

BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR AND VICTIM COPING STRATEGIES: A MIXED
METHODS STUDY OF RURAL BULLYING

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ABSTRACT

CAROLINE B. R. EVANS: Bystander Behavior and Victim Coping Strategies: A Mixed Methods Study of Rural Bullying
(Under the direction of Paul Smokowski)

Bullying is one of the most pervasive issues affecting American youth and schools. Youth can be actively involved in bullying as a victim, bully, or bully/victim (i.e., alternates between being a bully and a victim), or less involved as a bystander (i.e., an individual who witnesses bullying, but is not directly involved as the bully or victim) who offers varying degrees of support to the bully or victim. There is expansive research on bullying perpetration and victimization; however, bystander research is in its infancy. This volume contributes to addressing this gap in our knowledge.

Bystanders are individuals who witness a bullying event, but are not directly involved as a bully or victim. Bystanders play a vital role in the bullying dynamic because their behavior often dictates whether or not an episode of bullying continues or ends, and thus bystander behavior impacts classroom rates of bullying. Prosocial bystanders defend victims which often puts an end to the bullying and negative bystanders support the bully which often perpetuates the bullying. Current research on bystander behavior is limited to relatively small samples of urban and suburban youth outside of the United States and neglects to examine how both individual- and school-level factors representing social capital deprivation, anti-social capital, and positive social capital are associated with bystander behavior. Another gap in bullying research is the lack of qualitative studies examining coping

strategies that victims use to deal with bullying victimization. The current dissertation aims to fill these gaps in the bullying research.

The first two papers examine how the absence and presence of social capital is associated with negative and prosocial bystander behavior. The first paper examines how social capital deprivation (e.g., negative social relationships such as friend rejection and parent-adolescent conflict) and anti-social capital (e.g., anti-social relationships that provide social capital such as delinquent friends) at the individual- and school-levels are associated with the likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior (e.g., assisting the bully) in a large sample ($N = 5,752$) of racially/ethnically diverse rural youth. It was hypothesized that social capital deprivation and anti-social capital would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Following multiple imputation, a binary logistic regression with robust standard errors was run. In partial support of the hypothesis, results indicated that social capital deprivation in the form of peer pressure and verbal victimization and anti-social capital in the form of delinquent friends, bullying perpetration, verbal perpetration, and physical perpetration were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Findings highlight the necessity of establishing and maintaining sources of positive social support for disenfranchised youth.

The second paper investigates how positive social capital at the individual- and school-levels is associated with the likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Prosocial bystanders are individuals who actively intervene in the bullying dynamic to support the victim; this positive behavior often ends the bullying. The current study fills a gap in bystander research by assessing how social capital in the form of social support,

community engagement, mental health functioning, and positive school experiences and characteristics are associated with the likelihood of prosocial bystander behavior in a large sample ($N = 5,752$) of racially/ethnically diverse rural youth. It was hypothesized that the presence of social capital would be significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Following multiple imputation, an ordered logistic regression with robust standard errors was run. In partial support of the hypothesis, social capital in the form of friend and teacher support, ethnic identity, religion orientation, and future optimism were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Findings highlight the importance of establishing and maintaining positive social relationships and community engagement in order to decrease school bullying.

The third paper uses qualitative methodology to examine the coping strategies of 22 rural middle- and high-school victims of bullying. A combination of the Transactional Model of Coping and the Approach-Avoidant Model of Coping serves as a guiding frameworks for this study. A descriptive/thematic approach with grounded theory overtones was used to analyze the data. Findings indicate that youth use a variety of emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies such as internalizing, help seeking, physical and verbal aggression, standing up for themselves, and prosocial bystander behavior to cope with the stress of being bullied. In line with past research, problem-focused coping strategies predominated and some of these strategies changed slightly between middle- and high-school. Findings indicate that although victimized youth report negative internalizing symptoms as a result of being bullied, these youth are often resilient and rely on a number of innovative coping strategies.

Overall, findings suggest that social capital deprivation (i.e., peer pressure and verbal victimization) and anti-social capital (i.e., delinquent friends, bullying perpetration, verbal perpetration, and physical perpetration) are detrimental to positive social functioning as these factors were associated with significant increases in the likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Increasing youth's social capital is one possible way of combatting the negative effects of social capital deprivation and anti-social capital. Social capital in the form of positive social relationships (i.e., friend and teacher support), community engagement (i.e., ethnic identity and religious orientation), and positive mental health functioning (i.e., future optimism) are associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Based on these findings, youth with one or many sources of social support are potential prosocial bystanders who have the ability to interrupt the bullying dynamic. In contrast, youth with many negative social connections are at risk of perpetuating bullying by offering support to the bullies. This finding highlights the importance of offering these at risk youth social support as a means of increasing their social capital. In addition, although victimized youth are a vulnerable group, they often display great resilience and employ many problem-focused coping strategies following victimization. One such strategy is engaging in prosocial bystander behavior, which suggests that victims of bullying could be mobilized to increase classroom rates of prosocial bystander behavior. Finally, areas for future research are highlighted in each of the papers.

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INTRODUCTION

BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR AND VICTIM COPING STRATEGIES: A MIXED METHODS STUDY OF RURAL BULLYING

Bullying is one of the most pervasive issues affecting American youth and schools. Participation in the bullying dynamic as a bully or victim negatively affects the social, educational, and mental health outcomes of a wide range of youth in both rural and urban school systems (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2013). Bullying is commonly defined using three criteria established by Olweus (1993): *repetition*—bullying occurs repeatedly over time; *power imbalance*—the bully has more social and/or physical power than the victim; and *intent to harm*—the bully intends to inflict physical or emotional harm on the victim. This definition was recently expanded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the addition of three key elements: bullying is unwanted, occurs between youth who are not siblings or dating partners, and may cause the victim distress (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014). Bullying includes direct aggressive behaviors that occur in the presence of the victim and indirect aggressive behaviors that occur when the victim is not present, but are intended to harm the victim. These direct and indirect behaviors are classified into four types. Physical bullying is physical force intended to harm the victim such as hitting, kicking, or pushing. Verbal bullying is oral or written communication, such as name calling, teasing, or threatening. Relational bullying consists of behaviors meant to harm the victims' reputation and relationships such as spreading rumors, excluding, and making embarrassing images of the

victim public through the internet, cellphones, or other means. The fourth type of bullying is damage to personal property, which includes stealing and/or destroying the victim's property (Gladden et al., 2014). The CDC considers electronic bullying to be a form of verbal and relational bullying executed using electronic means (i.e., e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, web sites, gaming sites, or cellular phones) to harass, insult, intimidate, exclude, and/or ostracize victims. Such behaviors range from sending harassing text messages or pictures via cellphone to creating defamatory websites intended to embarrass or humiliate the victim (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Raskaukas & Stoltz, 2007).

Youth can be actively involved in bullying as a victim, bully, or bully/victim (i.e., alternates between being a bully and a victim), or less involved as a bystander (i.e., an individual who witnesses bullying, but is not directly involved as the bully or victim) who offers varying degrees of support to the bully or victim (Salmivalli, 2010). Bystanders play a vital role in the bullying dynamic because their behavior often dictates whether or not an episode of bullying continues or ends, and thus bystander behavior impacts classroom rates of bullying. For example, in one study, prosocial bystander behavior in the form of defending the victim ended the bullying 57% of the time (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001). In contrast, negative bystander behavior in the form of reinforcing the bully has been significantly associated with increased rates of classroom bullying (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011). Given the power that bystanders have to impact bullying, researchers have spent considerable time creating interventions to increase prosocial bystander behavior (e.g., Steps to Respect [Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom, & Snell, 2009]; KiVa [Karna et al., 2011]). However, despite researchers' interest and focus on bystanders, relatively little research has examined what individual- and school-level characteristics are associated with bystander behavior;

especially in regards to how social capital deprivation (e.g., parent-child conflict, friend rejection), anti-social capital (e.g., delinquent friends, bullying perpetration), and positive social capital (e.g., friend support, religious orientation) factors impact negative and prosocial bystander behavior. In addition, much of the existing bystander research was conducted outside of the United States (e.g., Italy [Caravita, Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2008; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012; Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012]; Australia [Barchia & Bussey, 2011]; Finland (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996)), uses relatively small sample sizes (e.g., ranging from 294 to 1,167), and does not examine how school-level characteristics are associated with bystander behavior. Finally, the majority of bullying research has focused on urban and suburban youth to the exclusion of rural youth, especially minority youth living in impoverished rural areas (Estell, Farmer, & Cairns, 2007). The current research aims to fill these gaps in the bullying bystander literature by focusing on how school- and individual-characteristics representing social capital deprivation, anti-social capital, and positive social capital are associated with bystander behavior in a large sample of U.S. rural youth.

Bullying research on rural youth is especially important because, compared to urban and suburban youth, rural youth are at an elevated risk of bullying involvement, especially victimization (Dulmus, Theroit, Sowers, & Blackburn, 2004; Price, Chin, Higa-McMillan, Kim, & Frueh, 2013; Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002). Thus, additional information on bystander behavior and victimization experiences of rural youth is needed. The majority of current research on bullying and victimization is quantitative (Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011; Kvarme, Helseth, Saeteren, & Natvig 2010), which means that youth's lived experiences of bullying victimization and their coping strategies

have rarely been investigated using rigorous qualitative methodology. Using qualitative methodology to gain additional insight into how victims of bullying cope with their victimization experiences will provide insight for researchers and practitioners as how best to support this vulnerable group.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation presents three papers that focus on bystander behavior and the victimization experiences of rural youth. Guided by social capital and peer relationship theories, the first two articles use quantitative methods to examine how positive, negative, and the lack of social capital influences bystander behavior. The first article is a quantitative investigation of how social capital deprivation and anti-social capital at the individual- and school-levels are associated with the likelihood of rural youth ($N = 5,752$) engaging in negative bystander behavior. The second article is a quantitative exploration of how positive social capital at the individual- and school-levels are associated with the likelihood of rural youth ($N = 5,752$) engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. The third article is qualitative and uses the frameworks of the Transactional Model of Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the Approach-Avoidance Model of Coping (Roth & Cohen, 1986) to explore how rural middle- and high-school victims ($N = 22$) of bullying cope with their victimization. Taken together, all three articles aim to illuminate the experiences of bystanders and victims in a low-income, racially/ethnically diverse rural area.

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PAPER I

NEGATIVE BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR IN BULLYING DYNAMICS: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL DEPRIVATION AND ANTI- SOCIAL CAPITAL

Bystanders are individuals who witness a bullying event, but are not directly involved as a bully or victim. They often engage in negative bystander behavior by assisting or reinforcing a bully. The current study examines how variables representing social capital deprivation (e.g., negative social relationships such as friend rejection and parent-adolescent conflict) and anti-social capital (e.g., anti-social relationships that provide social capital such as delinquent friends) are associated with the likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior in a large sample ($N = 5,752$) of racially/ethnically diverse rural youth. It was hypothesized that social capital deprivation and anti-social capital would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Following multiple imputation, a binary logistic regression with robust standard errors was run. The hypothesis was partially supported and results indicated that social capital deprivation in the form of peer pressure and verbal victimization and anti-social capital in the form of delinquent friends, bullying perpetration, verbal perpetration, and physical perpetration were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Findings highlight the vital importance of establishing sources of positive social support for disenfranchised youth. Implications were discussed.

The brutal murder of Catherine Susan (Kitty) Genovese, witnessed by 38 of her neighbors, sparked national discourse about the behavior of bystanders (i.e., individuals who observe an emergency event but are not directly involved; Myers, 2002). The bystander effect (Darley & Latane, 1968), supported by decades of research, is the social phenomenon that individuals who witness an event requiring intervention are less likely to intervene if there are other actual or perceived people present (Howard, Landau, & Pryor, 2013). This phenomenon is best understood by the “diffusion of responsibility”: the presence of others during a situation requiring assistance decreases or “diffuses” the feeling of personal responsibility because individuals assume that someone else will provide support (Latane & Darley, 1968; p. 215).

Indeed, individual behavior is influenced by the presence of others (Greenwood, 2004), especially in the context of negative social relationships. Compared to positive experiences, negative experiences have a greater impact on human behavior (see Taylor, 1991 for a review), suggesting that the presence of negative social relationships might influence bystanders’ proclivity to intervene. Negative social relationships indicate *social capital deprivation* (Ozbay, 2008; p. 404), a term used to describe an absent or weak social network, indicating a lack of positive social support. As applied to the bullying dynamic, bystanders who experience social capital deprivation through social rejection and engagement in multiple negative social relationships, might be inclined to replicate these relationships and engage in negative bystander behavior. Further, youth enmeshed in anti-social peer networks that provide anti-social capital (e.g., social capital from deviant sources such as delinquent friends), might feel pressure to mimic their friends’ behavior in order to preserve their social ties and thus might display negative bystander behavior.

Social Capital Deprivation and Anti-Social Capital

Social capital refers to the benefits gained from social relationships (Putnam, 2000). The social capital literature describes these relationships as prosocial and as offering four beneficial resources: access to *information* about opportunities, the potential to *influence* socially powerful individuals, *social credentials* (e.g., being socially connected to certain individuals provides access to resources), and *reinforcement* of identity and self-worth (Lin, 2001; Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001). A social network ripe with negative relationships (e.g., parent-child conflict, friend rejection) indicates disengagement from positive social capital resulting in *social capital deprivation* (Ozbay, 2008). It is well established that social capital deprivation is associated with deviant behavior; positive relationships are essentially blocked, leaving youth to affiliate with antisocial peers. For example, poor parent-child relationships and low levels of parent support, teacher control (e.g., teachers breaking up fights), school attachment, and adolescent attachment to adult figures were associated with increased adolescent delinquency, aggression, use of weapons, and fighting (McNulty & Bellair, 2003; Salmi & Kivivuori, 2006; Wright & Fitzpatrick, 2006). It follows that social capital deprivation might be associated with other deviant behaviors such as negative bystander behavior. Further, youth deprived of positive social capital might turn to anti-social sources for support or engage in deviant behavior in an effort to obtain anti-social capital.

Indeed, peer rejection (a form of social capital deprivation) is associated with increased delinquency (Miller-Johnson, Coie, Maumary-Gremaud, Lochman, & Terry, 1999), suggesting that rejected youth might seek out a deviant peer group in order to obtain anti-social capital. Although delinquent peers are anti-social, they provide social

capital in the form of access to *information, social credentials, and reinforcement* of one's sense of self. Further, belonging to a group of delinquent peers provides comradery and sense of belonging. In this regard, connection to delinquent friends is a form of social capital, but one that fosters rule breaking and deviant behavior and is thus termed anti-social capital. In order to obtain entry into such a group, engaging in deviant and rule breaking behavior, such as aggression and bullying, might be necessary. Given the human inclination towards group involvement, individuals go to great lengths to gain group acceptance.

Group Conformity: The Desire to Belong

Bullying often occurs in a group setting and groups are more likely to bully than individuals (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). Social belonging is a basic and fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and individuals often alter their behavior in order to conform to group norms, thus avoiding ostracism and social isolation. Asch (1951) demonstrated the phenomenon of group conformity in his seminal line length discrimination study. In this study, seven confederates and one subject were presented with a line and were told to select the line of the same length from three comparison lines. The confederates answered before the subject and in some cases purposefully selected a comparison line that was clearly not the same length as the original line. When an incorrect line was selected by all confederates, one third of the subjects, overwhelmed by the desire to be accepted by the group, went along with the group and endorsed the incorrect selection. This study highlighted that the powerful desire for acceptance and belonging caused individuals to alter their behavior to conform to group norms.

Indeed, it appears that human beings are biologically wired for conformity. In one study using fMRI machines, 24 females were asked to rate the attractiveness of 222 faces. After providing a rating, each subject was presented with the “average European rating” (i.e., the group rating) of attractiveness, which was altered to either coincide with or differ from the subjects rating. When the group rating differed from the subject’s rating, indicating a lack of conformity with the group, a neuronal response occurred in areas of the brain that signal error processing and detection. Behavior deviating from the group norm was processed by the brain as problematic (Klucharev, Hytonen, Rijpkema, Smidts, & Fernandez, 2009), suggesting that the human brain is wired to enhance and promote group conformity, and fires a warning signal when individual behavior conflicts with the group. The aforementioned research highlights the importance of group belonging; group dynamics function to promote this desire for belonging.

Group behavior is best understood in light of five group processes: in-group favoritism, out-group hostility, between group contrast, within-group assimilation, and within-group differentiation (Harris, 1995). In-group favoritism refers to the phenomenon that group members view their group more favorably than other groups and often feel hostility towards other groups (out-group hostility). Groups also tend to view extreme differences between themselves and other groups, even when differences are minimal or nonexistent. This ‘between-group contrast’ likely enhances group members’ feeling of solidarity and heightens the “us versus them” mentality. Individual group members gradually adopt the behavior of the group and members become increasingly similar over time (i.e., within group assimilation). Finally, within-group differentiation is established as a group’s social hierarchy forms and dominant group members exert more social power

over others (Harris, 1995). According to these processes, youth embedded within social groups characterized by unsupportive and anti-social relationships will likely adopt and reenact the group's negative interactions, increasing the likelihood of engaging in negative behavior, such as supporting bullying behaviors.

Bystanders in the Bullying Dynamic

Bystanders are ubiquitous in the bullying dynamic and witness between 80% and 90% of bullying episodes (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Kerzner, 2013). Between one third and two thirds of elementary, middle, and high school students report having been a bystander to bullying (Rivers & Noret, 2010; Trach, Hymel, Waterhous, & Neale, 2010). Although bystander behavior varies widely from defending the victim to reinforcing or assisting the bully to ignoring the situation (Poyhonen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2012), many bystanders engage in negative bystander behavior and support the bully.

In one study of 60 videotaped bullying episodes of Canadian youth in Grades 1 through 6, researchers found that bystanders assisted or reinforced the bully 32% of the time, while bystanders defended the victim only 10% (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). Another study of Canadian youth in the same grades revealed that in 53 videotapes, bystanders joined in the bullying 21% of the time (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Studies using self- and peer-report surveys of bystander behavior mirror these results. In a sample of 573 Finnish students in sixth grade, 26% reported reinforcing or assisting the bully and only 17% defended the victim (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukialnen, 1996). Assisting and reinforcing behavior is problematic, because it fuels rates of classroom bullying. For example, in a study of 6,762 Finnish children ages 9 through 11,

reinforcing the bullying was significantly associated with increased bullying in the classroom (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011). Given the relatively high rates of negative bystander behavior and the impact this behavior has on subsequent bullying, it is incumbent upon researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the individual- and school-level characteristics that impact negative bystander behavior. Further, the aforementioned studies take place outside of the United States, highlighting the need for additional U.S. based bystander research. The majority of research examining bystander behavior focuses on factors associated with positive and passive bystander behavior, to the exclusion of negative bystander behavior (e.g., Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Barhight, Hubbard, & Hyde, 2013; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). It is hypothesized that negative bystander behavior will be influenced by social capital deprivation and engagement in sources of anti-social capital.

Variables Representing Social Capital Deprivation and Anti-Social Capital Associated with Bystander Behavior

Demographic variables associated with negative bystander behavior. Past research suggests that compared to girls, boys were more likely to assist or reinforce the bully (Salmivalli et al., 1996). In terms of age, compared to younger middle school students, older middle school students were more likely to engage in passive bystander behavior (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). However no research examines how age is associated with negative bystander behavior. To the authors' knowledge, there is also no research examining racial differences in bystander behavior, indicating the need for additional research. Compared to youth with high academic performance, those with low academic performance engage in more deviant behavior as evidenced by their more frequent,

serious, and violent delinquent offenses (Maguin & Loeber, 1996). Grades are a common measure of academic performance and this finding suggests that youth with lower grades might be more inclined than youth with higher grades to engage in deviant behaviors, such as negative bystander behavior. In terms of socioeconomic status (SES) and family structure, a low SES is associated with an increased risk for aggression (McLeod & Shanahan, 1993). Single parenthood is often related to limited financial resources and it follows that compared to youth from two parent families, those from single parent families have higher rates of aggression (Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz, & Miller, 2000; Vaden-Kiernan, Ialongno, Pearson, & Kellam, 1995). Thus, receipt of free or reduced price lunch (a common proxy for SES) and/or residence in a single parent family, might also be associated with negative bystander behavior.

Social capital deprivation through negative friend relationships. Friend rejection is a form of social capital deprivation that denotes unstable and negative friendships. In the current study, friend rejection was characterized by negative teasing, being picked on, and being treated in a disrespectful way by one's friends. Youth treated in this manner might be inclined to behave as a negative bystander for a few reasons. First, rejected youth in the current study clearly lack supportive friends, which is a key form of social capital. Perhaps siding with the bully is used to gain favor with the bully, with the ultimate hope of being accepted into the bully's social circle. Although often disliked, bullies sometimes possess social power and are viewed as popular by their classmates (Cillessen & Mayeaux, 2004; Prinstein & Cillessen, 2003). In classrooms where bullies are viewed as popular, assisting the bully can be viewed as a form of "social mimicry" (Moffitt, 1993; p. 15) that might be used to gain access to the power the bully possesses.

Second, youth who are rejected by their friends are also likely rejected by the wider school or classroom social networks and these rejected youth are at risk of being victimized (Bierman, 2004). Perhaps socially rejected youth assist the bully as a form of self-protection; reinforcing the bullying of someone else decreases the likelihood of becoming the victim. Finally, negative bystander behavior might be used as a means of gaining power and social standing over the victim, thus increasing the bystanders' sense of self-worth. According to social comparison theory, humans evaluate themselves in comparison to others (Festinger, 1954) and negative bystander behavior relegates the victim to a lower social status than the bystander, allowing the bystander to evaluate him or herself in a comparatively positive light.

Along with friend rejection, other indicators of social capital deprivation, such as peer pressure, might also impact bystander behavior. Peer pressure refers to pressure exerted by peers to think or act in a specific manner (Clasen & Brown, 1985) and typically refers to youth encouraging each other to break rules. In the current study, peer pressure exerted by friends was assessed and its presence thus represents unstable and negative friend relationships. Peer pressure is exerted either directly through verbal pressure or indirectly by viewing others model particular behaviors (Padilla-Walker & Bean, 2009). Both direct and indirect peer pressure to engage in aggression and delinquency are associated with increases in these deviant behaviors (Padilla-Walker & Bean, 2009; Sullivan, 2006). It follows that peer pressure might also affect bystander behavior. Witnessing bystanders who support the bully serves as indirect peer pressure for other group members to also support the bully. Direct peer pressure in the form of verbal encouragement to join in the bullying might further encourage youth to behave as negative

bystanders. Indeed, researchers found that the less supportive of defending behavior youth perceived their peers to be, the less youth defended victims (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010). It follows that peer pressure to assist the bully would be associated with increases in negative bystander behavior; however, researchers have not yet examined this relationship.

Social capital deprivation through bullying victimization and general victimization. Bullying is a distinct form of aggression defined by repetition, power imbalance, and intent to harm (Olweus, 1993). Bullying victimization and general victimization (absence of repetition and power imbalance) represent social capital deprivation as victims have few friends (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Scholte et al., 2008) and perceive low levels of peer support (Demaray & Malecki, 2003; Furlong, Chung, Bates, & Morrison, 1995; Holt & Espelage, 2007). Youth who are victimized might refrain from engaging in negative bystander behavior in an effort to prevent someone from feeling the humiliation engendered by victimization. Conversely, victims might engage in negative bystander behavior for the same reasons that rejected youth might behave as negative bystanders (i.e., to gain social status, avoid being victimized, and increase positive self-regard by relegating a peer to a lower social status). Additional research is needed to examine the relationship between bullying victimization, general victimization, and negative bystander behavior.

Social capital deprivation through parent-adolescent conflict. Parent-adolescent conflict represents a form of social capital deprivation that inhibits the formation of a supportive parent-adolescent relationship. The presence of parent-adolescent conflict is associated with negative outcomes such as increased aggression

(Eichelsheim et al., 2010; Smokowski, Cotter, Robertson, & Guo, 2013). Indeed, the family coercion theory of childhood aggression posits that negative interactions among family members, such as parent-adolescent conflict, exacerbate problem behaviors and aggression in youth (Long, Edwards, & Bellando, 2009; Patterson, 1982). It follows that youth coming from families characterized by high levels of parent-adolescent conflict might be more likely to behave aggressively and display negative bystander behaviors. Further, youth constantly engaged in negative social interactions with their parents, might be inclined to replicate these interactions in the peer group by supporting the bully.

