

Bystanders' affect toward bully and victim as predictors of helping and non-helping behaviour

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Trach, J. & Hymel, S. (2019). Bystanders' affect toward bully and victim as predictors of helping and non-helping behaviour. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*.

The current study examined how children's relationship with the bully and victim impacted their reactions as bystanders. An ethnically diverse sample of 2,513 Canadian students in grades 4–7 responded to questions about their experiences of bullying, including the frequency with which they witnessed bullying at school. Approximately 89% of the sample reported witnessing bullying at school during the current school year. Subsequently, participants were asked to recall a specific bullying incident that they witnessed and describe: (1) their relationship with the bully and victim; (2) how they felt while witnessing; and (3) how they responded as a bystander. Compared to situations where they *didn't know* the victim, bystanders were more likely to intervene directly (e.g., try to stop the bully, comfort the victim) if they *liked* the victim, and less likely to tell an adult if they *disliked* the victim. Aggressive intervention was more common if the witness *didn't like* the bully, but also if they *didn't like* the victim compared to if they *didn't know* them. Regarding emotions, anger emerged as an especially powerful predictor of bystander defending, with youth being over five times more likely to try to stop the bullying or comfort the victim if they felt *angry*. Implications of these findings for the development of ecologically valid, anti-bullying interventions are discussed.

Key words: Bullying, bystander, group processes, peer relationships, social-emotional.

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INTRODUCTION

An important mandate of school systems is to provide safe and supportive learning environments that nurture the healthy social and emotional development of the next generation. Beginning with the work of Nordic researchers Dan Olweus in the 1970/1980s (e.g., Olweus, 1993) and Christina Salmivalli and colleagues in the 1990s (e.g., Salmivalli, Karna & Poskiparta, 2011), there has been a growing recognition that bullying is a group phenomenon influenced by peer bystanders (see Hymel, McClure, Miller, Shumka & Trach, 2015; Swearer & Espelage, 2004). As a result, school-based, anti-bullying interventions not only target the children who are directly involved in bullying (i.e., children who are at-risk for being bullied, and those who bully others), but are also directed to the larger classroom and school communities, inspiring students to help and support one another. With the goal of transforming passive bystanders into “upstanders,” anti-bullying interventions encourage students to engage in a number of prosocial defending behaviors when they witness bullying, usually through a combination of activities designed to elicit greater empathy for victims while simultaneously increasing bystanders' coping skills and self-efficacy for intervention (e.g., KIVA program in Finland, Salmivalli *et al.*, 2011; Steps to Respect program in North America, Frey, Hirschstein, Edstrom & Snell, 2009; NoTrap! program in Italy, Palladino, Nocentini & Menesini, 2016).

Encouragingly, programs that have been designed to address group processes (e.g., peer counseling, school policies about bullying) have been shown to produce significantly larger reductions in bullying compared to the programs that did not

involve these strategies (Lee, Kim & Kim, 2015). These findings suggest that another shift may be warranted – one that underscores the value of investing in interventions that are informed by a deeper understanding of the peer group processes that are endemic to bullying (e.g., Hymel *et al.*, 2015). Enhancing current, evidence-based anti-bullying programs will require a more nuanced understanding of the social pressures that youth experience, and how their social relationships impact their decision to intervene (or not) when they witness bullying. The current study contributes to these efforts by examining the ways in which youth's social and emotional experiences impact their behavior as bystanders.

Types of bystander responses

Dan Olweus, a pioneer in the field of bullying prevention has long described the “bullying circle” as part of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP; Olweus & Limber, 2010) identifying the various roles that peers can play in any given bullying incident. While some peer bystanders support the bullying either actively or passively, others defend the victim and still others are described as “potential defenders” and “disengaged onlookers”. With the development of the Participant Role approach, Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman and Kaukiainen (1996); Salmivalli, Lappalainen and Lagerspetz (1998) took this approach further by demonstrating that peers can reliably identify those that engage in specific helpful and unhelpful bystander behaviors, including defending the victim, assisting or reinforcing the bullying, and avoiding or doing nothing (i.e., passive bystanding), as well as those who are not

involved (i.e., outsiders). Subsequent research has shown that most children readily report a willingness to intervene when asked about hypothetical situations of bullying, but reports of actual defending are more modest (e.g., 92% compared to 54% of youth surveyed; Bellmore, Ma, You & Hughes, 2012).

