ABSTRACT

“I HAVEN’T BEEN BULLIED SO I DON’T NEED HELP”: THE ROLE OF SELF-PERCEIVED VICTIMIZATION IN HELP-SEEKING

by Karin L. Vanderzee

A primary aim of bullying prevention efforts is to encourage victims to seek help. One factor that may influence whether children seek help but which has received little attention is their self-perceptions of victimization. This study investigated whether self-identification as a victim moderated the relationship between the type of bullying experienced and help-seeking among 4331 children in grades three through eight. Logistic regression analyses indicated that younger children and youths who self-identified as victims were more likely to seek help. Furthermore, as levels of physical and relational victimization increased, boys were more likely than not to seek help. Girls consistently sought help at high rates. Results suggest interventions should focus on creating a safe environment for boys to seek help.
“I HAVEN’T BEEN BULLIED SO I DON’T NEED HELP”: THE ROLE OF SELF-PERCEIVED VICTIMIZATION IN HELP-SEEKING

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“I haven’t been bullied so I don’t need help”: The Role of Self-perceived Victimization in Help-seeking

Bullying has been described as a “potentially serious threat to school safety and to the psychological and physical health of children” (Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002, p. 266) and is estimated to affect 15 % of children worldwide (Olweus, 1995). Both bully and victim status have been shown to remain stable over time (Bernstein & Watson, 1997) and may result in a host of negative long-term outcomes. Bullying perpetration is associated with delinquency, substance abuse, loneliness, social and emotional maladjustment, poor academic achievement, peer problems, and crime (Bernstein & Watson, 1997; Nansel et al., 2001; Rigby, 2003). Victimization is associated with depression, low self-esteem, loneliness, anxiety, and risk of suicide (Bernstein & Watson, 1997; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002; Olweus, 1993a; Olweus 1993c; Rigby, 2001; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000). Given these findings, it is not surprising that bullying has become a widely recognized problem among researchers, school staff, parents, and children.

A major thrust of bullying prevention programs is to encourage children to seek help when they have been bullied (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000; Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000; Smith & Shu, 2000). To date, research has focused on how and why children seek help. A number of factors have emerged that affect help-seeking such as gender (e.g., Cowie, 2000) and the type of bullying experienced (Elsea, 2001). A factor that has not been examined yet is children’s self-identification as a victim of bullying. If children do not believe they have experienced bullying, it may be unlikely that they will seek help to make it stop. Differences in definitions of bullying among children and adults may create an environment in which children are confused about whether or not they have experienced bullying and, consequently, they may not seek help. An examination of the roles that factors such as self-identification as a victim, gender, and type of bullying play in children’s help-seeking behavior may ultimately inform and improve bullying prevention efforts geared towards creating a climate in which all children who have experienced any type of bullying feel comfortable seeking help. Different strategies for increasing help-seeking may be necessary depending on whether a child self-identifies as a victim, is a boy or girl, or experiences different types of bullying. In other words, a “one-size-fits-all” approach may not be sufficient for encouraging help-seeking. Therefore, this study will
examine factors that may promote or interfere with help-seeking, namely one’s willingness to self-identify as a victim, the type of bullying one experiences, and one’s gender.

In order to set the stage for the present study, I first will review the concept of bullying and how differing definitions among stakeholders may create a climate in which children and adults may be uncertain about whether children have or have not experienced bullying and thus, whether or not it is appropriate to seek help. This uncertainty may vary according to the type of behavior children experience, namely physical or relational bullying. Second, I will review the existing empirical research regarding children who self-identify as bullying victims and those who do not. Third, I will describe what is known about relational bullying and how gender stereotypes and socialization may influence children’s willingness to identify as a victim and seek help. Fourth, I will discuss what is currently known about help-seeking. Finally, the present study will examine the roles that self-identification as a victim, type of bullying experienced (physical or relational), and gender play in victims’ help-seeking behavior.

Although for the sake of conciseness the term “victim” will be used throughout this document, it is important to acknowledge that this term has connotations that are not intended here. For instance, the term “victim” implies helplessness, stigmatization, and loss of control, and has been associated with negative outcomes (Taylor, Wood, & Lichtman, 1983). In this document, however, the term victim will be used simply to refer to those children who have experienced bullying.

Definitions of Bullying

Researchers’ definitions. There currently is no universally agreed-upon definition of bullying among researchers; however, there is some consensus about what behaviors constitute such acts (Farrington, 1993). For the majority of researchers, the term bullying refers to an unprovoked, intentional, physically, verbally, or psychologically harmful act perpetrated by a more powerful person on a less powerful person repeatedly over time (Farrington, 1993; Olweus, 1993b). Bullying may take several different forms such as physical, verbal, or relational. Physical bullying refers to such behaviors as hitting, kicking, pushing, or shoving (Bjorkvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992). Verbal bullying refers to teasing in a mean way, name-calling or making fun of another person (Olweus, 1996). Relational bullying refers to excluding or spreading rumors about a person or engaging in other behaviors aimed at damaging or destroying a person’s social relationships, sense of inclusion in a group, or reputation (Crick & Grotpeter,
It has been suggested that there is a developmental progression in these forms of aggression (Björqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1992). In the early years, aggression is physical in nature whereas, as children develop language skills, aggression becomes more verbal. Finally, as children begin to develop social acuity in the preschool years (Brune & Brune-Cohrs, 2006), relational aggression emerges.

Despite scholars’ attempts to define bullying in a consistent way, children, adults, and teachers may have definitions that vary from one another as well as from those of researchers.

*Children’s definitions.* Children’s definitions do not appear to vary according to gender (Guerin & Hennessey, 2002; Menesini, Fonzi, & Smith, 2002; Monks & Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2002), but they do seem to vary across age, with younger children’s definitions appearing to be less differentiated than older children’s definitions. For example, in a cross national study of children’s definitions of bullying, Smith and colleagues (2002) asked 8 year-olds and 14 year-olds to classify a series of cartoons according to whether they depicted incidents of bullying or not. Younger children tended to define bullying using an aggression – non-aggression dimension whereas older children tended to include a second physical – social exclusion dimension. In other words, while younger children were unable to make more subtle distinctions between different types of bullying such as the difference between social exclusion and verbal bullying, they were able to label acts of relational, physical, and verbal bullying as aggressive.

In a study using a similar methodology, Monks and Smith (2006) broadened the range of age groups that were examined by Smith and colleagues. They compared children 4 to 6 years of age with children 8 and 14 years old and also with adults 40 years old. Children 4 to 6 years old appeared to define bullying using the same aggression – non-aggression dimension as 8 year olds. Teenagers and adults defined bullying according to two dimensions: a prosocial/less aggressive – severe aggressive dimension and a physical – social exclusion dimension. Interestingly, adults viewed prototypical physical items as the most extreme forms of bullying whereas 14 year olds also viewed verbal bullying and relational items as extreme forms.

Other researchers have also found that youths consider relational forms of bullying as extremely stressful. For example, in her study of 13 and 16 year olds experiences of bullying, Sharp (1995) reported that victims consider social exclusion and rumor spreading to be as stressful as physical bullying. These fundamental differences in perceptions of bullying may create an environment where children may be confused about whether or not they have
experienced bullying (particularly relational bullying) and, consequently, when it is appropriate to seek help to stop the bullying. In other words, the way adults define bullying may influence whether children identify themselves as victims of bullying or not.

There appears to be variability within children’s perceptions of bullying which may be accounted for by measurement definitions in research. Assessing meanings of bullying through individual child interviews may yield significantly different understandings of bullying than when it is discussed in a group interview format with groups of children from the same class (Terasahjo & Salmivalli, 2003). Important social forces within the peer group which contribute to children’s understandings may be less apparent when children are asked about bullying individually as opposed to interviewed in peer groups. For example, in their qualitative study of the discourse of bullying in three elementary school classrooms (4th, 5th, and 6th grades), Terasahjo and Salmivalli found that several interpretive repertoires (“recurrently used systems of terms for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena” [Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 148, cited in Terasahjo & Salmivalli, 2003, p. 236]) emerged. These interpretive repertoires suggest that, within the peer group, children may not only find bullying to be unproblematic or a harmless game, they may find it justified because a child is “odd” or deviant in some way, or “deserves” it. Other qualitative researchers have reported similar findings with girls and indirect bullying (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). These results emerge despite strong anti-bullying attitudes children report on self-report questionnaires (Terasahjo & Salmivalli, 2003). Thus, children’s peer groups can play a powerful role in shaping perceptions of bullying which may or may not emerge depending on the method by which bullying is assessed.