Social capital deprivation through negative school experiences and characteristics. Many youth are exposed to school based violence and weapons (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012) and thus view school as a dangerous and hostile place, making it difficult for them to engage and invest in school. Viewing school as dangerous represents a form of social capital deprivation that undoubtedly impacts bystander behavior. Youth who view school as dangerous likely feel unsafe and might engage in negative bystander behavior as a way of appearing tough and avoiding victimization. Further, viewing school as dangerous indicates the presence of violence and aggression within the school, suggesting that aggressive behavior, like negative bystander behavior, could be the norm.

Youth's view of school as safe or dangerous is impacted by school characteristics. For example, compared to smaller schools, larger schools have higher rates of violence (Ferris & West, 2008), crime (Chen, 2008), vandalism (Walker & Gresham, 1997), and bullying (Bowes et al., 2009) and accordingly, youth often feel less safe in larger schools (Lleras, 2008). Bystanders in larger schools might therefore mimic the violence and

aggression surrounding them and assist or reinforce the bully. Given that poverty at the individual level is associated with an increased risk for aggression (McLeod & Shanahan, 1993), it follows that schools with many low income students might have high rates of aggression. Indeed, for middle schools, a high concentration of students receiving free or reduced priced lunch was associated with increased bullying and victimization (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2009). It follows that bystanders in such schools might mimic this aggression and support the bully. Teacher turnover rate indicates the percentage of teachers who leave school each year. A high teacher turnover rate might indicate that a school provides a poor working environment ripe with problematic students. Indeed, one study found that a high teacher turnover rate was associated with increased student aggression (Smokowski et al., 2013). Thus, a high teacher turnover rate might also be associated with increased aggression in the form negative bystander behavior. Further, a high teacher turnover results in social capital deprivation because youth are unable to form and maintain strong bonds with their teachers. Finally, school suspension rates are an indicator of school environment and many states use them to gauge the level of school disruption (Bradshaw et al., 2009). High suspension rates indicate a high prevalence of aggressive, deviant, and rule breaking behavior and might be associated with increased negative bystander behavior.

Social capital deprivation through symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Although poor mental health per se is not a form of social capital deprivation, symptoms of depression and anxiety impede social capital formation, putting youth in danger of experiencing social capital deprivation. Youth who are depressed and anxious are likely socially withdrawn and may be unappealing social companions and might also be

particularly vulnerable to group influence. It follows that poor mental health might be associated with bystander responses to bullying. Irritability is a hallmark for both depression and anxiety, especially in children (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The increased irritability of depressed and anxious youth could fuel negative bystander behavior. Further, in children and adolescents, there is well established comorbidity between internalizing symptoms (i.e., depression, anxiety) and aggression (Weiss & Catron, 1994). Depressed and anxious youth are inclined to be aggressive, supporting the notion that poor mental health might be associated with negative bystander behavior.

Anti-social capital formation through delinquent friends and engagement in bullying and perpetration. Spending time with deviant, anti-social peers isolates youth from prosocial peers and adults, preventing the accrual of positive social capital. At first glance, having delinquent friends appears to represent social capital deprivation. However, delinquent friends provide youth with anti-social capital as youth benefit from a feeling of comradery and belonging. Both delinquency and bullying are defined by a disregard for prosocial behavior and a lack of concern for others. It follows that there is a well-established link between both behaviors (Bender & Losel, 2011; Ttofi, Farrington, Losel, & Loeber 2011). Given the strong influence that peers have on adolescent behavior, especially delinquent and deviant behavior, it is not surprising that compared to youth who do not associate with delinquent peers, those who do are more likely to engage in delinquent acts (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Haynie, 2002). Indeed, deviant peers fuel and encourage each other's negative behaviors (Bagwell & Coie, 2004; Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011). Further, compared to non-aggressive youth, aggressive youth, such as those who engage in delinquency and bullying, show little concern for victims' suffering (Boldizar,

Perry, & Perry, 1989) and report that it is easier to perform aggressive acts (Perry, Perry, & Rasmussen, 1986). This research suggests that delinquent youth disregard the feelings and needs of their peers, engage in bullying others, and thus might be inclined to assist or reinforce the bully when witnessing a bullying situation. Thus, youth who are friends with delinquent youth might be inclined to mimic their friends' behavior and support the bully. Failure to mirror this behavior could result in group exclusion and a loss of anti-social capital.

In addition to engaging in negative bystander behavior to assimilate into delinquent friend groups, youth might also resort to bullying and perpetration as means of gaining and maintaining access to anti-social capital. Indeed, bullying and general perpetration are negative behaviors, but often result in acquisition of popularity and social power (Cillessen & Mayeaux, 2004; Prinstein & Cillessen, 2003). Given their propensity towards aggression (Menesini, Modena, & Tani, 2009; Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002), it is likely that youth who bully others would engage in negative bystander behavior. Negative bystander behavior is a natural extension of bullying behavior, but rather than instigating the bullying, youth simply join in on the bullying that someone else started. This argument extends to youth who behave aggressively towards their peers, but are not considered bullies (i.e., repetition and power imbalance are absent). Indeed, a retrospective study of 298 college students, found that compared to non-bullies, participants who had bullied others were significantly more likely to report having assisted or reinforced the bully when in the position of a bystander (Oh & Hazler, 2009).

Hypothesis

The thesis guiding the current study was that social capital deprivation and anti-social capital would be associated with an increased probability of reporting negative bystander behavior. Based on past research, it was hypothesized that being male, young, of minority status, and from a single parent household, as well as receiving free or reduced price lunch and low grades would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. It was further hypothesized that social capital deprivation in the form of negative social relationships (e.g., peer rejection, peer pressure, bullying victimization, general verbal or physical victimization, parent-adolescent conflict), negative school experiences and characteristics (e.g., school danger, large school size, high teacher turnover rate, high percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch, and high suspensions rates), and poor mental health functioning (i.e., depression, anxiety) would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Of particular interest, we believed that anti-social capital (i.e., delinquent friends, bullying, and general verbal or physical perpetration) would be associated with negative bystander behavior. See Figure 1.1.

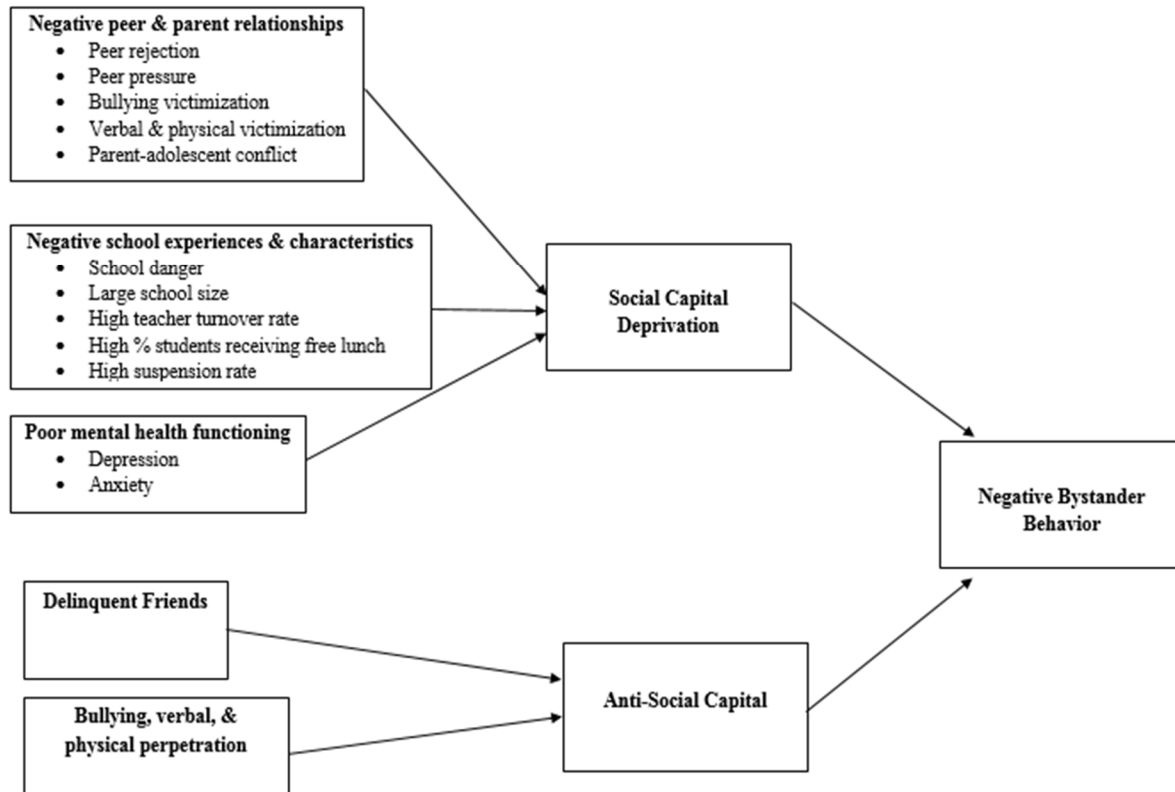


Figure 1.1. Conceptual model of social capital deprivation and anti-social capital factors hypothesized to be associated with negative bystander behavior.

Method

Current Study

The current research was funded by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through a cooperative agreement with the North Carolina Academic Center for Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (NC-ACE). Data for the current study came from the Rural Adaptation Project (RAP), a 5-year longitudinal panel study of more than 7,000 middle- and high-school students from 26 public middle schools and 12 public high schools in two rural, economically disadvantaged counties in North Carolina. In Year 1, a complete census in County 1 (all middle school students in Grades 6 through 8) was included in the sample and each year the new class of sixth graders was added to the

analysis. Because County 2 was geographically bigger with a larger student population, a random sample of 40% of middle school students were included and each year a new, random sample of 500 sixth graders was added. Students in both counties were tracked longitudinally as they moved through middle school and high school. Data for the current analysis were collected in Year 4 of the RAP study.

Procedure

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board from a major research university in the Southeastern United States, a nearly identical collection procedure was used in both counties. In accordance with school district policies, County 1 adopted the assessment as part of normal school procedures, while County 2 sent a letter home to all parents explaining the study. If parents from County 2 did not want their child(ren) to participate, they returned a letter requesting non-participation and their child(ren) were removed from the study roster. In both counties, assessments were filled out in school computer labs closely monitored by research staff. Prior to filling out the online assessment, all participants were notified that participation was voluntary and that they were free to decline participation at any time without negative consequences. Student's assented to participate by reading and electronically signing an assent screen. No identifying information was collected and each participant had a unique identification number in order to maintain confidentiality. Surveys took 30 to 45 minutes to complete and participants received a \$5 gift card as an incentive.

Participants

The final analytic sample for the current study was comprised of all participants who participated in Year 4 of the RAP study ($N = 51\%$). About half (51.03%; $n = 2,935$)

were female. The racial/ethnic composition reflected the diversity of the surrounding community and 29.40% ($n = 1,691$) identified as Caucasian, 25.85% ($n = 1,487$) as African American, 24.32% ($n = 1,399$) as Native American, 12.70% ($n = 730$) as mixed race or other, and 7.74% ($n = 445$) as Latino. Participants' age ranged from 11 to 19 years old ($M = 14.42$; $SD = 1.78$) and students were in Grades 6 through 11, with about 15.00% to 20.00% in each grade. About two-thirds of the sample received free or reduced price lunch (76.95%; $n = 4,426$), the majority resided in a two parent households (81.99%; $n = 4,716$), and a little more than half (55.62%, $n = 3,199$) reported receiving A's and B's while the remainder reported receiving C's, D's, and F's.

Measures

The School Success Profile (SSP; Bowen & Richman, 2008) is a 195-item youth self-report with 22 scales that measure perceptions and attitudes about school, friends, family, neighborhood, self, and health and well-being. The SSP has been administered to tens of thousands of students since its creation in 1993, and has well-documented reliability and validity (Bowen, Rose, & Bowen, 2005). The RAP project used a modified version of the SSP, the School Success Profile Plus (SSP+), which included 17 of the original SSP scales plus 12 additional scales. The current study used 10 of the original SSP scales included on the SSP+ and nine of the additional scales. The measures for the current study come from Year 4 of the RAP study.

Dependent variable: Negative bystander behavior. Negative bystander behavior was conceptualized as behavior that supported the bully's actions. Like the majority of the scales used in the SSP+, the negative bystander scale was a modified version of a longer scale that has been widely used in other studies and is currently being used to evaluate

bullying behavior in 3,000 youth in 40 Colorado counties (The Colorado Trust, 2015) and has also been used in evaluations of Second Step (Brown, Low, Smith, Haggerty, 2011; Low, Van Ryzin, Brown, Smith, & Haggerty, 2014). In the current study, the negative bystander scale was a modified version of scale from The Colorado Trust Bullying Prevention Initiative Student Survey (2014). The three-item scale was preceded by a definition of bullying:

It is bullying, when another student makes someone feel bad on purpose and repeatedly. A student is being bullied when one or more other students: say mean or hurtful things, make fun of him/her, or call him/her mean and hurtful names; completely ignore him/her leave him/her out of things on purpose; hit, kick, or shove, him/her; try to make other students dislike him/her by spreading lies about him/her; Please keep this explanation of bullying in mind when you answer the following questions.

Participants were then provided with a prompt that asked: “When you see someone being bullied, how often do you behave in the following ways?” Items included: “I cheered when someone was beating up another student,” “I joined in when students were teasing and being mean to certain students,” and “I joined in when students told lies about another student” (Colorado Trust Bullying Prevention Initiative Student Survey, 2014). Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (*Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*) and Cronbach’s alpha was .76 in the current sample ($M = 1.23, SD = 0.51$).

Independent variables associated with negative bystander behavior.

Demographic variables associated with negative bystander behavior.

Demographic variables included gender (male was the reference group) and age. Race was coded as four dichotomous variables Hispanic, African American, American Indian, and Mixed Race/Other (Caucasian participants were the reference group). Receipt of free or reduced price lunch was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status (SES) and *No* was the

reference group, family structure was dichotomized as a two parent household or another type of family situation (reference group), and school grades were dichotomized into high grades (receiving A's and B's) and receiving low grades (C's, D's, and F's which was the reference group).

Social capital deprivation through negative friend relationships.

Friend rejection. The degree to which participants felt rejected by their friends through teasing, being picked on, and being treated disrespectfully was measured with the three-item friend rejection scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008). Example items included: "I am made fun of by my friends" and "I wish my friends would show me more respect." Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and the Cronbach's alpha reliability was .80 in the current sample ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 0.44$).

Peer pressure. The degree to which participants felt their friends negatively pressured them was assessed with a five-item scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008). Example items included: "I let my friends talk me into doing things I really don't want to do" and "I tend to go along with the crowd." Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert Scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and Cronbach's alpha reliability was .83 in the current sample ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 0.39$).

Social capital deprivation through bullying victimization and general verbal and physical victimization.

Bullying victimization. Following the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014), bullying victimization was measured by a

dichotomous variable that asked students: “During the past 12 months, have you ever been bullied on school property?” The response options were *Yes* or *No* ($M = 0.23$, $SD = 0.42$).

Physical victimization. Physical victimization was assessed with three-items from the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Although the items assessed forms of physical bullying, the word bullying was not used in this portion of the survey, thus this scale assessed general physical victimization and not physical bullying specifically. Example items included: “Someone at school pushed, shoved, or hit you” and “Someone at school stole my money or possessions or damaged something I own.” Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and the Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .81 in the current sample ($M = 1.20$, $SD = 0.42$).

Verbal victimization. Verbal victimization was assessed with a five-item scale; two-items were from the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Solberg & Olweus, 2003) and three-items were from the school hassles scale from the SSP (Bowen & Richman, 2008). Although items assess forms of verbal bullying, the word bullying was not used in this portion of the survey, thus it assessed general verbal victimization and not verbal bullying specifically. Example items included: “Someone at school yelled a racial slur or racial insult at you” and “Someone at school ‘made fun of’ or ‘picked on’ you.” Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert subscale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and the Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .82 in the current sample ($M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.42$).

Social capital deprivation through parent-adolescent conflict. The parent-adolescent conflict scale measured the degree of conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship. Ten of the 20 items from the Conflict Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ; Prinz, Foster, Kent, & O’Leary, 1979) were used. Example items included: “At least three times

a week, my parent(s) and I get angry at each other” and “My parent(s) put me down.” The response for each item were *True* or *False* and the Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .85 in the current sample ($M = 2.43, SD = 2.78$).

Social capital deprivation through negative school experiences and characteristics.

School danger. Students’ perception of the level of danger present in their school was assessed with the 11-item School Danger scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008). Following the prompt “How often does each of the following happen at your school?” example items included: “Fights among students” and “Students carrying weapons.” Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Does Not Happen, Happens Sometimes, Happens A Lot*) and Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .91 in the current sample ($M = 1.81, SD = 0.50$).

School characteristics. School characteristics were obtained from publically available administrative data and included: school size ($M = 477.21, SD = 238.97$), percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch ($M = 76.37, SD = 10.30$), teacher turnover rate ($M = 14.03, SD = 10.08$), and average number of short term (i.e., less than 10 days) suspensions per 100 students ($M = 34.75, SD = 21.47$).

Social capital deprivation through symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Symptoms of depression. Symptoms of depression over the past 6 months were assessed with five items from the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ; Kroenke & Spitzer, 2002). Items were reworded slightly for the current population. For example, the item “Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television” was reworded to read: “I had trouble concentrating on things like school work, reading, or watching T.V.” Other example items included, “I felt down depressed, irritable, or

hopeless” and “I felt tired and had little energy.” Items were rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, A Lot Like Me*) and Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .88 in the current sample ($M = 1.39, SD = 0.51$).

Symptoms of anxiety. Symptoms of anxiety over the past 6 months were assessed with three items from the Youth Self-Report (YSR; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Example items included: “I often feel fearful or anxious” and “I often feel nervous or tense.” Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, A Lot Like Me*) and Cronbach’s alpha was .85 in the current sample ($M = 1.41, SD = 0.59$).

Anti-social capital formation through delinquent friends and engagement in bullying and general verbal and physical perpetration.

Delinquent friends. The nine-item Delinquent Friends scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008) assessed participants’ reports of the degree to which their friends engaged in delinquent behavior. Example items included: “I have friends who get in trouble with the police” and “I have friends who carry a weapon such as a knife, gun, or club.” Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and the Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .92 in the current sample ($M = 1.37, SD = 0.47$).

Bullying perpetration. Engagement in bullying perpetration was assessed by a dichotomous variable that mirrored the dichotomous bullying victimization question used by the CDC in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Participants were asked: “During the past 12 months have you bullied someone weaker than you?” The response options were *Yes* or *No* ($M = 0.08, SD = 0.28$).

Verbal perpetration. Verbal perpetration was assessed with three items from the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). The word bullying was

not used in this portion of the survey, thus this scale assessed general verbal perpetration and not verbal bullying specifically. Example items included: “I called another student mean names, made fun of, or teased him/her” and “I sent another student mean messages or pictures on his/her cell phone or over the internet.” Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (*Never, Once, Sometimes, Often*) and Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .79 in the current sample ($M = 1.18, SD = 0.45$).

Physical perpetration. Physical perpetration was assessed with four items from the violent behavior measure (Dahlberg et al., 2003). Although these items assess forms of bullying behavior, the word bullying was not used, thus this scale assessed physical perpetration in general and not physical bullying specifically. Example items included: “I hit or kicked someone” and “I pushed or shoved someone.” Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (*Never, Once, Sometimes, Often*) and Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .83 in the current sample ($M = 1.35, SD = 0.59$).

Data Analysis

The dependent variable was positively skewed with a skewness of 2.93 and a kurtosis of 12.59. A normal distribution of the disturbances is an assumption of linear regression models and when this assumption is violated, the convention in econometrics is to take the natural-logarithm transformation. For example, income is a typical dependent variable in economics and is often skewed, thus economist take the natural-logarithm transformation of income (i.e., $\ln(\text{income})$) to use as the dependent variable in linear modeling (Greene, 2003). In accordance with this procedure, the natural-logarithm of the dependent variable was taken; however, this procedure did not sufficiently address the non-normal distribution. A histogram indicated that the natural log of the dependent

variable remained positively skewed with a skewness of 1.05 and a kurtosis of 6.66. It was therefore not possible to analyze the dependent variable in its original metric and it was converted into ordinal levels and a binary logistic regression was run.

Almost three-fourths (73%) of participants scored a 1 (*Never*) on the negative bystander scale. Given this highly skewed distribution, the scale was dichotomized. Values of 1 of y were coded as 0, indicating that a participant *Never* reported negative bystander behavior and values of 1.01 to 4 of y were coded as 1, indicating that a participant *Once*, *Sometimes*, or *Often* reported negative bystander behavior. In the case of a binary logistic regression model the number of ordinal levels (i.e., k) is 2 and the probability of reporting each ordinal category is expressed as a function of the independent variables and can be expressed with the following equations:

$$\Pr(y = 1) = \frac{\exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2)}{1 + \exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2)} \text{ and}$$

$$\Pr(y = 0) = 1 - P(y = 1) = \frac{1}{1 + \exp[-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2)]}$$

Where β is a regression coefficient and X is an independent variable. A binary logistic regression with robust standard errors was run using the Stata commands *logistic* and *vce(robust)*. Robust standard errors allow for accurate model estimation in the presence of clustering.

The current study used multilevel data (i.e., individual students nested within 38 middle and high schools), thus, the presence of clustering effects is one methodological issue that needs to be addressed. Students from the same school might be more similar on an outcome measure compared to students from other schools. The presence of such clustering is problematic because it violates the independent-observation assumption embedded in a regression model and might lead to an inaccurate test for statistical

significance (Bickel, 2007). Therefore, the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) was used to test the clustering effects of the dependent variable in its original metric (i.e., as continuous variables). The ICC is defined by the following equation:

$$\text{ICC} = \frac{\sigma_u^2}{\sigma_u^2 + \sigma_e^2}$$

Where σ_u^2 is the between-group variance, and σ_e^2 is the within-group variance. Results indicated that the ICC value for the negative bystander scale was .0242, showing that a little over 2% of the variation in outcome variables lies between schools. Despite this low ICC, robust standard errors were still used to be conservative and correct for this small amount of clustering.

Missing data were addressed using multiple imputation. Only a small fraction of the data were missing for the dependent variable (3.7%). Rates of missingness for the independent variables ranged from 0% to 11.3%. According to Rubin (1987), such modest patterns of missing data require between two and 10 imputations, thus 10 imputed data sets were created. The dependent variable and 26 independent variables collected in Year 4 were imputed along with predictors used only for imputation (the independent variables collected in Years 1 thru 3).

Results

Overall, 73.20% of the sample reported never behaving as a negative bystander and 26.80% reported behaving as a negative bystander once, sometimes, or often. The negative bystander model with all independent variables fit the data as evidenced by a chi-square of 715.09 (with 26 degrees of freedom) that was statistically significant at a .001

level. An average student had a 76.02% probability of reporting never behaving as a negative bystander and a 23.98% probability of reporting a history of negative bystander behavior.

Demographic variables associated with negative bystander behavior.

Compared with older youth, younger youth were significantly more likely to report negative bystander behavior. At age 11 years, there was a 27.68% probability of reporting negative bystander which decreased to 19.57% at age 19 years ($p = .009$). Compared to girls, boys had a significantly higher probability of reporting negative bystander behavior (22.31% for girls versus 25.81% for boys, $p = .009$). Compared to youth who received A's and B's (i.e., high grades), those who reported receiving C's, D's, and F's (i.e., low grades) had a significantly higher probability of reporting negative bystander behavior (21.81% for high grades versus 26.91% for low grades, $p < .0001$). Compared to Caucasian students (17.77%), African American (29.10%, $p < .0001$), Native American (25.54%, $p < .0001$), and mixed race or other youth (28.51%, $p < .0001$), had a significantly higher probability of reporting negative bystander behavior. A chi-square likelihood ratio test yielded that, overall, race was significantly associated with negative bystander behavior: $X^2(4, N = 5,752) = 10.89, p = .03$.

Social capital deprivation through negative friend relationships. Compared to youth who reported low levels of peer pressure, youth who reported high levels of peer pressure had a significantly higher probability of reporting negative bystander behavior (20.92% for low versus 54.53% for high, $p < .0001$).

Social capital deprivation through bullying victimization and general verbal and physical victimization. Compared to adolescents who endorsed low levels of verbal

victimization, those who endorsed high levels of verbal victimization had a significantly higher probability of reporting negative bystander behavior (21.89% for low versus 40.21% for high, $p = .002$). Bullying victimization and physical victimization were not significantly associated with the likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior.