Peer participation in bullying situations also varies depending on the social context. For example, passive bystanders are occasionally nominated as defenders by peers, suggesting that they will act to defend victims in *some* situations (Pronk, Olthof & Goossens, 2014; Sutton & Smith, 1999). Moreover, not all bystander behaviors have been emphasized in research to date. Specifically, “anti-social” defending strategies have received far less scrutiny, when youth seek to defend a victimized peer using aggression or some form of retaliation. This omission is noteworthy since children tend to view retaliation as less serious, less wrong, and less deserving of punishment than unprovoked aggression (Gasser, Malti & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012). Although less common, such strategies are utilized by approximately 22% of youth at least some of the time (Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse & Neale, 2010).

According to the *bystander effect theory* (Darley & Latané, 1968), in order for bystanders to intervene, they must: (1) notice that another person is in distress; (2) interpret the situation as a problem that requires intervention; and (3) decide that they have a personal responsibility to help. Notably, bystander action requires the rapid integration of cognitive, emotional and social information, as witnesses must quickly evaluate the severity of the situation based on the amount of distress displayed by the person in need of help, as well as the availability and reactions of other witnesses, their own emotional state, their ability to successfully solve the problem, and the quality of their relationship with the individuals involved, including the person in need of help, the perpetrator, and other witnesses. Given the complexity of the social dynamics involved, it is little wonder that so many youth do not intervene when they witness bullying. Indeed, Salmivalli *et al.* (1998) found that 25–30% of the students were identified as passive witnesses by their peers, and Trach *et al.* (2010) found that 31% of the bystanders reported that they usually “did nothing.” Of interest in the present study are the emotional reactions and social conditions that either increase or reduce the likelihood of bystander intervention.

Impact of social relationships on bystander behavior

There is a small body of literature that has examined how a bystander’s relationship with the person being bullied and/or the person bullying affects their willingness to intervene. For example, when asked what they would do in response to a hypothetical bullying scenario, the majority of bystanders reported that they would be more likely to help a friend who was being bullied compared to a neutral peer (Bellmore *et al.*, 2012; Oh & Hazler, 2009; Pronk *et al.*, 2014). Qualitative interviews with youth have indicated that there is a strong implicit social norm for defending one’s friends (DeSmet Bastiaensens, Van Cleemput, Poels, Vandebosch & DeBourdeaudhuij, 2012; Ferrans, Selman & Feigenberg, 2012), and compared to defenders, passive bystanders are less likely to report being friends with either the victim or the bully (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005), suggesting that they may feel

less social responsibility to intervene. *How* bystanders intervene also varies depending on their relationship with the youth involved; all forms of defending, including hostile retaliation are more likely when a friend is victimized compared to a non-friend (Rocke Henderson, 2010). When the victim is not a friend, youth indicate that bystanders would be more likely to join in or do nothing (Ferrans *et al.*, 2012; Rocke Henderson, 2010). Similarly, when asked to recall a real-life bullying incident, bystanders who shared a close relationship with the bully were significantly less likely to report attempting to defend the victim (Oh & Hazler, 2009).

Bystanders’ responses to hypothetical situations of bullying have also been shown to depend on the social group to which they belong (i.e., victim’s group, bully’s group, or an outsider group; Jones, Haslam, York, & Ryan, 2008; Nesdale, Killen & Duffy, 2013) as well as how strongly they identify with their assigned group (Jones, Manstead & Livingstone, 2009; 2011). Lastly, when witnesses are friends with both the victim and the bully, youth suggest that they may try to take the role of mediator or avoid the situation altogether in order to protect their relationships with both parties (Ferrans *et al.*, 2012). Extending these findings, the present study explored the variations in bystander behavior as a function of their relationship with both the perpetrator and victim.

Importance of emotions for bystander action

Emotions serve as important indicators of the moral rightness of one’s behavior, motivating individuals to act in ways that correspond with their moral values (Haidt, 2003; Hutcherson & Gross, 2011; Malti & Dys, 2015). Different classes of moral emotions include: other-praising (e.g., gratitude, awe), other-condemning (e.g., anger, contempt, disgust), other-suffering (e.g., empathy, sympathy, compassion) and self-conscious emotions (e.g., shame, guilt, pride; Haidt, 2003). In the following section, we explore existing research on the links between experiencing various emotions and bystanders’ behavior.

