelihood of students proposing less socially acceptable behaviors. With peer nominations, as in used in Salmivalli's research, concerns regarding halo effects and reputational bias (see Hymel, Wagner, & Butler, 1990) can be raised, making peer perceptions of negative behaviors more likely when describing the behavior of peers. Thus, the question of whether participant roles or strategies represent a more accurate representation of children's actual responses to bullying conflict as bystanders is unclear and requires further investigation.

Another interesting finding was that strategies students reported in the present study did not correspond particularly well with any one study described within the social problem-solving literature (e.g., Chung & Asher, 1996; Delveaux & Daniels, 2000; Erdley & Asher, 1996; Rose & Asher, 1999a) highlighting the utility and significance of applying this paradigm to bullying conflict as a unique social problem that students face. For instance, Rose and Asher (1999a) examined strategies (and goals) children use to deal with conflicts within a friendship. They found that children endorsed strategies grouped into three clusters: accommodation/compromise, hostile, self-interest. Although conceptually there is some overlap between these results and the results of the present study, Rose's and Asher's framework alone would be insufficient in describing children's strategies for bullying situations.



As schools struggle to address bully-victim problems and as bullying is being increasingly recognized as a group phenomenon (Bukowski & Sippola, 2001), *peers* will continue to be viewed as critical for effective intervention (Salmivalli, 2001). However, if students are to be encouraged to take personal responsibility when bullying occurs, I have argued that they must have a repertoire of *effective* and *appropriate* strategies. Results of the present study indicate that indeed children were aware of strategies that are likely to be both appropriate and effective. However, they also reported that they would use strategies that are inappropriate or less socially acceptable and which seems to support bullying and, others that serve no clear purpose. The key to understanding these responses lies in understanding what *motivates* such responses. Thus, in addition to finding out about students' strategy knowledge, the present study examined students' goals in bullying situations among their peers.

Goals students generated included *getting the harassment to stop*, *helping the victim*, *avoiding involvement*, *general self-interest*, *general prosocial*, and *negative outcomes for the bully*. On average, students were able to describe slightly fewer goals per situation ( $M=1.57$ ) than strategies, a finding that may suggest that it is harder for children to generate goals than strategies. According to Asher (S. Asher, personal communication, August 10, 2002.), this finding is not unexpected. In his own extensive work on children's social problem-solving, he has shifted away from having children provide goals to having children provide ratings to reflect their endorsement of goals. However, in the present study, the aim was to identify students' goals. Given that previous studies had not yet looked at children's strategies and goals for dealing with bullying as bystanders, it was necessary first step to elicit goals (and strategies) from children themselves.

The most dominant goal reported by students was to *get the harassment to stop*, voiced by 88% of respondents at least once and constituting 25% of all the goals suggested. This goal was viewed as distinct and separate from wanting to *help the victim* (13% of all responses), and wanting to achieve *negative outcomes for the bully* (4% of all responses). Reported nearly as frequently as *getting the harassment to stop*, pursuing *general prosocial* goals captured 15% of all responses and was mentioned by 81% reported at least once. Equally prominent, however, was the goal of wanting to *avoid personal involvement*, a goal mentioned by 83% of students at least once and constituting 20% of all the goals mentioned. A related and almost as common goal was *protecting one's own self-interests*, mentioned by 76% of the students at least once (18% of all goals). Overall, children in the present sample seemed to place greater emphasis on global positive goals and with personal concerns than on addressing bully/victim problems per se. Although they clearly wanted bullying to stop, this goal reported about as frequently as the goal of protecting one's self-interests. Perhaps more aptly described from a developmental perspective as an internal struggle between addressing the needs of the self versus others, students' goals were most often self-serving or prosocial, and less frequently, antisocial.

Results of the present study also highlight the importance of considering both the individual and interactive effects of gender and type of bullying on both strategy and goal selection. With respect to strategies, girls proposed more *prosocial behavior towards the victims* than did boys, while boys were more likely to do nothing (*inaction*). In light of the fact that girls are said to operate more comfortably within the realm of close relationships (e.g., Zabartany, McDougall, & Hymel, 2000), it is not surprising that they would respond more often to bullying by being prosocial to the victim. Moreover, given the finding that boys rated bullying situations as less difficult to deal with than

girls, it may be that boys did not recognize the seriousness of bullying situations as readily as girls, and, as a result, found it acceptable to do nothing. Another interesting finding in the present study was that *inaction* was proposed more often in situations involving relational rather than verbal bullying, suggesting that students perceived such behaviors as typical or acceptable, making it unnecessary to do anything in such situations. This result makes sense in light of the finding that students in the present study also perceived relational bullying as the easiest to deal with and perhaps, the least serious or urgent.

Type of bullying influenced the extent to which students endorsed *hostile/retaliatory* responses. Such responses were significantly less likely for physical than for verbal or relational bullying. Why would students be more likely to propose physically or verbally hostile behavior and retaliation in situations involving verbal and relational aggression? Perhaps students feel that such responses are justified in situations involving verbal or relational bullying. It may also be that they are too afraid to use such strategies in situations involving physical bullying because they risk being aggressed upon physically.

For *gaining information* and *enabling* strategies the effects of gender and type of bullying were interactive. Specifically, boys proposed using *gaining information* (from the bully, the victim, the peer group or some unspecified person) for dealing with relational bullying more often than for physical or verbal bullying. In contrast, girls did not differ in their reported use of gaining information strategies across situations involving physical, verbal, or relational bullying. Ironically, *gaining information*, which might be considered relationally aggressive and most akin to “gossiping”, is a response strategy we would be more likely to expect of girls (e.g., Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Perhaps boys do not recognize that gaining information is akin to gossip and therefore, see no problem with utilizing this type of strategy. Girls on the other hand know that *gaining information* is really just gossiping or that others might perceive it as such. Alternately, gaining information may not be perceived as "gossiping" by boys, and thus, a tactful way of intervening.

An interactive effect was also found for *enabling* strategies. Across physical, verbal, and relational bullying situations, girls and boys did not differ in the extent to which they proposed enabling strategies. Additionally, girls did not differ in their use of enabling strategies across physical, verbal, and relational types of bullying. However, boys proposed enabling strategies more often for situations involving relational bullying than for physical and verbal bullying situations. Overall, these findings suggest that although boys and girls do not differ in their use of enabling behavior, boys will be inclined to use more enabling strategies for situations involving relational bullying. It is also worth noting that, relative to Salmivalli et al. (1999), overall, very few students endorsed *enabling* behavior as a response strategy.

Although there were no interactive effects for goals, type of bullying and gender independently influenced the extent to which students endorsed particular goals. Overall, results suggest that the goals one pursues is influenced by the context of each situation. That is, in situations involving verbal aggression, students were more likely to want to *stop the harassment* and less concerned with *helping the victim*. *General prosocial* goals were pursued most often in situations involving relational bullying. Finally, wanting *negative outcomes for the bully* was pursued most often in situations involving physical, followed by verbal, and lastly, relational bullying. Thus, to some degree, students select particular goals for particular types of bullying situations.

