Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for Bullying Problems

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Abstract

The study examined adolescents' willingness to seek help from peer, parent/guardian and teacher/professional helpers in physical, verbal and relational bullying situations. Questionnaire data were collected from 169 students (M age= 13.7 years, SD = 1.01; 88 females, 81 males). Factorial and Univariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine differences across gender, grade, school location, family status, recent experience with bullying and previous help-seeking. Results revealed significant main effects of previous help-seeking, school location, family structure, and Helper x Gender interactions. With respect to gender differences, females were significantly more willing to seek help from friends for bullying than males. It was also found that adolescents' willingness to seek help for bullying varies based on type of bullying, helper, and previous help-seeking. Adolescents living with a father or living in a rural community were also more willing to seek help. Results are discussed in terms of the impact of these variables upon adolescents' willingness to seek help.

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Chapter I: Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

Researchers from around the world have drawn attention to the problem of bullying in schools and the National Education Association reports that an estimated 160,000 students miss school everyday to avoid being bullied (Sheras & Tippins, 2002). Although bullying amongst adolescents is recognized as a serious problem and difficult to cope with, (Crick & Brigbee, 1998) little consideration has been given to how they manage these problems and who they seek for help. Given that an important element of many anti-bullying programs is encouraging victims to seek help in order to resolve the situation, more research needs to be done to address these gaps in the help-seeking literature (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). Most frequently, victims of school bullying are encouraged to tell the teacher and are also advised to seek help from parents and professionals (Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2004). Furthermore, when adolescents are not willing to seek help from adults they often seek support from peers (Naylor & Cowie, 1999).

It is unclear, however, how the type of victimization (i.e., relational, physical or verbal) or how previous experience with a bullying problem impacts on adolescents' choice of helper. The purpose of the present study was to assess junior high school students' willingness to seek help from their peers, teachers/professionals and parents/guardians for a physical bullying problem, a verbal bullying problem and for a relational bullying problem, and to evaluate whether adolescents' willingness to seek assistance in these situations differs by gender, recent experience with the same type of problem and/or their previous help-seeking. Junior high school students were chosen as a

sample because the worst incidents of bullying occur in early adolescence from sixth to ninth grade, a time period can be a very turbulent time during an adolescent's life and is accompanied by numerous hormonal and social changes (Hazler, 1996). The growing need to define individuals into 'in group status' reinforces bullying behaviors and fits the developmental needs of this age group (Hazler, 1996). Information about junior high students' choice of helper in bullying situations might help to create a school culture in which teachers/school personnel and parents better understand what is expected of them, thus leading to more effective and efficient anti-bullying programs and interventions.

Literature Review

Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be defined as a repeated action of harming others that occurs regularly over time with behaviors intended to cause physical and/or psychological harm to one or more persons (Hazler, 1996). The bully is often perceived as physically, socially and/or verbally stronger than the victim (Hazler, 1996). Children who bully typically experience a sense of power and excitement while children who are bullied experience feelings of resentment, anxiety, and embarrassment (Olweus, 1993). Thus, bullying may also be characterized by a power imbalance between the victim and the bully, either real or perceived (Olweus, 1993; Roberts, 2000).

Teasing is very similar in nature to bullying. Teasing is considered a normal yet challenging aspect of adolescent culture and of children's social development (Jones, Newman, & Bautista, 2005). Through receiving teasing comments from peers, children have the opportunity to develop and practice interpersonal skills of asserting themselves and managing conflicts (Roberts, 2000). Teasing does, however, become bullying when

it extends over long periods of time (Jones et al., 2005). Coloroso (2002) further distinguishes taunting from teasing. Taunting is considered similar in nature to bullying with equally harmful effects. A method used to distinguish between teasing and taunting, when it is recognized, is to examine adolescents' intentions; taunting is intended to cause harm and teasing is stopped if an individual becomes distressed (Coloroso, 2002).

Types of Bullying

Bullying encompasses a wide range of behaviors that can be clustered into three broad categories: physical, verbal and relational (Crick & Brigbee, 1998; Karin, Albreksten, & Qvarnstrom, 2001; Olweus, 1993). Most people will agree that physical aggression constitutes the most widely accepted definition of bullying (Olweus, 1993). It involves harm to an individual's physical body (e.g., being hit, having one's hair pulled or being pushed; Karin et al., 2001). Physical bullying in elementary grades typically occurs during recess and lunch hour and may consist of striking and/or pushing another student (Holmes & Bradenburg-Ayers, 1998). During the middle and high school years, physical bullying can become more serious in nature due to the differences in students' size and strength (Holmes & Brandeburg-Ayers, 1998).

A second type of bullying, verbal bullying, is characterized by name-calling, sexist and racist comments, verbal threats and cruel jokes about appearance, disabilities, race, ethnicity, religion and/or idiosyncrasies (Hazler, 1996; Karin et al., 2001; Olweus, 1993). Verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying reported by both male and female students (Olweus, 1993). Although this type of bullying is more specific and detailed in high school compared to that which occurs in elementary school, it causes psychological harm to students at every level of schooling (Olweus, 1993).

Verbal bullying is usually more difficult to detect by adults than other types of bullying because it often occurs very quickly leaving no physical evidence that the incident has taken place (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 1999). Verbal bullying is also especially difficult to distinguish from verbal teasing, as mentioned earlier, due to its subtle features. One method to differentiate between verbal bullying and teasing is to examine a child for signs of embarrassment, anxiety and resentment (Olweus, 1993).

Relational bullying is the third form of bullying and it involves being excluded from social groups or being gossiped about (Karin et al., 2001). Social exclusion consists of individual children or groups of children purposefully excluding another child or children from participating in social activities (Olweus, 1993). Exclusion can consist of verbal or non-verbal insults that indirectly or directly convey a message to children that they are not welcomed to participate in the group (Olweus, 1993). Youth can be excluded from participating in a group for a variety of reasons including: their friends, religion, ethnicity, sex, clothing, appearance, scholastic and/or athletic abilities (Olweus, 1993). Exclusion also occurs when verbal comments directly or indirectly put down or insult the child or group of children, often referred to as gossip (Crick & Brigbee, 1998).

There is less known about relational bullying compared to the other two types of bullying because it is often complex and difficult to distinguish (Woods & Wolke, 2004.) Most of the work on peer harassment in schools has primarily focused on forms of aggression that are overt in nature and little attention has been given to relational forms of aggression (Cullerton-Sen & Crick 2005; Leff, Kupersmidt, Patterson, & Power, 1999). In a study conducted by Craig, Henderson, and Murphy (2000), teachers were less likely to classify exclusionary behaviors as bullying and therefore less likely to intervene.

Prior to the work of Crick and colleagues, (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Crick & Ladd, 1993; Woods & Wolke, 2004) most studies excluded relational victimization. A meta-analytic review of cross–sectional peer victimization research over 20 years found that only five studies included relational forms of victimization (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

Age Trends in Bullying

Students of all ages report being bullied; however, the worst incidents of bullying occur in early adolescence from sixth to ninth grade (Hazler, 1996). This time period can be a very turbulent time during an adolescent's life and is accompanied by numerous hormonal and social changes. Hazler (1996) states that the growing need to define individuals into 'in group status' reinforces bullying behaviors and fits the developmental needs of this age group. There is a decline in the frequency and the rate of physical bulling as children age; however, the rate of verbal bullying consistently increases as children age (Boulton & Underwood 1992; Olweus, 1991; Perry, Kusel & Perry, 1998). Furthermore, while differences exist in the rate of bullying as children age, less is know about the rate of help-seeking for bullying problems as children age. In the only study the researcher could find on this topic, students' help-seeking behaviors for bullying problems did not differ based on school-stage for adolescents aged 9-14 years (Hunter et al., 2004).