**Teacher and school staff members’ definitions.** Teachers and school staff members appear to define bullying differently than do students. Hazler, Miller, Carney, and Green (2001) found that physical bullying was central to teachers’ and counselors’ definitions. Specifically, their results showed that threats of physical abuse or physical abuse itself were viewed by school staff as more severe forms of bullying than verbal, social, or emotional abuse. In a study comparing terms included by teachers and students ages 8 and 14 years in their definitions of bullying, Menesini and colleagues (2002) found that teachers tended to exclude items associated with verbal bullying, severe social exclusion, and gender exclusion from their definitions more often than did students. Teachers have also rated relational bullying as less severe than verbal
and physical bullying (Birkinshaw & Elsea, 1998; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Furthermore, in their study of teachers’ responses to bullying scenarios, Yoon and Kerber (2003) found that teachers perceived social exclusion to be significantly less serious than physical or verbal bullying and empathized with social exclusion victims significantly less than physical or verbal victims. They also indicated they would be less likely to intervene in instances of social exclusion than in physical or verbal bullying instances. Further analyses indicated that teachers would discipline the perpetrators of social exclusion less frequently than perpetrators of physical or verbal bullying (10% vs. 50%, respectively). These findings are in striking contrast to those of victims who believe that relational forms of bullying such as social exclusion are as detrimental as physical bullying. If teachers and counselors are less likely to believe that relational bullying is as severe as physical bullying and are less likely to intervene or give harsh consequences, children who are bullied in these ways may begin to question whether they have experienced bullying at all and may become less likely to seek help. Therefore, it is important to consider that school staff’s definitions of bullying may influence children’s understandings and subsequent actions.

School staff play an important role in determining the climate of a school and, specifically, whether or not bullying of any kind will be tolerated. Pepler and Craig (1988) assert that teachers and other school staff may reinforce a culture which accepts bullying by holding certain beliefs. For example, Pepler and Craig (1988) communicate that adults may convey the following:

Bullying is a normal part of growing up, children who bully just grow out of it, children are always best left to resolve their own conflicts, children’s conflicts reflect play fighting and teasing which do no real harm, sometimes victims provoke attacks, and adults should not encourage tattle-telling. (p. 10)

These perceptions may have negative effects on children’s willingness to seek help, particularly when they have experienced relational bullying which some school staff may fail to perceive as a form of bullying at all (Menesini et al., 2002). Therefore, careful consideration of children’s help-seeking behaviors in relational bullying instances is warranted.

Parents’ definitions. Though data are slight, a similar pattern appears to be emerging for parents. In their study of parents’ definitions of bullying, Smorti and colleagues (2003) found that British parents tended to view physically aggressive acts as bullying but not verbal
aggression or social exclusion. Parents may also contribute to a climate where children perceive certain acts of bullying as acceptable and others as unacceptable. Again, this may make children reluctant to seek help. Therefore, further study of specific types of bullying and children’s willingness to seek help will bring additional clarity that may guide intervention efforts.

Implications of differing definitions. Madsen (1996) recognized that these definitional differences may have serious implications. First, parents and teachers may view children as oversensitive to forms of aggression that adults do not define as bullying. Second, children may perceive a nonresponse from adults as condoning the behavior, thus teaching children that behaviors which they believe are bullying are acceptable to others. Consequently, these differences in definitions may contribute to a school climate in which certain types of bullying are tolerated and where children who experience them are not viewed as victims. Furthermore, these differences in definitions may lead to underreporting of bullying for children if their experience does not readily fall within the definition presented to them on researchers’ questionnaires about bullying (Madsen, 1996).

Differences in definitions may also have adverse effects on bullying intervention efforts (Guerrin & Hennessey, 2002). As O’Connell and colleagues (1999) suggest, some children may not recognize that they are being bullied. This may be evident in findings about children’s willingness to self-identify as a victim which indicate that children are less likely to admit to global questions about “being bullied” than they are to admit to having experienced specific bullying behaviors such as being hit, kicked, or punched (Stockdale et al., 2002; Theriot, Dulmus, Sowers, & Johnson, 2005). It follows that if a child does perceive him/herself as a victim, he or she will likely not seek help to make the behavior stop. Thus, a bullied child’s willingness to self-identify as a victim may play a critical role in whether or not children will seek help when they have been bullied, and ultimately whether intervention programs succeed.

To summarize, different types of aggression may be identified as bullying by different cohorts and to different degrees. For instance, it appears that physical bullying is conceptualized as an act of bullying for all groups. However, evidence suggests that relational bullying, such as social exclusion, may be one type of aggression that children view as bullying more frequently than adults (Menesini et al., 2002; Monks & Smith, 2006). Importantly, children of all ages and both genders consider relational and physical acts bullying. Despite deleterious effects of relational bullying, adults consider it to be less severe than physical bullying and are less likely
to intervene (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick et al., 2001; Crick, Ostrov, & Werner, 2006; Johnson & Foster, 2005; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Differences in how adults and children define bullying can impact the climate of the school and may contribute to children being unsure whether or not they have been bullied and reluctant to seek help.

**Self-identified Versus Non-identified Victims**

To date, few authors have explored the relationship between children’s self-identification as a victim and the specific bullying experiences they undergo (Theriot et al., 2005). Self-identified victims are those who indicate they have been bullied in response to a global question about bullying experiences. Non-identified victims are those who report that they have not been bullied on a global question, but who endorse having experienced one or more specific bullying behaviors (e.g., having been hit or kicked, or having been excluded, etc.). Initial evidence suggests that self-identified victims experience greater frequency and severity of bullying, and more types of specific bullying experiences than non-identified victims (Stockdale et al., 2002; Theriot et al., 2005). They also tend to be younger (Theriot et al., 2005). However, preliminary findings do not indicate that gender plays a role in predicting self-identification as a victim (Theriot et al., 2005).

While self-identified victims may experience bullying to a greater degree, it is important not to discount the experiences of non-identified victims. They, too, experience the entire range of bullying experiences and may do so as frequently as once a week (Theriot et al., 2005). These children may not admit to being “bullied” on global measures because they see other children being bullied more frequently than themselves and may discount their own victimization, or they may be reluctant to view themselves as a victim because it is socially undesirable to do so (Theriot et al., 2005). It is possible that non-identified victims do not perceive the need to tell someone because they do not perceive that there is a problem. However, results from Theriot and his colleagues (2005) suggest that a problem does exist. It may be particularly important to learn more about this group of children who do not label their experiences as bullying in order to refine bullying prevention efforts.

**Relational Bullying**

Certain types of bullying may be more prone than others to misinterpretation as harmless acts or typical behavior (Casey-Cannon & Hayward, 2001). Relational bullying (i.e., behaviors that are aimed at damaging or destroying a person’s social relationships, sense of inclusion in a...
group, or reputation [Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick et al., 2001]) is one type of bullying where the lines between “just teasing” and bullying may be blurred which may result in children silently enduring abuse (Lahelma, 2002). As a result of these blurred lines, children may be less likely either to identify as victims or seek help. Relational bullying may be one behavior that may be perceived as bullying by some groups and not others. Reasons for these definitional differences may rest in gender stereotypes and socialization.

For many years, the study of aggression focused exclusively on males, perhaps spurred on by the consistent finding that males outnumber females in overt aggression or physical bullying. Based on these findings, males were labeled as the more aggressive of the sexes (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1980). However, by only examining overt forms of aggression, researchers missed important information regarding the types of aggression that females typically use (Crick, Ostrov, & Werner, 2006). To fill this gap, researchers have recently begun to focus on other forms of aggression, namely relational aggression. Currently, there is considerable evidence to suggest that females do partake in aggressive acts, but typically do so in subtle and relational, as opposed to physical, ways.

Relational aggression moderately correlates with overt aggression, but has been shown to be a distinct form of aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick, Ostrov, & Werner, 2006). There is some evidence to suggest that, like physical aggression, children’s use of relational aggression is relatively stable over time (Crick, 1996; Crick, Ostrov, Burr, et al., 2006). In contrast to physical aggression, relational aggression does not decrease with age (Crick, Grotpeter, & Bigbee, 2002) and tends to be more frequent during the middle school than the elementary school years (Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 2002). Relational aggression also is more covert than physical aggression, meaning that the perpetrator need not approach the target directly to inflict harm. For instance, perpetrators may speak just loudly enough for the target (but not teachers) to hear, say nothing to the target at all (e.g., spread a rumor), or use code names for the target when plotting against him or her (Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000). These types of behaviors make it difficult for a child to determine whether he or she is being bullied or to prove that he or she is the intended target (Owens et al., 2000). The covert nature of this type of bullying may account for the fact that teachers are often unaware of relational aggression incidents (Owens et al., 2000). Its covert nature and the uncertainty it creates among victims may also explain why
children who do not self-identify as victims on global questions of bullying frequently report they have been the subject of lies or false rumors (Theriot et al., 2005).

The costs of relational aggression—or relational bullying in the case of relationally aggressive acts that are repeated and involve differences in power (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006) — may be great. Children who endure relational bullying may experience concurrent and future peer rejection, loneliness, internalizing (loneliness, depression, social isolation), and externalizing problems (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick et al., 2001; Crick, Ostrov, & Werner, 2006; Johnson & Foster, 2005). Some investigators suggest that relational bullying is just as or more damaging than physical bullying due to the impact it has on the adjustment and academic performance of victims, as well as the climate of the school (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Olweus & Limber, 1999). For example, van der Wal and colleagues (2003) surveyed 4811 children ages 9-13 about their experiences of relational and overt bullying, depression, and suicidal ideation. They found that relational victimization was associated with both depression and suicidal ideation. Furthermore, being relationally bullied was a stronger predictor of depression than was being overtly bullied. Similar findings have been reported with regard to loneliness and feelings of sadness (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Paquette & Underwood, 1999). Therefore, understanding more about relational victimization has important implications for enhancing efforts to stop it.