Girls and boys demonstrated biases in their goal selection. Boys were more likely than girls to pursue *general self-interest* goals and *negative outcomes for the bully*. Girls pursued *general prosocial goals* more often than boys. Overall, these results might suggest that girls and boys were motivated by stereotypical goals. That is, girls were more concerned with being prosocial and boys were somewhat antisocial and self-centered. However, this is an inaccurate representation of children's goal orientations considering that boys and girls *did not* differ in wanting to *get the bullying to stop, help the victim, or, avoid involvement*.

Finally, links between goals and strategies were examined in the present study. Several findings reflected sensible, predictable connections between strategies and goals. For instance, as might be expected, students who wanted to *help the victim* (goal) were more likely to behave *prosocially toward the victim* (strategy); students who wanted *negative outcomes for the bully* (goal) were more likely to suggest *hostile/retaliatory behaviors* (strategy). However, the preferred means of *getting bullying to stop* (goal) was *talking to the bully* (strategy). Thus, out of all the strategies that children might use for intervening, children were most likely to try to talk to the bully. What is also interesting is that students who wanted to *get the bullying to stop* (goal) were least likely to use *enabling* strategies suggesting that to some degree, students are aware that watching, laughing, and joining in support bullying.

Results also indicated that children's primary motivation for *seeking the assistance of adults* (strategy) was to *avoid getting involved* (goal). Students were not motivated to seek the assistance of adults to stop bullying or to help the victim as one might expect but rather, to avoid getting involved. Less surprising is that they were

least likely to use *gaining information* (strategy) as a response strategy when concerned with avoiding *involvement* (strategy).

Interestingly, general self-interest goals, which included self-protection, were most strongly associated with enabling and inaction strategies. Enabling strategies afford bystanders with self-protection because they stand by the bully. Ignoring the situation or staying out of the situation (inaction) were also considered effective means of protecting oneself. Thus, it is not surprising that children who were concerned about their own self-interests were more likely to endorse such strategies. However, consider the following response of a student (grade seven boy) who reported that he would use *inaction* in a situation where another student was being called names by a group of bullies:

**Strategy:** "I probably wouldn't say anything."

**Goal:** "Because that's such a difficult situation to change. It's not [like] you can just walk up with a couple of friends say, 'Hey, leave him alone.' ...but in this situation I doubt I'd be able to convince **one** of my friends to walk in there.

...Once again, I don't want to risk my own...I don't want to get bullied just so that kid (victim) won't get bullied for that one time. Because even if I stepped in there and said something, they'd (bullies) probably **still** bully that kid **and** bully me."

Although the link between this student's inaction and his motivation might be expected, it is still a poignant example of the internal struggle that many students face when dealing with bullying conflict.

Finally, consider the finding that students who reported being highly motivated to protect their *general self-interests* (goal) were the least likely to *seek assistance from*

*adults* (strategy). One likely explanation for this finding is that students might be motivated primarily out of concern for being viewed as a tattletale (general self-interest). Thus, to avoid being viewed as a tattletale, students would not want to approach adults.

### *Implications of Findings*

Findings from the current study have implications regarding theory, research, and practice. Consider first Hazler's (1996) observation that children who are not directly involved in bullying situations either as bullies or victims present as a largely untapped resource for tackling the problem of "peer on peer abuse". As Pepler and others who have developed interventions that focus on the peer group response have found, it is actually very difficult to modify student responses to bullying (Pepler & Craig personal communication, October 2000). In the present thesis, I have argued that in order to utilize peers, we must first gain a better understanding of the "how" and "why" of their responses to bullying conflict. In an effort to understand peer involvement in the bullying process, the present study has allowed us to take a step back and to consider what it is that children say they would do in response to bullying and why. Specifically, results indicated that (1) students are aware of a variety of strategies that serve both to discourage and encourage bullying, (2) their intentions (goals) varied, being prosocial, self-serving, and sometimes anti-social, (3) there were important links between strategies and goals, and finally, (4) both strategy and goal selection was influenced to a certain degree by gender and the type of bullying. The strategies and goals students generated in the present study, though informed by both the social problem-solving and bullying literatures, would not have been uncovered by looking only at each theoretical perspective independently. Thus, to better understand peer responses to bullying, it was necessary to merge both perspectives and past research.

Results of the present study lend empirical support for the utility of using a social problem-solving approach to further our understanding peer responses to bullying. Interestingly, in a recent review, Lemerise and Arsenio (2000) commented on how researchers might begin to revise current conceptualizations of social information processing to incorporate emotion processes (e.g., emotion regulation, emotional understanding). Although yet to be empirically validated, the extent to which emotions are linked with social information processing in bullying is certainly worth considering and might contribute greatly to our understanding of how peers respond to bullying.

Perhaps most importantly, results from the current study have important implications for practice, and in particular, for school-based interventions. Why school-based interventions? Schools are where children begin to learn about the rules of society. Some of the lessons children learn, particularly those around how to deal with bullying, have implications for how they will respond to the needs of the weakest members of our society. Helping children to deal with bullying conflict then is a way to teach our children to be better citizens. Results from the current study can be used to shape school-based interventions.

In particular, knowledge generated from the present study about students' response strategies and goals presents educators with a important opportunity to generate a variety of exercises (e.g., open discussions, moral dilemma discussions, role-playing) and curriculum materials that have been informed by students' own reports. The goal of these interventions ought to be to facilitate open and honest conversations with students about bullying and about what really happens between and among students. The present research gives us some insight about students' repertoire of response strategies and their motivations. This information might be used to



generate discussion among adults and students about the implications of particular responses or further examination of human motivation. For instance, getting kids to talk about *gaining information* (strategy) and the possible effects of employing this strategy would be a useful approach. Questions that might be used to generate discussion and activities around responding to bullying might include: How does the bully feel when I try to gain more information? How does this make the victim feel? How do I feel when I try to gain more information? What are the good things that might come out of using this strategy and what are some of the bad things? Why do kids use this type of strategy in the first place? Why might I be motivated to use this particular strategy? How do my motivations influence the decisions I make in difficult situations? What is a better strategy to use? Helping children to explore these types of issues is one way that results from the present study can be used in practice.

Results from the present study would also suggest that anti-bullying interventions, particularly those aimed at getting peers to intervene, need to include curriculum about different types of bullying and how children might respond to different types of bullying situations. This research also suggests that it might be useful to get children to explore gender differences in response styles both through same-sex workshops as well as mixed-sex groupings.

### *Limitations of Study*

Although the present investigation gives us keen insight into the social-cognitive processes that are involved when students figure out how to respond to bullying, it is not without limitations. As suggested above, one limitation of the present study relates to the likelihood of socially desirable responding. Given the sensitive nature of bullying and the potential for negative self-evaluation, results of the present study may have

been influenced by students' desire to be viewed in a socially positive light even though efforts were taken to minimize this outcome. The net impact on the results would be that students exaggerated the extent to which they would use prosocial strategies and goals and may have underreported the antisocial and self-serving strategies and goals.