Gender, Ethnic, Residency and Socioeconomic Differences

It is often reported that overt forms of bullying are more common of boys' experiences than that of girls, especially during elementary school (Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2000). Although girls tend to experience more relational forms of victimization, this gender difference is not seen consistently in the literature (Crick & Brigbee, 1998).

While it is not always clear if boys or girls are more frequent recipients of relational aggression, it is evident that girls are significantly more likely to be a victim of relational aggressive acts rather than physically aggressive acts (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). It is also clear that girls tend to use relational aggression to victimize adolescents more frequently than boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). In addition, girls tend to report higher levels of negative affect in response to relational aggression than boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

The physical and emotional consequences of bullying also tend to differ by gender. For example, males and females may interpret bullying differently. Early adolescent girls predicted greater negative emotional responses to hypothetical bullying situations than did boys (Whitesell & Harter, 1996). In another study, girls rated both overt and relational aggression as more hurtful than did boys (Galen & Underwood, 1997). Furthermore, girls tend to have greater concerns over social acceptance and appearance than their male counterparts, so that perceived violations create greater emotional reactions (Whitesell & Harter, 1996). Moreover, Lampert (1998) has observed that single bullying events had long-lasting effects on girls' self-concept. It is possible that bullying provocations may be experienced as seemingly more normative for boys because, typically, boys' friendships are characterized by more ritualized teasing (Zeman & Shipman, 1997). Boys may learn to react less to insults than do girls because they anticipate greater ridicule when revealing negative emotions to other male friends (Zeman & Shipman, 1997).

Previous research has examined the relationship between bullying behaviors, school, class size, ethnic composition and socioeconomic status. Whitney and Smith

(1993) reported that children from lower socioeconomic statuses were significantly more often involved in bullying incidents than children from higher socioeconomic statuses. In studies that included schools with student populations between 100 and 1,200 there was no significant relationship between the proportion of white/nonwhite students and the frequency of bullying behavior, or between the reported incidents of bullying and school and class size (Olweus, 1991; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

The Effects of Bullying on the Victim

The most commonly reported consequences of being a victim of bullying include emotional and social problems (Hazler, 1996). Victims of any type of frequent bullying can be conditioned to exhibit social anxiety, avoidance of social interactions and internalization of negative peer experiences (Crick & Brigbee, 1998). These individuals also have higher levels of depression, loneliness, externalizing problems and lower self-esteem. The association between mental health problems and victims are similar among girls and boys (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimepla, 2000). However, it has been reported that relationally aggressive episodes are often more upsetting for girls than boys (Crick & Brigbee, 1998). Teenagers who are bullied also have higher school drop-out rates (Hazler, 1996). Over 90% of bullying victims believed that the victimization caused their current problems and 20% of those students believed that their problems were severe in nature (Hazler, 1996). Taunting has also been linked to negative emotions, suicide ideation, and suicide in victims (Boulton & Hawker, 1997; Coloroso, 2002).

The Effects of Bullying on the Bully

Bullying research has primarily focused on the effects that bullying has on the

victim, as opposed to the effects that bullying has on the bully (Hazler, 1996; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Olweus (1993) emphasized the importance of providing adequate intervention to the bully because failing to do so often results in negative consequences for both the bully and the community at large.

Children who bully have increased problems in interpersonal relationships. For instance, children who bully typically perceive hostile intent where there is none (Olweus, 1993). This often leads to misinterpretation of non-threatening situations that results in aggressive and/or inappropriate reactions by children who bully (Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 1999). Some children who bully perceive that they may be punished for acting out aggressively when adults are present and, therefore, either wait until adults are not present to engage in aggressive acts or utilize more relational and less overt forms of bullying such as name-calling or exclusionary behaviors (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 1999). Either pattern of responding to perceived threats can lead to life long interpersonal difficulties (Olweus, 1991).

Children who bully often have difficulty regulating their emotions. They typically experience more feelings of anxiety, hostility, anger, and tend to be impulsive (Hazler, 1996; Olweus, 1991; Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 1999). Furthermore, bullies also had multiple mental health problems more frequently than did victims (Storch, Brassard, & Masia-Warner, 2003). Literature concerning mental health correlates of bullying and victimization is scarce (Storch et al., 2003), thus the direction of causality is difficult to determine. Some studies suggest that a prolonged sense of hopelessness in the face of uncontrollable victimization leads to a bleak view of the future and an increased sense of hopelessness, leading to poor career planning, dropping out of school, substance use and

anti-social behaviors such as bullying (Arroyo & Eth, 1997). Other research focuses on children's natural adaptive/maladaptive capacities as counteracting/invoking disturbances (Jensen & Shaw, 1992). While the directionality of this relationship remains unclear, ideally children who bully would benefit from intervention that not only addresses their anger and hostility but also addresses their psychological and emotional needs. Unfortunately, interventions directed toward the bully rarely address these needs (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 1999).

Children who bully also share an underlying sense of inadequacy (Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 1999). Although children who bully often report that they feel good about themselves, their self-esteem is often derived from their ability to gain a sense of power over the children they bully (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 1999). If children who bully others are not taught better methods of resolving problems, gaining self-esteem and obtaining a sense of power and control, they will continue their inappropriate behaviors into adulthood (Olweus, 1991).

Children who bully also develop problems with academic work and employment (Olweus, 1993). They tend to achieve lower grades in school and are more likely to drop out (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Olweus, 1993). Adults who participated in bullying behaviors through their grade school years were also more likely to have fewer years of education and earn less money than those who were not involved in bullying (Olweus, 1993). Furthermore, many adults who were involved in bullying as children consistently reported dissatisfaction with their work and coworkers that may be, in part, due to poorly developed interpersonal skills (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Huesmann, Eron, & Lefkowitz, 1984).

Individuals in the community will also be affected by bullies who do not receive intervention during their adolescent years. Children identified as bullies during school tend to have greater participation in criminal activity in adulthood (Olweus, 1993). Children identified as bullies in early elementary school were six times more likely than their same aged peers to be convicted of a crime by age 24 and five times more likely to have committed a serious crime by age 30 (Olweus, 1993). Bullies are also at a much greater risk for being involved in domestic violence and for abusing their own children (Huesmann et al., 1984).

Help-Seeking

There are numerous challenges and changes associated with adolescence, including the prevalent problem of bullying. While adolescents may respond to these challenges in a variety of ways, seeking help is an adaptive coping response that is linked to better adjustment and well-being overall (Ayers, Sandler, West, & Roosa, 1996; Saunders, 1990; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996).

Help-seeking has been described as a coping method for dealing with conflict and distressing events (Wilson & Deane, 2000). It involves communicating about a problem with the intent of obtaining advice, treatment, or support required to resolve or alleviate the concern (Wilson & Deane, 2000). There are two main sources of help-seeking: (1) informal (i.e., friends or parents); and (2) formal or professional (i.e., teachers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, doctors, or social workers; Schonert-Reichl, & Muller, 1996). Indirect sources of help, such as the internet, are also gaining in popularity (Wilson & Deane, 2000). Past research indicates that adolescents prefer informal sources of help and are reluctant to seek help from professional sources (Saunders, 1990).

Furthermore, the majority of previous help-seeking research examined adolescents who sought help from professional sources, even though only 10 % of school based samples access this source of help (Saunders, Resnick, Hoberman, & Blum, 1994; Sears, 2004). It would be helpful to examine help-seeking among a more normative sample of teenagers (i.e., those adolescents' willing to seek help from informal sources) and factors related to their intentions.