Anti-social capital formation through delinquent friends and engagement in bullying and general verbal and physical perpetration. Compared to youth whose friends engaged in minimal delinquency, youth whose friends engaged in a high degree of delinquency had a significantly increased probability of reporting negative bystander behavior (20.78% for low versus 41.40% for high, $p < .0001$).

Compared to youth who did not engage in bullying others, youth who reported bullying others had a significantly higher probability of reporting negative bystander behavior (22.91% did not endorse bullying versus 37.72% did endorse bullying, $p < .0001$). This trend was also evident for specific forms of perpetration and youth who reported high rates of physical and verbal perpetration had significantly higher probabilities of reporting negative bystander behavior compared to youth who engaged in low levels of physical perpetration (49.10% for high versus 19.91% for low, $p < .0001$) and verbal perpetration (44.13% for high versus 22.39% for low, $p < .0001$). See Table 1.1 for results.

Table 1.1
Model Predicted Probabilities for Negative Bystander Behavior

Variables	Sig	Never	Once Sometimes Often
All		0.7602	0.2398
Demographic Variables			
Age	.009		
11 years		0.7232	0.2768
12 years		0.7343	0.2657

13 years		0.7452	0.2548
14 years		0.7558	0.2442
15 years		0.7661	0.2339
16 years		0.7661	0.2239
17 years		0.7858	0.2142
18 years		0.7952	0.2048
19 years		0.8043	0.1957
Gender	.009		
Female		0.7769	0.2231
Male		0.7419	0.2581
Free/Reduced Lunch			
Yes		0.7547	0.2453
No		0.7777	0.2222
Grades	<.0001		
A's and B's		0.7819	0.2181
C's, D's, and F's		0.7301	0.2691
Race	.03		
Caucasian (reference group)		0.8223	0.1777
African American	<.0001	0.7090	0.2910
Latino		0.7758	0.2242
Mixed/Other	<.0001	0.7149	0.2851
Native American	<.0001	0.7446	0.2554
Living Arrangement			
Two-parent family		0.7591	0.2409
Other type of family		0.7652	0.2348
Social Capital Deprivation: Negative Friend Relationships			
Friend Rejection			
Low		0.7530	0.2470
Medium		0.7834	0.2165
High		0.8111	0.1889
Peer Pressure	<.0001		
Low		0.7908	0.2092
Medium		0.6397	0.3603
High		0.4547	0.5453
Social Capital Deprivation: Bullying & General Victimization			
Bullying Victimization			
Yes		0.7710	0.2290
No		0.7570	0.2430
Verbal Victimization	.002		

Low	0.7811	0.2189
Medium	0.6973	0.3027
High	0.5979	0.4021
Physical Victimization		
Low	0.7528	0.2472
Medium	0.7875	0.2125
High	0.8184	0.1816
Social Capital Deprivation: Parent-Adolescent Conflict		
Parent-Adolescent Conflict		
Low	0.7671	0.2329
Medium	0.7527	0.2473
High	0.7376	0.2624
Social Capital Deprivation: Negative School Experiences and Characteristics		
School Danger		
Low	0.7826	0.2174
Medium	0.7547	0.2453
High	0.7245	0.2755
School Size		
Small (140)	0.7544	0.2456
Medium (570)	0.7617	0.2383
Large (1,000)	0.7689	0.2311
% Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch		
Low (60%)	0.7714	0.2286
Medium (78%)	0.7590	0.2410
High (95%)	0.7469	0.2531
Teacher Turnover		
Low (0%)	0.7566	0.2434
Medium (25%)	0.7629	0.2371
High (50%)	0.7691	0.2309
Average # Suspensions per 100 Students		
Low (5)	0.7618	0.2382
Medium (43)	0.7597	0.2403
High (90)	0.7571	0.2429
Social Capital Deprivation: Depression and Anxiety		
Depression		
Low	0.7654	0.2346
Medium	0.7521	0.2479

High		0.7384	0.2616
Anxiety			
Low		0.7541	0.2459
Medium		0.7686	0.2314
High		0.7825	0.2175
Anti-Social Capital			
Delinquent Friends	<.0001		
Low		0.7922	0.2078
Medium		0.6990	0.3010
High		0.5860	0.4140
Bullying Perpetration	<.0001		
Yes		0.6228	0.3772
No		0.7709	0.2291
Verbal Perpetration	<.0001		
Low		0.7761	0.2239
Medium		0.6769	0.3231
High		0.5587	0.4413
Physical Perpetration	<.0001		
Low		0.8009	0.1991
Medium		0.6712	0.3288
High		0.5090	0.4910

Note. Each probability was chosen for one category of an independent variable of interest while all other independent variables were fixed at the sample mean level.

Discussion

The overarching hypothesis of the current study was that social capital deprivation (represented by negative social relationships and school characteristics) and anti-social capital (represented by delinquent friends, bullying, and perpetration) would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Over all, this hypothesis was largely supported. As discussed below, anti-social capital was more strongly associated with negative bystander behavior than social capital deprivation. This creates an important differentiation between the two concepts.

Demographic Variables Associated with Negative Bystander Behavior

It was hypothesized that being male, young, of minority status, and from a one parent household as well as receiving free or reduced price lunch and low grades would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. In line with our hypothesis and past research (Salmivalli et al., 1996), compared to females, males had a significantly higher likelihood of reporting engagement in negative bystander behavior. It is well documented that compared to females, males of all ages display more physical aggression and violence (Peterson, Esbensen, Taylor, & Freng, 2007; Frisell, Pawitan, Langstrom, & Lichtenstein, 2012; Topitzes et al., 2012; Zheng & Cleveland, 2013). Negative bystander behavior involves acts of verbal or physical aggression, thus, it follows that adolescent boys would be more inclined than girls to engage in this form of behavior. Also in line with our hypothesis, younger participants were significantly more likely to report negative bystander behavior compared to older participants. This finding suggests that as youth age, they become increasingly inclined to ‘mind their own business’ and avoid engaging in negative bystander behavior. Past research supports this assertion as older youth were more likely, compared to younger youth, to act as passive bystanders (Pozzoli & Gini, 2010) and younger youth were more likely, compared to older youth, to behave as prosocial bystanders (Barchia & Bussey, 2011, Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Poyhonen et al., 2010). We add to this research base by showing that younger adolescents are also more likely to act as negative bystanders. Taken together, current and past findings confirm that as youth age, they are less inclined to engage in negative or prosocial bystander behavior, and are more inclined to passively observe bullying. These findings highlight the importance of creating interventions that encourage older youth to become

actively involved as prosocial bystanders and attempt to decrease younger adolescents' inclination to engage in negative bystander behavior.

In terms of race, our hypothesis was partially supported and, compared to Caucasian youth, African American, Native American, and Mixed Race/Other youth were significantly more likely to engage in negative bystander behavior. This trend was not present for Latino youth. Bullying victimization frequently centers on issues of race/ethnicity and racial minorities are often bullied due to their race (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2006). It is possible that the African American, Mixed Race/Other, and Native American youth in the current sample witnessed high levels of race-based bullying of victims. Rather than defend someone from a different racial group, it is possible that these youth chose to join in the bullying as a means of strengthening the power of their own racial group. Perhaps in-group favoritism and out-group hostility (Harris, 1995) fueled their desire to assist in bullying individuals from other racial groups. However, the current study did not measure the race/ethnicity of the victims; thus, further research is needed to better understand the association between race/ethnicity and bystander behavior. Given the relatively small proportion of Latino youth in the current study communities, it is possible that Latino youth were more hesitant to engage in bullying dynamics for fear that no one from their group would be present to provide support if needed. Alternately, Latino youth may be socialized to different cultural and family message about engaging in bullying. More research is needed to fully understand how Latino youth view and engage in bullying dynamics.

Also in line with our hypothesis, compared to youth who received A's and B's, youth who reported low grades (C's, D's, and F's) were significantly more likely to report

negative bystander behavior. Poor academic performance is often indicative of poor school connectedness and is a risk factor for delinquency (Maguin & Loeber, 1996), suggesting that poor school performance might also be associated with increased aggression and deviant behavior in the form of negative bystander behavior. Poor grades and low school connectedness may be signs of social capital deprivation and an emerging interest in anti-social capital development. This finding highlights the importance of supporting youth who are underperforming academically in order to foster their positive feelings about school and increase their school connectedness, which might serve to decrease negative bystander behavior and prevent development of anti-social capital.

Social Capital Deprivation through Negative Friend Relationships

In line with our hypothesis, compared to youth who reported low levels of peer pressure, youth who reported high levels of peer pressure were significantly more likely to report negative bystander behavior. This finding mirrors past research indicating that peer pressure to engage in aggression and delinquency resulted in increases in these anti-social behaviors (Padilla-Walker & Bean, 2009; Sullivan, 2006). Friendships ripe with negative peer pressure are unstable and represent social capital deprivation. Human beings in general, and particularly adolescents, seek acceptance (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and youth succumb to peer pressure as a way of maintaining group belonging and cohesion. Thus, if peers pressure youth to engage in negative bystander behavior, youth might comply in an effort to avoid being ostracized from the group. Indeed, there was more than a two fold increase in the likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior between youth who reported low peer pressure (21%) and youth who reported high peer pressure (55%). In line with the theory of group dynamics (Harris, 1995), giving in to peer pressure

is a way of assimilating into a group and attempting to gain acceptance and social status. Standing up to peer pressure severs valuable social ties, resulting in isolation. Current findings suggest that social capital deprivation in the form of peer pressure fuels negative bystander behavior, highlighting the importance of creating interventions to help youth stand up to negative peer pressure.

Interestingly, the hypothesis that friend rejection would be associated with increased negative bystander behavior was not supported. The current measure of friend rejection assessed rejection in the form of negative teasing, being picked on, and being treated disrespectfully. Perhaps if a more traditional measure of rejection has been used (e.g., assessing how liked and disliked youth were and how many mutual friendships they had; Parker & Asher, 1993; Rose, 2002), results would have been different. It is possible that in order to preserve their sense of self-worth, youth interpreted teasing and being picked on by friends as playful and not as a form of rejection and were thus not negatively impacted by the presence of this friend behavior. Aside from the measurement issue, clear and overt peer rejection may relegate the adolescent to being marginalized and outside of positive or negative peer influences. Consequently, peer pressure or the desire for social belonging might not be salient for these rejected youth, leaving them to disengage from social relationships and bullying dynamics.

Social Capital Deprivation through Bullying Victimization and General Verbal and Physical Victimization

It was hypothesized that youth who endorsed bullying victimization or general verbal or physical victimization would report higher rates of negative bystander behavior compared to youth who did experience these harmful events. However, contrary to our

hypothesis, bullying victimization was not significantly associated with negative bystander behavior. Victims often feel lonely and excluded (Kvarme, Helseth, Saeteren, & Natvig, 2010), have few friends (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Scholte et al., 2008), and perceive low levels of peer support (Demaray & Malecki, 2003; Furlong et al., 1995; Holt & Espelage, 2007) all of which indicate social capital deprivation. Bullying others through negative bystander behavior can be used as a means of obtaining social status and attempting to rectify this social capital deprivation; however, in the current sample, victims of bullying did not appear to use negative bystander behavior as a means of gaining social capital as hypothesized. Perhaps firsthand knowledge of the pain engendered from victimization deterred victims from engaging in negative bystander behavior. Some past research suggests that, compared to non-victimized youth, victims were significantly more likely to act as prosocial bystanders and defend victims (Pozzoli, Ang, & Gini, 2012; Salmivalli et al., 1996). In light of this finding and current findings, it is interesting and enigmatic that victims' inclination to protect victims does not translate into a significantly decreased likelihood of negative bystander behavior. Bullying victims and non-victims had a relatively equal likelihood (23% and 24% respectively) of endorsing negative bystander behavior, which indicates that relative to non-victimized youth, experiencing victimization did not decrease victim's proclivity to harm other victims. Although most victims do not engage in negative bystander behavior, a small percentage join in with the bully. This subgroup could consist of "bully-victims" a group that takes on the role of bully and victim and might be inclined towards aggressive behavior, such as negative bystander behavior.

Interestingly, compared to youth endorsing low rates of verbal victimization, youth who endorsed high rates of verbal victimization were significantly more likely to report negative bystander behavior. However, physical victimization was not significantly associated with negative bystander behavior. Verbal victimization is emotionally harmful and might engender anger and the desire for retribution that is then expressed through negative bystander behavior. Further, verbal victimization can be covert and teachers are less likely to intervene in episodes of verbal bullying compared to episodes of physical bullying (Glover et al., 2000), leaving verbal victims feeling alone and unsupported to a greater degree than victims of physical perpetration. Perhaps verbal victims therefore believe that teachers will not intervene in bullying situations and support the bully with the knowledge that they will not be caught. Engaging in negative bystander behavior might also be a way for verbal victims to gain social status, avoid being victimized, and increase positive self-regard by relegating a peer to a lower social status. Because physical victimization is a more violent experience than verbal victimization, physical victims might be too afraid to engage in bullying dynamics for fear of becoming physically harmed.

Anti-Social Capital through Delinquent Friends, Bullying Perpetration, and General Verbal and Physical Perpetration

In line with our hypothesis, compared to youth whose friends engaged in minimal rates of delinquency, youth who reported that their friends engaged in high rates of delinquent activity had a two fold increase in the likelihood of reporting negative bystander behavior. The close connection between delinquency and bullying (Bender & Losel, 2011; Ttofi et al., 2011) suggests that, compared to non-delinquent youth,

delinquent adolescents might be more likely to be bullies or negative bystanders. Given that youth mimic peer behavior (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011), it follows that, compared to youth whose friends do not engage in delinquent behaviors, those youth with delinquent friends have a higher likelihood of reporting negative bystander behavior. Delinquent friends provide youth with anti-social capital, thus, youth are likely motivated to maintain these social ties and shape their behavior to conform with their delinquent friends' behavior to assimilate into the group (Harris, 1995). Negative bystander behavior becomes a mechanism to maintain a source of anti-social capital.

In line with our hypothesis and past research (Oh & Hazler, 2009), compared to non-bullies, youth who endorsed bullying others had a significantly higher likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Negative bystander behavior is an extension of bullying, but rather than initiating the bullying, youth join in on bullying that someone else started. The current finding suggests that youth who bully other youth seek out opportunities to engage in bullying even if they have not started the bullying. Findings indicate that youth who bully fuel classroom bullying even when they are not directly involved in starting the bullying. Indeed, negative bystander behavior is associated with increased classroom bullying (Salmivalli et al., 2011), highlighting the deleterious effect that the presence of bullies has on a classroom.

Also in line with the hypothesis, both verbal and physical perpetration were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of reporting negative bystander behavior. The measures of verbal and physical perpetration assessed general verbal and physical aggressive perpetration, but did not refer specifically to bullying. However, both of these behaviors involve forms of aggression, thus it follows that engaging in these

aggressive acts would be associated with aggression in the form of negative bystander behavior. Negative bystander behavior involves aggressive verbal or physical acts directed at the victim and is a natural extension of verbal and physical perpetration. Current findings indicate that youth who engage in bullying and aggression consistently seek out opportunities to harm their peers, and join in even when they did not instigate the harm. Both bullying and aggression can also be viewed as mechanisms to acquire positive and anti-social capital as youth who are aggressive and bully are often viewed as popular (Cillessen & Mayeaux, 2004; Prinstein & Cillessen, 2003). Youth who bully and behave aggressively are often embedded within social networks where this deviant behavior is the norm. Youth in these groups reinforce each other's negative behaviors and provide one another with anti-social capital, which fuels ongoing negative behavior. This dynamic was more poignant than the social deprivation effects discussed above and should stimulate prevention program efforts to decrease delinquent friendships.

Limitations

The positive contributions of the current study must be considered in light of the limitations. Given the wide range of negative bystander responses to bullying, it would have been ideal to include additional items assessing other forms of negative bystander behavior such as physically attacking the victim or verbally encouraging the bully. It would have also been interesting to assess negative bystander responses to specific forms of bullying (e.g., physical, verbal) and different types of victims (e.g., gender, race, disability status). Further, although the three-item negative bystander scale is part of a larger scale that has been widely used, further research is needed to establish the validity of this scale. Although research staff closely monitored participants to maintain privacy

and confidentiality, youth might have been affected by the presence of their peers. It would be ideal to have participants fill out the online survey in private rooms; a lack of time, space, and research staff made this impractical. Finally, caution is warranted in generalizing current findings to other geographic areas and populations. The current study population accurately represented the areas in which data were collected, but generalizability to other populations is limited given the rural, low income, racially/ethnically diverse sample.

Conclusion

The current study examined how variables assessing social capital deprivation and anti-social capital are associated with negative bystander behavior during bullying episodes. Social capital deprivation in the form of peer pressure and verbal victimization and anti-social capital in the form of delinquent friends, bullying perpetration, and verbal and physical perpetration were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Findings highlight the importance of offering social support to youth disengaged from positive sources of social capital. Disengagement from social capital leaves youth feeling isolated and alone and fuels their participation in negative social interactions such as negative bystander behavior. Disengaged youth seek out support from deviant sources and often use anti-social means, such as acting aggressively and bullying others, to develop this anti-social capital. A key to decreasing bullying is eradicating support for bullying behavior and extinguishing negative bystander behavior. The current study highlights the importance of obtaining social support for disenfranchised youth as a vital step to achieving this goal.

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PAPER II

PROSOCIAL BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR IN BULLYING DYNAMICS: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Individuals who observe a bullying event, but are not directly involved as a bully or victim are referred to as bystanders. Prosocial bystanders are those individuals who actively intervene in bullying dynamics to support the victim, and often, this prosocial behavior ends the bullying. The current study examines how social capital in the form of social support, community engagement, mental health functioning, and positive school experiences and characteristics is associated with the likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior in a large sample ($N = 5,752$) of racially/ethnically diverse rural youth. It was hypothesized that social capital would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Following multiple imputation, an ordered logistic regression with robust standard errors was run. The hypothesis was partially supported and results indicated that social capital in the form of friend and teacher support, ethnic identity, religious orientation, and future optimism were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Contrary to the hypothesis, a decreased rate of self-esteem was significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Findings highlight the importance of positive social relationships and community engagement in increasing prosocial bystander behavior and ultimately decreasing school bullying. Implications were discussed.

A bystander is an individual who witnesses an emergency event, but is not directly involved. Social psychology textbooks are replete with stories of bystanders who observed emergency situations such as stabbings and sexual assaults without providing assistance (Myers, 2002). However, equally as important and more recently the focus of social psychological inquiry has been on the question of why bystanders might choose to behave in a prosocial manner (Batson, 1998). Various factors impact prosocial behavior in general and prosocial bystander behavior specifically. For example, observing someone engage in prosocial behavior significantly increases the likelihood of witnesses replicating that behavior (Bryan & Test, 1967; Rushton & Campbell, 1977). Further, prosocial bystanders appear to display certain personality characteristics such as empathy, an internal locus of control (i.e., belief that life events result from personal actions), a strong belief in fairness, and high social responsibility (Bierhoff, Klein, & Kramp, 1991). In addition, situational factors, such as the number of bystanders present (Darley & Latane, 1968), impact bystanders' proclivity to intervene. However, researchers have largely neglected to examine how the presence of social capital impacts bystander behavior, especially for bystanders present during episodes of bullying.

Youth with access to social capital are likely enmeshed in a network of supportive social relationships that might lead to engagement in prosocial activities. The presence of supportive others might encourage youth to display prosocial bystander behavior (e.g., defend victims of bullying). First, it is possible that supportive others might model prosocial bystander behavior, making this positive behavior the norm, and thus increasing the likelihood that others also engage in this behavior. Second, the presence of social support might decrease fear of becoming the next victim as a result of standing up to the bully. The

current study aims to uncover how social capital indicators in the form of social support, community engagement, mental health functioning, and positive school experiences and characteristics are associated with prosocial bystander behavior.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital refers to the benefits gained from social relationships (Putnam, 2000). Specifically, individuals form and invest in social relationships with the expectation of fulfilling goals and profiting from their interactions with others (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001). Putnam described the mutual benefit of social capital as the force that drives people to maintain social networks: “Social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995; p 67). Social capital theorists argue that social ties offer four beneficial resources: access to *information* about opportunities that might not be available to those outside of the relationship, the potential to *influence* the person in power, *social credentials* (e.g., being socially connected to certain individuals indicates access to resources), and *reinforcement* of an individual’s identity and sense of self-worth (Lin, 2001; Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001).

Given these benefits of social capital, it follows that the presence of social capital would be associated with positive outcomes for adolescents. In support of this, one study of rural youth that used social capital theory as a guiding framework found that, over 3 years, social capital in the form of parent and friend support significantly predicted decreased depression and anxiety and increased self-esteem. In addition, social capital in the form of religious orientation and ethnic identity significantly predicted increased self-esteem (Smokowski, Guo, Rose, Evans, & Cotter, 2014).

In light of the beneficial impact that social capital has on adolescent mental health, it is likely that social capital influences other aspects of adolescent development, such as bystander behavior. It is possible that social capital in the form of social support, community engagement, mental health functioning, and positive school experiences and characteristics provide youth with the confidence and social resources to defend victims of bullying. Youth benefiting from these forms of social capital likely perceive the world as safe and assume that their defense of the victim will be encouraged by their sources of social support.

Bystanders in the Bullying Dynamic

The vast majority of bullying episodes are witnessed by bystanders (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Kerzner, 2013). While many bystanders reinforce the bully or ignore the situation, a small percentage defend the victim in an effort to interrupt the bullying dynamic. In one study of 60 videotaped bullying episodes of youth in Grades 1 through 6, researchers found that bystanders defended the victim only 10% of the time (Atlas & Pepler, 1998). In another study of the same age group, 306 videotaped bullying episodes were coded and bystanders defended the victim 19% of the time (Hawkins et al., 2001). Studies using self- and peer-report surveys of bystander behavior mirror these results. In a sample of 573 Finnish students in Grade 6, 17% reported defending the victim (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukianien, 1996). A study of 9,397 Canadian youth in Grades 4 through 11 paints a slightly more optimistic picture. These youth self-reported on their bystander behavior and 31% reported helping the victim most of the time and 18% reported helping the victim all of the time (Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse, & Neale, 2010). Overall, the prevalence of observed defending behavior varied from 10% to 19% and self-reported defending rates range from 17% to 31%.

Research suggests that bystanders who support the victim have the power to interrupt the bullying dynamic. For example, in a sample of youth in Grades 1 through 6, bystander defense of the victim ended the bullying 57% of the time (Hawkins et al., 2001). In another study of 6,762 Finnish children ages 9 through 11, defending behavior was significantly associated with decreased levels of classroom bullying (Salmivalli, Voeten, & Poskiparta, 2011). Further, defending the victim mitigates the negative outcomes associated with bullying victimization. Although victims generally report lower quality of life compared to non-victimized youth, victims who perceived high levels of peer support (e.g., being defended during bullying episodes) reported less of a decrease in quality of life than victims who did not perceive high levels of support (Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, & Sink, 2009). Taken together, past research indicates that defense of the victim has the potential to decrease rates of bullying and to buffer against the negative impact of bullying on victims. Given the impact that bystander behavior has on subsequent bullying, it is incumbent upon researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the individual- and school-level characteristics that impact prosocial (i.e., defending the victim) bystander behavior. The current study examines how the presence of social capital impacts prosocial bystander behavior.

Social Capital Variables Associated with Prosocial Bystander Behavior

Demographic variables associated with prosocial bystander behavior. It is well documented that compared to boys, girls are more likely to behave as prosocial bystanders and support victims during bullying episodes (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Poyhonen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2010; Salmivalli et al., 1996). In terms of age, defending behavior appears to decrease with age. For example, compared to middle school students, youth in elementary

school were more likely to defend the victim (Poyhonen et al., 2010) and compared to high school students, youth in middle school reported more defending behavior (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). However, other researchers have found that compared to younger students, older students were significantly more likely to intervene to defend the victim (Barhight et al., 2013) indicating the need for additional research. In regards to individual school performance, high grades indicate academic investment and could be indicative of other prosocial, rule following behaviors, such as defending victims of bullying.

Concerning familial influences on bystander behavior, it is well established that compared to single parent families, two parent families are more financially stable (Churaman, 1992) and that youth from two parent families engage in lower rates of aggression and delinquency (Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz, & Miller, 2000; Vaden-Kiernan, Ialongno, Pearson, & Kellam, 1995). Thus, it is possible that financial stability and residence in a two parent household might also be associated with increased prosocial behavior, such as prosocial bystander behavior. However, this relationship remains uninvestigated.