Additionally, results of the present study only provide evidence regarding children's strategies and goals within a narrow age range. Although the decision to only examine peer responses to bullying in pre-adolescents was strategic, the findings from the present study may only apply to children within this age range.

One final limitation of the present study concerns the generalizability of the findings. Specifically, responses (both goals and strategies) children generated were based on their considerations of *hypothetical* bullying situations. Thus, results of the present study may not reflect children's actual responses in 'real-life'. Moreover, hypothetical situations cannot capture the complexity of any real-life experience. Instead, results of the present study should be considered a close approximation of children's responses that could be verified using naturalistic observation. Nevertheless, student responses to hypothetical bullying situations do provide an initial look at the range of options they feel they have available to them and as such represents an important first step in understanding the issues they face. Despite these limitations, it is also important to underscore the importance of giving students a voice. By giving students an opportunity to talk about their ideas and experiences, not only do we gain a richer understanding of their perspectives, we also convey to them our belief in their ability to effect change.

### *Future Directions*

Considering the exploratory nature of the current study, a variety of issues related to peer responses to bullying require further investigation. Some possible directions for future research are described below.

First, level of affiliation with both the victim and the bully was a salient and relevant issue for many participants in the present study, suggesting that students' response strategies and goals might be very different depending on whether one was friends with the bully or the victim, adding further complexity to a complicated social situation. The hypothetical vignettes described in the present study could be adjusted to systematically examine the extent to which level of affiliation (with the victim, with the bully) influences children's responses with both the victim and the bully.

In the present study, bullying situations were limited to conflict involving same-sex peers. That is, bullies and victims matched the gender of the participant. Considering that gender proved to be an important variable in the present study (girls and boys generated different strategies and goals in certain situations), future research should consider how results would be different if bullies and/or victims were of the opposite sex.

In addition, it would be interesting to find out whether children's responses would vary as a function of sociometric status (e.g., popular, rejected, average). That is, do popular children respond differently to bullying than rejected or average children? Similarly, it would be interesting to find out whether one's status as a bully, bully-victim, victim, or non-involved peer influences the way children respond to bullying as bystanders.

In the present study, diffusion of responsibility was not tapped directly. Instead, vignettes described situations in which participants were clearly in a group and alone with the bully. This was done to maximize the different types of responses that students would generate rather than limiting the focus of the study to only those situations where diffusion of responsibility might operate. However, the extent to which diffusion of responsibility operates in bullying situations where peers are present needs to be examined.

As noted earlier, results of the present study only speak to the experiences of pre-adolescents. It would be informative to examine bystanders' strategies and goals for dealing with bullying conflict from a developmental perspective. For instance do adolescents generate similar strategies and goals as pre-adolescents? Are certain goals more important at certain ages? However, addressing these questions using the research methodology employed in the present study (i.e., social problem-solving interviews) would be prohibitive. Instead, results from the current study could be used to generate a measure, similar to those used within the social problem-solving literature, that could be administered with students across a wider range of ages. Additionally, the development of a measure would make it feasible to examine some of the issues described above (i.e., gender, level of affiliation).

Finally, in my opinion, the ultimate goal of social research is to improve the lives of children. Expanding the research on peer involvement in the bullying process in the ways described above can go a long way to meeting this objective *if* results are used to inform practice. Thus, it is critical for researchers who study bullying to make a concerted effort to uncover the ways in which their findings can reduce bullying and peer harassment among children.

## Conclusions

As adults it is very easy to criticize and be shocked by the lack of prosocial responding we see on our school campuses. However, we need to recognize or, perhaps be reminded that for youth, social situations, particularly those involving complex social conflict such as bullying, the stakes are high. Students are faced with weighing their own needs against the needs of others while simultaneously considering the moral, social, and personal implications of their responses. It should not surprise us that they often find it very difficult to figure out “the right thing to do”. As educators, we serve our kids best by helping them to deal with bullying, using it as a “teachable moment” rather than an issue of discipline. If we want kids to take responsibility, we need to teach them how.

Results of the present study can be used to get students talking about what they already do and to help them figure out new ways of responding. Talking honestly and non-judgmentally with students about what motivates us to behave in certain ways will foster in them greater self-awareness that is critical to changing their responses. However, as Garbarino and DeLara (2002) point out, the responsibility for dealing with bullying in our schools begins with the educators and adults who work with children every day.

Teachers and other adults often ignore [bullying] in the mistaken belief that kids have to figure out how to handle these kinds of interactions for themselves.

...The problem with this approach is that the solutions children come up with on their own are not always healthy and often lead to escalating conflict rather than its resolution. (Garbarino & DeLara, 2002, p. 17)

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**PARENTAL CONSENT FORM**

**Study Title:** Student Responses and Attitudes toward Social Conflict

**Principal Investigator:** Shelley Hymel, Ph. D., Associate Dean, Faculty of Education,  
University of British Columbia.

**Co Investigator:** Natalie Rocke Henderson, Master's candidate, Faculty of Education,  
University of British Columbia.

**Consent:** I have read and understood the attached letter of request for participation in the study entitled "Student Responses and Attitudes toward Social Conflict". I understand that I may keep the letter of request for my own records. I also understand that my child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that he/she may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences or impact on his/her schoolwork. My decision regarding my son/daughter's participation in this study is indicated below:

\_\_\_\_\_ **YES**, my son/daughter has my permission to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_ **NO**, my son/daughter **DOES NOT** have my permission to participate.

Son/Daughter's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN THIS SLIP TO THE SCHOOL**

## APPENDIX B

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

NOTE THAT QUESTIONS TO BE ADMINISTERED ORALLY.

**1. GENERAL INFORMATION:**

**Age/Birthdate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. TO WHICH ETHNIC OR CULTURAL GROUP(S) DO YOU BELONG?**

\_\_\_\_\_ White (Anglo, Caucasian, European descent, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Latin (Spanish, Mexican, South American, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Black (African, Haitian, Jamaican, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ First Nation (Aboriginal, Native Indian, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian (Oriental, Chinese, Japanese, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Filipino

\_\_\_\_\_ East Indian

\_\_\_\_\_ Other ethnic or cultural group(s) (If you would describe your ethnic or cultural heritage in some way that is not listed above, please describe your heritage in the space provided):

\_\_\_\_\_ Not sure.

**3. WHAT LANGUAGES ARE SPOKEN IN YOUR HOME?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN CANADA?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. WHICH OF THESE ADULTS DO YOU LIVE WITH MOST OF THE TIME? (CHECK ALL THE ADULTS THAT YOU LIVE WITH.)**

\_\_\_\_\_ Both my parents.

\_\_\_\_\_ My mother only.

\_\_\_\_\_ My father only.

\_\_\_\_\_ My mother and a stepfather.

\_\_\_\_\_ My father and a stepmother.