The Process of Seeking Help

Help seeking is a complex process that involves three steps: (1) recognizing the situation as problematic; (2) making the decision to seek help; (3) and the final act of seeking help.

The first step of the help-seeking process is acknowledging a situation as problematic (Gross & McMullen, 1983; Saunders, 1990; Srebnik et al., 1996). While some events are universally recognized as problematic (i.e., death of a loved one), most events are subjectively classified as problematic based on an individual's past experiences and cognitive schemas (Sears, Sheppard, & Murphy, 2005). Perceptions about the severity and the degree of the problem also predict help-seeking (Boldero & Fallon, 1995). An adolescent's demographic characteristics (i.e., grade level, gender, family composition and location of residency) may further impact their willingness to seek help (Hunter et al., 2004; Mok & Flynn, 1997). Differing types of bullying may be recognized as troublesome only for certain individuals (e.g., youth of a certain gender and age). Finally, distinct from recognizing the situation as problematic, adolescents must also decide that seeking help would be an appropriate way to solve the problem (Saunders, 1990).

The next step in the process is deciding to seek assistance (Gross & McMullen, 1983; Srebnik et al., 1996). This step usually involves a cost-benefit analysis of help-seeking. Adolescents consider the possible psychological costs of help seeking, such as the fear of being ridiculed and feeling obligated to reciprocate, or feeling guilty for not reciprocating (Gross & McMullen, 1983). Youth may also consider the cost of help-seeking to the helper, such as feeling obligated to solve the problem and not receiving financial compensation (Gross & McMullen, 1983). With respect to bullying problems, Coloroso (2002) indicated that feelings of shame, fear of retaliatory bullying, beliefs that individuals will not help them, and that bullying is a normal part of adolescence, deter adolescents from seeking help. Taken together, help-seeking most often occurs when the associated costs of help-seeking are judged to be low, and the benefits are expected to create positive results for the helper (Gross & McMullen, 1983).

The final step in the help-seeking process is accessing resources for help (Gross & McMullen, 1983; Srebnik et al., 1996). Prior to making contact with a helper, the individual must assess potential supports and services (i.e., psychologists, social workers, teachers/professionals, parents/guardians, peers and religious service providers) and evaluate which sources will be most helpful. While peer helpers are usually preferred, when adolescents are looking for expertise with a specific problem they may be more likely to seek help from parents (Sullivan, Marshall, & Schonert-Reichl, 2002). Generally, adolescents prefer seeking help from informal sources because they are directly accessible to the adolescent whereas professional sources of help may often require additional individuals, such as a parents or older siblings, to be aware of the request (Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996). Overall, helper choice is complex and

influenced by many factors such as type of problem, gender, familiarity and perceived trustworthiness of the helper (Sears et al., 2005; Srebnik et al., 1996). While a clearly delineated path is not specified, a combination of these factors contribute to the final act of making contact with a helper.

All models of help-seeking depict it as a multi-step process of decisions; however, the vast majority of research has focused on a small sample of youth, less than 10% of school-based samples, who are at the last step of the help-seeking process (i.e., the act of seeking help; Saunders et al., 1994; Sears, 2004). It is important to investigate earlier points in this process, as well teenagers' use of informal sources of aide, to determine what factors promote or deter help-seeking. A variety of factors such as demographic characteristics, family status, physical and emotional health, and behavioral characteristics (e.g., alcohol/drug use) have been linked to adolescents' help-seeking decisions at earlier stages (Saunders et al., 1994; Sears, 2004; Zwaanswijk, van der Ende, Verhaak, Bensing, & Verhulst, 2003). These results suggest it is important to evaluate adolescents who are at earlier points in the process, such as youth who are willing to seek help for problems but have not done so.

Adolescents' willingness to seek help with problems has been infrequently investigated in the literature. Some researchers have proposed that emotional health greatly influences teenagers' willingness to seek from both formal and informal sources (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Saunders, 1990). Factors that promote willingness to seek help include: supportive relationships, positive attitudes toward the helper and seeking help, knowing someone else who sought help, good mental health, being white and from middle or middle-upper class families (Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001; Rickwood &

Braithwaite, 1994; Saunders et al., 1994). Factors that deter willingness to seek help include: poor mental health, lack of access to resources or supportive relationships, less well educated, and being from nonwhite and from lower class families (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Ciarrochi, Deane, Wilson, & Rickwood, 2002; Saunders et al.; Zwaanswijk et al., 2003).

Evaluating both teenagers' actual help-seeking behaviors, and their help-seeking intentions is important. Bayer and Peay (1997) argue that there are often discrepancies between intentions and actual help-seeking behavior. Furthermore, an adolescent's help-seeking intentions may reflect earlier points in the help-seeking process than youths who have actually sought help. Ciarrochi and colleagues (2002) found that adolescents' willingness to seek help is related to their actual help-seeking behavior in the past month and to their help-seeking behaviors in the future. Examining adolescents' intentions to seek help rather than their actual help seeking may also provide insight into factors that deter youths from seeking assistance (Simmering, 2005).

Correlates of Adolescents' Help-Seeking Behaviors and Willingness to Seek Help

   Type of problem: Bullying.

Type of problem is a key factor related to adolescents' help-seeking behavior (Cauce et al., 2002; Sears et al., 2005). Most help-seeking research has examined emotional problems, such as suicidal ideation, severe psychological distress and depression (Carlton & Deane, 2000; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994; Saunders et al., 1994) instead of more normative problems that adolescents face in their daily lives, such as bullying. The latter issue is a serious problem in Canada and around the world. Bullying is common among youths, it often causes considerable distress, and it is often

not disclosed (Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2004).

Help-seeking is a common element of many anti-bullying programs (Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000). It is interesting to note that anti-bullying programs have historically targeted physical bullying and failed to acknowledge relational bullying (Birkinshaw & Elsea, 1998). Most often, anti-bullying programs promote reporting the victimization to a teacher (Hunter et al., 2004). Teachers frequently identify seeking help for bullying problems as the primary strategy they would recommend to their students (Nicolaides, Toda, & Smith, 2002). It is also recognized that some students feel more comfortable seeking help from friends; therefore, some anti-bullying peer initiatives have also been encouraged in the school system (Hunter et al.). Victims are also encouraged to seek help from multiple sources: teachers, parents, guidance counselor, other professionals and peers (Hunter et al.). Information about adolescents' choice of helper in bullying situations might help teachers and parents to better understand what is expected of them, change school culture to one that is more conducive to help-seeking, and create more effective and efficient anti-bullying programs and interventions.

While it appears that for bullying problems, younger children seek help more often than older children (Borg, 1998; Glover et al., 2000; Hunter at al., 2004; Sharp, 1995), it is largely unknown whether selecting a helper differs depending on the type of victimization (i.e., relational, physical, or verbal) that occurred. The researcher could only find two articles concerning this topic. Eslea (as cited in Hunter et al.) found that those who experience more overt bullying (i.e. physical violence, property damage) seek-help most frequently whereas those who experience verbal bullying and those who

experience relational bullying, are the least likely to seek help for bullying problems (as cited in Hunter et al.). Similarly, Rivers and Smith (1994) examined types of bullying behavior and found that adolescents were most likely to seek help for direct/overt bullying as opposed to indirect bullying.

Gender.

Gender differences in adolescents' use of help seeking as a coping strategy have been consistently documented. Specifically, girls are more likely than boys to seek assistance from others (Raviv et al., 2000; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996; Sears et al., 2005). This result may be explained, in part, by girls being more likely than boys to identify having a problem, to perceive their problems as more serious, to report more symptoms of distress and to be willing to refer themselves and others for help (Raviv et al.; Saunders et al., 1994; Sears, 2004; Zwaanswijk et al., 2003).