**Gender.** Previous research is equivocal regarding gender differences in relational bullying. Whereas some studies suggest that relational aggression is a phenomenon that is specific to girls (Bjorqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Lagerspetz, Bjorqvist, & Peltonen, 1988), other findings suggest that this may not be the case (Henington, Hughes, Cavell, & Thompson, 1998; Tomada & Schneider, 1997; Woods & Wolke, 2004). For instance, in a study of 3rd and 4th grade students, Tomada and Schneider (1997) found that boys were both more overtly (physically and verbally) and relationally aggressive than girls. With regard to victimization, some have found that girls are more likely to be victims of relational aggression than boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996; Ostrov, Crick, & Stauffacher, 2006) whereas others have found no differences (Crick et al., 2001). Regardless of whether there are gender differences in the amount of relational bullying perpetrated or experienced, it appears that both genders use and experience relational bullying.

Gender differences do emerge in children’s reactions to relationally aggressive acts they experience, however. For example, girls report being more upset than boys when they experience
relationally aggressive acts such as being excluded, slighted, or put down by their female peers (Crick, Grotpester, & Bigbee, 2002; Galen & Underwood, 1997; Paquette & Underwood, 1999; Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, & Lagerspetz, 2000).

The socialization experiences of boys and girls may contribute to these findings. Girls are socialized to be relationship-oriented whereas boys are socialized to be individually oriented, concerned with issues of dominance, and controlling of their emotions (Hartup, 1983; Maccoby, 1990; Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004). Girls tend to spend their time with one or two close friends, but they spend time in groups as well. Acceptance within these groups is very important to girls, perhaps more so than for boys whose peer groups tend to be larger and less intimate (Owens et al., 2000). Because outright aggressive acts may threaten the peer group, girls’ aggression necessarily may take a more subtle form than overt, physical aggression (Putallaz et al., 2004). This is evident in subtle disclaimers such as “I don’t mean to be mean, but . . .” and “Can I ask a question?” which often precede relationally aggressive acts (Putallaz et al., 2004). Because girls are socialized to focus on relationships, it is not surprising that girls appear more bothered by relational aggression than boys. As a result of their upset feelings, girls may seek help to resolve the situation more frequently than boys who may attempt to resolve relational bullying on their own or ignore it.

The way girls and boys are socialized to express anger may influence whether or not children self-identify as victims when they experience relational bullying as well. For instance, Crick, Bigbee, and Howes (1996) examined 9- to 12-year-old children’s normative beliefs about relational and physical aggression and found that boys perceived physical aggression to be the most common expression of anger in their peer group. By contrast, girls perceived relational aggression to be the most common expression of anger in girls’ peer group. While not all bullying occurs as a result of anger, it is possible that children may be better able to identify gender normative aggressive acts than gender non-normative acts. Thus, girls may self-identify when they have experienced relational bullying more frequently than boys.

In sum, both boys and girls have been shown to be perpetrators and victims of relational bullying. However, girls and boys respond differently to experiencing relational bullying, possibly due to their socialization experiences. In girls’ social circles, relational bullying may be more likely to occur than physical bullying because its covert nature may be less threatening to girls’ groups. Furthermore, girls may be more upset by relational bullying due to their orientation.
towards being in relationships. Children may be more likely to self-identify as victims when they experience gender normative forms of bullying. As a result, girls seem more likely to self-identify as a victim of relational bullying than boys.

Help-seeking

A critical part of many bullying prevention programs is encouraging help-seeking because it is assumed that bullying will stop when there is intervention from others (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000; Glover et al., 2000; Smith & Shu, 2000). Although our understanding of help-seeking is still in its infancy, there is some evidence to suggest that victimization is reduced when children seek help (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997). Despite this, it is estimated that only 50-80% of students seek help when they have experienced bullying (Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2004; Naylor, Cowie, & del Rey, 2001; Cowie & Olafsson, 2000; Smith & Shu, 1998; Westcott & Davies, 1995; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Thus, there are a number of children who continue to experience bullying but remain silent. Further research is needed to illuminate the circumstances under which children seek help.

To date, research on help-seeking in bullying situations is scant and typically is embedded within studies focused on other issues regarding bullying. However, a number of factors have emerged which may influence children’s help-seeking behavior. Children may seek help for different reasons: out of fear, avoidance, to get revenge, to solve the conflict, to make themselves feel better, or because they believe that it is the best strategy to make the bullying stop (Chung & Asher, 1996; Hunter et al., 2004; Newman, Murray, & Lussier, 2001). It has been hypothesized that children will only choose to seek help when they have been pushed “far enough” and realize that it is socially appropriate and necessary to seek help from an adult (Newman et al., 2001; Newman, 2003). However, knowing when to seek help from a teacher presents a dilemma for some children (Newman, 2003) since telling may increase the bullying.

Newman (2003) comments that “it is alarming when children allow themselves to be victimized in situations that are dangerous (i.e., when help from an adult is truly needed)” (p. 340). In these situations, however, there clearly are forces which prevent them from seeking help. Children may fear that the bully will retaliate against them, believe that school staff members’ responses will do little to help them, feel ashamed of asking for help, feel anxious about appearing weak, do not want to be perceived to be avoiding the conflict, perceive the costs of help-seeking to outweigh the benefits, want to maintain their sense of independence, or feel
pressure to solve conflicts on their own (Boulton, 2005; Chung & Asher, 1996; Cowie & Olafsson, 2000; Hunter et al., 2004; Newman et al., 2001; Smith & Shu, 2000; Unnever & Cornell, 2004). Taken together, these factors suggest that the climate of the school plays an important role in whether or not children seek help.

**Age.** Most researchers who have examined the impact of age on help-seeking have found that younger children seek help more frequently than older children (Hunter et al., 2004; Smith & Shu, 2000). For instance, rates of help-seeking in victims ranged from 80% among 9-11 year olds to 66% in 13-14 year olds in one study (Hunter et al., 2004). However, other researchers report no age differences (Westcott & Davies, 1995). Age differences appear to emerge when considering who children seek help from. For example, Smith and Shu (2000) found that 10-14 year old British victims told a friend most frequently, followed by a parent, then a school staff member. In a study of British high school boys, Cowie and Olafsson (2000) found that youths told a teacher/school staff member most frequently, followed by someone at home and then a peer supporter. Whether students told a friend was not assessed in this study. By contrast, Westcott and Davies (1995) found that 8-17 year old children told their mothers most frequently, followed by their teacher, and then a friend. After taking a closer look at the findings, however, the investigators found that preferences for telling a peer varied according to age; younger children told family members more frequently than older children, while older children told peers more frequently than younger children. A somewhat consistent finding of older children telling peers may be explained by the increasing importance that the peer group plays, particularly in the face of aggression, as children age (Berndt & Keefe, 1996).

In summary, help-seeking occurs at all ages but tends to decrease as children get older. Findings regarding who children of different ages seek help from are mixed. However, there is some agreement that older children tell peers more than younger children.

**Gender.** With few exceptions (e.g., Westcott & Davies, 1995), researchers have found that girls tend to seek help from others (e.g., friend, family member, teacher) more frequently than do boys (Cowie, 2000; Glover et al., 2000; Hunter et al., 2004; Newman et al., 2001; Smith & Shu, 2000). Differences in the nature of girls’ and boys’ friendships may contribute to gender differences in help-seeking. Girls’ friendships tend to be more intimate and based on cooperation and sharing (Lever, 1978). However, despite their greater intimacy, girls’ friendships tend to be more fragile (Benenson & Christakos, 2003) and may be more susceptible to relational bullying.
In addition to the nature of their friendships, gender stereotypes may make it relatively easy or difficult to seek help (Cowie, 2000). In masculine socialization, it may be expected that a boy stand up for himself if he is being bullied, or appear nonchalant or unaffected by the bullying (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Boys who choose to tell, thereby violating social norms, may be seen as “tattletales” or “sissies” by peers, which may result in further bullying (Cowie, 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997). Bullied boys who endorse help-seeking strategies have also been found to be at greater risk of peer rejection, loneliness, and lower teacher perceived social competence than boys who do not endorse such strategies (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). This pattern of results does not emerge for bullied girls. It appears that boys may be especially aware of the potential costs of seeking help; they report that they are reluctant to seek help because they fear they may get in trouble from a teacher for telling or that they may experience negative consequences from the bully (Newman et al., 2001). In addition to how boys help-seeking appears to their peers and teachers, boys may be reluctant to seek help because it challenges their own ideas about what it means to be masculine (Cowie, 2000). Consistent with their socialization experiences, boys have been shown to respond to bullying by fighting back more often than girls (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997). Thus, it seems that they may be less likely to seek help, particularly in instances where they perceive that they should be standing up for themselves.