Shame/guilt. Although shame and guilt have been distinguished on the basis of whether the individual is negatively evaluating their behavior (guilt) or the self as a “bad actor” (shame; Tangney, Stuewig & Mashek, 2007), both are understood to reflect awareness that one has acted in ways that are inconsistent with what is “right” or “good.” Feeling shame is seen as an important self-regulatory mechanism that signifies a need to make amends when one’s actions cause harm to others (Ttofi & Braithwaite, 2008). Consistently, adolescents report that they would feel more guilty for intentionally harming a peer than for other forms of social misconduct (Malti, Ongley, Dys & Colasante, 2012), and prosocial children report feeling more ashamed and guilty about hypothetical bullying than bullies and uninvolved children (Menesini & Camodeca, 2008; Pronk *et al.*, 2014). Youth also anticipate feeling more shame and guilt when in the role of the passive bystander compared to the person doing the bullying (Conway, Gomez-Garibello, Talwar & Shariff, 2016), suggesting that they believe that bystanders are also responsible for the victim’s suffering, and feel badly if they do not intervene.

Shame acknowledgement (accepting responsibility for one's behavior) has been negatively associated with bullying (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004; Ttofi & Braithwaite, 2008), and positively associated with empathy for the victim (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004), and with intervening as a defender (Ahmed, 2008; Pronk *et al.*, 2014). However, the relationship between shame/guilt and specific forms of bystander intervention remains unclear. In one study, bystander guilt positively predicted apologizing to the victim (Jones *et al.*, 2009), whereas shame predicted avoiding the bully (Jones, Manstead & Livingstone, 2011).

Sadness/fear. Common sense suggests that children who feel bad (unhappy, upset) when they witness bullying are less likely to support such behavior, yet fear of being the next victim is considered a common reason for not becoming involved. Adolescents expect bystanders to feel more sadness when they witness social exclusion compared to intentional harm (Malti *et al.*, 2012), but feeling bad for the victim is not necessarily associated with greater likelihood of intervention. Although Thornberg, Pozzoli, Gini and Jungert (2015) found that feelings of sadness and guilt were negatively associated with bullying and positively associated with defending, both defenders and passive bystanders have been shown to experience high levels of empathic concern for others (Gini, Albiero, Benelli & Altoé, 2008). Ettekal, Kochenderfer-Ladd and Ladd (2015) have hypothesized that bystanders who experience feelings of anxiety and fear and are not friends with the victim would be more likely to avoid getting involved, whereas children who have a high degree of concern for the victim *and* have a positive relationship with them would be more likely to intervene. To date, these specific hypotheses have not been empirically tested.

Happiness/pride. Both younger children and adolescents attribute more positive emotions to perpetrators for intentional harm compared to unprovoked or unintentional harm (Gasser *et al.*, 2012; Malti *et al.*, 2012). As well, bullies report higher levels of pride about hypothetical bullying compared to the victims or outsiders (Menesini, Codecasa, Benelli & Cowie, 2003). Pride is more common among children who belong to the same friend group as the bully, but only among those who are strongly identified with their group (Jones *et al.*, 2009). Experiencing pride is positively associated with a desire to be friends with the bully (Jones *et al.*, 2009), and negatively associated with apologizing to the victim (Jones, Bombieri, Livingstone & Manstead, 2012). Feeling happy is also more common when the bystander is not friends with the victim, and has been linked to greater likelihood of engaging in aggressive behavior (Rocke Henderson, 2010).

Anger. Perhaps one of the most interesting, but least discussed emotions relevant to bystander behavior is anger. It has been suggested that anger functions to motivate action in response to immediate threats to the self, either by trying to stop an offensive behavior or avoid the person responsible (Hutcherson & Gross, 2011). With respect to bystanders, Vitaglione and Barnett (2003) were the first to demonstrate that *empathic anger* in adults predicts the desire to help a victim and punish an aggressor. Similarly, with children and youth, higher ratings of anger have been found to predict both prosocial defending (Jones *et al.*, 2009, 2011; Lambe, Hudson, Craig & Pepler, 2017; Rocke

Henderson, 2010) and hostile retaliation (Rocke Henderson, 2010). Empathic anger has also been shown to mediate the relationship between empathic concern and defending (Pozzoli, Gini & Thornberg, 2017), suggesting that anger may be critical for motivating bystanders to take action on behalf of a victimized peer.

Current study aims and research questions

The current study builds on and extends previous literature by systematically examining the impact of youth's emotional reactions and social relationships on their behavior as bystanders. To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine both of these constructs in response to actual bullying that participants witnessed at school in the recent past (i.e., within the current school year), providing a potentially more authentic evaluation of the process than is possible with hypothetical bullying situations. Three research questions guided our inquiry:

- (1) How do the emotions youth experience when witnessing bullying vary as a function of their relationships with the bully and victim?
- (2) How do bystander's response strategies vary as a function of their relationship with the bully and victim?
- (3) How do the emotions that youth reported experiencing when they witnessed school bullying influence the strategies they employed as a bystander?