For bullying problems, gender differences in help-seeking are also evident. A repeated finding is that girls are more willing to seek help for bullying than boys (Glover at al., 2000; Hunter et al., 2004; Sharp, 1995). This result may be explained in part by boys' belief that they can cope on their own. Furthermore, it is a common societal belief that boys don't need help from anyone (Fortune, Sinclair, & Hawton, 2005). It is likely that help-seeking contradicts the societal image of masculinity, where expressing emotions, especially among male peers, is a symbol of weakness (Coloroso, 2002). In addition, males are less likely to recognize or acknowledge that they have a problem (Fortune, Sinclair, & Hawton, 2005).

Choice of helper.

When adolescents have problems, they are more likely to choose informal helpers, such as their peers or their parents, rather than formal helpers, such as teachers or counselors (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Raviv et al., 2000; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994). Several studies found that teenagers are most likely to turn to their friends for help, especially those who they perceive as trustworthy and good listeners (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Fallon & Bowles, 1999; Glover et al., 2000; Saunders et al., 1994; Sears et al., 2005). Interestingly, both boys and girls prefer seeking help from female friends than male friends (Sears et al.). This is not surprising given that boys are socially conditioned to communicate with their male peers for a direct purpose, whereas conversations with girls are directed at gaining rapport and a sense of social connectedness (Wisch et al., 1995).

Most help-seeking studies indicate that adolescents are least willing to seek help from parents (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Raviv, Sills & Raviv, 2000). Although parents are an accessible source of help, adolescents have identified the following barriers: fearing that parents would not understand what they was going through or disappointing their parents, being worried that their parents would think badly of them or be angry with them, and that the teen's problem would make parents look bad to others (Sears et al., 2005). While adolescents do not turn to their parents for help often, they are more likely to select parents as helpers when they have a very close relationship with them, when they perceive one or both parents to be understanding or when the problem they are managing is judged to be an area of parental expertise (Sears et al., 2005). With respect to gender differences, studies have found that boys are more likely than girls to seek help

from parents (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Offer, Howard, Schonert, & Ostrov, 1991; Raviv et al., 2000; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994).

Adolescents' choice of helper also depends on the type of problem they are managing. For a bullying problem, adolescents more commonly seek help from parents, friends and teachers (Glover et al., 2000; Westcott & Davies, 1995). Parent and peer helpers are also most often seen as complementary rather than competitive sources of help for problems with bullying (Westcott & Davies, 1995). While the reasons for choosing helpers for bullying problems are varied, help-seeking is largely related to perceived qualities of the helper (ability and willingness to help, experience of similar situations, and ability to make the child feel better; Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001; Wescott & Davies, 1995).

Glover et al. (2000) reported that among 11-16 year-olds, telling a friend about a bullying problem is most common, followed by telling one's mother; however, Smith, Talamellie, Cowie, Naylor, and Chauhan (2004) reported that in the same age range, students most often sought help for bullying problems from their parents, followed by friends, and then teachers. In a younger sample (7-11 years old), children were equally likely to seek help from adults and friends (Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001). The reason for the discrepancy is unclear but may be related to different research methodologies.

Not surprisingly, choice of helper for bullying problems may also vary by gender. Westcott and Davies (1995) stated that female helpers were preferred overall for bullying problems, although a relationship did exist between the adolescent's and helper's gender. Girls between ages 9 and 14 years of age are more likely than boys to select a best friend or parent as a helper, and boys are more likely to select a friend or teacher for help (Borg,

1998).

In addition, Eslea found (as cited in Hunter et al., 2004) that there also appear to be differences regarding whom children seek for help for different types of bullying; those who experience more overt bullying (i.e., physical violence, property damage) tell the most, whereas those who experience verbal bullying tell less frequently. Once again, those who experience relational or exclusionary bullying tell the least.

Recent experience with bullying and previous help-seeking behavior.

One variable that has not been explored in studies of adolescents' help-seeking behavior for bullying problems is their recent experience with various types of bullying. Perhaps previous experience with bullying suggests that it is more severe and common of youths' daily experiences, thus setting the stage for adolescents to be more willing to seek assistance. Conversely, it may also be possible that adolescents who recently experienced bullying are accustomed to having this problem and are less willing to seek help. Newcomb, Huba, and Bentler (1986) suggested that youth who had a previous experience with a problem may view it as less undesirable because of its familiarity, and as a result, they may be less willing to seek help (Newcomb, Huba, & Bentler, 1986). Further, victims are often treated with ambivalence and rejection, which may constitute further victimization after the initial event (Kenney, 2002). The fear of aversive or unsympathetic societal reactions leads many crime victims to hide their victim status or downplay its negative impact (Kenney, 2002). Although the direction of the relationship between recent experience with a bullying problem and seeking help is not clear, in the current study, adolescents' experience with three potential types of bullying situations: physical, verbal and relational, and their willingness to seek assistance from

parents/guardians, friends and teachers/professionals was assessed.

It is also important to assess adolescents past help-seeking behavior, as this is likely related to their future help-seeking intentions. For example, it is possible that youth who sought help for a bullying problem in the past would be more likely to do so again. Studies found that individuals are more willing to seek help from a variety of professionals after they sought professional help at least once previously (Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001; Saunders et al., 1994). In addition, Smith et al. (2004) reported that students bullied over a two year period were significantly less likely to have sought help than students who began the same period as victims but ended it having resolved the conflict. In this study, the relationship between adolescents' responses to verbal, physical and relational bullying experienced in the same school year and their willingness to seek assistance from parents/guardians, friends and teachers/professionals was explored.

Rationale

The purpose of the present study was to assess teenagers' willingness to seek help from their peers, parents/guardians and from their teachers for a physical, verbal and relational bullying problem. Specifically, variation in youths' willingness to seek help was examined by gender, school location (i.e., urban and rural), recent experience with the same type of problem and their previous help-seeking in response to that problem (i.e., whether or not those who had the problem had talked to someone about it).

The majority of this research to date has considered bullying as one distinct category, without assessing to what extent youth turn to different people for different types of bullying problems (i.e., physical, verbal, relational). This distinction is important because all three types of bullying occur at school, and depending on the combination,

have different effects on students. In addition, while gender differences in adolescents' use of help seeking as a coping strategy have been consistently documented, few studies of youths' willingness to approach others for help have explored gender as a possible correlate (Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001; Ciarrochi et al., 2002; 2003; Newman, 1990). Similarly, little attention has been paid to whether adolescents' previous experience with a specific type of bullying problem and their help-seeking behavior in response to the problem is related to their current willingness to seek assistance with the same type of bullying, even though these are likely correlates of teenagers' help-seeking intentions.

Significance of the Study

The goal of this study was to better understand how teenagers make decisions about whether or not to approach others for help with bullying problems so that potential helpers (e.g., parents, teachers) are better able to meet their needs. This information serves three primary purposes: (1) it extends our knowledge about bullying; (2) it addresses gaps in the help-seeking literature; and (3) it may serve to help parents/guardians, teachers/professionals and school personnel develop and implement more effective anti-bullying interventions that are tailored to meet the needs of different cohorts.

Research Questions

Given the limited number of studies on adolescents' willingness to seek help for various types of bullying problems, three research questions were developed to address the gaps in our knowledge base:

Question 1: Does willingness to seek help for a physical, verbal or relational bullying problem vary as a function of gender, recent experience and choice of helper?

Question 2: For that subset of the sample that had a recent experience with a bullying problem, does willingness to seek help for a physical, verbal or relational bullying problem vary as a function of gender, previous help-seeking and choice of helper?

Question 3: Is there a relationship between family structure, grade level, school location, and choice of peer, parent or teacher as a helper in a physical, verbal or relational bullying situation?