Gender stereotypes of the protective male may also be evident in responses to help-seeking. For instance, Craig and Pepler (1997) observed children on the playground and found that peers intervened in only 12% of bullying situations and teachers intervened in only 4%. Boys and girls alike tended to empathize with females in distress more than with males. This greater empathy for females may be because it is acceptable within the masculine role to empathize with females in distress whereas male victims are expected to be unaffected by the bullying (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). A male showing empathy for another male may be perceived as weak, whereas a female showing empathy for another female may be perceived as kind; this empathy may strengthen relationship bonds between females. Furthermore, telling someone about having been bullied may actually increase females’ feelings of acceptance if they feel validated by the person they told (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002).

Preliminary research suggests that children’s willingness to seek help may depend on the type of bullying they have experienced as well as their gender. For example, Rivers and Smith
found that boys reported telling someone else most frequently when they had been physically bullied, less when they had been verbally bullied, and least when they had been indirectly bullied (defined similarly to the construct of relational bullying). Boys were more likely than girls to tell adults when they had been physically bullied. For girls, the pattern was somewhat different. Girls reported telling most frequently when they had been verbally bullied, less when they had been physically bullied, and least when they had been indirectly bullied. However, girls told adults when they had been indirectly bullied more often than did boys.

The fact that children generally tell less frequently when they experience relational bullying may be due to their initial reactions to this vague and sometimes indiscernible form of aggression. For instance, Owens and colleagues (2000) examined girls’ reactions to indirect aggression and found that girls’ first reaction to indirect aggression was often confusion. This reaction may arise because the victim may not be aware of who, for example, started a rumor or wrote a defaming message on a bathroom wall. Similarly, a child may not be certain whether he or she is being excluded deliberately or because of the rules of a game the group is playing (e.g., four square requires four children). In these types of instances it may be difficult for the child to identify who the bully is or even whether he or she is being bullied. Owens and colleagues (2000) found that girls’ second reaction was to try to deny what was happening to them. Coupled with the tendency for adults to view relational bullying as typical or even acceptable behavior, denial may make children even less likely to tell a peer or adult.

Taken together, these findings suggest that gender norms can affect whether or not children view the behaviors they are experiencing as bullying and subsequently, whether they will seek help. For instance, if girls tend to be relationship-oriented (Maccoby, 1990) and experience relational bullying more frequently than overt bullying in their relationships (Smith & Shu, 2000), they may be keen at detecting subtle forms of aggression. Thus, they may be more likely to self-identify as a victim when they have experienced relational bullying. Furthermore, if girls are viewed as the more fragile of the sexes (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974, cited in Condry, Condry & Pogatshnik, 1983), it may be more acceptable for them to seek help. In addition, the act of seeking help from another person may strengthen the relationship bonds between the bullied child and the helper. By contrast, if boys use physical forms of bullying in their relationships, and physical prowess is rewarded in male culture, a male victim and his peers may not view relational bullying as severe enough an act to constitute bullying let alone warrant
seeking help. Instead, boys may be expected to handle relational bullying without intervention. However, compared to relational bullying instances, it may be easier for a child to determine when a physical bullying situation is getting out of control. With escalating violence, boys may acknowledge both that they are being bullied (i.e., they may self-identify as a victim) and that they cannot handle the situation alone; only then might they seek help (Newman, Murray, & Lussier, 2001). Therefore, help-seeking may be affected by gender, self-identification as a victim, and the type of bullying a child experiences.

The Present Study

Differences in how children and adults perceive bullying may affect whether or not children view themselves as victims and subsequently, whether they seek help from someone else. Differences in how males and females are socialized may also contribute to self-identification as a victim and help-seeking behaviors. Certain types of bullying may be expressed and accepted more within each gender (i.e., relational bullying for females and physical bullying for males) and therefore, it may be acceptable for children to seek help when they experience their gender’s “typical” form of bullying. Therefore, this study investigated children’s self-perceptions and help-seeking behavior in various bullying situations by examining children’s endorsement of a global victimization question (i.e., self-identification), their responses to specific bullying behaviors they have experienced, and their reports of help-seeking. I hypothesized that self-identification as a victim would moderate the relationship between experiencing particular bullying behaviors (physical or relational bullying) and help-seeking. In addition, I hypothesized that these relationships would be further moderated by gender. Specifically, for physical bullying, this relationship was expected to be stronger for boys than girls, whereas for relational bullying, this relationship was expected to be stronger for girls than boys.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of children who attend 9 elementary and middle schools in a Midwestern state who were involved in implementing a bullying prevention program. Passive consent was used to gain parental permission. Because each school was in charge of gaining consent, the refusal rate is unknown. The sample consisted of 4331 students from grades 3 through 8 (49.2% girls, 50.8% boys).
**Procedure**

Questionnaires were administered during the spring of 2006. Researchers requested that someone other than the typical teacher in the class administer the questionnaire to students in order to increase disclosure and maintain the anonymity of responses. Prior to administration, students were told that their answers would be anonymous and they were asked not to write any identifying information on the questionnaire. After students had completed the measure, the administrator collected the questionnaires and placed them in a sealed envelope.

**Measure**

The *Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire* (BVQ; Olweus, 1996) is a 39-item self-report measure assessing bullying behavior and victimization in schoolchildren over the previous few months. Validity and reliability of the measure has been assessed in a population of 5,171 children ages 11 to 16 from 37 schools (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Construct validity was assessed by relating the dimensions of victim and bully to self reports of depression, poor self-esteem and peer rejection for victims and anti-social behavior and aggression for bullies. Internal consistencies, as measured by the correlations between the global question and the sum of the specific bullying experiences questions were .79 for having been bullied by others and .77 for bullying others (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). In the present study, these same correlations were .68 for having been bullied by others and .63 for bullying others.

Participants were read aloud the following definition of bullying prior to beginning of the questionnaire.

We say a student is being bullied when another student, or several other students, say mean and hurtful things or make fun of him or her or call him or her mean and hurtful names; completely ignore or exclude him or her from their group of friends or leave him or her out of things on purpose; hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock him or her inside a room; tell lies or spread false rumors about him or her, or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike him or her; and other hurtful things like that. When we talk about bullying, these things happen repeatedly, and it is difficult for the student being bullied to defend himself or herself. We also call it bullying, when a student is teased repeatedly in a mean and hurtful way. But we don't call it bullying when the teasing is done in a friendly and playful way. Also, it is not bullying when two students of about equal strength or power argue or fight.
Students were then asked to mark on their questionnaires their responses to a global question regarding how frequently they have experienced bullying by others over the past couple of months. Five response choices were offered: 1 = “it hasn’t happened in the past couple of months”, 2 = “it has only happened once or twice”, 3 = “2 or 3 times a month”, 4 = “about once a week” and, 5 = “several times a week”. The categorization of self-identified victim was given to participants who indicated that they experience bullying “2-3 times a month” or more, in line with previous research (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Participants were then asked questions about the frequency with which they have experienced eight specific types of bullying behaviors: verbal bullying, social exclusion/ignoring, physical bullying, spreading rumors, taking or damaging things from the victim, threatening or forcing the victim to do things, bullying based on the victim’s race, and sexual harassment. Response choices were the same as those for the global question of bullying. Non-identified victims were those youth who indicated that they had experienced bullying less than 2 or 3 times a month on the global question, but endorsed having experienced at least one type of bullying behavior at least 2 or 3 times a month. Due to a low correlation (.43) between the two items that make up the relational bullying scale (exclusion and rumor spreading), only the exclusion question was used to assess relational bullying. Help-seeking was assessed by asking students, “Have you told anyone that you have been bullied at school in the past couple of months?” Response choices were “I haven’t been bullied at school in the past couple of months”, “I have been bullied but I have not told anyone”, and “I have been bullied and I have told somebody about it”. For purposes of this study, the first two response choices were collapsed into a single category of not sought help. Children who endorsed the third response choice were considered to have sought help.

Results

Analytic Strategy

Of the 4331 cases, 476 (11%) were missing values. These values were found to be missing at random within groups. For the analyses, the missing values were imputed using the Expected Maximum algorithm in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 15. The data was then normalized using Linear Structural Relations (LISREL), version 8.5, and standardized in SPSS.
Hypothesis 1: Self-identification as a Victim as a Moderator of Help-seeking

Logistic regression analyses were selected to test the moderational relationships because the dependent variable (help-seeking) is dichotomous (no or yes; Peng, Lee, & Ingersoll, 1996). Logistic regression analyses calculate a Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness of fit statistic which indicates whether a logistic regression model predicts the observed state of each case of having sought help or not with an accuracy that is significantly better than chance. Non-significant Hosmer-Lemeshow $\chi^2$ values indicate better model fit. In addition, logistic regression analyses yield an odds ratio, Exp ($\beta$), for each predictor. An odds ratio is the probability of an outcome “success” (i.e. a score of 1) divided by the probability of an outcome “failure” (i.e. a score of 0; Peng, Lee, & Ingersoll, 1996).