Social capital through social support: friends, parents, and teachers. As youth enter adolescence, peer relationships become an increasingly important form of social support (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992) and friend support in particular represents a significant form of social capital. Social standing in the classroom provides some insight into whether or not youth are supported by their peers and friends. Sociometric popularity, also referred to as acceptance, is the extent to which an individual is liked or disliked by his or her peer group (Asher, Parker, & Walker, 1996) and perceived popularity is assessed by asking youth to nominate the peers they perceive as being the most and least popular (Cillessen & Rose, 2006). Both of these constructs are associated with bystander behavior.

For example, in a sample of youth ages 8 through 10, there was a significant and positive association between both sociometric and perceived popularity and defending behavior. Compared to less well-liked and popular children, well-liked and popular youth were more likely to defend victims. However, for adolescents ages 11 through 14, sociometric popularity, but not perceived popularity, was significantly and positively associated with defending behavior (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009). These findings were partially confirmed in a sample of elementary and middle school youth and both sociometric and perceived popularity were positively associated with defending behavior (Poyhonen et al., 2010). Finally, in a sample of students in Grade 6, compared to bullies, victims, outsiders (i.e., passive bystanders), and defenders (i.e., those who supported the bully), defenders received the highest number of “like most” nominations and had the highest social status in the class (Salmivalli et al., 1996). These findings suggest that, in general, across age groups, being liked by one’s peers and being popular is a form of social capital associated with defending behavior. It is possible that the defending behavior itself increases youth’s sociometric and perceived popularity. However, it is also possible that highly liked and popular youth feel supported by their friends and classmates, which gives them the confidence to defend victims of bullying. Defending the victim puts youth at risk of being victimized (Caravita et al., 2009), but having high social status might provide youth with a feeling of security and the confidence to defend victims. Although perceived friend support is a slightly different construct than sociometric and perceived popularity, it is also a form of social capital that denotes the presence of positive social relationships. Further, youth who perceive high levels of friend support might be well-liked by classmates. Being backed up by

a cadre of supportive friends likely provides youth with the confidence to support the victim, thus increasing prosocial bystander behavior.

In addition to friend support, parent support is also an important form of social capital for adolescents. Supportive parents foster a positive relationship with their children by encouraging, praising, and spending time with them. Parent support indicates that parents are invested in their children's current and future success and likely encourage their children to excel academically, connect with prosocial peers and adults, and engage in prosocial activities. Thus, parent support promotes healthy youth development and functioning. For example, a high level of parent support is associated with increased adolescent self-esteem and decreased symptoms of depression (Boutelle, Eisenberg, Gregory, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009; Smokowski, Evans, Cotter, & Guo, 2013). Youth internalize and then replicate their relationship with their parents (Bowlby, 1973; Siegler, Deloache, & Eisenberg, 2003), thus, a child who was raised by supportive parents might be inclined to reenact this positive relationship in the peer context. Indeed, youth ages 9 through 11 years old who reported parent support and a high self-concept received the most 'like most' nominations in the class, indicating they were prosocial and got along well with their classmates (Inguglia, Inguglia, & Lo Coco, 2013). In another sample of youth ages 16 through 18 years, a lack of family support was strongly associated with emotional and behavioral dysfunction (Garnefski & Diekstra, 1996), which likely negatively impacted peer relationships. It is possible that these findings carryover to bullying situations and that bystanders with supportive parents replicate the support they experience at home by defending the victim.

Teacher support is a third form of social capital that influences adolescents' behavior in the school environment. Youth who view their teachers as supportive are engaged in

school and are well prepared for class, pay attention in class, and value academic success (Klern & Connell, 2004); it is possible that this prosocial behavior extends outside of the academic realm and into the bullying dynamic. Perhaps youth who perceive high levels of teacher support act as defenders because they know that teachers will step in to support them if needed. Further, perceived teacher support could serve as a deterrent to join in bullying. If students generally perceive high levels of teacher support, perhaps they assume that teachers will intervene in bullying situations and thus students refrain from supporting the bully in an effort to avoid being caught by a concerned teacher. Indeed, in one study of 238 Korean-American youth in Grades 3 through 12, teacher support was significantly associated with a decreased likelihood of assisting the bullying and ignoring the situation, but was also significantly associated with a decreased probability of defending the victim. These findings suggest that teacher support effectively decreased negative bystander behavior, but did not facilitate prosocial bystander behavior (Choi & Cho, 2012). Further research is needed to investigate the relationship of teacher support on bystander behavior.

Social capital through community engagement: religious orientation and ethnic identity.

Both religious orientation and ethnic identity are forms of social capital that serve to connect youth to prosocial and supportive peers and adults. Religious orientation is a measure of the importance that youth place on religion and participation in religious activities. Religious institutions are often tight knit and supportive communities that enhance members' wellbeing. For example, participation in religious activities and a belief in the importance of religion were associated with increased self-esteem (Bagley & Mallick, 1997; Le, Tov, & Taylor, 2007; Smith, Weigert, & Thomas, 1979) and decreased aggression

(Leach, Berman, & Eubanks, 2008; Hollister-Wagner, Foshee, & Jackson, 2001). Youth with high religious orientation value religion and likely attend religious sermons and ceremonies that expose them to prosocial religious principles. Further, many religious groups advocate for peace and camaraderie and support doctrines that discourage violence. It follows that, compared to youth who do not value religion, youth with a high religious orientation might be more likely to defend victims. However, there is very little research examining the connection between religion and bystander behavior. The one existing study of 426 Puerto Rican youth ages 10 to 12 years, found no significant differences in youth's negative (e.g., assisting the bully) and prosocial bystander behavior for those who attended church and for those who did not (Mercado-Crespo, 2013). Given the dearth of literature, additional research is needed to further investigate the connection between religious orientation and bystander behavior.

Ethnic identity refers to an individual's ethnic self-identification (Bernal & Knight, 1993) and to his or her feeling of connection to that ethnicity (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). A strong sense of ethnic identity indicates that youth feel a sense of belonging and membership to their ethnic group and likely seek out opportunities to connect with that group. Thus, ethnic identity functions as a form of social capital, connecting youth to prosocial institutions such as churches or community centers, exposing youth to positive adult and peer role models who share the same race, ethnic affiliation, or language. Further, ethnic identity is related to successful psychological functioning (Phinney, 1990) such as decreased levels of depression (Kiang, Witkow, & Champagne, 2013), anxiety (Tynes, Rose, Anderson, Umaña-Taylor, & Lin, 2012), aggression (Flanagan et al., 2011), and increased self-esteem (Corenblum & Armstrong, 2012). Research indicates that high ethnic identity is

also associated with an absence of negative peer relationships, suggesting that ethnic identity might be associated with positive social interactions (Huang, 2012), such as prosocial bystander behavior. Given that ethnic identity indicates a feeling of belonging, compared to youth with low ethnic identity, youth with high ethnic identity might be more inclined to engage in prosocial bystander behavior because they feel that members of their ethnic group will support and protect them from becoming victimized.

Social capital through mental health functioning: future optimism and self-esteem. Although mental health is not a direct measure of social capital, it impacts social capital acquisition. Optimistic, confident, and engaged youth are desirable social companions for peers and adults and thus more easily accrue social capital than youth plagued by depression and anxiety. Future optimism is an individual's sense of hope about the future and is a catalyst for the formation of plans, goals, and commitments (Nurmi, 1991; Seginer, 2008). Further, optimism about the future enhances mental health functioning in vulnerable youth (McCabe & Barnett, 2000; Polgar & Auslander, 2009). A related construct, self-esteem, refers to the degree of confidence one has in him or herself and the extent to which an individual values him or herself (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). Self-esteem and future optimism are closely tied as youth who have a current positive view of themselves (i.e., high self-esteem) likely also have a positive view of their future (i.e., high future optimism). Indeed, researchers have found a positive and significant association between self-esteem and future optimism (Seginer & Shoyer, 2012; Smokwoski, Evans, Cotter, & Webber, 2014). Youth with high self-esteem and future optimism might have the confidence to engage in defending behavior; however, research is mixed. In one study of cyberbullying, there was no association between self-esteem and prosocial bystander behavior (Machackova, Dedkova,

Sevcikova, & Cerna, 2013), a finding that was replicated in a study of traditional bullying (Kabert, 2010). However, other studies have found that self-esteem was a significant and positive predictor of defending behavior (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999; Turetsky, 2013).

Social capital through positive school experiences and characteristics. The term school connectedness refers to a student's belief that the adults and peers at school care about him or her as an individual and about his or her academic development (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Youth who are not connected to school are at risk for poor academic achievement and dropping out prior to the end of tenth grade (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000). Thus, school connectedness is a form of social capital that buffers against the risk factors associated with dropping out of school. A feeling of connection to school likely denotes satisfaction with the school experience and school satisfaction is a form of social capital associated with improved functioning. For example, school satisfaction is associated with decreased symptoms of depression (Eamon, 2002; Millings, Buck, Montgomery, Spears, & Stallard, 2012; Witherspoon, Schotland, Way, & Hughes, 2009) and increased self-esteem (Huebner & Gilman, 2006). Youth who are satisfied with school likely view the teachers and students as supportive and perceive school to be a safe place. Thus, these youth might be inclined to defend victims of bullying because they assume that their peers and teachers will support their efforts.

Certain school characteristics might also impact a youth's inclination to defend victims. For example, compared to larger schools, smaller schools have lower rates of violence (Ferris & West, 2008), crime (Chen, 2008), vandalism (Walker & Gresham, 1997), and bullying (Bowes et al., 2009). It follows that relative to youth in larger schools, youth in

smaller schools report feeling safer (Lleras, 2008) and might therefore be inclined to assist victims of bullying without the fear of being victimized. Other characteristics of schools, such as rates of poverty and suspension, impact the school climate and youth's inclination to defend victims. High rates of student poverty and suspensions are associated with increased bullying and victimization (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2009). It follows that lower rates of student poverty and suspensions might be associated with decreased bullying and victimization, perhaps due to more prosocial bystanders in these schools. Finally, teacher turnover rate represents the percentage of teachers who leave school each year and might impact bystander behavior. A low teacher turnover rate provides continuity for students and allows them to form close and lasting bonds with their teachers, thus bolstering their social capital. Perhaps teachers who return year after year are invested in and attuned to their students and are likely to encourage positive youth behavior.

Hypothesis

The thesis guiding the current study was that the presence of social capital would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Specifically, it was hypothesized that being female, younger, from a two parent family as well as receiving high grades and not receiving free or reduced price lunch would be significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Given the lack of research on race, no definitive hypothesis was made. Further, it was hypothesized that social capital in the form of social support (i.e., friend, parent, and teacher support), community engagement (i.e., ethnic identity and religious orientation), mental health functioning (i.e., self-esteem and future optimism), and positive school experiences and characteristics (i.e., school satisfaction, small school size, low percentage of

students receiving free or reduced price lunch, low teacher turnover rate, and low suspension rate) would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. See Figure 2.1.

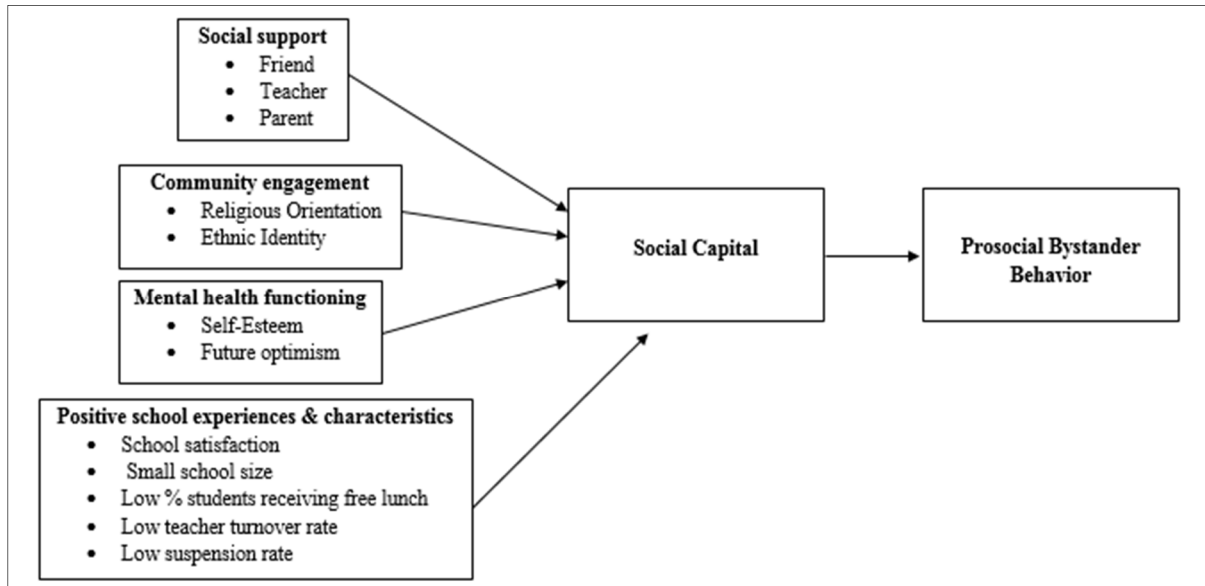


Figure 2.1. Conceptual model of social capital factors hypothesized to be associated with prosocial bystander behavior.

Method

Current Study

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funded the current research through a cooperative agreement with the North Carolina Academic Center for Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (NC-ACE). The Rural Adaptation Project (RAP), one part of the NC-ACE project, is a 5-year longitudinal panel study of more than 7,000 middle- and high-school students from 26 public middle- and 12 public high-schools located in two rural, economically disadvantaged counties in North Carolina. Throughout the 5 year study, a complete middle school census (all students in Grades 6 through 8) from County 1 was included in the RAP sample and each year the new sixth grade class was added to the sample. Because County 2 was larger both geographically and in student population, a

random sample of 40% of middle school students was taken in Year 1 and each year a new random sample of 500 sixth graders was added. Students from both counties were tracked longitudinally through middle- and high-school. Data for the current analysis were collected in Year 4 of the RAP study and therefore includes youth in Grades 6 through 11.

Procedure

Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board from a major research university in the Southeastern United States. Both counties followed a nearly identical data collection procedure. In line with school district policies, County 1 adopted the assessment as a normal part of school proceedings, whereas County 2 sent a letter to parents explaining the study; if parents from County 2 did not want their child(ren) to participate, they sent a letter requesting that their child(ren) be removed from the study roster. Participants in both counties filled out online assessments in school computer labs closely monitored by research staff. Prior to filling out the assessment, all participants were notified that participation was voluntary and they could decline at any time without negative repercussions. Participant's then assented to participate by reading and electronically signing an assent screen. In order to maintain confidentiality, each participant had a unique identification number and no identifying information was collected. Assessments took between 30 and 45 minutes to complete and participants received a \$5 gift card as an incentive.

Participants

The analytic sample consisted of all participants who participated in Year 4 of the RAP study ($N = 5,752$), about half of which were female (51.03%; $n = 2,935$). The racial/ethnic composition mirrored the diversity of the surrounding community and 29.40% ($n = 1,691$) identified as Caucasian, 25.85% ($n = 1,487$) as African American, 24.32% ($n =$

1,399) as Native American, 12.70% ($n = 730$) as mixed race or other, and 7.74% ($n = 445$) as Latino. Participants' age ranged from 11 to 19 years old ($M = 14.42$; $SD = 1.78$) and students were in Grades 6 through 11, with about 15% to 20% in each grade. The majority of the sample received free or reduced price lunch (76.95%; $n = 4,426$) and resided in a two-parent households (81.99%; $n = 4,716$) and a little more than half (55.62%, $n = 3,199$) reported receiving A's and B's whereas the remainder reported receiving C's, D's, and F's.

Measures

Data for the RAP study were collected using a modified version of the School Success Profile (SSP; Bowen & Richman, 2008), a 195-item youth self-report with 22 scales that measure perceptions and attitudes about school, friends, family, neighborhood, self, and health and well-being. Since its inception in 1993, the SSP has been administered to tens of thousands of middle and high school students and has a well-documented reliability and validity (Bowen, Rose, & Bowen, 2005). The modified version of the SSP used in the current study, the School Success Profile Plus (SSP+), included 17 of the original SSP scales, plus 12 additional scales. The current study used five of the original SSP scales included on the SSP+ and two of the additional scales; all measures in the current study come from Year 4 of the RAP study.

Dependent variable: prosocial bystander behavior. Prosocial bystander behavior is any action taken on the part of a bystander to protect or defend the victim. Like the majority of the scales used in the SSP+, the prosocial bystander scale was a modified version of a longer scale that had been validated by previous studies. In the current study prosocial bystander behavior was assessed with a 4-item modified version of the Defender Scale from the Participant Role Questionnaire (PRQ; Salmivalli et al., 1996), which has been validated

in a number of studies across age groups and geographic locations (e.g., Goosens, Olthof, & Dekker, 2006; Salmivalli, Huttunen, Lagerspetz, 1997; Sutton & Smith, 1999; Tani, Schneider, Greenman, & Fregoso, 2003). Prior to answering these questions, participants were presented with a definition of bullying:

It is bullying, when another student makes someone feel bad on purpose and repeatedly. A student is being bullied when one or more other students: say mean or hurtful things, make fun of him/her, or call him/her mean and hurtful names; completely ignore him/her leave him/her out of things on purpose; hit, kick, or shove, him/her; try to make other students dislike him/her by spreading lies about him/her; Please keep this explanation of bullying in mind when you answer the following questions.

The original items from the PRQ are short, so three items were revised to include more detail: the PRQ item “Comforts the victim afterward” was reworded to read, “I tried to comfort the person who always gets pushed, shoved, or teased;” the PRQ item “Tells some adult about the bullying” was reworded to read, “I asked an adult to help someone who was getting pushed, shoved, or teased;” and the PRQ item “Encourages the victim to tell the teacher about the bullying” was reworded to read “I encouraged the person who gets pushed, shoved, or teased to tell a teacher.” The defender subscale has a number of items detailing how the bystander attempted to defend the victim; however, due to limited space on a lengthy assessment, there was not room to include all of these items and these items were combined into a single item that read, “I tried to defend the students who always get pushed, shoved, or teased.” Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (*Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*) and Cronbach’s alpha was .91 in the current sample ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 1.00$).

Independent variables associated with prosocial bystander behavior.

Demographic variables associated with prosocial bystander behavior. Demographic variables included gender (male was the reference group) and age. Race was coded as four dichotomous variables Hispanic, African American, American Indian, and mMixed Race/Other (Caucasian participants were the reference group). Receipt of free or reduced price lunch was used as a proxy for socioeconomic status (SES) and *No* was the reference group, family structure was dichotomized as a two parent household or another type of family situation (reference group), and school grades were dichotomized into high grades (receiving A's and B's) and low grades (C's, D's, and F's), which was the reference group.

Social capital through social support: friends, parents, teachers.

Friend support. The five-item Friend Support scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008) gauged participants' perceptions of how supportive their friends are. Example items included: "I can count on my friends for support" and "I can trust my friends." Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and the Cronbach's alpha reliability was .94 in the current sample ($M = 2.38, SD = 0.62$).

Parent support. The five-item Parent Support scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008) measured the degree to which an adult caregiver in the participants' home provided emotional support in the past 30 days. Example items included: "How often did the adults in your home let you know that you were loved?" and "How often did the adults in your home tell you that you did a good job?" Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert Scale (*Never, Once or Twice, or More than Twice*) and the Cronbach's alpha reliability was .94 in the current sample ($M = 2.58, SD = 0.59$).

Teacher support. The eight-item Teacher Support scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008) measured participants' perceptions of their teachers' supportive behavior. Example items included: "My teachers care about me" and "My teachers give me a lot of encouragement." Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree*). Cronbach's alpha reliability was .92 in the current sample ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .63$).

Social capital through community engagement: religious orientation and ethnic identity.

Religious orientation. The influence of religion in participants' lives was assessed with the three-item religious orientation scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008). Example items included: "My religious faith gives me strength" and "My religious faith influences the decisions I make." Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and the Cronbach's alpha reliability was .93 in the current sample ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.71$).

Ethnic identity. The strength of participants' ethnic identity was assessed with Phinney's five-item Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Example items included, "I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group," and "I feel a strong attachment towards my ethnic group." Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree*) and Cronbach's alpha reliability was .95 in the current sample ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.12$).

Social capital through mental health functioning: future optimism and self-esteem.

Future optimism. Expectations for future success were measured with the 12-item Future Optimism scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008). Example items included "When I think

about my future, I feel very positive” and “I see myself accomplishing great things in life.” Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (*Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree*) and Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .97 in the current sample ($M = 3.33, SD = 0.69$).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was measured using an eight-item adapted version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Example items included, “I feel good about myself” and “I am able to do things as well as most other people.” Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .96 in the current sample ($M = 2.61, SD = 0.54$).

Social capital through positive school experiences and characteristics.

School satisfaction. The seven-item School Satisfaction scale (Bowen & Richman, 2008) assessed participants’ overall satisfaction with school experiences. Example items included: “I enjoy going to this school” and “I get along well with teachers at this school.” Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (*Not Like Me, A Little Like Me, or A Lot Like Me*) and the Cronbach’s alpha reliability was .88 in the current sample ($M = 2.28, SD = 0.52$).

School characteristics. School characteristics were obtained from publically available administrative data and included: school size ($M = 477.21, SD = 238.97$), percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch ($M = 0.77, SD = 0.42$), teacher turnover rate (i.e., the percentage of teachers who did not return to school at the start of each school year; $M = 14.03, SD = 10.08$), and average number of short term (i.e., less than 10 days; $M = 34.75, SD = 21.47$) suspensions per 100 students.

Data Analysis

The dependent variable was non-normally distributed with a skewness of .53 and a kurtosis of 1.97. Linear regression models assume that the disturbances are normally distributed and when this assumption is violated, it is common practice to take the natural-logarithm transformation of the dependent variable. For example, in economics, income is a typical dependent variable that is often skewed, thus the natural-logarithm of income [i.e., $\ln(\text{income})$] is used as the dependent variable in linear modeling (Greene, 2003). Following this convention, the natural-logarithm of the prosocial bystander scale was taken; however this did not sufficiently address the non-normal distribution. A histogram indicated that the prosocial bystander scale remained non-normally distributed with a skewness of .10 and a kurtosis of 1.52. Thus, it was not possible to analyze the prosocial bystander scale in its original metric and it was therefore converted into ordinal levels and a logistic regression was run.

The prosocial bystander scale had four categories and one third of participants scored a 1 (*Never*) and the rest of the participants were fairly evenly spread between 2 (*Once*), 3 (*Sometimes*), and 4 (*Often*). Thus, this scale was recoded so that the dependent variable, y , had four ordinal levels, ranging from 1 to 4. Values of 1 of y remained coded as 1, values of 1.1 to 2 of y were recoded into the value of 2, values of 2.01 to 3 of y were recoded into the value of 3, and values of 3.01 to 4 of y were coded into the value of 4. Ordered logistic regression assumes that each value of y is determined by changes in the independent variables. There are k ordinal categories of y and the model assumes $k-1$ threshold or cutoff values (Long & Freese, 2006). For the current study, k is 4 thus the number of threshold values is 3. Ordered logistic regression is used to model the probability of reporting each of

the ordinal categories, in this case four, as a function of the independent variables and the likelihood of being in 1 of 4 ordinal categories can be expressed by the following equations:

$$\Pr(y = 1|x) = \frac{\exp(\tau_1 - x\beta)}{1 + \exp(\tau_1 - x\beta)}, \quad \Pr(y = 2|x) = \frac{\exp(\tau_2 - x\beta)}{1 + \exp(\tau_2 - x\beta)} - \frac{\exp(\tau_1 - x\beta)}{1 + \exp(\tau_1 - x\beta)}$$

$$\Pr(y = 3|x) = \frac{\exp(\tau_3 - x\beta)}{1 + \exp(\tau_3 - x\beta)} - \frac{\exp(\tau_2 - x\beta)}{1 + \exp(\tau_2 - x\beta)}, \quad \text{and } \Pr(y = 4|x) = 1 - \frac{\exp(\tau_3 - x\beta)}{1 + \exp(\tau_3 - x\beta)}$$

where τ_1 , τ_2 , and τ_3 are the threshold values, β is a vector representing a regression coefficient, X represents independent variables, and an exponent of the coefficient is an odds ratio. The STATA program *ologit* (i.e., an estimator of maximum likelihood) was used to estimate the ordered logistic regression and robust standard errors, also referred to as Huber-White standard errors, were obtained using the STATA command *vce(robust)*. Robust standard errors permit accurate model estimation even in the presence of clustering.