Chapter II: Method

Participants

The participants for this study were selected from junior high school students in Grade Seven to Nine within the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board, Sydney, Nova Scotia. The sample consisted of students from three urban junior high schools (three grade seven classes, three grade eight classes and three grade nine classes) and students from three rural schools (three grade seven classes, three grade eight classes and three grade nine classes). However, it is important to keep in mind that Cape Breton is predominately rural in nature when compared to larger cities in other provinces in Canada. For the purpose of the present study, urban and rural schools were selected by Mr. David Crane, Coordinator of Student Services/Research Chair in the Cape Victoria Regional School Board based on his expertise of surrounding areas and schools. His selection of urban and rural schools was consistent with Lindsay's (1982) definition where urban schools were those located in larger cities and their suburbs, while rural schools were those located in smaller communities that were not suburbs.

Measures

Demographic Characteristics

Adolescents reported their age, gender, grade, school, with whom they were living, and their urban or rural living status (see Appendix A).

Willingness to Seek Help

As done previously by Simmering (2005), willingness to seek help was assessed using twelve items adapted from the Support Seeking subscale of the Children's Coping Strategies Checklist – Revision 2 (CCSC-R2; Ayers, Newton, & Sandler, 2002; Ayers et

al., 1996). Four of these items focused on support seeking from friends (e.g., "You would talk with your friends about your feelings"), four items focused on support seeking from parents/guardians (e.g., "You would ask your mother/father/guardian for help in figuring out what to do") and four items were formulated based on the previous scales to focus on support seeking from teachers and other professionals (e.g., "You would figure out what you could do by talking with one of your teachers/other school personnel). The response format was a five-point scale, which ranged from 1 = "never", 2= "sometimes", 3= "often", 4= "most of the time" to 5= "always". The adolescents completed the twelve items three times, once after they were presented with examples of physical bullying problems, once after they were presented with examples of verbal bullying problems and once after they were presented with examples of relational bullying problems (see Appendix B).

Ayers et al. (2002) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .85 for the Support from Peers subscale and .83 for the Support from Mother/Father/Guardian subscale (n=217). In the present study, the alpha coefficients for the outcome variables were as follows: willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a physical bullying problem was .92; willingness to seek help from friends for a physical bullying problem was .84; willingness to seek help from teachers/professionals for a physical bullying problem was .73; willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a verbal bullying problem was .90; willingness to seek help from friends for a verbal bullying problem was .83; willingness to seek help from teachers/professionals for a verbal bullying problem was .76; willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a relational bullying problem was .94; willingness to seek help from friends for a relational bullying problem was .86; and

willingness to seek help from teachers/professionals for a relational bullying problem was .61.

Recent Experience with Bullying

After the students completed all of the items assessing their willingness to seek help for a verbal, physical or relational bullying problem, as done similarly by Simmering (2005), they were asked to respond to the following three items adapted for this study using a "yes" or "no" format (see Appendix C): "Have you experienced a physical bullying problem during this school year?", "Have you experienced a verbal bullying problem during this school year?", and "Have you experienced a relational bullying problem during this school year?".

Help-Seeking Behavior in Response to the Bullying Problem

As done similarly by Simmering (2005), youths who responded with a "yes" to the items assessing recent experience with a physical, verbal and relational bullying problem, respectively, were then asked to answer the following question using a "yes" or "no" format: "If YES, did you talk to anyone about this problem?". Youths who responded with a "yes" to the item assessing seeking help for the bullying problems, were then asked to respond to the statement: "The experience of talking to someone about this problem was…" using a five-point scale, which ranged from 1 = "positive", 2= "somewhat positive", 3= "neither+or-", 4= "somewhat negative" to 5= "negative".

Face and content validity of the questionnaires was developed using the following methodology: A panel of three faculty members from the Faculty of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) and a panel of members from the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board (CBVRSB) reviewed the questionnaire for breadth of

coverage and content. Feedback from this process was reviewed and utilized to create the final questionnaire.

Procedure

After the study met approval of the Mount Saint Vincent Research Ethics Board, officials at the school district and the school principals, letters describing the study were distributed to classroom teachers (see Appendix D) and sent home with students (see Appendix E). Parents with a teenager who was interested in the study were asked to sign and return the consent form (see Appendix F) to the school. On a pre-selected day, chosen in conjunction with the researcher, the school district authorities, the principal and the teacher, the researcher distributed the student consent form, survey and information sheet to those students in the classroom for whom consent had been granted. Those students for whom consent had not been granted continued with regular classwork.

Prior to completing the survey, the students were asked to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix G). Students were informed that participation was voluntary and that they were free to stop at any time. The researcher then distributed the surveys and read the instructions aloud to the students (see Appendix H). Finally, an information sheet with a description of the study and a list of available community resources for teenagers and their families was given to each participant at the end of the class period (see Appendix I).

Data Analysis

Quantitative methods were employed to examine the data. Initially, means, frequencies, cross-tabulations and standard deviations were tabulated to describe the sample.

Descriptive statistics for the predictor variables [gender (girl/boy), school location (urban/rural), relational bullying (recent experience-no/yes; previous help-seeking-no/yes), physical bullying (recent experience-no/yes; previous help-seeking-no/yes), and verbal bullying (recent experience-no/yes; previous help-seeking-no/yes)] were also calculated.

For each of the research questions, a series of Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were conducted. If significance was found a series of post-hoc analyses were conducted. Pearson correlations were also computed to examine the relationship between adolescents' willingness to seek help from peers, parents/guardians and teachers/professionals for a physical, verbal and relational bullying problem.

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical principles were adhered to in this study: Informed consent was obtained from all student participants and parents of children. Confidentiality was ensured by having the students complete the survey anonymously. The background information the researcher asked for could not be used to identify individual participants. Completed survey booklets were stored in a locked filing cabinet at Mount Saint Vincent University and could only be identified by a code number. The data set and any computer disks holding data were erased and surveys were shredded immediately following the completion of the study.

The study was completely voluntary and students who participated in the study could refuse to answer any item in the survey booklet and withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. There was only a slight possibility of adverse effects anticipated as a result of participation in this research. The survey may have stimulated some

emotionally laden memories of past bullying experiences in some students. For those adolescents who wanted some more information regarding sources of help-seeking, an information sheet was distributed at the termination of the study that contained a list of community services/resources that were available to adolescents.

Participants were also thanked for participation in the research and a summary of the results was distributed to the school district, the school principal, and any interested parents/guardians and students. The participants and their parents/guardians were given contact information for the researcher, her thesis advisor and the Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board in the event that they had any questions or comments about the research.

Chapter III: Results

Response Rate

A total of four hundred surveys and four hundred parent/guardian consent forms were distributed to different schools in the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board to Grade Seven, Eight and Nine students. One hundred and seventy-two consent forms were returned representing a 43% response rate. Three of the returned surveys could not be analyzed because they were not accompanied by written consents. Specifically, one hundred and seventy-five consents were distributed in the rural schools and sixty-eight were returned representing a 39% response rate. With respect to the urban schools, a total of two hundred and twenty-nine consent forms were distributed and one hundred and one were returned representing a 45% response rate. Thus, all participants who returned signed consent forms participated in the study.