METHOD

Participants

This ethnically diverse sample consisted of 2,513 elementary students in grades 4–7 from 19 schools located in Western Canada (52% female; 30% Caucasian, 25% South Asian, 17% Asian, 14% Mixed, 2% Latin American, 2% Middle Eastern, 1% African/Caribbean, 1% Aboriginal/First Nations, 5% Other, 3% Don't Know). Analyses were performed on the subsample of students who indicated that they had witnessed bullying at school at least once during the current school year ($n = 2,226$).

Materials

Students responded to questionnaires that included demographic information (e.g., grade, gender, ethnic background), as well as questions about their experiences with bullying. Of interest in the present study were student reports of their reactions when witnessing peer victimization. Participants were presented with a definition of bullying that described four different types of bullying (e.g., physical, verbal, social and cyber) and included the criteria of the perpetrator's intention to harm, repetition over time, and a power imbalance between the perpetrator and target. Five items addressed participants' frequency of witnessing peer victimization in general, and across the four different forms of bullying using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Every Week or More). Participants were then asked to recall an incident of bullying that they had witnessed at school during the current

school year, and to describe their relationships with the bully and victim.

The present study explored how bystanders' responses varied depending on whether the witness knew the bully and/or victim, and, if they did know them, whether they liked or didn't like them. Although it is possible to not know someone well and also not like them, the intention here was to distinguish between children with whom the bystander was familiar or had some affiliation with (i.e., knew their name), and children who were strangers (i.e., not recognized by face or name). Participants were then asked to indicate how they felt when they witnessed the bullying by choosing one of the six emotions, based on previous research on bullying and moral emotions (e.g., Menesini *et al.*, 2003; Rocke Henderson, 2010; Happy, Sad, Scared, Guilty, Angry, and Nothing; 1 = emotion selected, 0 = emotion not selected). Finally participants were asked to indicate how they responded to the situation from a list of seven behavioral response strategies identified in previous research (e.g., Salmivalli *et al.*, 1998; Rocke Henderson, 2010; Trach *et al.*, 2010; 1 = Yes, 0 = No). Participants could endorse more than one strategy given the previous survey research documenting the myriad ways that youth respond to bullying (e.g., Trach *et al.*, 2010). Seven bystander response strategies were included in this study: Not Involved (e.g., avoided or ignored the situation), Told Someone (e.g., talked to an adult or another student), Tried to Stop It (e.g., told them to stop, told others not to join in), Hurt the Bully (e.g., called the bully mean names), Encouraged the Bully (e.g., laughed, told others to come and watch), Joined the Bully (e.g., joined in, prevented the victim from getting away), and Helped the Victim (e.g., helped them get away, got friends to help).

Procedure

As part of university-school partnership, students from interested schools within partner school districts were invited to complete a survey about bullying and school climate. Trained research assistants visited classrooms in the Spring (towards the end of the school year) to explain the project to students and distribute parent consent forms, which were translated into multiple languages. All students who received parent permission and who provided their assent for participation completed the survey (70% participation rate). Students whose parents withdrew consent or who themselves withdrew were excluded without penalty. Trained research assistants administered the surveys in students' regular classrooms during a 60-min group session.

RESULTS

Descriptive analyses

Among participants who reported that they had witnessed bullying in the past year (89% of total sample), 31% recalled a situation that involved a victim they Didn't Know being targeted by a bully they Didn't Know, 31% knew either the bully or the victim, and 38% knew both parties. When bystanders knew the bully, 17% reported that they Liked the

bully, and 41% Didn't Like the bully. When the victim was someone they knew, 27% of the bystanders Liked the victim, and 21% Didn't Like them. The rarest situations in this study involved someone that witnesses Liked bullying someone they Didn't Know (3%), or someone they Didn't Know bullying someone they Liked (4%).

Overall, the most commonly endorsed emotion was Angry (31%), followed by Sad (25%), Nothing (19%), Scared (13%), Guilty (10%), and Happy (2%). The most commonly endorsed responses to the observed bullying incidents were Helped the Victim (62%), Tried to Stop It (53%), Told Someone (50%), and Did Not Get Involved (47%). Less commonly endorsed strategies were Hurt the Bully (11%), Helped the Bully (10%), and Encouraged the Bully (7%). The mode for number of bystander responses endorsed was three strategies per bullying episode ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.25$).