The current data is multilevel (i.e., individual students nested within 38 middle and high schools), making the presence of clustering effects a potential issue. Compared to students from different schools, students from the same school might be more similar on an outcome measure, indicating the presence of clustering. Clustering violates the independent-observation assumption embedded within a regression model, potentially leading to an inaccurate test for statistical significance (Bickel, 2007). The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) was used to test the clustering effects of the dependent variable in its original metric (i.e., as a continuous variables). The ICC is defined by the following equation:

$$\text{ICC} = \frac{\sigma_u^2}{\sigma_u^2 + \sigma_e^2}$$

Where σ_u^2 is the between-group variance, and σ_e^2 is the within-group variance. Results indicated that clustering effects were quite low and the ICC value was .0472 for the prosocial bystander scale, showing that less than 5% of the variation in outcome variables lies between schools. Despite this low ICC, robust standard errors were still used to be conservative and correct for this minimal clustering.

Multiple imputation was used to address missing data. Only 4.0% of the data were missing for the dependent variable and rates of missingness for the independent variables ranged from 0%-11.3%. Such modest patterns of missing data require between 2 and 10 imputations (Rubin, 1987), thus 10 imputed data sets were created. The dependent variable and 21 independent variables collected in Year 4 were imputed along with predictors used only for imputation (the independent variables collected in Years 1 thru 3).

Results

Overall, 33.57% of the sample reported never behaving as a prosocial bystander, 26.02% reported once behaving as a prosocial bystander, 22.93% reported sometimes behaving as a prosocial bystander, and 17.48% reported often behaving as a prosocial bystander. The prosocial bystander model with all independent variables fit the data as evidenced by a chi-square of 577.32 (with 21 degrees of freedom) that was statistically significant at .001 level. An average student had a likelihood of 32.03% of reporting never behaving as a prosocial bystander, a 28.09% likelihood of reporting once behaving as a prosocial bystander, a 24.02% likelihood of reporting sometimes behaving as a prosocial bystander, and a 15.87% likelihood of reporting often behaving as a prosocial bystander. See Table 2.1.

Demographic variables associated with prosocial bystander behavior. Compared to males, females had a significantly higher probability of reporting frequent prosocial bystander behavior (13.35% for males versus 18.63% for females, $p < .0001$). Age was significantly associated with a decreased probability of reporting frequent prosocial bystander behavior. Participants who were 11 years old had a 24.32% ($p < .0001$) probability of reporting frequent prosocial bystander behavior while students who were 19 years old had an 8.45% ($p < .0001$) probability of reporting frequent prosocial bystander behavior. Compared with Caucasian students, Native American students had a significantly lower probability of frequently engaging in prosocial bystander behavior (16.52% for Caucasian students versus, 14.53% for Native American students, $p = .047$). A chi-square likelihood ratio test yielded that overall race was not significantly associated with prosocial bystander behavior: $X^2(4, N = 5,752) = 4.00, p = .41$. Youth living in a two parent family had a significantly lower probability of engaging in frequent prosocial bystander behavior compared to youth living in another type of family situation (15.46% for two-parent family versus 17.81% for another type of family situation, $p = .009$). Participants who reported receiving high grades had a significantly higher probability of engaging in frequent prosocial bystander behavior compared to participants who reported receiving low grades (16.56% for high grades versus 15.03% for low grades, $p = .031$).

Social capital through social support: friends, parents, teachers. Participants with high levels of friend support had a significantly higher probability of reporting frequent prosocial bystander behavior compared to students with low levels of friend support (17.10% for high versus 13.37% for low, $p = .003$). A similar trend was found for teacher support; youth who reported high rates of teachers support had a significantly higher probability of

reporting frequent prosocial bystander behavior compared to youth who reported low levels of teacher support (18.94% for high versus 10.53% for low, $p < .0001$). Parent support was not significantly associated with prosocial bystander behavior.

Social capital through community engagement: religious orientation and ethnic identity. Compared to youth with low rates of religious orientation, youth with high rates of religious orientation had a significantly higher probability of engaging in frequent prosocial bystander behavior (13.71% for low versus 17.09% for high, $p = .004$). A similar pattern was evident for ethnic identity (12.10% for low versus 19.56 for high, $p < .0001$).

Social capital through mental health functioning: future optimism and self-esteem. Youth with high rates of future optimism had a significantly higher probability of reporting frequent prosocial bystander behavior compared to youth with low rates of future optimism (18.77% for high versus 8.53% for low, $p < .0001$). Youth who reported high levels of self-esteem had a significantly lower probability of engaging in frequent prosocial bystander behavior compared to youth who reported low levels of self-esteem (14.98% for high versus 19.95% for low, $p = .005$).

Social capital through positive school experiences and characteristics. Positive school experiences and school characteristics were not significantly associated with the probability of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. See Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 *Model Predicted Probabilities for Prosocial Bystander Behavior*

Characteristic	Sig	Never	Once	Sometimes	Often
All		0.3203	0.2809	0.2402	0.1587
Demographic Variables					
Age	<.0001				
11 years		0.2166	0.2528	0.2874	0.2432
12 years		0.2443	0.2641	0.2760	0.2156

13 years		0.2742	0.2730	0.2624	0.1904
14 years		0.3063	0.2792	0.2470	0.1675
15 years		0.3404	0.2824	0.2303	0.1469
16 years		0.3762	0.2824	0.2130	0.1284
17 years		0.4135	0.2793	0.1953	0.1119
18 years		0.4518	0.2732	0.1777	0.0973
19 years		0.4906	0.2643	0.1606	0.0845
Gender	<.0001				
Female		0.2796	0.2743	0.2598	0.1863
Male		0.3658	0.2827	0.2180	0.1335
Free/Reduced Lunch					
Yes		0.3176	0.2806	0.2415	0.1603
No		0.3293	0.2817	0.2358	0.1532
Race					
Caucasian (ref. group)		0.3099	0.2797	0.2452	0.1652
African American		0.3257	0.2814	0.2375	0.1554
Latino		0.3467	0.2826	0.2273	0.1434
Mixed/Other		0.2761	0.2735	0.2615	0.1889
Native American	.047	0.3433	0.2825	0.2289	0.1453
Living Arrangement	.009				
Two-parent family		0.3269	0.2815	0.2369	0.1546
Other type of family		0.2908	0.2766	0.2544	0.1781
Grades	.031				
A's and B's		0.3093	0.2796	0.2455	0.1656
C's, D's, and F's		0.3344	0.2820	0.2333	0.1503
Social Capital: Social Support					
Friend Support	.003				
Low		0.3655	0.2827	0.2182	0.1337
Medium		0.3325	0.2819	0.2342	0.1514
High		0.3011	0.2784	0.2495	0.1710
Parent Support					
Low		0.3259	0.2814	0.2374	0.1553
Medium		0.3223	0.2811	0.2392	0.1574
High		0.3188	0.2807	0.2409	0.1596
Teacher Support	<.0001				
Low		0.4302	0.2770	0.1875	0.1053
Medium		0.3489	0.2827	0.2262	0.1422
High		0.2755	0.2733	0.2617	0.1894

Social Capital:					
Community Engagement					
Ethnic Identity	<.0001				
Low		0.3922	0.2814	0.2053	0.1210
Medium		0.3269	0.2815	0.2369	0.1547
High		0.2677	0.2713	0.2654	0.1956
Religious Orientation	.004				
Low		0.3587	0.2828	0.2214	0.1371
Medium		0.3293	0.2817	0.2357	0.1532
High		0.3012	0.2784	0.2495	0.1709
Social Capital: Mental Health Functioning					
Self-Esteem	.005				
Low		0.2628	0.2700	0.2677	0.1995
Medium		0.2978	0.2779	0.2511	0.1733
High		0.3353	0.2821	0.2329	0.1498
Future Optimism	<.0001				
Low		0.4880	0.2650	0.1617	0.0853
Medium		0.3771	0.2824	0.2125	0.1280
High		0.2778	0.2739	0.2607	0.1877
Social Capital: Positive School Experiences and Characteristics					
School Satisfaction					
Low		0.3466	0.2826	0.2273	0.1435
Medium		0.3259	0.2814	0.2374	0.1553
High		0.3059	0.2791	0.2472	0.1678
Size					
Small (140)		0.3300	0.2817	0.2354	0.1528
Medium (570)		0.3177	0.2806	0.2415	0.1603
Large (1,000)		0.3056	0.2791	0.2473	0.1680
% Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch					
Low (60%)		0.3073	0.2793	0.2465	0.1669
Medium (78%)		0.3216	0.2810	0.2395	0.1579
High (95%)		0.3354	0.2821	0.2328	0.1497
Teacher Turnover					
Low (0%)		0.3261	0.2814	0.2373	0.1551
Medium (25%)		0.3158	0.2804	0.2424	0.1615
High (50%)		0.3056	0.2791	0.2473	0.1680

**Average # Suspensions
per 100 Students**

Low (5)	0.3228	0.2811	0.2389	0.1571
Medium (43)	0.3196	0.2808	0.2405	0.1591
High (90)	0.3156	0.2804	0.2424	0.1615

Note. Each probability was chosen for one category of an independent variable of interest while all other independent variables were fixed at the sample mean level.

Discussion

Using social capital theory as a framework, the current study examined individual and school characteristics associated with prosocial bystander behavior. The overarching hypothesis was that the presence of social capital in the form of social support, community engagement, mental health functioning, and positive school experiences and characteristics would be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Overall, this hypothesis was partially supported.

Demographic Variables Associated with Prosocial Bystander Behavior

Based on past research, it was hypothesized that compared to boys, girls would be more likely to engage in prosocial bystander behavior (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Poyhonen et al., 2010; Salmivalli et al., 1996). This hypothesis was supported and girls had a significantly higher likelihood of reporting sometimes or often engaging in prosocial bystander behavior compared to boys. Boys and girls are socialized differently: girls are raised to value relationships and nurturance, while boys learn to emphasize independence and competition (Davies, 2004). Prosocial bystander behavior is a form of nurturance that aims to protect the victim from maltreatment, thus, based on how girls are often socialized, it follows that they are more likely than boys to engage in this behavior.

In terms of age, it was hypothesized that compared to older students, younger students would be more likely to behave as prosocial bystanders. In line with past research

(Barchia & Bussey, 2011, Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Poyhonen et al., 2010), this hypothesis was supported. We add to the research base by illustrating that previous findings apply to an ethnically/racially diverse sample in a rural school district. Current findings indicate that perhaps as youth age they shy away from intervening in conflicts in which they are not directly involved. However, it is also possible that because rates of bullying decrease throughout middle and high school, older youth are faced with fewer opportunities to display prosocial bystander behavior. Future intervention research should center on creating programs that encourage youth of all ages, especially older youth, to support victims of bullying.

Overall, race was not significantly associated with prosocial bystander behavior; however, compared with Caucasian youth, Native American youth had a significantly lower probability of engaging in frequent prosocial bystander behavior. In the current sample, a higher percentage of Caucasian participants reported having been bullied compared to Native American participants (35.18% of Caucasians versus 21.11% of Native Americans). Past research suggests that, compared to non-victimized youth, victims were significantly more likely to act as prosocial bystanders and defend the victim (Pozzoli, Ang, & Gini, 2012; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Thus, the higher rates of bullying victimization reported by Caucasian students in the current sample could account for their higher probability of frequent prosocial bystander behavior relative to Native American participants.

Contrary to our hypothesis, youth from two parent families had a significantly lower probability, compared to youth from another family situation, of engaging in frequent prosocial bystander behavior. Single parent families face significant stressors such as financial instability (Churaman, 1992); given their increased exposure to hardships, it is

possible that youth from these families are more empathetic to the plight of others and are thus inclined to assist victims of bullying. Finally, in line with our hypothesis, youth reporting high grades had a significantly higher probability of reporting frequent prosocial bystander behavior compared to youth who reported low grades. Receiving high grades indicates engagement in prosocial activities such as attending and paying attention in class and completing homework. Based on current findings, it seems that participation in these prosocial behaviors is associated with other prosocial actions such as protecting victims of bullying. Further, receipt of high grades could indicate social capital; youth with high grades are likely engaged in school, positively connected to teachers, and invested in their future success.

Social Capital through Social Support: Friends, Parents, Teachers

Social support represents a significant form of social capital and it was hypothesized that high rates of friend, parent, and teacher support would be associated with an increased probability of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. This hypothesis was partially supported. Friend and teacher support, but not parent support, were associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior.

Friend support is an important form of social capital indicating that youth are connected to caring and nurturing peers who provide support during difficult times. Indeed, friend support is a promotive factor for rural youth that is associated with high self-esteem (Smokowski, Evans, Cotter, & Guo, 2013), increased ethnic identity (Evans, Smokowski, & Cotter, 2014), and decreased anxiety (Smokowski, Cotter, Robertson, & Guo, 2013). Thus, the presence of friend support might be indicative of an overall healthy and high functioning individual who possesses the confidence to support victims of bullying. The presence of

friend support suggests that youth are embedded within a positive friend network, which could increase bystanders' confidence that defending the victim would not result in his or her own victimization because a friend would intervene if needed. Friendships offer youth self-worth, intimacy, and companionship (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Bierman, 2004) and if adolescents know they have one or more supportive friends backing them up, they might be more inclined to defend a victim.

Teacher support is a form of social capital indicating that youth feel connected to and supported by their teachers. The perception of teacher support enhances youth's school experience by heightening their feeling of safety and belonging. Feeling safe and supported might enable youth to defend victims because the presence of caring teachers mitigates the fear of becoming victimized as a result of defending the victim. Teachers and friends are more proximal to school bullying than parents. Current findings indicate that this proximity makes friends and teachers particularly strong influences on youth's bystander behavior. It appears that although parents do impact youth's behavior in general, in the school setting, friends and teachers have a greater influence. These findings highlight the importance of fostering positive friend and teacher relationships in the school as a mechanism for creating a positive school atmosphere and increased rates of prosocial bystander behavior.

Social Capital through Community Engagement: Religious Orientation and Ethnic Identity

In support of our hypothesis, high levels of religious orientation and ethnic identity were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Religious orientation and ethnic identity are forms of social capital that connect and engage youth with prosocial peers and adults. The current results suggest that youth who

value religion have a higher likelihood of supporting victims than youth who do not value religion. This finding is in line with past research showing that valuing religion is associated with increased self-esteem (Bagley & Mallick, 1997; Le et al., 2007; Smith et al., 1979) and decreased aggression (Leach et al., 2008; Hollister-Wagner et al., 2001). Youth who feel positively about themselves and refrain from aggression likely possess the self-confidence necessary to protect victims of bullying. Further, many religious doctrines espouse peace and comradery and thus indirectly support prosocial bystander behavior, which might encourage religious youth to behave as prosocial bystanders as a way of upholding their religious values.

A high ethnic identity indicates that youth feel a sense of belonging to their ethnic group. Perhaps youth with a strong connection to their ethnic group feel supported and protected by classmates of their same ethnicity and feel safe supporting the victim knowing that their ethnic group members will support their efforts. Further, if a member of someone's ethnic group is being victimized, a high ethnic identity might further encourage youth to intervene to support the victim.

Social Capital through Mental Health Functioning: Future Optimism and Self-Esteem

In support of our hypothesis, high future optimism was significantly associated with an increased probability of engaging in frequent prosocial bystander behavior. Youth with high future optimism feel positively about the future, which suggests an overall positive appraisal of life and indicates that these youth expect good outcomes from their behavior. Thus, youth with high future optimism might assume that something positive will occur if they intervene to support a victim. Further, optimistic youth are likely desirable social companions and thus easily accrue social capital in the form of supportive relationships. The

presence of supportive others decreases the chances of the bully turning on the prosocial bystander, further enhancing youth's ability to support victims.

Counter to our hypothesis and past research (Salmivalli et al., 1999; Turetsky, 2013), compared to youth with high self-esteem, those with low self-esteem had a significantly higher probability of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Typically, victims of bullying report lower rates of self-esteem relative to bullies and non-involved youth (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Huitsing, Veenstra, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2012; Pollastri, Cardemil, & O'Donnell, 2009) and as previously mentioned, victims of bullying also tend to behave as prosocial bystanders (Pozzoli et al., 2012; Salmivalli et al., 1996). These two relationships may help explain why low self-esteem in the current study was associated with an increased probability of engaging in positive bystander. The group of youth reporting low rates of self-esteem might have consisted predominantly of victimized youth who have a higher probability of engaging in positive bystander behavior. It is possible that these youth with low self-esteem engaged in prosocial bystander behavior in an effort to increase their feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. Further research is needed to explore these complex relationships.

Social Capital through Positive School Experiences and Characteristics

Counter to our hypothesis school satisfaction and school characteristics were not significantly associated with prosocial bystander behavior. Perhaps the school characteristics that were included are simply unrelated to bystander behavior. School size, teacher turnover, and other school characteristics may not be salient because bullying dynamics are universal and pervasive. Alternately, the characteristics we included may not be the relevant ones. Assessing youth's perceptions of school characteristics, such as the degree to which youth

view their peers as being tolerant of bullying and prosocial bystander behavior, would be useful measures to include in future studies.

Limitations

Although the current study added to the literature on bystander behavior, findings must be considered in light of certain limitations. Prosocial bystander behavior varies widely from actively confronting the bully to calling the victim away and comforting him or her. It would have been ideal in the current study to include additional items on the prosocial bystander scale that more accurately assessed the nature of the defending behavior; however, this was not possible due to limited space on a long assessment. Due to space and time constraints, participants filled out online surveys in classrooms and the presence of others could have effected participant's answers. Although research staff closely monitored participants to ensure privacy and confidentiality, it would have been ideal to have participants fill out surveys in private rooms. Finally, the unique ethnic/racial composition of the current sample and the rural location warrant caution in generalizing findings to other populations and geographic locations.

Conclusion

The current study examined how the presence of social capital in the form of social support, community engagement, mental health functioning, and positive school experiences and characteristics were associated with prosocial bystander behavior. In line with our hypothesis, social capital in the form of friend and teacher support, religious orientation, ethnic identity, and future optimism were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Contrary to our hypothesis, high self-esteem was associated with decreased likelihood of engaging in frequent prosocial bystander

behavior. Findings indicate that friend and teacher support foster prosocial bystander behavior. Disenfranchised and socially isolated youth are therefore at risk of not intervening to support victims and current findings highlight the importance of helping these youth become engaged in supportive relationships. Given that prosocial bystanders have the ability to stop bullying episodes and thus reduce overall rates of school bullying, researchers and school personnel should seek ways to increase the social capital of school aged youth. Fostering prosocial bystander behavior is a key to decreasing school bullying and social capital acquisition is vital to this process.

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PAPER III

GIVING VICTIMS OF BULLYING A VOICE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF POST BULLYING COPING STRATEGIES

Youth typically cope with stressors such as bullying victimization through two distinct coping mechanisms: emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. Emotion-focused coping is an internal coping strategy that focuses on emotion regulation while problem-focused coping involves active behaviors that are aimed to decrease or eradicate the stressor. Research on adolescent coping is primarily quantitative, examines youth in Grades 1 through 6, and neglects to specifically assess how victims of bullying cope with being bullied. Using a combination of the Transactional Coping Model and the Approach-Avoidant Coping Model as guiding frameworks, the current qualitative study explored the coping strategies of 22 rural middle- and high-school youth victimized by bullying. Results indicate that youth report using an array of emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies including internalizing, help seeking, physical and verbal aggression, standing up for themselves, and prosocial bystander behavior. Although the majority of coping strategies were similar between middle- and high-school participants, these groups reported utilizing verbal and physical aggression in different ways. Further, certain coping strategies, such as help seeking and striking out with physical and verbal aggression, can be both emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies. Implications are discussed.

Bullied youth are a marginalized group at risk for a host of negative social and emotional outcomes. This group of youth is often socially isolated, feels lonely and excluded (Kvarme, Helseth, Saeteren, & Natvig, 2010), and perceives low levels of peer support (Demaray & Malecki, 2003; Furlong, Chung, Bates, & Morrison, 1995; Holt & Espelage, 2007). In addition, victimized youth are at risk of suffering from depression, anxiety, withdrawal, and insecurity (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaída, 2008; Menesini, Modena, & Tani, 2009). Rural youth might be at a particularly high risk for bullying victimization and the ensuing emotional problems. National bullying surveys suggest that rates of bullying victimization range from 10.6% (Health Behavior of School-Aged Children Survey; Nansel et al., 2001) to 27.8% (School Crime Supplement; Robers, Kemp, & Truman, 2013). However, smaller scale studies of rural areas indicate higher rates of victimization ranging from 33.0% (Price, Chin, Higa-McMillan, Kim, & Frueh, 2013) to 82.3% (Dulmus, Theroit, Sowers, & Blackburn, 2004). In addition, compared to urban and suburban areas, rural areas expose adolescents to unique stressors such as geographic isolation, restricted social networks, and limited community resources (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). These stressors affect rural adolescents by constraining their access to extracurricular activities, mental health services, and social interactions with non-family members. Thus, rural youth victimized by bullying might not have access to needed social support and mental health services. Yet, despite the emotional problems associated with victimization and the potential stressors present in rural areas, victimized youth are often resilient, finding multiple ways of coping with their bullying victimization.

Coping is defined as "...any and all responses made by an individual who encounters a potentially harmful outcome" (Silver & Wortman, 1980, p. 281). While researchers have

created various models of coping, two models predominate the literature: the Transactional Model of Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the Approach-Avoidance Model of Coping (Roth & Cohen, 1986). According to the Transactional Model of Coping, coping strategies are either emotion-focused (i.e., attempting to regulate emotions that arise due to stress or “internally restructuring” one’s emotional response to the stress) or problem-focused (i.e., attempting to alter the source of stress by taking action; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus, 1991; p. 113; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This model posits that there are three forms of problem-focused coping (i.e., confrontational coping [e.g., acting aggressively to change the situation], seeking social support [e.g., asking for help and support], planned problem solving [e.g., attempting to alter the situation]) and five forms of emotion-focused coping (i.e., distancing [e.g., minimizing the stressor and detaching from it], self-controlling [e.g., regulating one’s emotions about the stressor], accepting responsibility [e.g., acknowledging one’s own role in the situation], escape-avoidance [e.g., engaging in wishful thinking and efforts to escape or avoid the problem], positive reappraisal [e.g., creating positive meaning from the stressor by focusing on personal growth]; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Ways of Coping Checklist, 2014). This model of coping has typically been tested with adults and findings indicate that individuals often used more than one form of coping simultaneously (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980).

The Approach-Avoidance Model of Coping posits that individuals cope with stress by confronting and dealing with the stressor (i.e., approach) or by denying and ignoring the stressor (i.e., avoidance; Roth & Cohen, 1986). Approach coping is similar to problem-focused coping, while avoidance coping is similar to emotion-focused coping. The Approach-Avoidance Model of Coping has been tested in the literature by conceptualizing

three forms of avoidance coping strategies (i.e., internalizing – e.g., becoming worried or sad; distancing–e.g., ignoring or avoiding the situation; externalizing–e.g., feeling angry) and two forms of approach coping strategies (i.e., help seeking–e.g., asking someone for help; and problem solving–e.g., taking action to solve the problem or change the situation; Causey & Dubow, 1992). Past quantitative research using this model suggests that victimized children and young adolescents commonly display both approach and avoidance coping strategies (Andreou, 2001; Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Causey & Dubow, 1992; Olafsen & Viemero, 2000; Roecker Phelps, 2001). For the purposes of the current study, the Transactional Coping Model and the Approach-Avoidance Model will be combined. Emotion-focused coping will refer to any coping strategy that involves the processing of internalized emotions that result from being victimized; there will be a focus on internalizing, distancing, and externalizing in the form of anger. Problem-focused coping will refer to any coping strategy that involves a direct action employed to stop the stressor of bullying victimization; there will be a focus on problem solving, help seeking, and externalizing in the form of physical or verbal aggression. Although there is a large body of research examining how youth cope with victimization, the majority of this past research was conducted outside of the United States, used samples of youth in Grades 1 through 6, and examined how youth respond to general stressors and not exclusively to experiences of victimization. Further, this body of research lacks qualitative studies.