Participants Demographic Information

The participants were 169 adolescents (88 girls, 81 boys) who were attending Grades 7-9 in three urban (N= 101) and three rural communities (N=68) in the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board in Nova Scotia. The youths ranged in age from 12 to 16 years (*M* = 13.68, *SD* = 1.01). The majority of these teenagers reported living with their biological parents (66%); 11% reported living in a remarried family; 19% were living with only one parent; and 4% were living with someone other than a parent (e.g., a grandparent) or on their own (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	N	Percentage of Participants
Gender		
Male	81	47.9
Female	88	52.1
Age		
12 Years	25	14.8
13 Years	46	27.2
14 Years	57	33.7
15 Years	40	23.7
16 Years	1	0.6
Grade		
7	64	37.9
8	42	24.9
9	63	37.3
School Location		
Urban	101	59.8
Rural	68	40.2
Family Structure		
Mother and Father	111	65.7
Mother and Step-father	14	8.3
Father and Step-mother	4	2.4
Mother Only	23	13.6
Father Only	2	1.2
Mother Half /Father Half	8	4.7
Guardian	7	4.1

With respect to urban and rural living status, the majority of youths (60%) lived in an urban setting, compared to those who lived in a rural setting (40%). With respect to age of participants, twenty-five participants were twelve years of age, forty-six participants were thirteen years of age, fifty-seven were fourteen years of age, forty were fifteen years of age and one was sixteen years of age.

When asked to identify grade level, sixty-four participants indicated that they were in Grade Seven, while forty-two and sixty-three participants indicated they were in Grade Eight and Nine respectively.

Description of the Variables

With respect to the predictor variables, as presented in Table 2, just over one half of the sample was comprised of girls. Turning to recent experience with the same type of problem, it should be noted that all three types of bullying occurred. The majority of adolescents (42%) reported having experienced a verbal bullying problem during the past school year, 32% reported having a relational bullying problem, and 23% reported experiencing a physical bullying problem in this same period. Cross-tabulation analyses by grade indicated that the majority of bullying occurred in Grade 7 (N=70) compared to Grade 8 (N=48) and Grade 9 (N=43). Furthermore, verbal bullying was the most prevalent type of bullying in Grade 7 and Grade 8 (N=29; N=22 respectively), whereas relational bullying was the most prevalent type of bullying in Grade 9 (N=19). Cross-tabulation analyses by age indicated that overall, the prevalence of bullying increased between ages 12-14 (N=22; 44; 60) and decreased by age 15 (N=35).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for the Predictor Variables

Predictor Variables

	Frequency (Percentage)	Frequency (Percentage)	
<u>Gender</u>	Girls	Boys	Total
	88 (52%)	81 (48%)	169
<u>Physical Bullying Problem</u>	No	Yes	Total
Recent Experience	130 (77%)	38 (23%)	168
Previous Help-Seeking	18 (47%)	20 (53%)	38
<u>Verbal Bullying Problem</u>	No	Yes	Total
Recent Experience	98 (58%)	69 (42%)	168
Previous Help-Seeking	23 (34%)	45 (66%)	68
<u>Relational Bullying Problem</u>	No	Yes	Total
Recent Experience	114 (68%)	54 (32%)	168
Previous Help-Seeking	17 (32%)	36 (67%)	54

Specifically, the prevalence of verbal and relational bullying also increased between ages 12-14 (N=11; 18; 26 vs. N=6; 12; 21 respectively) and decreased by age 15 (N=14 vs. N=15). The prevalence of physical bullying increased between ages 12 to 13 (N=5 vs. N=14) and decreased in prevalence thereafter (N=13; N=6). Cross-tabulation analyses by gender showed that more boys (N=22) than girls (N=16) reported experiencing a physical bullying problem in the past school year, whereas more girls than boys reported experiencing a verbal bullying problem (N = 48; N= 21), and a relational bullying problem (N = 27; N=9).

In terms of youths' previous help-seeking to the three types of bullying, 53% of teens who had recently experienced a physical bullying problem had spoken to someone about it, 66% of teens who had recently experienced a verbal bullying problem and 67% of teens who had recently experienced a relational bullying problem had spoken to someone about it. Cross-tabulation analyses by grade indicated that the majority of youth sought help in Grade 7 (N=39) compared to Grade 8 (N=34) and Grade 9 (N=28). Furthermore, students sought help for verbal bullying most often in Grade 7 and Grade 8 (N=17; N=17 respectively), but sought help for relational bullying most often in Grade 9 (N=15). Cross-tabulation analyses by age indicated that overall, the prevalence of help-seeking for bullying problems increased between ages 12-14 (N=15; 20; 42) and decreased by age 15 (N=24). Specifically, help-seeking for verbal bullying also increased between ages 12-14 (N=8; 9; 18 respectively) and decreased by age 15 (N=10). There was no discernable pattern among the age of students and relational and physical bullying problems. Cross-tabulation analyses by gender showed that over twice as many girls as boys reported having talked to someone about a verbal bullying problem (N=32; N=13)

and a relational bullying problem, (N = 27; N=9), and more boys than girl reported having talked to someone about a physical bullying problem (N = 11; N=9) that they had experienced during the past year.

The descriptive statistics for the outcome variables, together and separately by gender are presented in Table 3. Overall, the adolescents in this study scored at or below the midpoint on these measures, indicating that they were willing to seek support from peers, parents/guardians and teachers/professionals half or less than half of the time. It is also noteworthy that youths' willingness to seek support from peers exceeds their willingness to seek support from parents and teachers respectively in all three bullying domains. Furthermore, girls scored higher on all measures than boys, indicating a greater willingness to seek help across all bullying problem domains.

Correlations between Outcome Variables

Pearson correlations were computed to examine the relationships between adolescents' willingness to seek help from peers, parents/guardians and teachers/professionals for a physical, verbal and relational bullying problem. The results are presented in Table 4.

The pattern of the correlations shows that the outcome measures were all significantly and positively correlated. Adolescents' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a physical bullying problem was highly related to their willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a verbal bullying problem ($r = .836$, $p<.01$). Similarly, youths' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a physical bullying problem was highly related to their willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a relational bullying problem ($r = .833$, $p<.01$).

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the Outcome Variables Separated by Gender

Outcome Variables [a]	Girls	Boys	Total	Alpha
	M (SD)	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	
Physical Bullying Problem				
Willingness to Seek Help From Peers	3.34 (1.09)	2.34 (.92)	2.86 (1.12)	.84
Willingness to Seek Help From Parents/Guardians	2.79 (1.23)	2.58 (1.14)	2.69 (1.19)	.92
Willingness to Seek Help From Teachers/Professionals	1.99 (1.11)	1.80 (.96)	1.90 (1.04)	.73
Verbal Bullying Problem				
Willingness to Seek Help From Peers	3.25 (1.18)	2.34 (.97)	2.81 (1.18)	.83
Willingness to Seek Help From Parents/Guardians	2.68 (1.39)	2.50 (1.19)	2.60 (1.30)	.90
Willingness to Seek Help From Teachers/Professionals	1.89 (1.17)	1.88 (.90)	1.88 (1.05)	.76
Relational Bullying Problem				
Willingness to Seek Help From Peers	3.35 (1.16)	2.34 (.99)	2.86 (1.19)	.86
Willingness to Seek Help From Parents/Guardians	2.76 (1.34)	2.49 (1.18)	2.63 (1.27)	.94
Willingness to Seek Help From Teachers/Professionals	1.78 (1.47)	1.52 (1.25)	1.66 (1.37)	.61

Note: For girls, $n = 88$. For boys, $n = 81$. Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

Table 4

Correlations between Outcome Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Will to Seek Help-Parents Phys Bull	1	.38**	.57**	.84**	.31**	.55**	.83**	.28**	.48**
2. Will to Seek Help-Peers Phys Bull	- -	1	.30**	.35**	.79**	.22**	.33**	.79**	.24**
3. Will. to Seek Help-Teachers Phys Bull	- -	- -	1	.48**	.26**	.75**	.52**	.26**	.71**
4. Will to Seek Help-Parents Verb Bull	- -	- -	- -	1	.35**	.51**	.79**	.27**	.43**
5. Will to Seek Help-Peers Verb Bull	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.29**	.36**	.81**	.22**
6. Will to Seek Help-Teachers Verb Bull	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.51**	.24**	.66**
7. Will to Seek Help-Parents Rel Bull	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.35**	.23**
8. Will. to Seek Help-Peers Rel Bull	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.23**
9. Will. to Seek Help-Teachers Rel Bull	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1

$* p<.05 ** p<.01$

In addition, adolescents' willingness to seek help from friends for a relational bullying problem was highly related to their willingness to seek help from friends for a verbal bullying problem (r = .81, p<.01).