To test the first hypothesis that self-identification as a victim (using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff) moderates the relationship between experiencing bullying and help-seeking, two logistic regression analyses were conducted. One regression included physical bullying as the independent variable, and the other regression included relational bullying as the IV. Help-seeking (no or yes) was the dependent variable. To account for possible age-related effects, in both models, grade was entered as a covariate in the first step. The first model tested examined whether the relationship between experiencing physical bullying and seeking help was moderated by self-identification as a victim, using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff. Physical bullying and self-identification as a victim were entered on the second step and the two-way interaction term (physical bullying X self-identification) was entered on step three. The second model examined whether self-identification as a victim (using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff) moderated the relationship between experiencing relational bullying and seeking help. In this model relational bullying and self-identification as a victim were entered on the second step and the two-way interaction term (relational bullying X self-identification) was entered on step three.

Neither model achieved good fit as measured by the Hosmer-Lemeshow test statistic. Thus, because the models that did not include gender did not achieve good fit, the first hypothesis was not supported. Self-identification as a victim did not moderate the relationship between the type of bullying experienced and help-seeking without regard to child gender.

Hypothesis 2: Gender, Self-identification as a Victim, and Physical Bullying

To examine hypothesis two – that self-identification as a victim moderates the relationship between experiencing physical bullying and seeking help differently for boys and
girls – a logistic regression analysis was conducted. Once again, grade was entered as a covariate on step one. Gender, physical bullying and self-identification were entered on step two. The three two-way interaction terms were entered on step three (gender X physical bullying, gender X self-identification, and physical bullying X self-identification). The three-way interaction (gender X physical bullying X self-identification) was entered on step four.

The overall model that included the three-way interaction term was significant, $\chi^2(8) = 401.595, p < .001$, and achieved good fit according the Hosmer-Lemeshow statistic, $\chi^2(8) = 8.927, p > .05$. Betas, Wald statistics, degrees of freedom, p-values and odds ratios are presented in Table 1 for each predictor at each step. In step one, the covariate of grade significantly predicted help-seeking. In step two, gender, physical bullying, and self-identification as a victim predicted help-seeking. In step three, the interaction between gender and physical bullying significantly predicted help-seeking. In step four, the three-way interaction between gender, physical bullying and self-identification as a victim did not significantly predict help-seeking. In other words, boys who self-identified as victims did not seek help more frequently than boys who did not self-identify as they experienced increasing levels of physical bullying. Thus, hypothesis two was not supported.

Examination of the model that included only the individual predictors and two-way interactions (step 3) revealed that the overall model was significant, $\chi^2(7) = 401.540, p < .001$, and showed good fit according the Hosmer-Lemeshow test, $\chi^2(8) = 12.367, p > .05$. The model was accurate in predicting whether students sought help or did not 63.9% of the time. This model was better at predicting when children would not seek help (74%) than when they would (51.3%). There were main effects of grade, Wald(1) = 93.680, $p < .001$, and self-identification, Wald(1) = 40.858, $p < .001$, and a significant interaction between gender and physical bullying.

Table 2 contains the percentages of children in each grade who sought help. The main effect of grade indicated that a greater percentage of third grade students sought help than sixth grade students, $t(1114) = 3.434, p < .001$, seventh grade students, $t(1072) = 6.52, p < .001$, and eighth grade students, $t(1015) = 9.214, p < .001$. More fourth grade students sought help than seventh grade students, $t(972) = 4.408, p < .001$, or eighth grade students, $t(902) = 6.915, p < .001$. A greater percentage of fifth grade students sought help than sixth grade students, $t(1622) = 2.46, p < .05$, seventh grade students, $t(1323) = 6.255, p < .001$, or eighth grade students, $t(1630) = 9.752, p < .001$. More sixth grade students sought help than seventh grade students, $t(1332) =$
Finally a greater percentage of seventh grade students sought help than eighth grade students, *t*(1238) = 2.596, *p* < .01. In other words, overall, younger students tended to seek help at similar rates to one another, but sought help at higher rates than older students. Furthermore, help-seeking decreased after fifth grade.

The main effect of self-identification revealed that the odds of self-identified victims seeking help were greater than the odds of non-identified victims seeking help. This pattern can also be seen in Table 3 where more self-identified victims sought help than non-identified victims. Table 4 shows that the amount of physical bullying children experience may drive them to self-identify as victims. When children experience physical bullying two or three times a month or more, they are more likely to self-identify as victims, *t*(408) = 4.133, *p* < .001. Thus, the frequency with which they are bullied motivates victims to self-identify or not.

The interaction between gender and physical bullying suggests that the odds of a victim seeking help as he/she is physically bullied more frequently is a function of his/her gender. Further analysis revealed that for every one unit increase in physical bullying experienced, the odds of boys seeking help increased 1.278 times, Wald(1) = 21.915, *p* < .001, whereas the odds of girls seeking help was unchanged. Thus, regardless of whether victims self-identify as a victim or not, the odds of boys seeking help as they experience more frequent physical bullying increases while the odds for girls remain the same. Examination of the percentages of boys who seek help at each level of physical bullying illustrates a tendency towards slight increases in boys’ help-seeking overall, but shows variability within each level of physical bullying experienced (see Table 5). Boys were less likely to seek help if they were physically bullied once or twice or less or about once a week. However, they were more likely to seek help if they were bullied either two or three times a month or several times a week. By contrast, girls’ rates of help-seeking remain consistently high across all levels of physical bullying.

**Hypothesis 3: Gender, Self-identification as a Victim, and Relational Bullying**

A similar logistic regression model was run to test the hypothesis that self-identification as a victim moderates the relationship between experiencing relational bullying and seeking help differently for boys and girls. Grade was entered on step one; gender, relational bullying and self-identification were entered on step two, and the three two-way interaction terms were entered on step three (gender X relational bullying, gender X self-identification, and relational
bullying X self-identification). The three way interaction (gender X relational bullying X self-
identification) was entered on step four.

The results of the analyses for relational bullying revealed a similar pattern to those
reported earlier for physical bullying. The overall model was significant, \( \chi^2(8) = 386.195, p < .001 \), and achieved good fit according the Hosmer-Lemeshow test, \( \chi^2(8) = 9.997, p > .05 \). Betas,
Wald statistics, degrees of freedom, p-values and odds ratios are presented in Table 6 for each
predictor at each step of the regression analysis. In step one, the covariate of grade significantly
predicted help-seeking. In step two, gender and self-identification as a victim predicted help-
seeking. In step three, the interaction between gender and relational bullying significantly
predicted help-seeking. In step four, the three-way interaction between gender, relational
bullying and self-identification as a victim did not significantly predict help-seeking. This
indicates that girls who self-identified as victims did not seek help more frequently than girls
who did not self-identify as they experienced increasing levels of relational bullying. Therefore,
hypothesis three was not supported.

Further evaluation of the main effects and two-way interactions revealed that the model
was significant in predicting help-seeking, \( \chi^2(7) = 384.962, p < .001 \). The model was accurate
in predicting whether students sought help or did not 63.7% of the time. As in the previous
model, this model was better at predicting when children would not seek help (76.9%) than when
they would (47.3%). Once more, there were main effects of grade, Wald(1) = 91.369, \( p < .001 \),
and self-identification as a victim, Wald(1) = 22.446, \( p < .001 \), as well as a significant interaction
between gender and relational bullying. The main effect of grade was discussed above in relation
to physical bullying. In short, children were less likely to seek help as they got older. The main
effect of self-identification revealed that the odds of self-identified victims seeking help were
greater than the odds of non-identified victims seeking help. With regard to motivating factors of
self-identification, Table 7 shows the same pattern as physical bullying; victims tend to self-
identify when they experience relational bullying two or three times a month or more, \( t(518) = 3.008, p < .01 \).

The interaction suggests that gender plays a role in whether the odds of a child seeking
help change as relational bullying increases. Subsequent analysis of the interaction between
gender and relational bullying revealed that for every one unit increase in relational bullying
experienced, the odds of boys seeking help increases 1.157 times, Wald(1) = 8.519, \( p < .01 \) while
the odds of girls seeking help is unchanged. Thus, regardless of whether children who are bullied self-identify as victims or not, the odds of boys seeking help as they experience more frequent relational bullying increases while the odds for girls stays the same. In looking at the percentages of boys who seek help at each level of relational bullying illustrates that at low levels of bullying (once or twice), boys tend to not seek help, but at higher levels of relational bullying, boys do tend to seek help (see Table 8). As was the case with physical bullying, girls’ rates of help-seeking remain consistently high across levels of relational bullying. Comparing rates of help-seeking in girls who experienced only physical bullying with girls who experienced only relational bullying revealed that girls sought help more frequently when they experienced only physical bullying (74%) than when they endured only relational bullying (48%), \( t(199) = 5.992, p < .001 \). Thus, girls appear more willing to tolerate relational bullying than physical bullying.

Calculating Self-identification as a Victim Using a More Liberal Cutoff

Whereas Solberg and Olweus (2003) recommend using 2-3 times a month or more as a cutoff to categorize victims of bullying, other researchers argue that children who endorse having been bullied once or twice should be considered victims if, prior to answering questions about their bullying experiences, they have been provided definitions of bullying that describe bullying as a repeated act (Hunter & Boyle, 2004). Thus, it may be the case that a different pattern of help-seeking may emerge for victims who self-identify versus those who do not. For example, self-identification may not moderate the relationship between type of bullying and help-seeking when using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff, but may when using a more liberal cutoff. To address this possibility, analyses were run again using the more liberal cutoff (1 to 2 times or more) for self-identification.