Qualitative research, in the form of in-depth interviews, offers a unique behind the scenes look at the “lived-experience” of individuals and offers a richer and more comprehensive understanding of certain phenomena than quantitative data. In addition, qualitative methods give a voice to marginalized populations and have the potential to

empower participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). However, the majority of bullying research is quantitative (Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011; Kvarme et al., 2010), leaving a large gap in the current bullying research. Further, the existing qualitative bullying research consists primarily of focus groups (e.g., Bibou, Tslantis, Assimopoulos, Chatzllambou, & Glaannakopoulos, 2012; Guerra et al., 2011; Horowitz et al., 2004; Hopkins, Taylor, Bowen, & Wood, 2013) to the exclusion of in depth interviews and was conducted outside of the United States (e.g., Australia [Cranham & Carroll, 2002], Greece [Bibou et al., 2012], Sweden [Thornberg, Rosenqvist, & Johansson, 2012], England [Formby, 2013], Croatia [Sekol, 2012]). The purpose of the current study was to use in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews to explore the coping strategies of victims of bullying in rural middle- and high-schools. Specifically, the two aims of this study were to ascertain what forms of emotion- and problem-focused coping victimized youth employ and to determine if these coping strategies differed across age groups.

Emotion-Focused Coping

Emotion-focused coping is an internal coping strategy that involves the management of emotions and alters the way in which the stressor is perceived and interpreted (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus, 1991; Roth & Cohen, 1986). Emotion-focused coping does not involve any direct action or attempt to alter the source of stress. Three examples of emotion-focused coping that youth often employ in response to stress are distancing (e.g., ignoring or avoiding the stressor), internalizing (e.g., feeling sad, worried, anxious), and externalizing (e.g., feeling angry or expressing anger, but not directing that anger at the source of stress).

In one study of 481 U.S. youth in Grades 4 through 6, when faced with a peer conflict or receiving a low grade, compared to females, males were significantly more likely to

employ the coping strategy of distancing (e.g., pretend nothing happened, refrain from thinking about the situation) while females were more likely to engage in problem-focused coping (to be discussed later; Causey & Dubow, 1992). Coping by distancing is also a common way in which victimized youth respond to being bullied. Research suggests that victims often attempt to ignore the bullying and act as if it does not bother them (Salmivalli, Karhunen, & Lagerspetz., 1996). Indeed, in a sample of 408 Greek youth ages 9 to 12, compared to bullies and non-involved youth, victims were significantly more likely to report dealing with peer conflict by distancing or internalizing, but were significantly less likely compared to bullies, bully/victims, and non-involved youth to report using externalized coping (i.e., feeling angry or expressing anger by throwing something; Andreou, 2001). This finding was partially supported in a sample of 329 Flemish youth in Grades 4 through 6; female victims were significantly more likely than socially neglected females to respond to peer conflict by internalizing and male victims were significantly more likely than non-victimized males to also employ this coping strategy (Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998).

It seems that emotion-focused coping might also depend on the nature of the stressor and age. For example, in a sample of 491 U.S. youth in Grades 3 through 6, youth in Grades 5 and 6 were significantly more likely to report using distancing to cope with relational aggression compared to overt aggression, but this difference was not present for youth in Grades 3 and 4. In the same study, youth in Grade 6 reported significantly greater use of internalizing strategies to cope with relational aggression compared to overt aggression (Roecker Phelps, 2001). Further, youth in Grade 6 also reported significantly greater use of externalized coping for dealing with overt aggression compared to relational aggression and compared to younger participants. (Roecker Phelps, 2001). In another sample of 510 Flemish

youth ages 10 through 12 years, female victims of indirect bullying reported a significantly increased use of internalized coping in the form of thinking about committing suicide or harming oneself compared to female victims of direct bullying (Olafsen & Viermero, 2000).

Taken together, past research suggests that youth commonly cope with bullying victimization and general stressors by employing the emotion-focused coping techniques of distancing and internalizing. Further, certain forms of victimization (e.g., relational and indirect) are significantly associated with an increased use of internalized coping, while other forms of victimization (e.g., overt) are significantly associated with externalized coping (e.g., feeling angry or expressing anger by throwing something).

Problem-Focused Coping

Problem-focused coping is an external coping strategy that involves taking action to address the source of stress (Lazarus, 1991; Roth & Cohen, 1986). Examples of problem-focused coping often employed by youth are seeking help (e.g., asking an adult or peer for help or support), problem solving (e.g., taking action to solve the problem or change the situation), and externalized coping (e.g., physically or verbally fighting back against the source of stress). This externalized coping is distinct from the externalized emotion-focused coping previously discussed. Problem-focused externalized coping is the actual physical manifestation of anger in the form of verbal or physical aggression directed towards the stressor, while externalized emotion-focused coping is the emotion of anger and a general expression of that anger, not necessarily directed towards the source of stress. Youth who engage in externalized problem-focused coping use verbal or physical aggression to directly confront a source of stress in an attempt to put an end to it.

Past literature has found that, compared to males, females were significantly more likely to report using problem-focused coping in the form of seeking help (e.g., get help from a friend, teacher, or parent) or problem solving (e.g., think of possible solutions, take action) when they received a low grade, had a conflict with a friend, or faced relational or overt aggression (Causey & Dubow, 1992; Roecker Phelps, 2001). However, other researchers found no gender differences in help seeking or problem solving and also found no differences in these two forms of problem-focused coping between victims, bullies, non-involved youth, and socially isolated youth (Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998). In situations involving bullying or aggression, male victims were more likely compared to female victims to employ problem-focused externalized coping by fighting back against the bully or aggressor (Roecker Phelps, 2001; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Problem-focused coping might also vary by age as youth in Grade 3 were significantly more likely than youth in Grades 4 through 6 to employ help seeking strategies for coping with overt aggression compared to relational aggression (Roecker Phelps, 2001). Taken together, females appear to employ help seeking and problem solving more often compared to males, however further research is needed to ascertain if this relationship extends beyond general stressors and also exists for coping with bullying victimization. It seems that being a bully or victim does not impact the use of help seeking or problem solving and male victims of bullying and aggression are more likely to employ externalized coping compared to female victims.

Qualitative Research on Victim Coping Strategies

To the author's knowledge, only one qualitative study of bullying victimization coping strategies has been conducted. Researchers conducted 18 group interviews with 102 victimized students in Grades 4 through 8 in an urban school district in the Southeastern

United States. Using the Transactional Model of Coping as a guiding framework, researchers found that youth reported using both emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies including self-defense, standing up to the bully, seeking social support, distancing, internalizing, externalizing, focusing on the positive, and self-blaming (Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, & Parris, 2011). The current study seeks to expand upon this past research by extending it to youth in a rural setting, including middle- and high-school students, and by utilizing individual interviews to gain a more in depth understanding of how victimized youth cope with being bullied.

Method

Current Study

A cooperative agreement between the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the North Carolina Academic Center for Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention (NC-ACE) funded the current research. The Rural Adaptation Project (RAP), one part of NC-ACE project, is a 5-year longitudinal panel study of more than 7,000 middle- and high-school students from 26 public middle- and 12 public high-schools located in two rural, economically disadvantaged counties in North Carolina. Each year for 5 years, participating youth filled out an online assessment (the School Success Profile Plus; SSP+) that examined perceptions of school, friends, family, health and wellbeing, and attitudes about and experiences with bullying. A number of quantitative articles have been written using this data including three articles specifically examining experiences of bullying victimization (Evans, Smokowski, & Cotter, 2014; Smokowski, Cotter, Robertson, & Guo, 2013; Smokowski, Evans, & Cotter, 2014). The current qualitative study served to expand upon the quantitative bullying data gathered in the RAP study. The current study used semi-structured interviews

and examined how middle- and high-school victims of bullying coped with the experience of victimization.

Participants

Participants ($N = 22$) for the current study came from three rural counties in North Carolina. The majority of participants (68.18%, $n = 15$) came from the target county in the RAP study and 31.82% ($n = 7$) came from two neighboring rural counties. Half of the sample were female ($n = 11$) and participants' age ranged from 10 to 18 years ($M = 14.45$, $SD = 2.21$). A little over half of the sample was in high school ($n = 12$) and the remainder ($n = 10$) was in middle school. The sample was racially/ethnically diverse and 36.36% ($n = 8$) of participants identified as Native American, 31.82% ($n = 7$) identified as Caucasian, 13.63% ($n = 3$) identified as mixed race, 9.09% ($n = 2$) identified as Asian, 4.55% ($n = 1$) identified as Latina, and 4.55% ($n = 1$) identified as African American. The majority of participants (68.18%, $n = 15$) resided in two parent families, 27.27% ($n = 6$) resided with one parent, and 4.54% ($n = 1$) lived with a grandparent. All participants reported having siblings. In terms of academic grades, 22.73% ($n = 5$) reported receiving Mostly A's, 31.82% ($n = 7$) reported receiving mostly B's, 27.27% ($n = 6$) reported receiving C's and D's, and 18.18% ($n = 4$) reported receiving a mix of A's, B's, and C's.

Procedure

Following IRB approval from a major research university, purposive sampling was used. In Year 2 of the RAP study (Spring 2012), students who filled out the SSP+ were given a slip of paper recruiting individuals who had been victims of bullying to participate in a 30-45 minute interview about their experiences; contact information was provided and staff explained that there would be a 10 dollar incentive. About 3,000 of these fliers were

distributed; however, no students contacted the qualitative research team. Fliers were then distributed to two Boys and Girls Clubs in the geographic area of the RAP study and researchers met with the director of the Boys and Girls Club in an effort to recruit participants. Fliers were also distributed to parents and youth at parenting groups, but no one contacted the research team. Researchers then contacted the director of a Teen Court program, one of the RAP interventions implemented in the target county. The Teen Court director began screening Teen Court participants for this qualitative study and encouraged any youth who endorsed bullying victimization to contact the researchers. Fliers were also hung in the Teen Court building. This recruitment strategy resulted in eight Teen Court youth agreeing to participate in the study. Seven youth in the same county heard about the interviews through word of mouth and contacted the researchers. Six additional youth from a neighboring rural county were recruited at the Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) conference and one youth in a neighboring rural county was referred by word of mouth.

Prior to each interview, the head qualitative researcher talked to each participant's parent or caregiver on the phone to explain the study, answer questions, and establish a meeting place and time. Youth from the target county were either interviewed at the Teen Court office (86.67%, $n = 13$) or their school (13.33%, $n = 2$) and all youth from the neighboring rural counties were interviewed at their school. When participants and their parent or caregiver arrived for an interview, the researcher explained that the interview was completely voluntary. Participants could decline to answer any questions and could stop the interview at any time. The 10 dollar incentive would be provided regardless. A parent or caregiver signed a consent form and the participant signed an assent form.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a private office and were audio recorded with a digital audio recorder. The head qualitative researcher conducted 13 of the interviews alone and conducted nine with a second researcher present. The early interviews were conducted with two researchers present to ensure that the interview protocol was closely followed and to allow for in depth discussions about the content of the interviews. All interviews were structured using an interview guide. The guide included demographic questions and 16 questions about bullying including the meaning of the word bullying, how participants responded when they witnessed bullying, experiences being bullied, experiences bullying others, responses to being bullied, parent and school responses to bullying, and suggestions for how parents, teachers, and friends could stop bullying. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes depending upon how talkative participants were. Following each interview, participants were provided 10 dollars in cash. The digital recording of the interview was downloaded onto a computer and was transcribed verbatim.

In addition to the qualitative data, drawings collected from an NC-ACE sponsored drawing contest conducted in the RAP target county were also included in the current study to illustrate themes from the interviews. Adolescents in the middle schools participating in the RAP study were given the opportunity to participate in a monthly drawing contest. Interested youth were provided with a parental consent form and that month's prompt. One month focused on bullying and youth were provided with the prompt: What are my thoughts, actions, and feelings about bullying? Pictures were used in the current study to illustrate the themes that interview participants discussed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a pragmatic qualitative research approach, "...an approach that draws upon the most sensible and practical methods available in order to answer a given research question" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; p. 171). Specifically, a descriptive/thematic approach with grounded theory overtones was used. Qualitative descriptive studies identify the *who*, *what*, and *where* of events and are ideal when a description of a phenomenon is desired (Sandelowski, 2000). The current study sought to describe and clarify the coping strategies that bullied youth employ post victimization. Given the lack of qualitative research in this content area, a descriptive approach was ideal. The current analysis took the descriptive approach a step further and sought to extract themes from the data. The flexibility of a descriptive approach makes it possible to add overtones of other qualitative methods, thus elements of grounded theory were also incorporated (Sandelowski, 2000).

It was unclear whether codes and themes would be the same or different across the middle- and high-school interviews, thus the middle school interviews were coded first followed by the high school interviews. The middle school interviews were first coded using concept-driven coding. Concept-driven coding is a deductive coding approach that involves the creation of preliminary codes from previous studies, research literature, or the interview guide (Gibbs, 2007). In the current study, the interview guide was used as a means of establishing concept-driven codes that were then applied to the 10 middle school interviews. Following concept-driven coding, in line with grounded theory, the inductive approach of open coding was used. Open coding involves a more in-depth analysis of the data and goes a step beyond concept-driven coding because codes that were not readily evident from previous studies, research literature, or the interview guide are able to emerge from the data

(Charmaz, 2006). In this regard, open coding is a data driven approach where the data supplies the codes. The additional codes that emerged through open coding were added to the codes established from the concept-driven coding resulting in a middle school codebook. An identical procedure was then used with the high school interviews (i.e., concept-driven coding followed by open coding) resulting in a high school codebook. The middle- and high-school code books were compared; all codes but two were common across both groups, thus, the codebooks were combined resulting in 33 codes in total; 20 codes originated from concept-driven coding and 13 codes from open-coding.

The interviews were then coded for a third time using the combined code book. The final step in data analysis included the use of the grounded theory technique of constant comparison. Constant comparison entails comparing codes across interviews to ensure that the codes are being applied in the same manner (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All of the quotes for each code were grouped together and were then compared across interviews to ensure that all codes were applied consistently. Upon the completion of constant comparison, certain codes were combined to create themes. Given the breadth and depth of the current interviews, multiple themes emerged; however, the focus of the current analysis was on post-bullying coping strategies. A concept map was created in order to illustrate the connections between the various forms of coping that victims reported employing (see Figure 3.1).

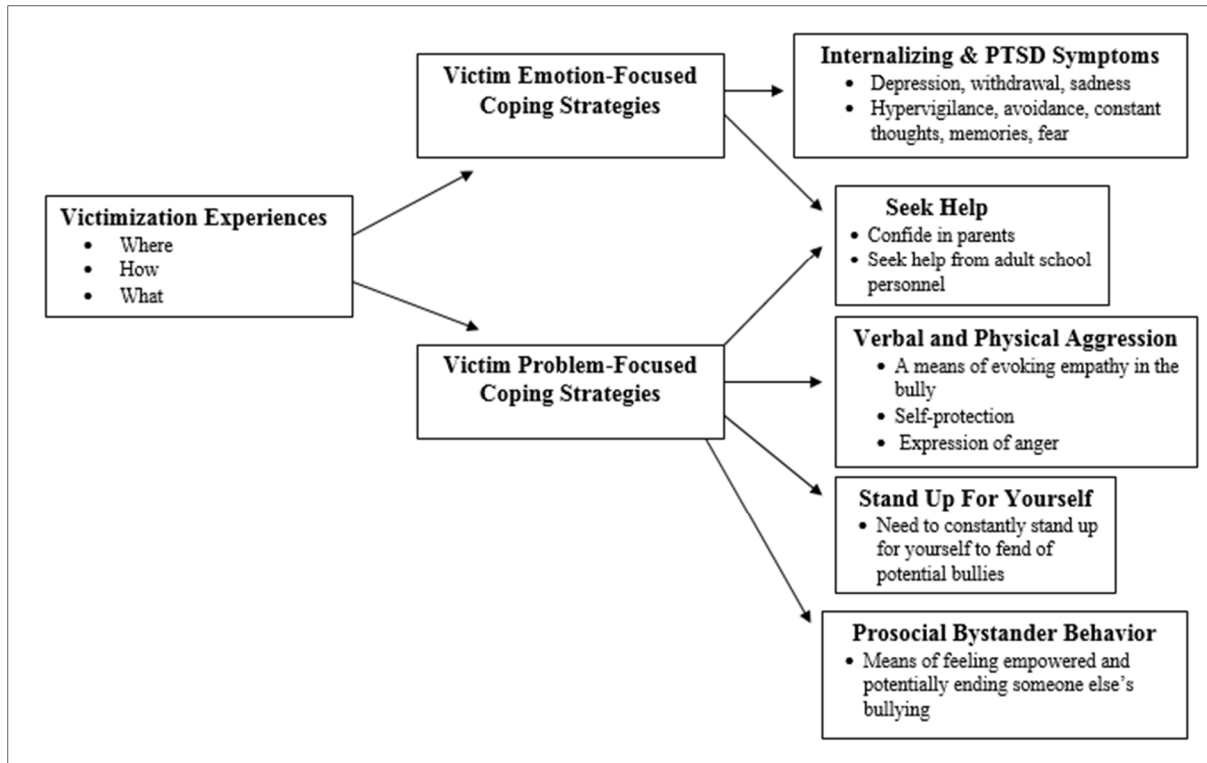


Figure 3.1. Thematic concept map of victim emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies.

Findings and Discussion

The majority (83.33%, $n = 10$) of high school participants reported past bullying victimization (i.e., one year or more in the past) and 16.67% ($n = 2$) reported current bullying victimization while the majority (90.00%, $n = 9$) of the middle school participants reported current bullying victimization and 10.00% ($n = 1$) reported having been bullied in the past. All participants provided detailed descriptions of their experiences being bullied. A subsequent theme that emerged was the variety of responses and strategies participants employed to cope with the bullying. These coping strategies broke down into two main themes: emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. There were then five subthemes that represented various forms of emotion- and problem focused coping: responding to victimization with internalizing, externalizing, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms (emotion-focused coping), coping by seeking help from parents

and teachers (emotion- and problem-focused coping), coping by physically or verbally fighting back (middle school only; problem-focused coping), coping by standing up for yourself (high school only; problem-focused coping), and coping through prosocial bystander behavior (problem-focused coping). Figure 3.1 displays a thematic concept map of how the central themes of emotion- and problem-focused coping relate to the five coping subthemes. Following a description of participants' experiences with victimization (e.g., location, reason for victimization, examples of victimization experiences) each form of victim coping will be discussed in detail.

General Description of Victimization Experience

In line with past literature (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007), participants reported being bullied in the hallway, cafeteria, classroom, library, gym, bathroom, outside, during in-school suspension (ISS), and on the bus. A few participants noted that the bullying occurred everywhere in the school. A 16-year-old male recounted the ubiquitous nature of bullying, "It [the bullying] happened everywhere. No matter where I was, they [the bullies] would come up." There were no differences between where middle school participants reported currently being bullied and where high school participants reported having been bullied in the past. The current findings highlight the fact that the bullied youth in the current study were at risk in every area of the school and could find little respite from the bullying they endured on a daily basis. Indeed, many participants discussed the repetitive nature of bullying, "Almost every day," "Mostly a lot," "a lot of times," or "It happens a lot." These findings confirm that school personnel need to reach out to bullied youth and ensure that they have a safe haven somewhere in the school where they are protected from victimization.

Participants also discussed the reasons that they were victimized. The reasons for victimization cited by participants were similar to the reasons youth in Year 4 of the RAP study reported being bullied (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 *Reasons Youth in the RAP Study Were Bullied*

Form of Victimization	Once (%)	Sometimes/Often (%)
Race	542 (9.69)	283 (5.06)
Religion	232 (4.16)	187 (3.35)
Sexual orientation	201 (3.61)	229 (4.12)
Disability	150 (2.69)	121 (2.17)
Overweight	322 (5.79)	348 (6.25)
Something about body	433 (7.77)	485 (8.69)
Clothing	368 (6.61)	327 (5.88)
Receiving good grades	317 (5.70)	289 (5.19)
Receiving poor grades	174 (3.14)	172 (3.10)

Similar to RAP participants, many participants in the current study mentioned physical appearance such as being overweight or having a physical abnormality. Middle school youth in particular discussed the specific reasons they had personally been bullied. An 11-year-old male explained, “He [the bully] calls me bunny rabbit ‘cause...the top of my teeth are...pushed out, pushed out further.” An 11-year-old female stated, “Some people pick on me because I’m big...and because of the way I dress.” Other reasons for being bullied included race, religion, sexual orientation, learning disabilities, lack of athleticism, appearing weak, speech impediments, low social status, and being shy. A 15-year-old male reported being bullied, “...because I was in like EC [special education] and stuff like that.” High school participants also offered specific reasons for having been bullied. A 16-year-old female remembered, “...I just got so many comments about having like a Jew nose...when I

cut my hair, 'cause I got it buzzed freshman year, like being called dyke..." And a 16-year-old male was bullied due to race and color, "...for me...it was the race, because of my color." However, high school participants went a step further and also explained reasons why bullying occurs in general. A 16-year-old male explained, "...what causes bullying...is differences, like people being different." This was echoed by an 18-year-old male who stated, "...it's just like a difference thing. Like if you see something, like completely different you'd be like shocked about it...it's more noticeable, it stands out, it's something that people can talk about." A 16-year-old female expanded upon the idea of differences causing bullying and stated that youth are bullied for, "...something a person can't control...it could be like race, religion, the way you look and like disabilities and things like that." Past literature supports the notion that youth are often victimized for acting or looking differently than their peers (Geiger & Fischer, 2006; Horowitz et al., 2004) and current findings confirm that this held true in rural, low income area. Current findings also highlight that compared to middle school aged youth, high school aged youth are more able to identify how differences in general contribute to bullying, while middle school youth focus only on the personal reasons why they were bullied.

Participants in both middle school and high school also discussed a gamut of victimization experiences including physical bullying (e.g., being hit, shoved, tripped), name calling, verbal harassment, bias based bullying (i.e., bullying due to actual or perceived group membership such as race, religion, or sexual orientation; Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni, & Scheer, 2013), threats, property destruction, electronic bullying, rumor spreading, and social exclusion. An 11-year-old female provided an example of name calling and physical bullying, "She [the bully] likes to mess with me, call me names and sometimes she just

pushes me out of line. She sometimes, just for no reason, she trips me in PE.” A 14-year-old female stated:

When I was bullied I was being called fish...people were talking about how I smelled and I don't know why, because mama told me that I didn't and I used to choke her out with perfumes and lotion and all that. But people just pick on me about how I smelled and they called me green giant 'cause I'm tall...

A 16-year-old female remembered that in elementary school, "...boys at lunch would spit corn at me...and...people all started a rumor that I was a lesbian.” A 15-year-old male with a speech impediment recounted classmates mimicking him, “They would like, copy [me] like sometimes they would [say] like book-book-book...mimic [me].” A 16-year-old female who had recently come out as transgender reported that, “A guy was spitting in my face saying f**k you dyke and stuff like that.” This same participant also recalled being physically and electronically bullied in middle school:

I was in gym and they [the bullies] took a picture of me naked...they jumped me and I had a bra and underwear on because I was changing in gym...and they jumped me and they got a picture of me and they sent it around. They sent it around.

Regardless of whether these experiences were occurring in the present (i.e., most middle school participants), or if they had occurred one or more years on the past (i.e., most high school participants), youth described their experiences in intense detail; bullying experiences were ingrained in participants' memories. Indeed, highly emotional and personally significant events, such as being bullied, tend to be remembered in great detail (van der Kolk, 1997). Traumatic events are often stored at a somatosensory level, that is, highly emotional, personal events are stored as visual images or sensations related to the trauma and those visual images persist over time (van der Kolk, 1994); "...recurrent observations about the nature of traumatic memories have given rise to the notion that traumatic memories may be encoded differently than memories for ordinary events..." (van

der Kolk, 1997; p.248). Moderate amounts of stress, such as that present in bullying encounters, actually facilitate memory (Siegel, 2012). This assertion has been supported by research suggesting adults who were bullied during childhood continue to vividly remember the details of their victimization experiences years later (Carlisle & Rofes, 2007; Russell, 2010). This body of research explains why youth in the current study had such vivid memories of their bullying, even years after the bullying had ended.

The personal narratives provided by participants offer an insight and depth into the experience of bullying victimization that cannot be obtained through quantitative research. These narratives indicate that despite the national focus on bullying, youth are still being victimized and ongoing effort is warranted in continuing to find ways to combat the problem of bullying. In addition to describing their experiences with bullying, participants also discussed a variety of strategies they had for coping with bullying victimization. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of how youth cope and respond to experiences of bullying victimization is vital so that researchers and school personnel know how best to support these at risk youth.