Impact of social relationships on bystander emotions

A series of six hierarchical, logistic regression analyses were conducted, one for each of the six bystander emotions reported (Bonferroni correction $\alpha = 0.007$). Participants' grade and gender were entered in the first step of the model, and separate variables representing: (1) their relationship with the bully; and (2) their relationship with the victim were entered in the second step. Didn't Know was coded as the default relationship status, so that significant effects for Liking or Disliking the bully and victim were understood relative to not knowing them. Results are presented in Table 1.

Each of the models tested was statistically significant: Happy, $\chi^2(6) = 80.94$; Scared, $\chi^2(6) = 56.94$; Sad, $\chi^2(6) = 24.53$; Guilty, $\chi^2(6) = 25.63$; Angry, $\chi^2(6) = 206.81$; Nothing, $\chi^2(6) = 245.95$. However, different patterns of predictors emerged as significant across emotions. There was a statistically significant negative effect of grade for bystander reports of feeling Scared and Happy, indicating that these emotions were less common among older students compared to younger students, whereas feeling Nothing was more likely among older students. Girls were significantly more likely than boys to report feeling: Scared and Sad in response to witnessing bullying, and boys were more likely than girls to report feeling Nothing.

Regarding the impact of relationship status on bystander emotions (Research Question 1), students who reported that they Liked the Bully were 4.9 times more likely to feel Happy about the bullying they witnessed compared to students who Didn't Know the Bully. In contrast, those who Disliked the Bully were approximately twice as likely to feel Angry and 1.7 times less likely to feel Nothing, but they were also two times less likely to report feeling Guilty about what they saw compared to those who Didn't Know the Bully. Bystanders who indicated that they Disliked the Victim were 7.7 times more likely to report feeling Happy, twice as likely to report feeling Nothing, and 1.9 times less likely to report feeling Angry while witnessing bullying compared to those who Didn't Know the Victim. Finally, participants who Liked the Victim were 2.2 times more likely to feel Angry and 2.8 times less likely to feel Nothing compared those who Didn't Know the Victim.

Table 1. Results of logistic regressions of relationship status predicting bystander emotion

Included	Happy		Scared		Sad		Guilty		Angry		Nothing (Neutral)	
	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)
Constant	-2.15 (1.05)		-1.48 (0.40)		-1.30 (0.31)		-1.79 (0.43)		-1.36 (0.30)		-1.56 (0.35)	
Grade	-0.54* (0.17)	0.58 (0.42-0.81)	-0.24* (0.06)	0.78 (0.70-0.89)	-0.05 (0.05)		-0.07 (0.07)		0.07 (0.05)		0.27* (0.06)	1.31 (1.18-1.46)
Gender	-0.29 (0.37)		0.70* (0.14)	2.02 (1.54-2.65)	0.39* (0.10)	1.48 (1.21-1.81)	0.13 (0.15)		-0.12 (0.10)		-0.91* (0.12)	0.40 (0.32-0.51)
Victim relationship												
Don't like	2.04* (0.54)	7.69 (2.68-22.11)	-0.31 (0.19)		-0.35 (0.14)		0.30 (0.19)		-0.65* (0.15)		0.71* (0.14)	2.03 (1.53-2.68)
Like	-0.25 (0.77)		-0.46 (0.18)		0.09 (0.13)		-0.003 (0.20)		0.79* (0.12)		-1.04* (0.19)	0.36 (0.24-0.52)
Bully relationship												
Don't like	-0.66 (0.63)		-0.08 (0.15)		-0.06 (0.12)		-0.72* (0.18)	0.49 (0.34-0.69)	0.70* (0.11)	2.02 (1.62-2.51)	-0.52* (0.14)	0.60 (0.45-0.79)
Like	1.59* (0.48)	4.92 (1.93-12.55)	-0.30 (0.23)		-0.07 (0.16)		-0.17 (0.21)		-0.41 (0.17)		0.45 (0.17)	
-2LL	268.19		1,561.47		2,364.52		1,370.11		2,471.95		1,853.52	
Nagelkerke R ²	0.25		0.05		0.02		0.03		0.13		0.17	

*p < 0.007

Social relationships and bystander emotions related to bystander behavior

A series of seven hierarchical logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between bystander relationships, emotions and actions, with grade and gender entered in the first step, relationship with bully and victim entered in the second step (as above), and emotional response entered in the third step (Bonferroni correction $\alpha = 0.008$). Feeling Nothing was coded as the default emotion, thus significant effects for emotion are understood relative to the likelihood of feeling Nothing. Results are presented in Table 2.