All variables were entered in the same order as in the previous logistic regression analyses. The only difference in these analyses was that the self-identification as a victim variable was recomputed based on the liberal cutoff of having experienced bullying once or twice or more.

Hypothesis 1 using the liberal cutoff for determining self-identification as a victim. The model examining whether self-identification as a victim moderates the relationship between physical bullying and seeking help was significant \( \chi^2(3) = 536.483, p < .001 \), and did achieve acceptable fit according to the Hosmer-Lemeshow statistic, \( \chi^2(8) = 14.302, p > .05 \). In step one, the covariate of grade significantly predicted help-seeking, Wald(1) = 94.034, \( p < .001 \). In step
two, there was a main effect of physical bullying, \( \text{Wald}(1) = 8.676, p < .01 \), and of self-identification as a victim, \( \text{Wald}(1) = 324.917, p < .001 \). In step three, the two-way interaction between physical bullying and self-identification as a victim was not significant. A closer look at Tables 9 and 10 illuminates the main effects of physical bullying and self-identification as a victim using the liberal cutoff. Table 9 shows that as physical victimization increases, fewer children seek help. Table 10 shows that more self-identified victims than non-identified victims sought help.

The model with relational bullying exhibited poor fit, as measured by the Hosmer-Lemeshow statistic, and therefore cannot be interpreted. Taken together, these findings suggest that using a more liberal cutoff to compute self-identification as a victim has no effect on whether victims who self-identify seek help more frequently as the amount of bullying they experience increases. In other words, the first hypothesis would not be supported using the more liberal cutoff for computing self-identification as a victim.

*Hypothesis 2 using the liberal cutoff for determining self-identification as a victim.* In examining hypothesis two, the same pattern of results emerged when using the liberal cutoff. The three-way interaction between gender, physical bullying and self-identification as a victim was not significant. In other words, boys who self-identified as victims did not seek help more frequently as they experienced increasing levels of physical bullying. Thus, the second hypothesis was not supported using the more liberal cutoff.

As was the case when using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff, the model using self-identification as a victim, physical bullying, gender, and the two-way interactions between them to predict help-seeking was the best model, \( \chi^2(7) = 600.891, p < .001 \). The model was correct in predicting whether students sought help or did not 68.3% of the time. Again, this model was better at predicting when children would not seek help (70.4%) than when they would (65.8%). However, the model using the liberal cutoff was better at predicting when children would seek help than the model using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff, which was only correct in predicting when children would seek help 51.3% of the time. Further analyses again revealed that the odds of boys seeking help increased 1.265 times for every one unit increase in physical bullying experienced, \( \text{Wald}(1) = 21.127, p < .001 \), while the odds of girls seeking help stayed the same. This odds-ratio is very similar to the 1.278 odds ratio found when using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff.
Hypothesis 3 using the liberal cutoff for determining self-identification as a victim. The same pattern of results again emerged when using the liberal cutoff for determining self-identification as a victim. As was the case using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff, the three-way interaction between gender, relational bullying, and self-identification as a victim was not significant. In other words, girls who self-identified as victims did not seek help more frequently as they experienced increasing levels of relational bullying. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not supported using this more liberal cutoff.

Once again, the model using self-identification as a victim, relational bullying, gender, and the two-way interactions between them to predict help-seeking was the best model, \( \chi^2(7) = 589.919, p < .001 \). The model was correct in predicting whether students sought help or did not 67.8% of the time. This model was better at predicting when children would not seek help (71.1%) than when they would (63.8%). Once more, the model using the liberal cutoff was better at predicting when children would seek help than the model using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff, which was only correct in predicting when children would seek help less than 48% of the time. Further analyses again revealed that the odds of boys seeking help increased 1.191 times for every one unit increase in relational bullying experienced, Wald(1) = 12.769, \( p < .001 \), while the odds of girls seeking help was unchanged. This odds-ratio is virtually identical to the 1.157 odds ratio found when using the Solberg and Olweus cutoff.

Discussion

Children who do not perceive themselves as victims of bullying may believe they have no reason to seek help. Thus, being able to self-identify as a victim may be an important determinant of help-seeking behavior. To date, research has not investigated how self-identification as a victim of bullying relates to help-seeking behavior. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine this role. Specifically it was hypothesized that self-identification as a victim would moderate the relationship between type of bullying experienced and help-seeking. Gender was predicted to moderate this relationship further. Specifically, boys who self-identified as victims were predicted to seek help more frequently as they experienced more frequent physical bullying. Similarly, girls who self-identified as victims were predicted to seek help more frequently as they experienced more frequent relational bullying. Contrary to what was hypothesized, these moderational relationships were not supported in this sample. However, unexpected relationships did emerge in both models that considered gender as an additional
moderator. In both the models that considered physical bullying and relational bullying, there was a main effect of self-identification and a two-way interaction of gender by type of bullying (physical or relational). In both models, the odds of seeking help were greater for children who self-identified as victims than for those who were bullied but did not self-identify as victims. Both models also revealed that the odds of boys seeking help increased as the level of either physical or relational bullying increased, whereas girls showed consistently high rates of help-seeking across levels of physical and relational bullying. In addition, girls endured more relational than physical bullying before seeking help. Interpretations and implications of these findings will be discussed below.

*Self-identification as a Victim Does Not Moderate Help-seeking*

Neither of the models that examined self-identification as a victim as a moderator of the relationship between type of bullying and help-seeking were supported in this sample. Thus, contrary to prediction, self-identification as a victim did not moderate the relationship between type of bullying experienced and help-seeking. In other words, children who had been bullied and self-identified as victims were *not* more likely to seek help as they experienced greater levels of either physical or relational bullying than children who had been bullied but who did not self-identify as victims. This pattern existed regardless of whether the Olweus and Solberg or the liberal cutoff was used to determine whether a victim self-identified or not.

*Self-identification as a Victim Predicts Help-seeking*

The finding that children who self-identified as victims were more likely to seek help when they had been bullied than children who did not self-identify as victims—regardless of whether they experienced physical or relational bullying—contributes to our understanding of help-seeking. One implication of this finding is that bullying prevention efforts should encourage children to self-identify in order to increase the likelihood that they will seek help. If this is true, it will be important for children to be able to determine when they have been bullied. Determining whether one has been bullied involves more than just applying the definition of bullying to a specific situation or endorsing a global item on a bullying questionnaire. It also requires careful consideration of the climate of the school. If the climate is one in which bullying behaviors are accepted or ignored by adults, then children may be confused about whether their experience constitutes bullying. If bullied children are uncertain about whether they have been bullied or if they believe nothing will be done to stop it, it follows that they would not believe
they have any reason to seek help. Indeed, past findings show that students who believed that bullying was both pervasive and an acceptable aspect of their school climate were less likely to seek help (Unnever & Cornell, 2004). Thus, one implication of the finding that victims who self-identify are more likely to seek help is that bullying prevention programs need to help schools fully appreciate the importance of the school-wide components of the model so that students understand what bullying is, are confident that consequences will be enforced when it occurs, and believe that adults will act in support of the victim if a student reports that he or she has been bullied.

However, an important assumption to question before encouraging children to self-identify as victims is whether help-seeking actually reduces victimization. Whereas some researchers have found this to be true (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997), others suggest that bullying may actually increase when children tell (Newman, 2003). Prior to encouraging self-identification, it will be important to determine whether there are differences in the effectiveness of self-identified and non-identified victims’ help-seeking behavior. It may be the case that children who self-identify as victims and tell others when they have been bullied do not experience reductions in their victimization. If this is the case, then encouraging children to self-identify and subsequently seek help may either have no effect on reducing bullying or may actually increase their experiences of it. Future longitudinal research that explores the effectiveness of self-identified and non-identified victims’ help-seeking behavior is needed to establish whether this is the case.

Another important consideration to weigh before encouraging children to self-identify as victims is whether self-identification is related to other helpful outcomes. Findings in the crime literature suggest that individuals who self-identify as victims tend to be rejected by others, and to be treated with ambivalence or even hostility (Taylor et al., 1983). Within the bullying literature, findings are mixed. On one hand, Terasahjo and Salmivalli (2003) found that students frequently dismissed bullying as harmless, justified it, or indicated that victims deserved their treatment because they were “odd” in some way. On the other hand, Theriot and colleagues (2005) reported that children frequently felt sorry for victims and wanted to help. Thus, future studies should focus on clarifying whether, and under what conditions, self-identifying as a victim is helpful when one considers outcomes other than help-seeking (e.g., quality of life, self-efficacy, etc.). It may be the case that self-identifying as a victim is helpful in a few
circumstances, but is mostly unhelpful when one looks across multiple outcomes. If this is true, program developers should consider the larger ramifications of encouraging children to self-identify as a victim before encouraging them to do so.