Emotion-Focused Coping: Internalizing, Externalizing, and PTSD Symptoms

All participants reported experiencing a host of negative emotions as a coping response to being bullied; these responses are in line with emotion-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Roth & Cohen, 1986). These negative outcomes could generally be grouped into three categories: internalizing symptoms (e.g., sadness, withdrawal), externalizing symptoms (e.g., anger), and symptoms of PTSD (e.g., hypervigilance, avoiding traumatizing stimulus, sleep disturbances). The presence of PTSD symptoms is a new contribution from bullying interviews that has rarely been discussed in past literature. PTSD

symptoms suggest that bullying victimization should be considered a form of interpersonal trauma.

Participants in middle- and high-school reported very similar internalizing symptoms as a result of being bullied. Although the majority of high school participants had been bullied one year or more in the past, they described their emotion-focused coping with the same clarity as the middle school participants who were currently being bullied. Figure 3.2 is a drawing done by a middle school aged youth that visually depicts the emotional and physical pain caused by bullying; this drawing illustrates emotion-focused coping in the form of sadness. The victim in this drawing is pictured with a frown and tear on his cheek, illustrating the sadness the victim feels. Further, the victim appears to have a black eye and blood on his face, indicating that victims may be physically as well as emotionally wounded.



Figure 3.2. Emotion-focused victim coping.

In line with this drawing, many participants in both middle- and high-school reported feeling sad as a result of being bullied. A 16 year female reported, “I would cry ‘cause it hurt my

feelings.” A 14-year-old female reiterated this and stated, “...it makes me feel sad because I’ve been through all this...” Other common internalizing symptoms were feelings of worthlessness, loneliness, fear, stress, and embarrassment. A 17-year-old male recounted feeling, “...this intense feeling of loneliness.” And a 16-year-old female remembered being, “...paralyzed with fear.” Another 16-year-old female reported feeling a mix of emotions:

So, so, so sad. I felt really bad about myself, um, I think it was just a lot of self-doubt. I’m sure at some points it was self-hatred. I felt so awful. I think a lot of times it was anger too...

A 16-year-old male discussed how being bullied made him become socially withdrawn and isolated, “I started being more alone, I started to get to where I wanted to be alone more and be separated from everybody else.”

A few high school participants also discussed more intense internalizing responses and reported suffering from depression and suicidal ideation and engaging in self-harming behaviors. Although being bullied was not the sole cause of these emotional responses and behaviors, it certainly played a role in exacerbating the victim’s already tenuous mental health. One 16-year-old female recalled:

I just remember driving to school and we would drive past this little, this like bridge and it had like the train tracks and then under it was just water with all these rocks...I would just...day dream jumping out of the car and jumping off and going in there and just like dying ‘cause I thought that would be so much better...

Another 16-year-old female stated, “...so eighth grade kept on going you know, people making fun of me, I still went to school you know, I cried every day, I started self-harm.” A 15-year-old girl stated, “I threatened to kill myself and I threatened to cut myself and run away from home.”

Externalized coping in the form of anger was another common emotion-focused coping response. One 11-year-old female described her anger: “I feel like a volcano

exploding. I just want to explode.” However, she went on to say that she did not display her anger for fear of getting into trouble. Other participants noted expressing anger as an emotional release, but not as a means of ending the bullying. For example, one 13-year-old male recounted throwing a desk because he felt so angry that he was being bullied.

Participants also noted a number of responses that were more intense than internalizing and externalizing symptoms and mirrored symptoms of PTSD. For example, sleep disturbances and nightmares are two diagnostic criteria of PTSD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and a few participants noted difficulty sleeping due to worrying about being bullied and some youth reported nightmares. An 11-year-old girl stated:

And sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and I can’t go back to sleep ‘cause I feel like the next day I won’t be able to go back, go to school ‘cause kids are picking on me.

A 13-year-old male stated, “And sometimes I just keep on having nightmares of them just hitting me.” Although high school participants did not report currently losing sleep over past experiences of being bullied, a few remembered trouble sleeping when the bullying was going on. A 16-year-old female said, “I feel like I definitely lost sleep in middle school.”

Another hallmark of PTSD is avoiding the situation or stimulus that caused the initial trauma (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Multiple participants described school avoidance as a way of coping with bullying. A 14-year-old girl reported:

I’m scared, I mean I used to be happy to go to school, wake up every morning and come to school and then it just got to the point where I just didn’t feel like it...because I knew I’d get bullied every day.

One 11-year-old female stated, “Sometimes I pretend to be sick just to stay home...and I’m missin’ a lot of work just because one person is bullying me. And I’m missin’ my education just because one person is bullying me.” A 17-year-old female recalled, “I skipped [school]

sometimes because I just wasn't in the mood to deal with it, to deal with someone saying 'oh look at her, oh look at this' ...so I'd skip school..."

When participants did attend school, some of them described being hypervigilant and constantly on guard for the next episode of bullying; hypervigilance is another symptom of PTSD that traumatized individuals often experience (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). An 11-year-old female stated:

...sometimes in class when I start to write, my hand starts to shake that somebody's gonna come behind me and just hit me in the head. And when she [the bully] gets near me, that's how I feel, I start to shake and I can't control when I start shakin' my hands. When she gets near me I start shakin' my hands and when she goes away they stop. It's like when she comes near me I start getting tense.

A 16-year-old male echoed this feeling of hypervigilance and reported constantly being on alert for potential ways in which his classmates could bully him:

Oh classes would be terrible. Ah, you just kind of sit there and you try and like go through like a mental check list. Like okay, is this good today? Is this good today? Will they make fun of this?

A 12-year-old male recounted being on alert for being physically harmed, "I just can't wait to get home. Like when the bell rings I be runnin' to the bus stop because I be scared that they gonna jump me or somethin.'" In addition, memories of bullying endured, causing ongoing emotional pain. Intense, pervasive memories and thoughts of traumatic events are another feature of PTSD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). One 16-year-old girl with a history of past and present bullying commented on how she was haunted by thoughts of being bullied:

I used to sit in my room in the dark and just cry...He [the bully] really did get to me...whenever I actually get sad or my self-esteem is down I do repeat the things he [the bully] said to me. You know, I see him in the hall, just pass me, just give me mean looks and stuff...

Taken together, these findings illustrate that one central way in which youth cope with being bullied is through emotion-focused coping in the form of internalizing symptoms such as sadness, withdrawal, fear, stress, and depression and externalized symptoms in the form of anger. These findings mirror past research documenting the high rates of internalizing symptoms that victims report relative to non-victimized youth (Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster, 2003; Menesini et al, 2009) and other research showing that victims of bullying typically display internalized and externalized coping strategies (Andreou, 2001; Tenenbaum et al., 2011). However, current findings take this past literature a step further and suggest that bullied youth may actually suffer from symptoms of PTSD, suggesting that bullying should be considered a form of interpersonal trauma. Researchers have recently begun to discuss bullying as a form of interpersonal trauma (D'Andrea, Ford, Stolbach, Spinazzola, & van der Kolk, 2012; Evans, Smokowski, & Cotter, 2014); however these studies do not assess for levels of PTSD in victims. Studies of victimized sexual minority youth have begun to examine the presence of PTSD and one study of 528 sexual minority youth found that, of those who had been physically victimized, 9.0% met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD (D'Augelli, Gorssman, & Starks, 2006), a rate slightly higher than the 7.8% estimated lifetime prevalence of PTSD found in the general U.S. population (Kessler, Sonnega, Vromet, Hughs, & Nelson, 1995). And a qualitative study of 23 sexual minority youth found that experiences of verbal, cyber, and physical bullying victimization were significantly associated with later symptoms of PTSD (Beckerman & Auerbach, 2014). However, seemingly no research has examined the connection between bullying and PTSD for non-sexual minority youth. Current findings suggest that this is an important area for future research. All participants in the current study reported some form of negative

emotional response to having been bullied. Although these responses varied in severity, some youth would likely meet the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. However, these negative emotional responses did not incapacitate youth and participants described a number of additional emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies they employed post victimization in an attempt to handle being bullied.

Emotion- and Problem-Focused Coping: Seeking Help

One common coping strategy that the majority of victims reported using was seeking help from adults such as parents or school personnel (i.e., teachers, social workers, principal). Youth engaged in this coping strategy as a means of obtaining emotional support (emotion-focused coping) and as a means directly confronting their problem with bullying and trying to put an end to it (problem-focused coping). Thus, in line with past qualitative research on victim coping strategies, seeking help was both an emotion- and problem-focused coping strategy (Tenenbaum et al., 2011). Although this coping strategy provided some emotional relief for victims, it rarely provided relief from the bullying. Despite offering advice to participants and even going to the school, parents were unable to stop the bullying. Participants indicated that the majority of school personnel refrained from intervening or that school interventions were unsuccessful.

Almost all of the middle school participants and the majority of high school participants reported coping with being bullied by talking to their parents. This is a noteworthy finding in and of itself as past qualitative research of high school aged youth found that the majority reported not telling their parents about bullying (DeLara, 2012). However, in the current study seeking parent support provided some youth with emotional comfort and in this regard proved to be an adaptive coping strategy. A 10-year-old male

stated, “I talked to my dad about it [the bullying] and he helped me out tremendously...he told me that there’s going to be some bullies out there...he said start speaking up, tell your teachers....” A 12-year-old male reported that his father tried to comfort him, “He [my dad] says ‘it’s okay, just don’t get in trouble and get an education.’” A 16-year-old female stated, “...My dad would like talk to me and tell me like you know, give me words of encouragement...” In addition to being supportive, both middle- and high-school participants reported that their parents offered hierarchical advice on how to handle the bullying: the first step was to ignore the bullying, if that did not work parents then advised that participants tell a teacher, and if all else failed, parents endorsed physical violence. An 11-year-old female stated:

...my mom says try to ignore it, but when it gets way outta control and they put their hands on me or anything, go tell the teacher, if they keep putting their hands on you or they touch you in the face or soemthin’....my mom says...hit ‘em back.

An 11-year-old male had a similar experience, “She [my mom] tells me to stand up for myself if they um, if they like hit me first...go tell the teacher, if they still do it and they hit me again just hit ‘em back.” A 15-year-old male said:

...my dad, he teaches me that if somebody hits you for no reason at all, the first thing you do is go tell the teacher. If that don’t solve anything then you gotta figure it out yourself so you gotta, I mean, hit ‘em back...”

In addition to giving participants advice on how to cope with being bullied, the majority of both middle- and high-school parents also went to the school to talk to the principal. A few parents even went to the school board. An 11-year-old female stated, “...when I tell her [my mom] she goes to the school house sometimes, she talks to them, to the principal, but for some reason the principals don’t do nothing at that point.” A 14-year-old female reported, “...My mom gets really mad and she wants to tell like the school board so they’ll do

something, but they never do...Mama's tried everything. She went to the principal, she's went to the board..." Participants indicated their parents felt frustrated by the lack of school response and simply did not know how else to support their children. Due to a lack of school response, three participants were removed from school to be home school. A 16-year-old female remembered, "... in fourth grade I got bullied so bad that I just didn't want to go back to school so my mom told me that she could home school me." This participant reported that her mother had been to the school multiple times seeking help with the bullying situation, but, due to a lack of school response, removed her from school. A 13-year-old male explained that, after going to the school and the Board of Education, his parents, "...took me out of school along with my sisters since they [the school and Board of Education] won't even do nothin'." Although going to the school proved futile, this action validated youth's victimization experiences and demonstrated to participants that parents were taking their reports of bullying victimization seriously. In this regard, the emotion-focused coping strategy of talking to parents was successful: youth received advice and verbal support from their parents and most parents validated the youth's experiences and attempted to improve the situation by talking with the school. However, in terms of putting a stop to the bullying, the problem-focused coping strategy of talking to parents proved useless.

Despite parents' lack of success talking to the school, every middle school participant reported seeking help from an adult school personal as a problem-focused coping strategy. Participants talked to school personal with the hope that this action would help put an end to their bullying. One middle school participant reported going to the teacher as his primary coping strategy because it resulted in the teacher taking action. A 13-year-old male stated:

I always tell the teacher when people bullying on me or other students...She [the teacher] tells them to stop. To stop bullying. Stop. You know they listen to the teacher...She will write them up or send them to ISS [in school suspension].

This participant felt that telling the teacher was a successful coping strategy as the teacher took action and the participant felt it helped the situation. This participant continued coping with his bullying by going to the teacher and did not feel the need to employ additional coping strategies. However, the remaining middle school youth used the coping strategy of going to teachers sporadically due to a lack of teacher response. Extant qualitative research supports the notion that youth feel teachers do nothing to stop bullying (DeLara, 2012). A 14-year-old female stated, "...I'll tell the teacher every once in a while, but they'll never do nothing." Other middle school youth who had approached the teacher reiterated the fact that teachers did nothing to help stop the bullying. An 11-year-old female stated, "...all they [the teachers] do is tell her [the bully] to stop and that's it. They don't do nothin' else about it. And then when I go tell again, they just act like they forgot." A 10-year-old male stated:

...those teachers is not doing anything about it [the bullying]. When I told them [the teachers] that they was not doing anything they just, they just like ignore [me]. I felt like they ignored the fact that I'm sayin' that I get bullied and they didn't want to do nothing about it.

Middle school participants noted that teachers sometimes sent bullies to the principal's office, put them in ISS, or put them in out of school suspension. However, as soon as the bullies returned to class, the bullying resumed, indicating that even when school personnel did respond to participants' requests for assistance, it did nothing to impact the bullying. Figure 3.3 is a drawing depicting a bullying scene in which a bystander and teacher are attempting to stop the bullying with no success. This drawing exemplifies the helplessness of the victim, who is held in the air, unable to move and illustrates that even when teachers or peers attempt to stop the bullying, the effort is often in vain. Interestingly, everyone in the

pictures is depicted without hands, perhaps symbolizing the fact that it feels as though everyone, including teachers, are unable to stop bullying.

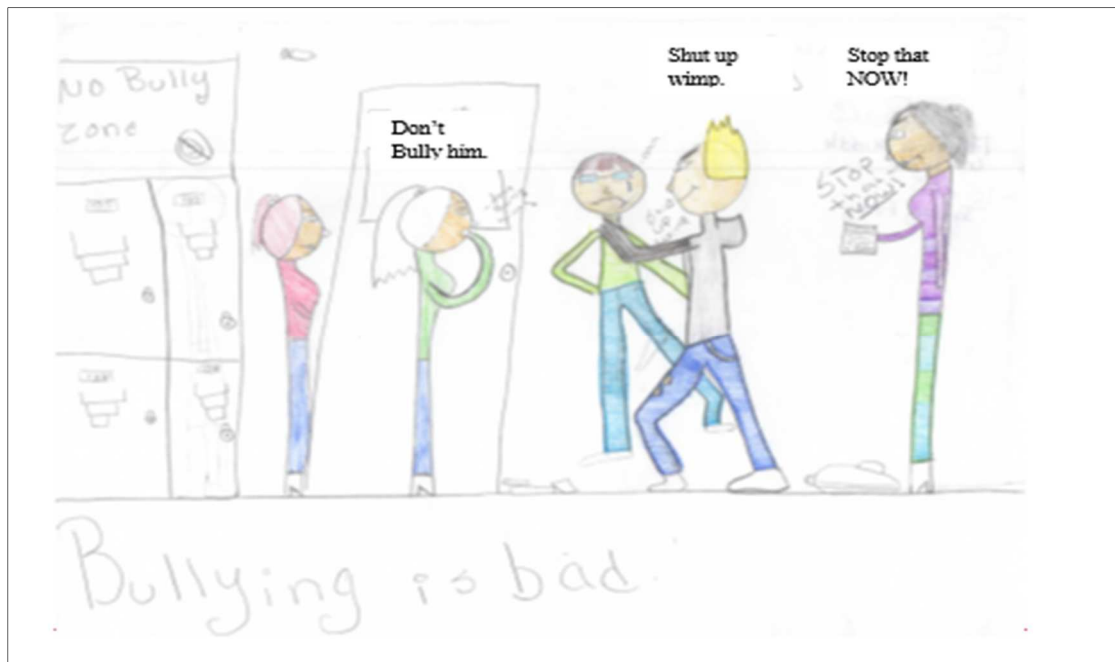


Figure 3.3. Problem-focused coping of help seeking.

The majority of high school participants also reported that a common coping response they used was to go and tell the teacher. However, similar to the majority of middle school participants, high school youth also reported a lack of teacher response. A 16-year-old female stated:

I told the teacher and she said, 'just go sit down' ...every time I...told a teacher they don't do anything about it. They just be like if they do it again come tell us and I tell them and they don't do nothing about it...

A 16-year-old male echoed this experience:

...every time I talked to somebody like the principal or the teachers they would ummm, they would push it off and tell me not to worry about it and that if it happened again to come back and when it happened again I would go back and they would tell me the same thing.

Even the three high school participants who did not tell the teacher about being bullied reported noticing that teachers did not respond to bullying episodes. A 16-year-old male stated, "...the teachers just don't notice things like this [bullying]."

The majority of participants in the current study attempted to cope with being bullied by seeking support from both parents and school personnel; the goal of employing this coping strategy was to receive emotional support (emotion-focused coping) and to put an end to the bullying (problem-focused coping). Parents attempted to support their children by encouraging them to ignore the bullying or tell a teacher. However, given the lack of teacher response, many parents told participants to fight back. The majority of parents in the current sample physically went to the school in order to seek support for their children; however, participants reported that the school did not respond to parents request for help, leaving participants and parents feeling despondent about their situation. Youth often told adult school personnel about the bullying, but in the majority of cases no action was taken and when the bully was punished, this punishment did nothing to deter the bullying behavior.

Current findings highlight the importance of schools having a standardized way of handling bullying situations so both parents and youth feel that the school is acknowledging and acting on the problem. Given the lack of school response, parents encouraged their children to physically fight back as a way of ending the bullying. Some middle school participants reported that they coped with being bullied by directing verbal or physical aggression towards the peers who were bullying them; some middle school youth even labeled this behavior as bullying. High school participants did not report bullying others, but stated that they learned to cope with being bullied by standing up for themselves.

Problem-Focused Coping: Middle School Verbal and Physical Aggression

In line with parents' advice to fight back, about half of the middle school participants reported coping with being bullied by either verbally or physically fighting back against the peers bullying them. All participants who reported engaging in this form of problem-focused coping had the same ultimate goal: stop the bullying. However, two distinct groups of youth emerged: one group of participants were verbally aggressive towards their bullies in order to hurt the bully and teach him or her what it is like to be a victim and a second group of participants physically fought back against the bully as a means of self-protection. Although both groups used aggression as a means of stopping the bullying, their techniques differed.

The first group of participants used problem-focused coping in the form of verbal aggression directed at their bullies in the hopes that if they made the bully understand how painful it was to be made fun of that the bully would stop bullying. In this case, verbal aggression was used as a means of attempting to reverse the power dynamic and teach the bully what it felt like to be victimized. For example, an 11-year-old female stated that she was sometimes verbally aggressive towards the girl who bullied her in an effort to teach her what it felt like to be victimized with the hope that she would ultimately stop bullying:

...I'm tryin' to make her [the bully] feel like I feel...I'm in my head like you need to feel how other people feel when you pick on them so I'm gonna start making you feel like when, when you pick on somebody else.

This participant reported being mean to her bully in the hopes that if the bully realized how painful it was to be made fun of that she would stop bullying. Although this participant acknowledged that some of her classmates labeled her behavior as bullying, the participant herself reported she was not bullying, but rather being mean. A 15-year-old male also endorsed directing verbal aggression towards the people who bullied him in an effort to make

the bully feel the pain of victimization, "...when I'm mad...[about] me gettin' bullied...I say something' out of hand...It makes me feel happier and makes them feel sad." This participant explained that he would sometimes feel so angry at the people bullying him that he would say mean comments to them in an effort to hurt them and make them understand how painful it is to be bullied. This participant actually labeled his behavior as bullying and reported that he bullied the bully. In both of these examples, youth coped with their victimization by directing verbal aggression towards the people who bullied them in an effort to teach the bully how it felt to be victimized and ultimately put an end to their bullying. Interestingly, this verbal aggression was not always a response to provocation from the bully and was sometimes initiated by the victim with the intent of ending the bullying.

The concept of teaching the bully what it feels like to be bullied appeared later in middle school interviews when participants were asked how bullying could be stopped. A 10-year-old male stated, "...I would say since they [the bullies] bully other kids, make them feel how that person who had been bullied feels." An 11-year-old male echoed this and suggested, "Um, ah, I would, like, probably get, get somebody, that's actually been bullied to bully the bully so they know how it feels like." Taken together, these examples suggest that some middle school aged youth who have been bullied want their bullies to understand the pain that they cause and attempt to strip the bullies of power by causing them pain as a potential way of preventing future bullying. Current findings suggest that some victims of bullying might attribute bullying behavior to the bully's lack of empathy for the victim and a possible point of intervention might be to increase adolescents' empathy. Indeed, certain bullying interventions focus on empathy training and have successfully decreased rates of bullying by increasing youth's empathy (Sahin, 2012). Based on youth's coping response of

attempting to evoke empathy in the bully, researchers should continue to investigate ways of increasing adolescent empathy.

A second form of externalized problem-focused coping was motivated by the desire for self-protection and can be considered a form of reactive aggression (i.e., a defensive response to frustration or provocation; Crick & Dodge, 1996). Although this group of youth also wanted to end the bullying, they did not use aggression as a vehicle to cause pain for the bully, but rather as a means of self-protection that they hoped would ultimately end the bullying. A 12-year-old male provided one example of a time when he responded to his bully with physical aggression:

Well, we was going to the computer lab and I felt something hit my head and it was a pencil and then people pointed at the boy who threw it at me and I said, 'leave me alone' and he started to pick on me and I pushed him through the door and we started to fight.

In this example, the victim physically fought back in reaction to being bullied and his behavior can be viewed as a form of self-protection. This participant fought back to protect himself from being viewed as weak by his peers and also as a way of trying to stop the bully from bothering him further. However, this participant did not randomly attack his bully, but rather used physical aggression in response to being victimized (i.e., reactive aggression). A 13-year-old male also reported physically fighting against his bully as a means of self-protection and problem-focused coping; although this was a common occurrence, here is one example he offered, "This one time I had to give [the bully] that Indian burn just to get him to stop." These examples are consistent with the concept of reactive aggression. Unlike the participants who sometimes initiated verbal aggression to harm their bullies in an attempt to help them understand the pain of being victimized, these youth used physical aggression only in response to an attack from the bully and as means of self-protection. Research suggests

that victims of bullying display higher rates of reactive aggression compared to non-victimized youth (Salmivalli & Nieminen, 2002) and current findings suggest that this is the case because victims might use aggression as a means of self-protection and a way of trying to stop the bullying.

The theme of problem-focused coping through verbal and physical aggression directed at the bully highlights the desperation that many victims of bullying feel. After talking to their parents and having repeated discussions with the school, participants continued being bullied and perhaps felt they had no recourse other than to verbally or physically fight back against the bully. Findings suggest that victimized youth might feel trapped and that verbally or physically fighting back feels like their only viable option to put a stop to the bullying.

Finally, the current examples call into question the concept of a bully-victim, an individual who is victimized, but also bullies others. If the youth discussed in this section filled out a bullying questionnaire, they would be labeled as bully-victims because they are victimized, but also behave aggressively towards others. However, the intent behind their aggressive behavior does not indicate malice and does not seem to constitute bullying. Some youth were mean to the people who bullied them as a way of evoking empathy and others were aggressive as a form of self-protection. The label of bully-victim does not seem to accurately describe these youth; however, bullying measures do not assess the reason behind bullying behavior, thus there is no way to distinguish between an adolescent who uses aggression to cause someone physical or emotional pain (i.e., bullying) and an adolescent who uses aggression as a means of evoking empathy or as self-protection. Current findings

suggest that the category of bully-victim is quite diverse and that perhaps there are subsets within this group.

Problem-Focused Coping: High School Students Standing Up For Themselves

Although middle school participants discussed coping with bullying by verbally or physically fighting back on certain occasions, high school participants reported an actual cognitive shift and stated that they learned to cope with victimization by standing up for themselves constantly. 'Standing up for themselves' did not entail a few isolated incidents of verbally or physically confronting the bullying as middle school participants described, but was rather a constant state. High school participants discussed the fact that in order to avoid victimization they learned to defend themselves whenever a perceived bullying attack was made. A few youth described specific experiences that taught them the vital importance of standing up for themselves. For example, a 16-year-old male explained:

...it was middle school and there was this kid, and holy crap, I was never a big kid and this kid was a lot bigger and he was like 'Get out of my seat'...and it was my assigned seat and we had a sub that day so I was like, I thought about it, I don't know why, but I was just like 'No, it's my seat!' And he was like, he was caught off edge so he backed off and that was really surprising cause...what I thought would have happened was I would have gotten beaten up that day and it would have kind of sucked. But that didn't happen. So I realized if you give them [bullies] a response, um, just ah, a response, a defense, a like, as a defense, they just back off. So now a days, if someone says something...very negative then I usually say something back.