Each of the models tested was statistically significant: Not Involved, $\chi^2(11) = 158.63$; Told Someone, $\chi^2(11) = 186.49$; Tried to Stop It, $\chi^2(11) = 244.04$; Hurt the Bully, $\chi^2(11) = 67.20$; Encouraged the Bully, $\chi^2(11) = 92.53$; Joined the Bully, $\chi^2(11) = 52.23$; Helped the Victim, $\chi^2(11) = 274.92$. Once again, different patterns of predictors emerged as significant across bystander responses. Grade level was negatively associated with student reports that they Told Someone and Joined the Bully. Girls were significantly less likely than boys to report that they Tried to Stop It, Hurt the Bully, or Encouraged the Bully.

Regarding the impact of social relationships on bystander behavior (Research Question 2), witnesses who indicated that they Liked the Bully were 2.1 times more likely to report that they did things that Encouraged the Bully, 2.2 times more likely to report that they Joined the Bully, and 1.6 times less likely to report that they Told Someone about the bullying compared to witnesses who Didn't Know the Bully. In contrast, bystanders who Disliked the Bully were 1.6 times more likely to attempt to Hurt the Bully. Witnesses who Disliked the Victim were also 1.7 times more likely to report attempts to Hurt the Bully compared to those who Didn't Know the Victim. Finally, those who Liked the Victim were 2.2 times more likely to report that they Tried to Stop It, 2 times more likely to Help the Victim, and 1.9 times less likely to report that they were Not Involved compared to those who Didn't Know the Victim.

Regarding the relationship between bystander emotions and behavior (Research Question 3), feeling Scared, Sad, Guilty or Angry were each negatively associated with bystander's reports that they were Not Involved, and positively associated with reports that they Told Someone, Tried to Stop It, or Helped the Victim. Among these emotions, Anger emerged as the strongest predictor of bystander defending; students were 5.2 times more likely to say that they Tried to Stop It and 5.4 times more likely to say that they Helped the Victim if they felt Angry about the situation compared to feeling Nothing. In contrast, feeling Happy was associated with 5.5 times greater odds of bystanders' reporting that they Encouraged the Bully and a 5 times increase in the likelihood that they Joined the Bully. Compared to feeling Nothing, bystander's who Joined the Bully were also 2 times more likely to report feeling Guilty about the situation. In combination with grade and gender, bystanders' social relationships and emotional reactions accounted for 5%–17% of the variance across bystander responses.

DISCUSSION

The current study is the first to examine the intersection of social and emotional processes involved in real life bullying incidents from the perspective of the bystander. As expected,

Table 2. Results of logistic regressions of relationship status and emotion predicting bystander behavior