\_\_\_\_\_ Grandparents.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other adults (describe):

**6. FOR ALL CAREGIVERS LISTED ABOVE, WHAT DO THEY DO FOR A LIVING?**

Where does your parent/guardian work? \_\_\_\_\_

What does s/he do there? \_\_\_\_\_

Where does your parent/guardian work? \_\_\_\_\_

What does s/he do there? \_\_\_\_\_

Where does your parent/guardian work? \_\_\_\_\_

What does s/he do there? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### BULLYING VIGNETTES

#### PHYSICAL BULLYING

**Vignette 1. "Hit with a book" Victim is hit on the head with a textbook by the bully.**

Your teacher has left the classroom for a moment. He/she has instructed everyone to read from the textbook while he/she is gone. You are sitting at your desk reading when this mean kid walks by the person in front of you and hits him/her on the head with their book. The mean kid is always picking on the girl/boy in front of you.

**Vignette 2. "Pantsed" Victim is has pants pulled down by bully in gym class.**

You're in gym class waiting for your teacher to get back from the office. Most kids are standing around talking and a few kids are playing games while you all wait. This big kid comes up from behind one of your classmates and pulls his/her shorts down in front of the whole class. The kid who did it is always trying to embarrass people.

**Vignette 3. "Lunch hassle" Bully (group) takes victim's sandwich and spits it out.**

You're sitting with a few of your friends eating your lunch when a group of kids comes up to a kid sitting at the next table and starts poking at his/her lunch. You hear him/her say, "Gimme your lunch, you loser." He/she takes a bite out of his/her sandwich, spits it out, then laughs and walks away. You've seen him/her hassle kids like this before.

#### VERBAL BULLYING

**Vignette 4. "Name calling" Group of bullies call victim names near the end of recess.**

You are waiting to go in after recess when a few "mean" girls/boys start making fun of another girl/boy. They call him/her things like "fatso, fag, loser." This group is always picking on this kid. He/she is getting upset and most everyone around is laughing at her/him.

**Vignette 5. "Extortion for \$10" Bully threatens to beat victim up if he/she doesn't give \$10.**

You are standing in the hallway when you and practically everyone else hears a kid who is always bothering people at school say, "If you don't give me that ten dollars, I'm going to kick the crap out of you after school." You know that he/she is serious. The girl/boy who has the loonie is looking scared.

**Vignette 6. "Verbal threat" Bully tells SS about intentions to beat victim up after school.**

Over the past few weeks one of your classmates has been picking on one particular student whose name is \_\_\_\_\_. You've seen it happen in the hall and after school. On this day this classmate comes up to you and says, "Yeah, such a loser. I'm going to get him/her today after school."

RELATIONAL BULLYING**Vignette 7. "Note" Bully starts a note asking people who hate victim to sign the note.**

You are in class when someone beside you passes you a note and says, "Read it and pass it along." You open the note and the note says, "Everyone who HATES \_\_\_\_\_, sign here." The person who passed the note to you is always picking on \_\_\_\_\_.

**Vignette 8. "Gossip" Group of bullies is gossiping about victim in the library.**

You are in the library doing some work on a project with a bunch of kids from your class. You are sitting across from some classmates who are talking about another classmate, behind his/her back and laughing. Some of the things they are saying are really, really mean and probably not even true. They are always use gossip to be mean to \_\_\_\_\_.

**Vignette 9. "Social Exclusion" Bully is trying to get people to exclude victim.**

Over the past few weeks one of your classmates has been telling everyone not to talk to one particular student. This student's name is \_\_\_\_\_. He/she doesn't have many friends to begin with and is always being picked on by other students.

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Adapted from Bream (1988) & Renshaw & Asher, (1983)

#### INTERVIEW SESSION INTRODUCTION:

"Part of my job is to talk to students of different ages about how they feel and what they think about different things. Today I'd like to talk to you about some things that might happen at school to kids your age."

#### STUDENT ASSENT:

"You're parents/guardians have said that it would be alright for you to participate but you also need to decide whether or not you want to participate."

"Before you decide, there are a few more things that I want to tell you. First, this is not a test. There are no right answers and no wrong answers, I'm just interested in finding out about what you think and everyone thinks about things differently. And, what you say will not affect your schoolwork. The second thing you need to know is that everything that we talk about is confidential. So, even though I will be tape recording what we talk about, this means that I won't talk to anyone, not your teachers or your parents, about what we've talked about. The last thing for you to know is that you can stop at any point."

"Do you want to continue?"

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE: (TO BE COMPLETED ORALLY-APPENDIX A)

"The first thing I would like to do is you ask you some things about your background."

#### STUDENT RESPONSE TO BULLYING INTERVIEW:

"Now I'm going to tell you some stories about things that happen to students at school. I want you I want you to imagine that the story is actually happening. After we finish each story I will ask you some questions about **what you would do or say** in that situation if you saw it happening and why."

"Now we are ready to start. Each story will be a bit different. Make sure you listen carefully to each story."

#### VIGNETTE 1 IS READ ALOUD TO THE PARTICIPANT. (APPENDIX C)

The participant will be provided with a copy of each story so that he or she can follow along. As the story is handed to the student, the interviewer will say,

"I want you to imagine this situation."

#### PROBES:

After finishing the story the interviewer proceeds with the following probe questions:

##### **1. Difficulty Rating Probe:**

- a.** "How hard do you think it would be for you to deal with this situation if you saw it happen?"

STUDENTS WILL BE PRESENTED WITH THE FOLLOWING RATING SCALE ON A CARD AND ASKED TO PROVIDE A RATING:

EASY	easy	Hard	HARD
1	2	3	4

**2. Strategy Probe:**

- a.** "What would you say or do if you saw this happen?"

**3. Goal Probe:**

- a.** "Why would you do or say that?"
- b.** "What would be your reason for doing (or saying that)?" (alternative probe)

**4. Additional Response Probe:**

- a.** "What is another thing you might do (or say)?" (Proceed with goal probe.)

ADDITIONAL RESPONSE PROBE IS USED UNTIL STUDENT IS UNABLE TO GENERATE ANY MORE STRATEGIES AND GOALS.

**5. Most Likely Strategy/Goal Probe:**

- a.** "You have told me a lot of things, which one do you think you would choose to do?"

**DEBRIEFING:**

"Thank you for sharing your ideas and experiences with me. One thing that I want to mention is that your teachers and principal want to make sure you always feel safe at school. If you ever feel unsafe at school or need someone to talk to, here are the names of some of the people in your school that you can talk to."

A list of staff (i.e., counselor, nurse, principal) will be shown to the students. Other resources (i.e., counselling services), that will vary from school to school, will also be mentioned.

"Do you have any questions about what we talked about?"

"Thanks for talking with me."