Addressing the Research Questions

In this section, participant responses to questionnaire items are examined using Analyses of Variance.

1. Does willingness to seek help for a physical, verbal or relational bullying problem vary as a function of gender, recent experience and choice of helper?

Physical bullying.

To test whether adolescents' willingness to seek help for physical bullying problems differed as a function of the independent variables, participants' mean scores on the willingness to seek help scale were submitted to a 2 x 2 x 3 (Gender x Recent Experience x Helper) factorial analysis of variance. Analysis of the means using a Least Significant Difference test indicated a main effect of helper $F(2, 328)= 3.5$, $p<.05$, with adolescents being significantly more willing to seek help from parents/guardians than teachers/professionals (M= 2.83 vs. 2.05), and friends than teachers/professionals (M= 2.69 vs. 2.05). Analysis of the differences among the means indicated a main effect of gender $F(1, 164)= 7.97$, $p<.05$, with females (M=2.71) being more willing to seek help for a physical bullying problem than males (M=2.40), and a nonsignificant main effect of recent experience with a physical bullying problem $F(1, 164)= .24$, n.s.

 These results are best explained by the significant Helper x Gender interaction, $F(2,328)= 10.78$, $p<.05$. All other interactions among the variables were nonsignificant. The Helper x Gender interaction was examined using a test of the simple main effect of

gender. A set of three Least Significant Difference tests were conducted to compare the means of choice of helper. First it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a parent/guardian professional did not significantly differ by females (M=2.86) and males (M=2.80). However, adolescents' willingness to seek help from friends did differ significantly, with females being significantly more willing to seek help from friends for a physical bullying problem than males (M=3.32 vs2.27). Finally it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a teacher/professional did not significantly differ by females (M=2.03) and males (M=2.07). These results are summarized in Table 5.

Verbal bullying.

To examine whether adolescents' willingness to seek help for verbal bullying problems differed as a function of the gender, recent experience with bullying and choice of helper, a 2 x 2 x 3 (Gender x Recent Experience x Helper) factorial analysis of variance was conducted. There was a main effect of gender $F(1, 163)= 5.27$, $p<.05$, with females (M=2.81) being more willing to seek help for a verbal bullying problem than males (M=2.53), a nonsignificant main effect of helper $F(2, 326)= .17$, n.s., and a nonsignificant main effect of recent experience with a verbal bullying problem $F(1, 163)= .75$, n.s.

These results are best summarized by the significant Helper x Gender interaction, $F(2,326)= 12.84$, $p<.05$. The interaction was examined using a test of the simple main effect of gender. A set of three Least Significant Difference tests were conducted to compare the means of choice of helper.

Table 5

ANOVA Helper by Gender Interaction for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a Physical Bullying Problem

	Means Being Contrasted [a]		Significance
	Male	Female	
Parent/Guardian	2.85	2.80	$F(1,164)=.016$, n.s.
Friend	2.27	3.32	$F(1,164)=7.70$, $p<0.5$
Teacher/Professional	2.07	2.02	$F(1,164)=.012$, n.s.

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

First it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a parent/guardian professional did not differ by females (M=2.99) and males (M=2.62). However, adolescents' willingness to seek help from friends did differ significantly, with females being significantly more willing to seek help from friends for a verbal bullying problem than males (M=3.08 vs. 2.29). Finally it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a teacher/professional did not significantly differ by females (M=2.73) and males (M=2.30). These results are summarized in Table 6.

Relational bullying.

To examine whether adolescents' willingness to seek help for relational bullying problems differed as a function of the gender, recent experience with bullying, and choice of helper, a 2 x 2 x 3 (Gender x Recent Experience x Helper) factorial analysis of variance was conducted. There was a main effect of gender $F(1, 164)= 8.30$, $p<.05$, with females (M=2.64) being more willing to seek help for a relational bullying problem than males (M=2.14), and a nonsignificant main effect of recent experience with a relational bullying problem $F(1, 164)= .45$, n.s. Analysis of the means using a Least Significant Difference test indicated a main effect of helper $F(2, 164)= 12.20$, $p<.05$, with adolescents being significantly more willing to seek help from parents/guardians than teachers/professionals (M= 2.86 vs. 1.37), and significantly more willing to seek help from friends than teachers/professionals (M= 2.80 vs. 1.37) for relational bullying.

Table 6

ANOVA Helper by Gender Interaction for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Verbal Bullying Problem

	Means Being Contrasted [a]		Significance
	Male	Female	
Parent/Guardian	2.99	2.62	$F(1,163)=.335$, n.s.
Friend	2.22	3.08	$F(1,163)=2.64$, p<0.5
Teacher/Professional	2.30	2.73	$F(1,163)=.744$, n.s.

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

These results are best summarized by the significant Helper x Gender interaction, $F(1,164)= 7.53$, $p<.05$. The interaction was examined using a test of the simple main effect of gender. Three Least Significant Difference tests were conducted to compare the means of choice of helper. It was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a parent/guardian did not significantly differ by females (M=2.95) and males (M=2.73). However, adolescents' willingness to seek help from friends did differ significantly by gender, with females being significantly more willing to seek help from friends for a relational bullying problem than males (M=3.38 vs. 2.41). Finally, it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a teacher/professional did not significantly differ by females (M=1.81) and males (M=1.08). These results are summarized in Table 7.

Question 2: For that subset of the sample that had a recent experience with a bullying problem, does willingness to seek help for a physical, verbal or relational bullying problem vary as a function of gender, previous help-seeking and choice of helper?

Physical bullying.

To examine the effect of gender, helper and previous help-seeking on adolescents' willingness to seek help for a physical bullying problem, a 2 x 2 x 3 (Gender x Previous Help-Seeking x Helper) factorial analysis of variance was conducted. The analysis examined the subset of the sample that had recently experienced a physical bullying problem in the past school year. Analysis of the means using a Least Significant Difference test indicated a main effect of helper $F(2, 322)= 6.12$, $p<.05$, with adolescents being significantly more willing to seek help from parents/guardians than teachers/professionals (M=2.90 vs. 2.21), and from friends than teachers/professionals

Table 7

ANOVA Helper by Gender Interaction for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Relational Bullying Problem

	Means Being Contrasted [a]		Significance
	Male	Female	
Parent/Guardian	2.95	2.73	F(1,164)=.22, n.s.
Friend	2.41	3.38	F(1,164)=6.08, p<0.5
Teacher/Professional	1.08	1.81	F(1,164)=2.16, n.s.

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

(M=2.92 vs. 2.21).   Analysis of the differences among the means indicated a nonsignificant main effect of gender $F(1, 161)= 2.93$, n.s., and a nonsignificant main effect of previous help-seeking $F(1, 161)= 2.16$.

These results are best summarized by the significant Helper x Gender interaction $F(2, 322)= 4.67$, $p<.05$. All other interactions among the variables were nonsignificant. The Helper x Gender interaction was examined using a test of the simple main effect of gender. A set of three Least Significant Difference tests were conducted to compare the means of choice of helper. First it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a parent/guardian did not significantly differ by females (M=2.90) and males (M=2.89).   However, adolescents' willingness to seek help from friends did differ significantly, with females being significantly more willing to seek help from friends for a physical bullying problem than males (M=3.60 vs2.24).   Finally, it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a teacher/professional did not significantly differ by females (M=2.37) and males (M=2.04). These results are summarized in Table 8.