Whereas self-identifying as a victim appears to be associated with an increase in the likelihood that bullied children will seek help, it is important to note that a large percentage (37%) of children who were bullied did not self-identify but still sought help. Possible differences between self-identified and non-identified children may involve the length of time they have been bullied and their sense of control over the bullying. Bullied children who experience short-term bullying report feeling greater control than those who experience long term bullying (Hunter & Boyle, 2002). Whereas the present study did not examine the length of the bullying, it is possible that non-identified victims have endured short-term bullying and, subsequently, maintain greater feelings of control. Therefore, identifying as a victim may not seem relevant because they view their victim status as temporary and under their control. This is a question for future research. Children also may choose not to identify as victims for fear that they will be seen as odd or in some way deserving of their treatment (Theriot et al., 2005). It will be an important task for future studies to explore other reasons why bullied children choose not to self-identify but still seek help as this knowledge may yield information about other potential predictors of help-seeking amongst this subgroup of victims. For example, non-identified victims may seek help the very first time they are bullied. As a result, they may not consider themselves victims because they stopped it early in the process. In this case, how soon a non-identified victim sought help after being bullied may predict help-seeking.

To summarize, the decision to self-identify as a victim appears to be complex. Additional research about self-identification as a victim is necessary. Specifically, avenues for future research include determining whether there are differences in the effectiveness of self-identified and non-identified victims’ help-seeking behavior; whether, and under what conditions, self-identifying as a victim is helpful when considering outcomes other than help-seeking; and why some victims choose not to self-identify but still choose to seek help. Only after research has examined these questions can policy changes be recommended.

*Gender and Type of Bullying Predict Help-seeking*

Another key finding of this study was that as physical bullying increased, the odds of boys seeking help increased whereas the odds of girls seeking help remained the same. Further
evaluation of these findings revealed that boys were less likely to seek help if they experienced physical bullying about once or twice or less or about once a week. By comparison, boys were more likely to seek help if they were physically bullied either two or three times a month or several times a week. In contrast to boys, the odds that girls sought help did not increase as the amount of physical bullying they experienced increased. Importantly, girls’ rates of help-seeking were quite high at all levels of physical bullying, ranging from 55% to 68%. Findings for relational bullying paralleled those for physical bullying: as relational bullying increased, the odds of boys seeking help increased whereas the odds of girls seeking help remained the same. Once again, girls’ rates of help-seeking were high at all levels of relational bullying, ranging from 50% to 62%. Furthermore, girls sought help more frequently when they had experienced physical bullying than relational bullying. This finding is consistent with past findings that suggest gender non-normative aggression (i.e., physical bullying in girls) is less acceptable than gender normative aggression (i.e., relational bullying in girls; Henington et al., 1998).

The tendency for boys to report being bullied as the level of physical or relational bullying increases is consistent with gender socialization theory. The stereotypic male is expected to be independent, assertive, and controlling of his emotions (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004). However, male victims’ experiences of helplessness and emotional distress are incongruent with the traditional male gender role (Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004), as is help-seeking. In an effort to maintain this gender role, boys may keep their distress to themselves or attempt to address the situation on their own. Therefore, at low levels of bullying, boys may be reluctant to tell because telling may challenge their own ideas of what it means to be masculine or because they may be seen as a “tattletale” or “sissy” by their peers (Cowie, 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1997).

Indeed, help-seeking in bullied boys is related to peer rejection and loneliness (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002), although the direction of this relationship has yet to be tested with longitudinal data. However, if help-seeking causes peer rejection and loneliness in boys, violations in gender stereotypes may be to blame. Generally speaking, individuals respond poorly to those who violate gender roles (Brody, 1997, cited in Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004; Henington et al., 1998) and help-seeking in boys is a violation of the gender role of male independence. Negative reactions from others may make boys even more reluctant to seek help, particularly at low levels of bullying. In other words, if boys experience bullying relatively
infrequently, they may view the costs of seeking help to outweigh the benefits and, as a result, may not seek help. However, at higher levels of bullying, victimized boys may realize that they cannot handle the bullying on their own and may seek help from others as a last resort (Newman et al., 2001).

By contrast, it may be more acceptable for bullied girls to seek help whenever they have been bullied because expressing emotions and seeking affiliation are more acceptable within the female gender role (Eagly & Wood, 1991, cited in Mendelsohn & Sewell, 2004). Thus, it seems important that intervention programs focus on creating an environment where it is safe for bullied boys to seek help while simultaneously encouraging them to use other coping strategies that may have fewer negative repercussions such as staying close to safe peers or steering clear of bully hangouts (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Skinner, 2002). Bullying programs may further encourage help-seeking in boys by normalizing their reactions to bullying or by creating ways that boys could seek help without it becoming known to their peers.

To date, only two other studies have examined the relationship between gender and different types of bullying on help-seeking. Rivers and Smith (1994) found that boys sought help more frequently than girls when they had experienced physical bullying and that girls sought help more frequently than boys when they had experienced relational bullying. In the only other study that examined the relationship between gender, type of bullying, and help-seeking, Unnever and Cornell (2004) found that only physical bullying was correlated with help-seeking. Thus, only physical bullying was considered as a predictor in their logistic regression analysis. In their analysis, they found that physical bullying did not significantly predict help-seeking, whereas gender, chronicity of bullying, and perceptions of the school’s tolerance of bullying did predict help-seeking. Neither study examined whether the likelihood of seeking help increased as the level of victimization increased.

An important limitation of the Rivers and Smith (1994) and Unnever and Cornell (2004) studies, and one which is also true of the present study, is that none of these investigations differentiated victims’ help-seeking behavior according to the particular type of bullying they had experienced. In all three studies, help-seeking was measured by one general question such as “Have you told anyone that you have been bullied at school in the past couple of months?” There are two implications to consider. First, interpretations of findings from these studies must be made cautiously, given that victims might have sought help when they experienced one
particular type of bullying but not another. Second, in order to determine whether girls or boys seek help when they experience different types of bullying, future studies will need to directly tie the type of bullying experienced with help-seeking.

Intervention programs will be enhanced by examining other facets of help-seeking behavior as well. For instance, children may turn to different people for help when they experience different types of bullying. To date, studies have largely focused on who children seek help from when they have experienced any type of bullying. For example, Hunter and colleagues (2004) examined combinations of people that 9-14 year old children told about having been bullied. They found that of those children who felt that telling was the best way to make the bullying stop, 23% had told a family member, 18% had told a friend, and 26% had told a family member and a friend. They also examined what strategies children used to try to make themselves feel better. They found that of those children who reported that telling was the best strategy for making them feel better, none indicated that telling a teacher alone, or only telling a teacher and a friend was the best strategy (Hunter et al., 2004). Thus, for some children, telling a teacher may be ineffective and may not make them feel better.

By contrast, Smith and Shu, (2000) found that bullying remained unchanged when victims told a peer. However, when they told teachers, the bullying often got better. Thus, it seems unclear whether telling a particular person (i.e., teacher, peer, or parent) is effective for stopping bullying in general or helping children to feel better. Studies that examine who children seek help from when they experience different types of bullying may provide important information about how to encourage helpful responses by individuals attempting to help the bullied child. For example, boys might seek help from their friends when they experience one type of bullying but from teachers or other adults at school when they experience another type of bullying. If this were true, it would be important for intervention programs to either attempt to encourage children to only seek help from adults or equip the child helpers with the tools necessary to help the bullied children respond. For instance, child helpers could be encouraged to tell an adult about the bullying on behalf of their friend or they could be encouraged to rally additional peer support for the friend being bullied. It may also be the case that bullied children choose to seek help from particular people based on the frequency with which they experience a particular type of bullying (i.e., they seek help from peers at low levels of physical bullying but teachers at high levels of physical bullying). Again, if children seek help from different people, it
is important for those individuals to be equipped to help the victim respond in a way that is helpful.

Intervention programs would also benefit by better understanding the type of support children receive from different helpers and whether or not they perceive that the assistance they receive actually helps. For instance, a child may seek help from a friend and receive emotional (e.g., comfort) or instrumental support (e.g., rallying peers to confront the bully). Children may perceive these different types of support to be more or less helpful when they experience different types of bullying. They may also play a part in children’s determinations of whether or not they are victims. For example, a child may receive instrumental support whereby a friend gathers other friends to confront the bully. A child may then not perceive that he or she was victimized because the type of support received buffered the child from feeling violated or abused.

Finally, bullying intervention efforts will be enhanced by examining what students do instead of seeking help when they experience particular types of bullying, and whether these strategies are effective. If other strategies are found to be more effective than help-seeking, intervention programs should encourage those strategies instead.