## APPENDIX E

# STRATEGIES/GOALS LIST

## SOCIAL PROBLEM-SOLVING LITERATURE

Erdley & Asher (1996)		Chung & Asher (1996)		Rose & Asher (1999a)	
<b>STRATEGIES:</b> Physical aggression Verbal aggression Passive reaction (ignore it) Avoidance Problem-solving behavior Request for clarification	<b>GOALS:</b> Getting back at protagonist Working out problem peacefully Avoiding the protagonist Hurting the person's feelings Protecting the self Maintaining relationship Maintaining an assertive reputation (based on Renshaw & Asher, 1983; Taylor & Asher, 1984) <b>Goal Categories:</b> Aggressive Avoidant Constructive Relationship-oriented	<b>STRATEGIES:</b> Prosocial Hostile/coercive Assertive Passive Adult seeking	<b>GOALS:</b> Relationship goal Control goal Self-interest goal Avoidance goal	<b>STRATEGIES:</b> Accommodating Compromising Verbally aggressive Self-interest pursuit Leaving Threat of termination of friendship Strategy clusters: Accommodation/ compromise Hostile Self-interest	<b>GOALS:</b> Relationship goal Moral goal Retaliation goal (revenge) Tension reduction goal Control goal Instrumental goal Goal clusters: Relationship maintenance Instrumental control (self-focused) Revenge
Rose & Asher (1999b)		Delveaux & Daniels (2000)		Hopmeyer & Asher (1997)	
<b>STRATEGIES:</b> Initiating discussion Sympathizing Reassuring Advice giving Offering distraction Avoidance Dismissing Blaming	<b>GOALS:</b> Help friend to feel better Expressing caring Help to solve problem Respecting privacy Not getting involved Assigning responsibility	<b>STRATEGIES:</b> Extreme physical aggression Mild physical aggression Compromise Polite request	<b>GOALS:</b> Pursuing self-interest Maintaining personal control Revenge Avoiding trouble Maintaining equality Maintaining relationships among peer group Maintaining relationships with focus peer Based on Chung & Asher (1995); 2 goals not included: Pursuing fairness Avoiding injury	<b>STRATEGIES:</b> Authority seeking (for help) Verbally assertive Acquiescing/ignoring Physically assertive Polite requests Physically aggressive Sharing and taking turns (remaining strategies not analyzed) Threatening to tell an authority Information seeking Appealing to social norms Verbally requesting and telling an authority No response Threatening violence Bribing Verbally aggressive Enlisting peer support irrelevant/ nonresponsive	<b>GOALS:</b> Not examined



Renshaw & Asher (1983)		Crick & Dodge (1994) Theoretical	
<b>Strategies:</b> Positive-outgoing Positive-accommodating Rule-oriented Avoidance Hostile	<b>Goals:</b> Positive-outgoing Positive-accommodating Rule-oriented Avoidance Hostile	<b>Strategies:</b>	<b>Goals:</b> Internal (feeling happy, regulating negative affect, avoiding embarrassment) External (object-oriented/instrumental) Wanting to be liked Wanting to improve social status; social acceptance Relationship enhancing Relationship damaging Avoiding negative interactions with peers Avoiding rejection & humiliation Categories of goals: Compliance Avoidance Compromise Physical aggression From Taylor & Asher (1984) Competence Fairness/rule-oriented Relationship (approach/avoidance) dominance

**APPENDIX F**

STRATEGIES/GOALS LIST

BULLYING LITERATURE

Olweus (1978; 1991)		Hazler (1996)		O'Connell et al. (1999)	
STRATEGIES: "Passive bullying"	GOALS: To participate in bullying without having to initiate it  To receive similar reinforcement that they bully receives (i.e., gain attention of peers)  To participate in bullying without feeling personally responsible or with the belief that the victim deserves it  To act in a way that is consistent with feeling a lack of personal responsibility (diffusion of responsibility, "it's not my problem")	STRATEGIES: To not intervene	GOALS: To avoid retaliation on the part of the bully (self-protection)  To avoid embarrassment/humiliation caused by not knowing what to do  To avoid anxiety caused by not wanting to make the situation worse  To avoid general anxiety that is caused  To find the easiest solution  To find the safest solution (self-protection)	STRATEGIES: To not intervene	GOALS: To act in a way that is consistent with feeling a lack of personal responsibility (diffusion of responsibility, "it's not my problem")
Salmivalli et al., (1996; 1997; 1998)		O'Connell et al. (1999)			
STRATEGIES: <i>Assistant Role</i> -assist the bully/join in <i>Reinforcer Role</i> -encouraging the bully by laughing or observing <i>Defender Role</i> -aiding victim by siding with him/her to get bullying to stop <i>Outsider Role</i> -avoiding, being removed from or not aware of bullying situations (avoidance)	GOALS: Salmivalli does not get into why children might adopt these roles/strategies	STRATEGIES: Join in verbally or physically Watch Intervene	GOALS:		

## APPENDIX G

### PEER RESPONSES TO BULLYING-SOCIAL PROBLEM-SOLVING CODING MANUAL

During individual interviews students were asked to suggest response strategies (i.e., "What they would say or do if you saw this happen") and goals (i.e., "Why would you say or do that?") for each of 9 hypothetical bullying situations. Students generated as many strategies and goals as possible.

First, students' responses were coded into "idea units" following guidelines described in Bream (1998). Briefly, this involves coding responses as *separate* idea units when two separate actions are described or when two separate responses or statements reflecting different ideas are made. Responses that include elaborated responses with unimportant details are coded as a single idea unit. When children initially say they don't know but then immediately provide a response, their elaboration is considered one idea unit. Similarly, if a vague response is later elaborated, it is coded as one idea unit. Finally, if more than one statement expressing the same idea is provided, it is coded as one idea unit. In many cases an idea unit corresponded to a single clause.

Next, each strategy and each goal was coded into one of 10 strategy categories and 7 goal or 5 non-goal categories respectively. Strategies reflect how students respond to a given situation, what they would do. Goals on the other hand reflect the *desired outcome*.

The following symbols appear in the transcripts:

(V) = refers to the victim

(B) = refers to the bully

(Q) = response was queried for clarification

(R) = response was queried for a goal/reason

(A) = refers to adult(s)

(T) = refers to teacher

DK = Don't know

NR = No response

#### **STRATEGY CODING SCHEME:**

A strategy is defined as statement about what a child would say, do, or feel in the situation (Renshaw & Asher, 1983). Please use the following descriptions and examples to code responses to the strategy probe (S1, S2, etc.) into *one* of the 10 strategy categories. Please remember to read each statement in its entirety before assigning a code.

1. **Adult involvement:** Included in this category were all responses in which students reported telling, informing, or getting adult (teacher, parent, principal, supervisor, "someone older", counselor, parent). Also included in this category are instances when students reported accompanying or offering to accompany the victim to tell an adult. Students may specify that they would like their anonymity to be protected or an action they would like the adult to take as part of their response.