Included	Not involved			Told someone			Tried to stop it			Hurt bully			Encouraged bully			Joined bully			Helped victim			
	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)	b (SE)	OR (95% CI)		
Constant	1.32 (0.29)		0.59 (0.29)		-0.78 (0.30)		-1.61 (0.45)		-0.85 (0.55)		-1.32 (0.47)		-0.53 (0.31)		-0.20* (0.07)	0.82 (0.72-0.94)	-0.11 (0.15)		-0.08 (0.13)		0.69* (0.13)	1.99 (1.53-2.58)
Grade	-0.12 (0.04)		-0.27* (0.04)	0.77 (0.71-0.83)	0.03 (0.04)		-0.01 (0.07)		-0.22 (0.08)		-0.20* (0.07)		-0.03 (0.05)		-0.22 (0.08)		-0.11 (0.15)		-0.03 (0.05)		-0.16 (0.15)	
Gender	0.05 (0.09)		0.09 (0.09)		-0.30* (0.10)	0.74 (0.62-0.90)	-0.73* (0.15)		-0.52* (0.19)	0.60 (0.41-0.86)		-0.11 (0.15)		-0.05 (0.10)								
Victim relationship																						
Don't like	-0.06 (0.13)		-0.13 (0.13)		0.07 (0.13)		0.55* (0.19)	1.73 (1.19-2.51)	0.33 (0.24)		-0.14 (0.21)		-0.08 (0.13)		0.33 (0.24)		-0.14 (0.21)		-0.08 (0.13)			
Like	-0.62* (0.12)	0.54 (0.43-0.68)	-0.004 (0.12)		0.80* (0.12)	2.23 (1.75-2.84)	0.44 (0.18)		0.10 (0.25)		-0.12 (0.20)		0.69* (0.13)		0.10 (0.25)		-0.12 (0.20)		0.69* (0.13)			
Bully relationship																						
Don't like	0.05 (0.11)		0.10 (0.11)		-0.12 (0.11)		0.49* (0.18)	1.63 (1.15-2.30)	0.04 (0.23)		0.05 (0.18)		0.16 (0.11)		0.04 (0.23)		0.05 (0.18)		0.16 (0.11)			
Like	0.12 (0.15)		-0.48* (0.15)	0.62 (0.46-0.83)	-0.33 (0.15)		0.59 (0.22)		0.76* (0.26)	2.13 (1.29-3.52)	0.76* (0.22)	2.17 (1.42-3.32)	-0.16 (0.15)		0.76* (0.26)		0.76* (0.22)	2.17 (1.42-3.32)	-0.16 (0.15)			
Emotion																						
Happy	-0.41 (0.37)		-0.18 (0.43)		0.65 (0.38)		0.19 (0.49)		1.70* (0.41)	5.50 (2.47-12.22)	1.62 (0.41)	5.03 (2.24-11.26)	0.24 (0.39)		1.70* (0.41)		1.62 (0.41)	5.03 (2.24-11.26)	0.24 (0.39)			
Scared	-0.52* (0.17)	0.60 (0.43-0.83)	0.88* (0.17)	2.41 (1.72-3.38)	1.08* (0.17)	2.95 (2.10-4.15)	0.16 (0.27)		-0.03 (0.32)		0.27 (0.28)		1.04* (0.17)		-0.03 (0.32)		0.27 (0.28)		1.04* (0.17)			
Sad	-0.76* (0.14)	0.47 (0.36-0.62)	1.03* (0.15)	2.81 (2.10-3.76)	1.10* (0.15)	3.00 (2.24-4.01)	-0.24 (0.24)		-0.46 (0.29)		0.26 (0.24)		1.26* (0.15)		-0.46 (0.29)		0.26 (0.24)		1.26* (0.15)			
Guilt	-0.77* (0.18)	0.46 (0.33-0.65)	0.87* (0.18)	2.39 (1.68-3.42)	1.06* (0.18)	2.88 (2.02-4.11)	0.15 (0.27)		0.45 (0.29)		0.76* (0.27)		1.20* (0.18)		0.45 (0.29)		0.76* (0.27)		1.20* (0.18)			
Angry	-1.25 (0.14)*	0.29 (0.22-0.38)	1.08* (0.15)	2.96 (2.23-3.93)	1.65* (0.15)	5.22 (3.90-6.98)	0.23 (0.21)		-0.76 (0.30)		0.02 (0.25)		1.69* (0.15)		-0.76 (0.30)		0.02 (0.25)		1.69* (0.15)			
-2LL	2,777.34		2,752.27		2,688.77		1,425.88		938.92		1,321.72		2,543.98		938.92		1,321.72		2,543.98			
Nagelkerke R ²	0.10		0.11		0.15		0.06		0.11		0.05		0.17		0.11		0.05		0.17			

*p < 0.007

bystanders reported that they were significantly more likely to intervene directly to defend the person being hurt (e.g., trying to stop the bully or comfort the victim) if they liked the victim. Indirect methods of helping (e.g., talking to someone about what they witnessed) were equally likely regardless of bystanders' relationship with the victim, but were less likely when the bystander liked the bully. Finally, hostile or aggressive defending (e.g., trying to hurt the bully) was more common if the witness disliked either the bully or the victim compared to situations where they were unknown to them. These results suggest that, in addition to a social norm of helping one's friends when they are being bullied (DeSmet Bastiaensens *et al.*, 2012; Ferrans *et al.*, 2012), youth may also be responding to a second implicit social norm that requires them to refrain from intervening aggressively or reporting to an adult when their friends behave badly. These results may have important implications for school-based interventions that focus on building positive school and classroom climate as an evidence-based strategy for reducing bullying. On a positive note, this approach should also help to reduce hostile retaliation on the part of bystanders. However, the stronger the bonds that students have with one another, the less likely they may also be to report wrongdoing by one of their peers. Successful anti-bullying programs will need to account for the natural bias to protect one's friends from harm by providing opportunities for students to learn about and discuss the complex social and moral dynamics of peer relationships, as well as the power dynamics inherent to bullying situations.