This moment was cited as a turning point in this participant's life; it was the moment that he first understood the value and importance of standing up to the people who were bullying him. Although this participant was not able to immediately begin standing up for himself, he states that through being bullied he learned to defend himself and gradually seemed to gain the confidence to constantly stand up for himself:

Bullying and stuff, it kind of makes you or breaks you...you'll have two responses: either you'll break and you just can't stand it or you just kind of get stronger....I

wouldn't say your confidence gets up, but you understand that something needs to be done and you do it...I had some days where I felt really bad, but I kind of learned from it. Like back in the day, during middle school, I was just taking it, I just sat there and was just like 'Oh okay,' and my face was kind, would have been kind of down cast I guess you could say, but now a days, I realize that you have to say something, whether it be a comeback or just a reaction, a response. I wouldn't say it has to be aggressive, but just defensive, like 'cause if you stand up for yourself they just stop.

The experience of being bullied put this participant on high alert for possible future situations where he could be bullied and in essence, he was always prepared to stand up for himself.

For example, this participant reported that earlier in the year an upperclassman began making racially charged comments towards him, ostensibly as a way of seeing whether or not he would make a good victim. Rather than passively taking this verbal abuse, this participant verbally responded with a racially charged comment directed at the upperclassman and put an end to this upperclassman bothering him. In essence, this participant demonstrated to the upperclassman that he was not going to be a passive victim. He described this experience in the following quote:

It's like testing the bridge, the water hits it and if it breaks then you [the bully] know, 'oh, I can keep passing through here,' but if it holds, then...they [bullies] go...it turns out if you say something, they [bullies] stop. And not even the first time, but if you say it for like the next couple times, they don't like, they prefer an easy target.

Through these experiences this participant states that he learned to protect himself and prevent future bullying from occurring. Standing up for himself was not something he engaged in sporadically, but was a problem-focused form of coping that he engaged in constantly. Other high school participants echoed this experience. A 16-year-old female recounted the first time she fought back against the girls bullying her in middle school:

This girl was talking about me and she pushed me...and they kept on calling me names and everything...and they kept on and kept on...And every day she would do that and they would fuss at me and call me names. So that...one day came along that she said something to me so I got up and I hit her... Now that I am in high school, nobody don't pick on me anymore because I stood up for myself.

When this participant consistently began standing up for herself and physically fighting back against her bullies, the bullying ended. This participant continued fighting people at the first sign of them making fun of her or threatening her and she stated that she was no longer bullied. The constant commitment to standing up for herself put an end to her being bullied; this participant did not simply stand up for herself once in a while as middle school participants reported, but did so constantly. Another 16-year-old female reiterated that the only way to stop bullying is for the victim to stand up for him or herself:

I've learned to stand up for myself...now I know that I don't have to get walked on...I learned that through a series of just terrible events that I had to go through and it was, it was something where my mom could go up to the school all she wanted and they [teachers] could talk to the kids that were doing it [the bullying] all they wanted, but honestly, it [the bullying] wasn't going to stop until I made it stop because if kids think they can walk all over you then they will, but if you stand up and show them that they can't, then they stop.

This participant went on to say that based on her experiences she felt that the only person who could stop the bullying was the victim. A 17-year-old female discussed how she became tougher from being bullied and thus began to stand up for herself:

I learned how to get tougher skin. So, it doesn't bother me anymore. So, if someone, I notice they'll try and say something to get you to react, I'm like: 'Oh, did you speak?'...that kind of thing. Or I just, I'm confident in who I am. Now, like, someone was like 'She's a lesbian' and I was like 'Oh, okay. Well that's nice to know, I didn't know that'...I learned how to say smart comments back..."

An 18-year-old male also became stronger from being bullied and stated that this strength helped him ignore the bullying, which eventually made it stop.

I feel like it [the bullying] built me up so I could be like okay, if they're going to keep doing this I can just stop dealing with it, like it's not really that big of a deal I saw after a while.

Although participants noted the vital importance of victims standing up for themselves, they had no suggestions as to how to teach this skill and stated that it is something that has to be

learned through experience. The 16-year-old girl cited above noted the role that confidence played in allowing her to engage in the problem-focused coping strategy of standing up for herself, “I kind of just gained a certain self confidence in myself...” which allowed this participant to avoid being bullied. This participant described a situation that might have led to bullying in her middle school days that she had the confidence to handle in high school:

I feel like if something happens that’s embarrassing and you own up to it and make fun of it, it becomes not embarrassing. Okay, freshman year, this is a good example...I sneezed, but I sneezed...into my elbow and I thought it was just going to be a little sneeze, but snot just ended up going everywhere. All over my face, all over my jacket and my teacher did not have any tissues. And I was like, ‘What do I do?’ And everyone heard the sneeze and they were like, ‘Bless you’ and I was...like, ‘Hey do you have any tissues?’ and he [the teacher] was like ‘No’ and then people were like, ‘Eww let me see, let me see’ and they were like ‘What happened?’ And everyone wanted to know so...I showed everybody and they were like, ‘Ewww’ and I was just laughing so hard because it was so funny because at that point there was no getting out of that. Everyone saw it. Everyone could see that there was snot coming everywhere, you know? So I just decided there is one of two things, I can cry right now or I can show everybody that I have snot all over me. And people sneeze, and people have snot. So I did that. And it felt so good.

Many high school participants noted that through the experiences of being bullied, they learned the importance of standing up for themselves. As youth aged, they reported gaining confidence and feeling more comfortable with who they were, which allowed them to stand up for themselves. Although it is disheartening that high school participants did not have suggestions as to how to teach younger victims of bullying the skill of standing up for themselves, the fact that many of them gained this skill over time is hopeful and indicates that middle school victims of bullying may eventually develop this inner strength and resilience.

Problem-Focused Coping: Positive Bystander Behavior

In addition to coping with being bullied by responding verbally or physically to the bully and standing up for themselves, youth attempted to prevent future bullying by behaving

as prosocial bystanders. In line with past research documenting the ubiquitous presence of bystanders during episodes of bullying (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Kerzner, 2013), all participants in the current study reported having been a bystander to bullying sometime in the past. Research generally suggests that the majority of youth refrain from engaging in prosocial bystander behavior and often join in the bullying (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Hawkins et al., 2001; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1996). Indeed, Figure 3.4 illustrates the negative bystander behavior that adolescents often display. This drawing depicts multiple bystanders verbally supporting the bully; however, one bystander is offering the victim support. This prosocial bystander represents the experience of current participants as almost every participant noted engaging in prosocial bystander behavior by actively confronting the bullying, getting a teacher, or comforting the victim.

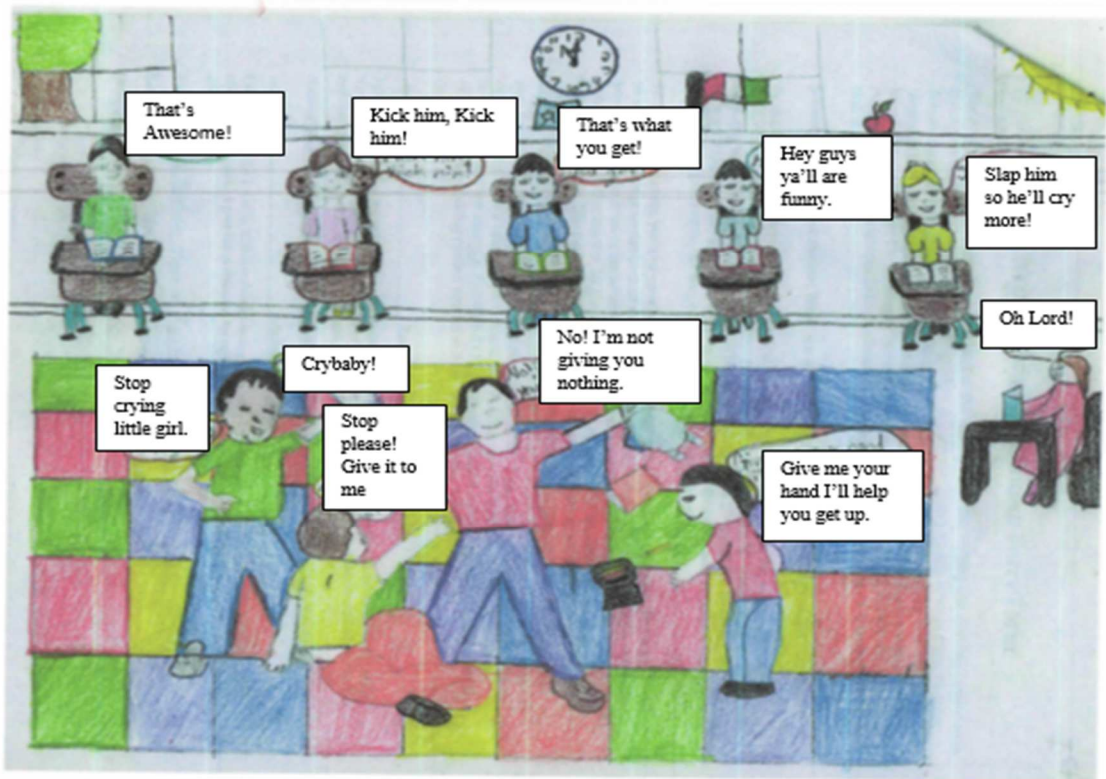


Figure 3.4. Problem-focused coping of prosocial bystander behavior.

Engaging in prosocial bystander behavior often puts youth at risk of being victimized (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009); however, the majority of participants ignored this risk and attempted to help other victims. While participants were often unsuccessful at ending their own bullying, standing up for their victimized friends or peers provided them an opportunity to potentially end someone else's bullying. In this regard, the prosocial bystander behavior of participants can be viewed as a form of problem-focused coping that was used as a means of decreasing rates of bullying; it was a way for victimized youth to attempt to change the culture of bullying in their school and put a stop to future bullying. Further, engaging in prosocial bystander behavior was a way for participants to cope with and combat the feeling of powerlessness caused by their own bullying victimization.

The most common bystander response was directly verbally or physically confronting the bully and the majority of both middle- and high-school participants reported engaging in this behavior. A 10-year-old male stated, "I told him [the bully] 'Hey man, pick on somebody your own size, it's not right to pick on somebody like that...' I kinda, you know, told them that it's not right and that really, you need to stop it..." An 11-year-old male also reported confronting the bully, "Whenever I see it [bullying] happen...I go there to 'em and the person that's...bullying him, I say 'Why don't you leave him alone? Just go somewhere else.'" A 13-year-old male stated, "Sometimes I just walk up to them [the bullies] and say 'Stop.' And this one time...I saw my best friend...he was getting hit across the head by [the bully]...and I had to pull him [the bully] off." High school participants echoed these prosocial bystander responses and provided more detailed accounts of how they confronted bullies in an effort to end bullying episodes. A 16-year-old female stated that she always confronted the bully and recounted one such episode:

If I see bullying...then I will 100% step in...first semester of this year there was a kid, this little freshman and these sophomores, like you know football players, he [the freshman]...got up and went somewhere, but he left his lunch box on the table because he went to go get a fork or something and when he came back they [the football players] were all in his lunch box and he had no idea who they were. So you know he [the freshman] didn't know what to do, he's a little freshman, a little short kid, so he got mad and they started laughing at him and making fun of him so of course he started crying and um, so I went over there to the table and told them to leave and then I was like, I talked to him [the freshman] for the whole rest of the lunch and you know made him feel better I guess.

A 15-year-old male reported physically confronting a bully to protect a victimized peer:

One time there was this dude, he's in EC [special education] he has like a problem and some bigger dude was pushing him so I got in between them and pushed the other dude off of him cause there was nothing he could do, he's little, he's in 9th grade and he has a problem so I tried my best to get him [the bully] off of him.

A 17-year-old female also provided an example of one of the many times she stood up for a victim:

Last semester this girl had like a little bit of hair so she had it in ponytail and these girls were making fun of her and they took a picture and they put it on Instagram. And I saw it and I talked to them and I said, 'How would you feel?' And they said, 'Well, everyone's laughing.' And I said, 'If she saw it she wouldn't be laughing.' I said, 'That's bullying, you could be expelled.'"

The second most common forms of prosocial bystander behavior was getting a teacher and comforting the victim. Sometimes participants engaged in both of these actions and about half of middle- and high-school participants engaged in one or both of these bystander behaviors. A 13-year-old male stated, "[I] tell her [the teacher], 'Some boys back there getting picked on. Boys or girls getting' picked on, bullied.'" A 14-year-old female reported, "First of all I tell them [the victim] it's okay and they will make it through and then I go and tell an adult." A 16-year-old male stated, "Well, most of the time I go up by myself and I would take the person [the victim] out of the situation and bring them with me and I'd

talk to them and then go to an adult.” An 11-year-old female said, “I tell her [the victim] not to listen to ‘em cause they jerks.”

The majority of high school participants stated that sympathy or empathy for the victim motivated their prosocial bystander behavior; however, middle school participants did not mention empathy as a motivating factor in their bystander behavior. For high school participants, it seems that the past experience of being bullied served as a catalyst for protecting current victims. A 16-year-old female stated, “I feel kind of sympathetic towards them [victims]...so I feel like I should do something.” A 15-year-old female explained her prosocial bystander behavior, “...it [watching someone else get bullied] reminded me of being bullied and nobody was there to help me or protect me.” A 16-year-old male stated:

...I can kind of relate to the person [getting bullied] and understand that they feel very, very terrible....I enjoy helping someone else who is maybe feeling bad, cause I know that it feels pretty bad to experience something like that. So to reassure them, it would make me feel better that someone wouldn't have to go through what I have.

A 16-year-old female reiterated this sentiment, “I just want to protect everybody. My instincts just kick in when I see someone who can't like protect themselves because it just makes me think of me when I was younger.” A 17-year-old female explained that she was a prosocial bystander because someone had once stood up for her when she was bullied, “I did that [acted as a prosocial bystander] because someone did that for me when I didn't know what to say...” It seems that for high school participants, past victimization experiences motivated many of them to protect current victims.

The majority of participants reported engaging in prosocial bystander behavior by directly confronting the bully, getting a teacher, or comforting the victim. For high school students, this behavior was motivated by empathy that stemmed from their past experiences of victimization. For both middle- and high-school participants, engaging in prosocial

bystander behavior was a potential way of feeling empowered and of coping with the helplessness engendered by victimization and also a way of trying to put an end to bullying and change the culture of the school.

Limitations

Although the current study adds to the bullying research base on victim coping strategies, results must be understood in light of certain limitations. First, due to difficulty obtaining participants, random sampling was not employed. It would have been ideal to randomly select participants from a group of victimized youth; however, given a dearth of participants, this was not possible. Second, results must be generalized with caution as participants came from low income, rural areas and results might not apply to urban or suburban areas. Finally, discussing experiences of victimization is very personal and while participants talked at length with the interviewer it is always possible that participants withheld important information for fear of embarrassment; however, this limitation is present in all qualitative studies.

Conclusion

In line with past qualitative research on victims' coping, the current study found that youth reported engaging in both emotion- and problem-focused coping, but that problem-focused coping was most common (Tenenbaum et al., 2011). Also in line with past research, youth engaged in emotion-focused coping in the form of internalizing, externalizing, and help seeking and problem-focused coping in the form of physical and verbal aggression and standing up for themselves (Tenenbaum et al., 2011). However, a form of emotion-focused coping not previously discussed in the literature included symptoms of PTSD. Many current participants reported sleep disturbances, nightmares, school avoidance, hypervigilance, and

intense and pervasive memories of their victimization, suggesting that bullying victimization is a form of interpersonal trauma that can result in symptoms of PTSD. Further, a form of problem-focused coping not previously discussed in the literature emerged: prosocial bystander behavior. Prosocial bystander behavior was a problem-focused coping strategy that allowed youth to potentially stop an episode of bullying, thus positively impacting the school climate. Current findings indicate that despite the devastating experience of bullying victimization, victimized youth are often resilient and engage in a number of coping strategies in an attempt to end their bullying. Findings highlight the importance of schools continuing to find ways in which to support bullied youth and their parents and to put an end to this school based bullying.

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SUMMARY

This three article dissertation filled an important gap in the current bullying research by providing insight into the bystander behavior and victim coping strategies of youth in a low income, racially/ethnically diverse, rural community. To date, the existing bullying research on bystander behavior and victim coping strategies has focused on relatively small samples of urban and suburban youth mainly located outside of the United States and has neglected to examine how individual- and school-level measures of social capital deprivation, anti-social capital, and positive social capital are associated with the likelihood of engaging in negative and prosocial bystander behavior (e.g., Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2008; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). Further, existing bystander research examines personal characteristics such as emotional responsiveness (Barhight, Hubbard, & Hyde, 2013), empathy (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Gini et al., 2008), and sociometric status (Caravita, Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009; Salmivalli et al., 1996), but does not examine how social relationships are associated with bystander behavior. Finally, existing research is primarily quantitative in nature (Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011; Kvarme, Helseth, Saeteren, & Natvig 2010) and researchers have neglected to collect in-depth qualitative data on how victims cope with the experience of being bullied.

The first article examined how social capital deprivation and anti-social capital at the individual- and school-levels were associated with the likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Findings indicated that both social capital deprivation and anti-social

capital were associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior (e.g., supporting the bully). Specifically, compared to youth who reported low levels of peer pressure, youth reporting high levels of peer pressure reported more than a two fold increase in the likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior (21% for low versus 55% for high). Adolescents seek social acceptance (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and succumbing to peer pressure and supporting the bully is one way of maintaining group belonging and cohesion. While social capital deprivation in the form of bullying victimization and physical victimization were not significantly associated with the likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior, verbal victimization was significantly associated with negative bystander behavior. Youth who endorsed high levels of verbal victimization were significantly more likely than those youth who endorsed low levels of verbal victimization to report engaging in negative bystander behavior. Verbal victimization is an emotionally harmful experience that might fuel anger and the desire for retribution that is gained through negative bystander behavior. Interestingly, all sources of anti-social capital (i.e., delinquent friends, bullying perpetration, verbal and physical perpetration) were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in negative bystander behavior. Compared to youth whose friends engaged in minimal rates of delinquency, those whose friends engaged in high rates of delinquency had a two fold increase in the likelihood of reporting negative bystander behavior. These findings were replicated for youth who reported engaging in bullying perpetration and who reported engaging in high rates of verbal and physical perpetration. Taken together, findings indicate that deleterious social relationships appear to fuel negative bystander behavior and potentially perpetuate school bullying.

In contrast, the second article found that social capital in the form of social support, community engagement, mental health functioning, and positive school experiences and characteristics was associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Specifically, compared to youth with low levels of friend and teacher support, youth with high levels of these forms of support reported a significantly higher likelihood of engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Feeling supported by friends and teachers likely provided youth with the confidence to stand up to bullies and to protect victims. Compared to low levels of community engagement, high levels of community engagement in the form of religious orientation and ethnic identity were significantly associated with an increased likelihood of reporting prosocial bystander behavior. Youth dedicated to religion might be more likely than non-religious youth to live their lives in accordance to peaceful religious doctrines and thus attempt to prevent bullying. And youth with a high ethnic identity might feel connected to and protected by peers from their ethnic group, giving them the confidence to defend victims. Finally, mental health functioning in the form of high future optimism was significantly associated with an increased likelihood of prosocial bystander behavior; however, in contrast to the hypothesis, compared to youth with high self-esteem, those with low self-esteem had a significantly higher likelihood of reporting prosocial bystander behavior. Victims of bullying typically report low levels of self-esteem relative to bullies and non-involved youth (Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Huitsing, Veenstra, Sainio, & Salmivalli, 2012; Pollastri, Cardemil, & O'Donnell, 2009) and victims of bullying tend to behave as prosocial bystanders (Pozzoli, Ang, & Gini, 2012; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Thus, in the current study, youth with low self-esteem might be victims of bullying, which accounts for the unexpected association between low self-esteem and

frequent prosocial bystander behavior. Taken together, current findings highlight the importance of supportive social relationships, community engagement, and mental health functioning. Youth who feel socially supported, are connected and invested in the community, and have hope for the future have the confidence to protect victims of bullying. In this regard, social capital has the potential to not only positively impact the individual who possesses the social capital, but to also possibly impact the wider classroom or school milieu.

Comparing the results of the first two articles, it is interesting to note that the risk factors of social capital deprivation and anti-social capital appeared to be more strongly associated with negative bystander behavior in comparison to the association of social capital factors with prosocial bystander behavior. The significant social capital deprivation and anti-social capital factors were associated with likelihood increases far larger than the likelihood increases associated with the significant social capital factors. This finding highlights the strong impact that negative social relationships have on youth's social behavior and suggests that interventions should not only focus on strengthening youth's social capital through the formation of positive social relationships, but should also actively focus on interrupting current negative social relationships and blocking the formation of future negative social relationships.

The third article provided an in-depth, qualitative look at how victims of bullying cope with victimization. Participants reported experiencing diverse forms of bullying such as verbal, physical, relational, and electronic. Findings indicated that victims reported using both emotion- and problem-focused coping strategies including internalizing, externalizing, and PTSD symptoms, seeking help from parents and teachers, physically or verbally fighting back, standing up for themselves, and engaging in prosocial bystander behavior. Although

participants reported a host of negative internalizing symptoms and symptoms of PTSD, youth also noted great resilience in their ability to utilize problem-focused coping post bullying victimization. Notably, sometime during the transition from middle- to high-school, participants seemed to alter their coping from physically and verbally fighting back (middle school problem-focused coping) to constantly standing up for themselves (high school problem-focused coping). In addition, almost all participants noted engaging in prosocial bystander behavior as a means of supporting other victims and attempting to stop the victimization of others. It seems that engaging in prosocial bystander behavior might actually be a form of coping that victims use as an attempt to decrease bullying and to also feel empowered. This finding suggests that victims of bullying are a potential source for helping increase classroom rates of prosocial bystander behavior.

The strengths of the current work must be understood in light of certain limitations that help highlight the direction for future research. First, given space limitations on the SSP+ assessment, the measures of negative and prosocial bystander behavior were limited and did not present all possible forms of bystander behavior. Future research should use more comprehensive measures of bystander behavior that include a fuller range of both negative and prosocial bystander behavior. In addition, the current study did not assess inactive bystander behavior (e.g., bystanders who ignore the bullying situation or take no action) and future research should examine how social capital deprivation, anti-social capital, and positive social capital factors are associated with inactive bystander behavior. Second, the current study did not assess bystander responses to specific forms of bullying (e.g., physical, verbal, relational). It is possible that youth engage in different bystander behavior depending upon the form of bullying they witness and future research should examine this further. In

addition, it is possible that characteristics of the victim (e.g., gender, race, age, disability status) impact bystander responses to bullying; collecting data on victim characteristics was beyond the scope of the current study, but future research should examine if and how victim characteristics impact bystander responses to bullying. Third, the qualitative interviews in the current study were not focused specifically on victim's bystander behavior. In order to gather more in-depth information about how victims respond when they witness bullying, future qualitative work should focus specifically on assessing victim's bystander behavior.

In terms of practice implications, current findings highlight the vital importance of bolstering adolescents' social networks. Going forward, bullying interventions should not only address bullying related behaviors and increasing prosocial bystander behavior, but should also focus on increasing adolescents' positive social connections to prosocial adults, peers, and community activities. Youth embedded within social networks ripe with social capital are apt to defend victims of bullying, thus, future interventions should focus on increasing youth's social capital. Further, while victims of bullying are a vulnerable group in need of protection, they are also resilient and a potential source of prosocial bystander behavior. Future interventions should focus on engaging and mobilizing victimized youth to help them feel empowered and to end the bullying of others.

Over all, the current work highlights the profound influence that both negative and positive forms of social capital have on bystander behavior. Youth with limited social capital are at risk for engaging in negative bystander behavior and are in need of immediate social support and intervention. In contrast, youth who benefit from social capital in the form of social support and community engagement replicate these positive social relationships by engaging in positive bystander behaviors. Further, victims of bullying use prosocial

bystander behaviors as one form of problem-focused coping. This finding suggests that victimized youth are a potential source for decreasing rates of bullying and increasing rates of prosocial bystander behavior. Bystanders are one vital key to decreasing rates of bullying and an ongoing research effort is needed to continue collecting data, both quantitative and qualitative, on this important group of youth.

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