*"I'd get a teacher."*

*"I'd ask her if she wants to go tell a teacher."*

*"I'd tell the principal but ask her not to tell them (bully) it was me."*

*"I'd give it (the note) to the teacher."*

2. **Peer involvement:** This category includes responses in which students propose telling their friends, soliciting the advice of friends, and discussing the situation with friends. This category also includes intervening with peers and attempting to influence peer responses. Some examples of attempting to influence peers include getting peers to intervene, reasoning with peers, and actively discouraging peers from joining in.

*"I'd get my friends and see if we could do something to stop it."*

*"Tell people to be nice to him (victim)."*

*"I'd talk to my friends about it."*

*"Get a few people to hang out with her (victim)."*

*"Tell people that they shouldn't laugh at him (victim) because how would they feel."*

3. **Talking to the bully:** This category includes telling or asking the bully to stop or not to engage in bullying behavior in the future. This category also includes reasoning with the bully or making an appeal to stop which may include voicing their disapproval to the bully, saying positive things about the victim to the bully, and communicating to the bully (by words or actions) that subject won't participate.

*"I'd tell him (bully) not to do that."*

*"Tell that girl (bully) to go away and get her own money."*

*"I'd say, 'Hey, I know that kid and he's not that bad.' "*

*"I'd pass it (the note) back to her (bully)."*

A distinction is made between telling the bully they are mean versus telling the bully their actions are mean. The former is not included in this category but is included in category 5.

*"I'd tell them (bully) they're mean." (category 5)*

*"I'd say, 'That's really mean.' " (category 3)*

4. **Gaining information:** Included in the category is statements in which students propose gaining information from the bully, the victim, the peer group, or from an unspecified individual.

*"Ask him (bully) why?"*

*"I'd talk to (V) and ask her why they pick on her all the time."*

*"I'd ask my friends if they know why this girl is so mean."*

*"Say, 'What's the point, why should I?' "*

5. **Use of hostile/retaliatory behavior:** This category includes statements in which students report use of physically hostile behaviors including hitting, pushing, or fighting. It also includes use of verbally hostile behaviors such as insulting, yelling, or threatening (including threatening to tell an adult). Retaliating, typically by doing to the bully what the bully has done to the victim, is also included in this category. Students may report involving others in the hostile/retaliatory behavior.

*"I'd hit them (bully) on the head with the book." "I'd pull their shorts down." "I'd call her (bully) names)."*

*"I'll tell if you do that."*

*"I might get into a fight with them (bully)."*

*"I'd get a bunch of people to do that to her (bully)."*

*"I'd yell at that kid myself."*

6. **Prosocial behavior towards victim:** Strategies such as comforting the victim, inquiring whether or not the victim is alright, talking to the victim, and other situation-specific acts of kindness are included in this category. Warning or informing the victim and giving advice to the victim (typically about what they should do to handle the situation) are also included in this category.

*"I'd comfort that kid (victim) who had that done to him."*

*"I'd make sure he's (victim) okay."*

*"I'd talk to her (victim)."*

*"I could give her (victim) part of my lunch."*

*"I'd tell her (victim) not to worry about them (bully)."*

*"I'd maybe warn her (victim). Tell her what that kid (bully) told me."*

*"I'd tell her (victim) to tell a teacher."*

7. **Direct intervention:** This strategy category includes taking action to intervene, defend, protect or assist the victim including hanging around/playing with the victim, being the victim's friend, getting the victim out of the situation, and actively choosing *not* to join in or laugh.

*"I would try to be that kid's (victim) friend maybe."*

*"I'd stand up for him (victim)."*

*"I'd go in and try to change the subject."*

*"Sit beside her (victim)."*

*"I'd try not to laugh."*

This category also includes situation-specific intervention strategies.

*"I'd throw the note in the garbage"*

This category *does not* include talking to the bully (category 3) but does include the intent of getting the bully to stop.

*"I'd tell her (bully) to stop." (category 3) versus "I'd try to get her (bully) to stop." (category 7)*

This category *does not* include intervening with peers (category 2).

8. **Enabling:** Watching or listening in, laughing, joining in or actively participating in the harassment, going along with it or pretending to go along with it are strategies included in this category.

*"Just laugh."*

*"Pass the note on." "I wouldn't sign it and just pass it on."*

*"Play along with the kid (bully)."*

*"Listen for a while."*

*"Just stand there and watch."*

*"Sit there."*

9. **Inaction:** This strategy category includes avoiding the bully, leaving, ignoring it, and non-involvement. This category also includes treating the victim the same as before, the student not changing their behavior towards the victim, or the student not going out of their way to be nice or mean to the victim.

*"Probably nothing."*

*"I'd just walk away/leave/go inside."*

*"I'd ignore the person (bully)." "Ignore it."*

*"If I didn't talk to him (victim) in the first place I wouldn't talk to him."*

*"I'd stay out of it."*

10. **Other:** This category includes miscellaneous strategies not captured by categories listed above as well as vague or uninterpretable responses. It also includes instances when students report that they don't know what they would say or do. Statements regarding what a student "wouldn't" do are also included in this category with the exception of when students report not joining in (or an action that implies not joining in).

*"Don't know."*

*"I wouldn't hit the girl (bully)."*

*"Not sure."*

## **GOAL CODING SCHEME:**

A goal is defined as a statement in which the purpose for a strategy is articulated (Renshaw & Asher, 1983). Note that many students had difficulty providing goals and instead, provided reasons, rationales, or commentaries that were not goals because they did not reflect a desired outcome implicitly or explicitly. Language students use around goals generally will include one of the following ("I want/don't want...", "so that...", "to...", "it would/might...", "victim wouldn't/might not...", "trying to...", "then...", "that way..."). Please remember to read each statement in its entirety before assigning a code.

1. **Getting the harassment to stop:** In this category the goal is to stop the bully and/or prevent further or future harassment. Students may describe wanting to resolve or handle the problem, getting the bully to listen, preventing the victim from being hurt or protecting the victim, or getting the bully to calm down or forget about it. Students may also specify an aspect of the harassment that they want stopped (i.e., note will not be passed around, victim keeps \$10, etc.).

*"So that the bully stops picking on that kid."*

*"So that the bully doesn't do it."*

*"So that the victim doesn't get hurt."*

*"To handle it myself."*

2. **Helping the victim:** Included in this category is the goal of helping the victim by addressing their emotional or physical needs. Students may report wanting to make the victim feel better in a general (i.e., comforting them) or specific way.

*"So that the victim feels better."*

*"The victim wouldn't feel so embarrassed/lonely/upset."*

*"So the victim feels more confident/safe/comfortable."*

*"So the victim isn't hungry."*

*"Because I don't want the victim to get hurt or anything."*

In addition to helping the victim by addressing physical or emotional needs, other goals around helping the victim are outlined below.

Helping the victim in an unspecified way.