Notably, consistent with previous research (Jones *et al.*, 2009, 2011; Lambe *et al.*, 2017; Pozzoli *et al.*, 2017; Rocke Henderson, 2010, see also Vitaglione & Barnett, 2003) both direct and indirect forms of defending were associated with experiencing higher levels of "negative" emotion, with anger emerging as an especially powerful predictor of bystander attempts to stop the bully, tell an adult, or offer support to the victim (approx. 5 times more likely compared to feeling nothing). Anger is an important motivator of moral action (Haidt, 2003), and it is necessary to include strategies for recognizing and managing feelings of anger in anti-bullying interventions. It is not clear why anger has been largely overlooked in previous research, but any potential concerns that bystanders' feelings of anger may promote hostile retaliation would appear to lack substance. We found no statistically significant links between hurting the bully and feeling angry. However, feeling happy when witnessing was associated with five times greater likelihood of encouraging or joining in with the bullying. Somewhat surprisingly, guilt was also positively associated with bystander reports that they joined in with the bullying they observed, suggesting that feelings of guilt alone are not sufficient to prevent youth from engaging in behavior that they know is wrong. Finally, experiencing feelings of fear, sadness, guilt or anger were all associated with significantly lower odds of being a passive witness (i.e., not getting involved.) These findings suggest that passive bystanders may be emotionally detached from the situation, possibly as a means of self-protection.

These results add to what is currently known about the social processes that impact youth's behavior when witnessing bullying, and suggest important avenues for anti-bullying

prevention efforts. Perhaps most importantly, these findings underscore the importance of incorporating strategies that address group functioning and social power dynamics in such efforts (Hymel *et al.*, 2015). Specifically, educational practices that promote healthy social-emotional learning and development (SEL) could be used to enrich current anti-bullying interventions. SEL includes recognizing and managing emotions, setting and achieving goals, feeling and showing empathy for others, making responsible decisions, and avoiding negative behaviors, resulting in healthier and more satisfying interpersonal relationships (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2016; Elias *et al.*, 1997). Teaching SEL skills in schools has been shown to lead to significant improvements in social, emotional, academic, and mental wellbeing of students (Domitrovich, Durlak, Staley & Weissberg, 2017; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011; Payton *et al.*, 2008), as well as reductions in bullying (Greenberg *et al.*, 2003). Programs that help children recognize and manage their emotions (in particular, managing feelings of anger and directing such feelings towards prosocial bystander responses), cooperate with others, and solve problems peacefully also have the potential to change the group social dynamics that contribute to bullying problems (Hymel *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, restorative, rather than punitive, disciplinary practices that focus on helping students to recognize, accept responsibility and make amends for harm caused to others will enable both youth who bully others and passive bystanders to constructively manage feelings of shame, and be safely reintegrated within the school and classroom community (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004; Morrison, 2002). Early efforts to evaluate the impact of SEL practices on bullying have shown promising effects (see Espelage, Chad & Polanin, 2015), although more research on the effective mechanisms of SEL, including group processes is needed (see CASEL, 2016 and www.selresources.com for a listing of SEL programs and strategies).

The use of retrospective recall of real-life events is both a strength and limitation of this study, having the potential to provide a more authentic representation of children's experiences with school bullying, while potentially vulnerable to self-report and memory bias. It is worth noting that a sizable portion of youth did report feeling and acting in ways that would contradict social expectations for bystanders, such as joining and/or hurting the bully, lending credence to these data. Another limitation of this study was the way in which bystanders' relationships with the bully and victim were categorized. The intention was to examine whether students' reactions to bullying varied depending on whether they liked or disliked the peers involved, compared to situations where the victim and bully were unknown to the witness. However, future studies would be enhanced by examining the constructs of "knowing" and "liking" as independent variables. For example, such a distinction would enable the study of situations where the victim was unknown (i.e., not friends with) but liked by the witness. Finally, it would also be useful in future studies to allow bystanders to endorse multiple emotions and behaviors. Such a design would allow for the examination of unique profiles of defender characteristics that have not been studied previously. More research is needed to

continue to uncover the complex social processes that contribute to bullying, including the role of anger in promoting bystander defending, as well as understanding how the social, emotional, and moral group dynamics that typically prompt individuals to help and protect one another may simultaneously enable a small subset of the population to intimidate and harass others with impunity.

The authors wish to acknowledge the support provided for this research by the Edith Lando Charitable Foundation and wish to express their thanks to the students and schools who participated in the present study.

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Received 12 April 2018, accepted 5 December 2018