Grade

In this study grade was found to be a significant predictor of help-seeking. Overall, younger children tended to seek help at higher rates than older children. An important question for future research will be to investigate whether younger children who self-identify as victims may be more or less likely to seek help than older children who self-identify as victims. If such differences exist, intervention programs may need to be tailored according to age.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the present study. First, students were the only reporters of their bullying experiences and help-seeking behavior. Thus, it is possible that students were biased in their reports of their bullying and/or help-seeking experiences. To address this potential problem, researchers encourage cross-validation of self-report measures (Caspi, 1998; Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2001). However, this was not possible in this sample because children responded to the questionnaires anonymously. Future studies should confirm the current findings with multiple informants and/or methods of assessing bullying and help-seeking.
A second limitation of this study was that only one question assessed help-seeking behavior and this question included only three response choices: “I haven’t been bullied at school in the past couple of months”, “I have been bullied but I have not told anyone”, and “I have been bullied and I have told somebody about it”. Therefore, it was not possible to determine how often students sought help when they had been physically bullied versus when they had been relationally bullied or when they had experienced some other type of bullying. Findings from future studies that used more detailed questionnaires to inquire about help-seeking in the context of each type of bulling would strengthen the present findings. Items on such questionnaires would ideally gauge the frequency with which students seek help after experiencing a particular type of bullying (i.e., “When you have been physically bullied, how often do you seek help?”). Furthermore, it would be helpful for these questionnaires to measure who children seek help from when they experience different types of bullying, and if they are not seeking help, how are they coping with the bullying.

Finally, this study used only exclusion to measure relational bullying due to a low correlation between rumor spreading and exclusion in the sample. Exclusion is only part of the concept of relational bullying and may potentially be less sensitive to gender effects than other behaviors associated with the concept, such as rumor spreading. Findings of this study should be confirmed using the full concept of relational bullying.

Conclusions

Children’s help-seeking behavior is a complex phenomenon that is not yet fully understood. Whereas this study revealed that self-identification as a victim is an important predictor of help-seeking regardless of the type of bullying children experience, many questions need to be answered prior to encouraging children to self-identify as victims of bullying. The findings of this study also yielded preliminary information that suggests that boys are more likely to seek help as the level of physical or relational bullying they experience increases. Whereas an important preliminary implication of these findings is that intervention programs should strive to create an environment where it is acceptable for victimized boys to seek help regardless of the level of bullying they have experienced, additional research is necessary to support this recommendation due to previous findings that suggest there are costs associated with seeking help for victimized boys. Until then, however, help-seeking should only be encouraged among girls.
References


Table 1

*Logistic Regression Analysis Results Examining the Role of Gender, Physical Bullying and Self-Identification of Victimization (Using the Solberg and Olweus Cutoff) in Help-seeking*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Exp (β)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(odds ratio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>-.235</td>
<td>104.344</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.506</td>
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<td>Physical bullying</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1.171</td>
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<td>Self-identification</td>
<td>-.993</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.371</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>5.693</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
<td>1.193</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical bullying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
<td>.949</td>
</tr>
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<td>Self-identification</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.606</td>
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<td>1.099</td>
</tr>
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<td>Self-identification</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X Physical bullying X</td>
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<td>.055</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
<td>.966</td>
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<td>Self-identification</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*The Percentage of Students in Each Grade who Sought Help*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage of students who did not seek help</th>
<th>Percentage of students who sought help</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Third (N = 530)</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth (N = 476)</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth (N = 1218)</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth (N = 753)</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh (N = 608)</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth (N = 682)</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Frequencies and Percentages of Identified Victims (Using the Solberg and Olweus Cutoff) Who Sought Help*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim identification</th>
<th>Did not seek help</th>
<th>Sought help</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(N = 3388)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-identified</td>
<td>1521 (63.3%)</td>
<td>883 (36.7%)</td>
<td>2404 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identified</td>
<td>358 (36.4%)</td>
<td>626 (63.6%)</td>
<td>984 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

*Frequencies and Percentages of Victims at Each Level of Physical Bullying Victimization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim identification</th>
<th>Was not bullied</th>
<th>Once or twice a month</th>
<th>2 or 3 times a month</th>
<th>About once a week</th>
<th>Several times a week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-identified</td>
<td>1756 (83.2%)</td>
<td>524 (65.6%)</td>
<td>82 (40.0%)</td>
<td>37 (26.8%)</td>
<td>46 (24.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identified</td>
<td>355 (16.8%)</td>
<td>275 (34.4%)</td>
<td>123 (60.0%)</td>
<td>101 (73.2%)</td>
<td>142 (75.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2111 (100%)</td>
<td>799 (100%)</td>
<td>205 (100%)</td>
<td>138 (100%)</td>
<td>188 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*Frequencies and Percentages of Girls and Boys at Each Level of Physical Bullying Who Sought Help or Did Not*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of physical bullying</th>
<th>Boys Did not seek help</th>
<th>Boys Sought help</th>
<th>Boys Total</th>
<th>Girls Did not seek help</th>
<th>Girls Sought help</th>
<th>Girls Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not</td>
<td>Sought help</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Did not</td>
<td>Sought help</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was not bullied</td>
<td>1148 (82.5%)</td>
<td>243 (17.5%)</td>
<td>1391 (100%)</td>
<td>986 (62.6%)</td>
<td>588 (37.4%)</td>
<td>1574 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied once or twice</td>
<td>202 (52.7%)</td>
<td>181 (47.3%)</td>
<td>383 (100%)</td>
<td>162 (42.0%)</td>
<td>224 (58.0%)</td>
<td>386 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied 2 or 3 times a month</td>
<td>58 (46.8%)</td>
<td>66 (53.2%)</td>
<td>124 (100%)</td>
<td>33 (44.6%)</td>
<td>41 (55.4%)</td>
<td>74 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied about once a week</td>
<td>42 (53.2%)</td>
<td>37 (46.8%)</td>
<td>79 (100%)</td>
<td>18 (31.6%)</td>
<td>39 (68.4%)</td>
<td>57 (100%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bullied several times a week</td>
<td>48 (45.3%)</td>
<td>58 (54.7%)</td>
<td>106 (100%)</td>
<td>27 (33.8%)</td>
<td>53 (66.2%)</td>
<td>80 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

Logistic Regression Analysis Results Examining the Role of Gender, Relational Bullying and Self-identification of Victimization (Using the Solberg and Olweus Cutoff) in Help-seeking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Exp (β)</th>
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<td>Step 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>-.235</td>
<td>104.344</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.620</td>
<td>68.761</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.538</td>
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<td>.052</td>
<td>2.498</td>
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<td>&gt;.05</td>
<td>1.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identification</td>
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<td>160.622</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.336</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>5.347</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
<td>1.167</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relational bullying</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
<td>.926</td>
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<td>Self-identification</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational bullying X Self-identification</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
<td>.963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender X Relational bullying X Self-identification</td>
<td>-.152</td>
<td>1.230</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;.05</td>
<td>.859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

*Frequencies and Percentages of Victims at Each Level of Relational Bullying Victimization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim identification</th>
<th>Was not bullied</th>
<th>Once or twice a month</th>
<th>2 or 3 times a month</th>
<th>About once a week</th>
<th>Several times a week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-identified</td>
<td>1340 (82.7%)</td>
<td>828 (75.9%)</td>
<td>113 (43.5%)</td>
<td>77 (38.1%)</td>
<td>86 (32.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identified</td>
<td>280 (17.3%)</td>
<td>263 (24.1%)</td>
<td>147 (56.5%)</td>
<td>125 (61.9%)</td>
<td>181 (67.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1620 (100%)</td>
<td>1091 (100%)</td>
<td>260 (100%)</td>
<td>202 (100%)</td>
<td>267 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of relational bullying</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did not seek help</td>
<td>Sought help</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Did not seek help</td>
<td>Sought help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was not bullied</td>
<td>1101 (81.6%)</td>
<td>249 (18.4%)</td>
<td>1350 (100%)</td>
<td>742 (66.4%)</td>
<td>375 (33.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied once or twice</td>
<td>262 (60.0%)</td>
<td>175 (40.0%)</td>
<td>437 (100%)</td>
<td>310 (49.4%)</td>
<td>317 (50.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied 2 or 3 times a month</td>
<td>51 (44.7%)</td>
<td>63 (55.3%)</td>
<td>114 (100%)</td>
<td>60 (41.7%)</td>
<td>84 (58.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied about once a week</td>
<td>32 (42.7%)</td>
<td>43 (57.3%)</td>
<td>75 (100%)</td>
<td>47 (37.9%)</td>
<td>77 (62.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullied several times a week</td>
<td>52 (48.6%)</td>
<td>55 (51.4%)</td>
<td>107 (100%)</td>
<td>66 (41.8%)</td>
<td>92 (58.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

*Frequencies and Percentages of Children Who Were Physically Bullied Who Sought Help*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical bullying (N = 4267)</th>
<th>Did not seek help</th>
<th>Sought help</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was not bullied</td>
<td>2137 (72.0%)</td>
<td>832 (28.0%)</td>
<td>2969 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice</td>
<td>366 (47.3%)</td>
<td>408 (52.7%)</td>
<td>774 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or 3 times a month</td>
<td>92 (46.2%)</td>
<td>107 (53.8%)</td>
<td>199 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About once a week</td>
<td>60 (43.8%)</td>
<td>77 (56.2%)</td>
<td>137 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>77 (41.0%)</td>
<td>111 (59.0%)</td>
<td>188 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim identification</td>
<td>Did not seek help</td>
<td>Sought help</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 3390)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-identified</td>
<td>961 (78.3%)</td>
<td>266 (21.7%)</td>
<td>1227 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-identified</td>
<td>920 (42.5%)</td>
<td>1243 (57.5%)</td>
<td>2163 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>