*"So I can help him/her." "To defend that other kid."*

Helping the victim-by being friends with or helping the victim to make friends

*"So s/he can make a lot of friends." "That way s/he has friends."*

Helping the victim-by making sure the victim is alright

*"To see if they're (victim) hurt or not." "To make sure s/he's okay."*

Helping the victim by informing the victim so that he/she is aware of the situation



*"He'd be aware." "So then s/he knows."*

3. **Avoiding Involvement:** This category includes not wanting to get involved, avoiding having to participate or join in, disassociating oneself from the bully or the bully's actions, and avoiding having to pick sides.

*"Don't want to get involved."*

*"Because I don't want to participate in that."*

*"I don't want to encourage it."*

*"Staying neutral."*

Also included in this category is the goal of deferring to adults. Specifically, students will describe wanting adults to handle the situation. They may speculate on what the adult might do and may specify that adults are better at handling bullying. A related goal that is also included in this category is making adults aware of the situation.

*"Cause they (adult) can stop it."*

*"So the bully will get a lecture and stop."*

*"They (adult) could do something about it."*

*"Teachers know what to do about that."*

*"The teacher will talk to them and send them to the office."*

*"To let them (adult) know that this is going on."*

The goal of getting or wanting the victim to do something, to take action him or herself, is also included as an avoiding involvement goal. Some students will speculate on what the victim could do.

*"So she could stand up for herself."*

*"So he could tell an adult."*

*"He could be prepared."*

*"If she knows, she can get away."*

4. **General self-interest:** The primary goal in this category is self-protection. The student may describe wanting to avoid getting in trouble with the bully, wanting to avoid being picked on or retaliated against by the bully or the larger peer group.

*"So that doesn't happen to me."*

*"Because I might get picked on too."*

*"If I X, then s/he will pick on me too."*

*"I am afraid of them (bully)."*

Also included in this category is the goal of avoiding trouble with adults or avoiding trouble more generally.

*"Not to get in trouble."*

*"Because the teacher would get mad at me."*

The goals of maintaining positive relationships with peers, the victim, and the bully are also included in this category.

*"I don't want the victim to get mad at me."*

*"Cause that would make things bad between us."*

*"So the bully doesn't get expelled."*

*"I don't want to make enemies with people."*

*"I don't want to lose friends."*

Other self-interest goals included in this category are reducing personal distress, maintaining independence, avoiding being viewed as a tattletale, doing what's easiest/easier, and going along with the group.

*"I wouldn't want to see someone getting hurt."*

*"Make me feel like I'm doing the right thing."*

*"Cause he (bully) can't tell me what to do."*

*"I don't like to tell."*

*"If I tell, then I'll be a tattletale."*

*"Cause it's the easiest thing to do."*

*"It's easier that way."*

*"Because other people would be doing it."*

Finally, gaining information to find out motivations/details of the situation or for the purpose of figuring out how to proceed is also included in the self-interest goal category.

*"To find out why."*

*"To see if bully has a reason."*

*"To get her side."*

*"So then I'll know why and I can fix it."*

*"If victim tells me it's not true then I could tell on the bully."*

5. **General Prosocial** This category includes various goals around doing good and minimizing harm for the victim and for others including the bully. It also includes goals about promoting positive peer behavior, conveying that the student doesn't condone the bully or the bully's action, and conveying that the student won't go along with it.

Goals around doing good and minimizing harm includes that no one gets hurt, making sure the situation doesn't get worse, being nice and doing the right thing, and not being mean.

*"To be nice."*

*"Signing it would be mean."*

*"Because it's the right thing to do."*

*"So no one gets hurt."*

Avoiding hurting the victim personally.

*"I wouldn't want to hurt her (victim)."*

Wanting for the bully to see the errors in their ways, trying to change the bully's mind about the victim, getting the bully to think about what they're doing, and helping the bully are included in this category.

*"To make the bully realize that they shouldn't do that."*

*"Maybe they'll (bully) realize the victim isn't so bad and stop doing that."*

*"She (bully) might think about it."*

This goal category also includes preventing or discouraging others from joining in and influencing peers to be more positive toward the victim.

*"So that no one else will be mean to him (victim)."*

*"So that people won't sign the note."*

*"So if I'm nice to her (victim), maybe my friends will follow too."*

Also included in this goal category is wanting to convey to the bully that you do not condone their actions and/or you won't go along with it.

*"To tell her off."*

*"Just to give her the idea that it's not cool to go around doing that."*

*"It gives him the idea that people don't like it."*

*"To let them know it's mean."*

*"For her to know it's not funny."*

*"To give them the message that I'm not going to sign it."*

6. **Negative outcomes for the bully:** Statements included in this category describe goals aimed at wanting negative outcomes for the bully. The category includes wanting to get back at the bully, trying to make the bully feel bad, wanting to teach the bully a lesson, getting the bully in trouble, and trying to intimidate or scare the bully, or make the bully feel outnumbered.

*"So they get in trouble."*

*"To show him what it feels like."*

*"Maybe it can scare her."*

*"If there's a lot of people the bully won't try anything."*

7. **Goal-other:** This category includes miscellaneous/low frequency goals that aren't included in the categories listed above.

### **NON-GOAL CODING SCHEME:**

As mentioned, many students did not provide a goal (desired outcome) to the goal probe. Instead, they provided reasons or rationales that can be categorized into 5 themes listed below.

8. **Don't know:** This category includes statements in which student indicates that they don't know why they would respond in a particular way.

*"Don't know."*

*"I just would."*

*"I can't think of a reason."*

9. **Emotional responding:** Included in this category is statements about how the victim would feel, statements reflecting empathy or a lack of empathy for the victim, and anger.

Examples of statements about how the victim would feel:

*"He's (victim) probably hurt."*

*"She (victim) could feel really bad/be embarrassed."*

*"Because what happened to her (victim) might hurt."*

Examples of statements about feeling/lacking empathy for the victim:

*"She (victim) probably did something to them (bully) and she deserves it."*

*"I would try to stop it because I would hate for that to happen to me."*

*"I help her (victim) because that's happened to me before."*

*"Because I'd feel bad for her (victim)."*

Example of responding in a particular way related to feeling angry:

*"That would make me mad."*

10. **Bystander effect:** Non-goal statements included in this category parallel the reasons why bystanders do not intervene in emergency situations. Specifically they do not perceive the situation as an emergency, they do not feel a personal sense of responsibility, and they do not have confidence that they have the skills necessary to intervene. Examples of statements around related themes are provided below.

This category includes statements in which students minimize the situation. Thus, the situation is not perceived as an emergency.

*"Cause that's funny."*

*"It's not that big a deal really."*

Students' statements indicating that they don't care, feel that it's not their business or not their problem and that they don't have to do anything because someone else will take care of it are included in this category. Such statements reflect a lack sense of personal responsibility.

*"It's not my problem."*

*"I don't care about that."*

*"I don't have to do anything. Someone else will probably tell the teacher."*

*"Because in a situation like that, I should mind my own business."*

*"To mind my own business."*

Students' statements reflecting a lack confidence in their ability to intervene are also included in this category.

*"I can't really do anything about that."*

*"There's no much I can do about that."*

*"He (bully) probably won't listen to me."*

11. **Moral/justice-oriented**: Included in this category are statements in which students report a concern for rules/fairness and general disapproval of bullying as a reason for responding in a particular way to the bullying situation.

*"It's mean/not nice/not fair/not funny."*

*"Because there's no point."*

*"Because it's not nice."*

*"That's stupid."*

*"He (bully) shouldn't do that."*

*"Because you're not supposed to do that."*

12. **No Goal-other**: This category includes all statements not considered to be goals. This category also includes statements characterizing the student's relationship with the victim.

*"I don't know him (victim)."*

*"I don't hate her (victim)."*

## STRATEGY SUMMARY TABLE

Strategy: a statement about what a student would say, do or feel in the situation.

<b>1. ADULT INVOLVEMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>telling/informing/getting an adult (teacher, principal, supervisor, counselor, parent)</li> <li>accompanying/offering to accompany victim to tell an adult</li> </ul>	<b>2. PEER INVOLVEMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>telling friends, soliciting their advice, discussing the situation</li> <li>intervening with peers</li> <li>influencing peer response (getting them to intervene, reasoning with them, actively discouraging them from joining in)</li> </ul>	<b>3. TALKING TO THE BULLY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>telling/asking bully to stop or not to engage in behavior in the future (no reason specified)</li> <li>reasoning with bully, making an appeal to stop (may include voicing disapproval)</li> <li>saying positive things about victim</li> <li>communicating to bully that SS won't participate</li> </ul>	<b>4. GAIN INFORMATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gaining information from the bully</li> <li>gaining information from the victim</li> <li>gaining information from the peer group</li> <li>gaining information from-unspecified</li> </ul>	<b>5. USE OF HOSTILE/RETALIATORY BEHAVIOR</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>using physically (hit, push, fight) or verbally (insult, yell, threaten) hostile behavior</li> <li>retaliating (do what bully has done to victim)</li> </ul>
<b>6. PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR TOWARDS VICTIM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comforting victim/inquiring whether or not victim is okay, talking to victim, situation-specific act of kindness</li> <li>warning/informing victim giving advice to victim</li> </ul>	<b>7. INTERVENTION-TAKING ACTION TO INTERVENE/DEFEND/PROTECT/ASSIST VICTIM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>situation-specific strategy</li> <li>hanging around/playing with victim</li> <li>be victim's friend</li> <li>getting victim out of situation</li> <li>actively choosing to not join in/laugh</li> </ul>	<b>8. ENABLING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>watching/listening in</li> <li>laughing</li> <li>joining in/active participation</li> <li>going along with it/pretending to go along with it</li> </ul>	<b>9. INACTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>avoiding the bully</li> <li>leaving</li> <li>ignoring it</li> <li>non-involvement</li> <li>treating the victim the same as before</li> </ul>	<b>10. OTHER</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not captured by existing categories</li> <li>vague/uninterpretable response</li> <li>don't know/no response</li> <li>I wouldn't _____. (does not include instances where students report not getting involved)</li> </ul>

## GOAL SUMMARY TABLE

Goal: a statement in which the purpose for a strategy is articulated. Language students use around goals generally will include one of the following ("I want/don't want...", "so that...", "to...", "it would/might...", "victim wouldn't/might not...", "trying to...", "then...", "that way..."). Please remember to read each statement in its entirety before assigning a code.

<b>1. GETTING THE HARASSMENT TO STOP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stopping the bully</li> <li>• Preventing further or future harassment</li> <li>• Resolving the problem</li> <li>• Getting the bully to listen, calm down, forget about it</li> <li>• Preventing the victim from getting hurt</li> </ul>	<b>2. HELPING THE VICTIM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comforting the victim and making the victim feel better</li> <li>• Trying to address a specific emotional/physical need</li> <li>• Unspecified help</li> <li>• Through friendship(s)</li> <li>• Making sure victim is alright</li> <li>• Informing victim so he/she is aware</li> </ul>	<b>3. AVOIDING INVOLVEMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not wanting to get involved</li> <li>• Avoiding having to participate/join in</li> <li>• Disassociating oneself from bully/bully's actions</li> <li>• Avoiding having to pick sides (staying neutral)</li> <li>• Getting adults to handle the situation</li> <li>• Making adults aware of the situation</li> <li>• Letting/ wanting victim to take action on his/her own</li> </ul>	<b>4. GENERAL SELF-INTEREST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoiding trouble with bully</li> <li>• Avoiding being retaliated against by bully or peers</li> <li>• Avoiding unspecified trouble</li> <li>• Avoiding trouble with adults</li> <li>• Reducing personal distress</li> <li>• Maintaining independence</li> <li>• Avoiding being a tattletale</li> <li>• Doing what's easiest</li> <li>• Maintaining positive relationships with bully/victim/peer group</li> <li>• To find out motivations/details of the situation</li> <li>• Gaining info with commentary on subjects next move</li> </ul>	<b>5. GENERAL PROSOCIAL</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making sure no one gets hurt, situation doesn't get worse, trying to be nice/not mean</li> <li>• Wanting bully realize his/her mistake</li> <li>• Trying to change bully's mind about the victim</li> <li>• Getting the bully to think about what they're doing</li> <li>• Preventing or discouraging others from joining in</li> <li>• Influencing peers to be more positive toward victim</li> <li>• Conveying to bully that you don't condone their actions</li> <li>• Conveying that you won't go along with it</li> </ul>
<b>6. NEGATIVE OUTCOMES FOR BULLY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting back at the bully</li> <li>• Making bully feel bad, scared, intimidated</li> <li>• Getting the bully in trouble</li> <li>• Teaching the bully a lesson</li> </ul>	<b>7. GOAL-OTHER</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misc./ low frequencies/ ambiguous goals not included elsewhere</li> </ul>			

# NON-GOAL SUMMARY TABLE

Non-goal: a statement that does not reflect a 'desired outcome' or purpose for a strategy. Please categorize the non-goal statements according to one of the **themes** listed below.

<p><b>8. DON'T KNOW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes "Don't know" responses</li> </ul>	<p><b>9. EMOTIONAL RESPONDING REASONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statements about how the victim might feel</li> <li>Statements reflecting empathy or a lack of empathy for the victim</li> <li>Statements related to feeling angry</li> </ul>	<p><b>10. BYSTANDER EFFECT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimizing the situation</li> <li>Don't care/It's not my problem statements</li> <li>"Not my business" statements</li> <li>"Don't need to do anything, someone else will take care of it" statements</li> <li>Victim should take care of it him/herself</li> <li>Statements reflecting sense of powerless/helplessness</li> </ul>	<p><b>11. MORAL/INJUSTICE ORIENTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statements reflecting general sense of disapproval (it's not funny, it's not nice, it's mean, it's stupid, there's no point) of bullying.</li> <li>Statements reflecting concern for rules/fairness</li> </ul>	<p><b>12. NO GOAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Misc./ low frequencies/ ambiguous non-goals not included elsewhere</li> </ul>
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