Verbal bullying.

To examine the effect of gender, helper and previous help-seeking on adolescents' willingness to seek help for a verbal bullying problem, a 2 x 2 x 3 (Gender x Previous Help-Seeking x Helper) factorial analysis of variance was conducted. The analysis was conducted on the subset of the sample that had recently experienced a verbal bullying problem. The analysis indicated a nonsignificant main effect of helper $F(2, 320)= .57$, n.s., a nonsignificant main effect of gender $F(1, 160)= .47$, n.s., and a significant main effect of previous help-seeking $F(1, 160)= 2.51$, $p<.05$., with those who had sought help

Table 8

ANOVA Helper by Gender Interaction for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Physical Bullying Problem

	Means Being Contrasted [a]		Significance
	Male	Female	
Parent/Guardian	2.89	2.90	F(1,161)=.001, n.s.
Friend	2.24	3.60	F(1,161)=11.68, p<0.5
Teacher/Professional	2.04	2.37	F(1,161)=.65, n.s.

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

for a recently experienced verbal bullying problem being significantly more willing to seek help for the same type of problem than those who had not sought help (M=2.69 vs. 2.07).

The Helper x Gender interaction was examined using a test of the simple main effect of gender. A set of three Least Significant Difference tests were conducted to compare the means of choice of helper. First it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a parent/guardian did not significantly differ by females (M=2.69) and males (M=2.91). However, adolescents' willingness to seek help from friends did differ significantly, with females being significantly more willing to seek help from friends for a verbal bullying problem than males (M=3.24 vs. 2.24). Finally it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a teacher/professional did not significantly differ by females (M=2.50) and males (M=2.25). These results are summarized in Table 9.

Relational bullying.

To examine the effect of gender, helper and previous help-seeking on adolescents' willingness to seek help for a relational bullying problem, a 2 x 2 x 3 (Gender x Previous Help-Seeking x Helper) factorial analysis of variance was conducted. The analysis was conducted on the subset of the sample that had recently experienced a relational bullying problem. An analysis of the means using a Least Significant Difference test indicated a main effect of helper $F(2, 322)= 12.95$, $p<0.5$, with adolescents being significantly more willing to seek help from parents/guardians than teachers/professionals (M=2.57 vs. 1.5) and from friends than teachers/professionals (M=2.82 vs. 1.5).

Table 9

ANOVA Helper by Gender Interaction for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Verbal Bullying Problem

	Means Being Contrasted [a]		Significance
	Male	Female	
Parent/Guardian	2.91	2.69	$F(1,160)=.19$, n.s.
Friend	2.24	3.24	$F(1,160)=5.54$, p<0.5
Teacher/Professional	2.25	2.50	$F(1,160)=.37$, n.s.

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

Analysis of the differences among the means indicated a nonsignificant main effect of gender $F(1, 161)= .44$, n.s., and a nonsignificant main effect of previous help-seeking $F(1, 161)= 1.15$, $p<.05$.

A significant Helper x Gender interaction $F(2, 322)= 3.59$, $p<.05$ was also found. No other significant interactions were found. The Helper x Gender interaction was examined using a test of the simple main effect of gender. A set of three Least Significant Difference tests were conducted to compare the means of choice of helper. First it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a parent/guardian did not significantly differ by females (M=2.27) and males (M=2.88). However, adolescents' willingness to seek help from friends did differ significantly, with females being significantly more willing to seek help from friends for a relational bullying problem than males (M=3.23 vs. 2.41). Finally it was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help from a teacher/professional did not significantly differ by females (M=1.25) and males (M=1.76). These results are summarized in Table 10.

Question 3: Is there a relationship between family structure, grade level, school location, and choice of peer, parent or teacher as a helper in a physical, verbal or relational bullying situation?

Family structure.

Due to small sample sizes, family structure was recoded into the following two categories: (1) adolescents who are living with their biological father; and (2) adolescents who are not living with their biological father. To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a physical bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted.

Table 10

ANOVA Helper by Gender Interaction for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Relational Bullying Problem

	Means Being Contrasted [a]		Significance
	Male	Female	
Parent/Guardian	2.88	2.27	$F(1,161)=1.49$, n.s.
Friend	2.41	3.23	$F(1,161)=3.76$, $p<0.5$
Teacher/Professional	1.25	1.76	$F(1,161)=.92$, n.s.

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

Levene's test of equality of variance was significant $F(1, 167)=7.00$, $p<.05$, indicating the variances across groups were not similar. While the analysis indicated a nonsignificant main effect of family structure ($F(1, 167)=3.77$, n.s.), it did approach significance ($p=.054$).

To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from peers for a physical bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted. Levene's test of equality of variance was not significant $F(1, 167)=.67$, n.s., indicating the variances across groups were similar. The analysis indicated a nonsignificant main effect of family structure ($F(1, 167)=1.32$, n.s.).

To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from teachers/professionals for a physical bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted. Levene's test of equality of variance was not significant $F(1, 167)=.11$, n.s. indicating the variances across groups were similar. The analysis indicated a nonsignificant main effect of family structure ($F(1, 167)=.84$, n.s.). The results are summarized in Table 11.

To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a verbal bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted. Levene's test of equality of variance was not significant $F(1, 167)=2.45$, n.s., indicating the variances across groups were similar. The analysis indicated a significant main effect of family structure ($F(1, 167)=5.88$, $p<0.05$) with those adolescents' living with their biological fathers being more willing to seek help for a verbal bullying problem

Table 11

ANOVA Results of Family Structure for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Physical Bullying Problem

Outcome Variables [a]	Predictors		Significance
Willingness to Seek Help from Parents/Guardians	Family Structure		F(1,167)=3.77, n.s.
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	2.79	2.39	
Willingness to Seek Help from Friends	Family Structure		F(1,167)=1.32, n.s.
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	2.80	3.03	
Willingness to Seek Help from Teachers/Professionals	Family Structure		F (1,167)=.84, n.s.
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	1.94	1.77	

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

from their parents/guardians than those who were not living with their biological fathers (M=2.74 vs. 2.19).

To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from peers for a verbal bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted. Levene's test of equality of variance was not significant $F(1, 167)=.65$, n.s., indicating the variances across groups were similar. The analysis indicated a nonsignificant main effect of family structure ($F(1, 167)=.01$, n.s.).

To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from teachers/professionals for a verbal bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted. Levene's test of equality of variance was not significant $F(1, 167)=.61$, n.s. indicating the variances across groups were similar. The analysis indicated a nonsignificant main effect of family structure ($F(1, 167)=1.12$, n.s.). The results are summarized in Table 12.

To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians for a relational bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted. Levene's test of equality of variance was significant $F(1, 167)=7.56$, $p<.05$, indicating the variances across groups were not similar. The analysis indicated a significant main effect of family structure ($F(1, 167)=4.83$, $p<0.05$) with those adolescents' living with their biological fathers being more willing to seek help for a relational bullying problem from their parents/guardians than those who were not living with their biological fathers (M=2.76 vs. 2.27).

To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from peers for a relational bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted.

Table 12

ANOVA Results of Family Structure for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Verbal Bullying Problem

Outcome Variables [a]	Predictors		Significance
Willingness to Seek Help from Parents/Guardians	Family Structure		$F(1,167)=5.88, p<0.5$
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	2.74	2.19	
Willingness to Seek Help from Friends	Family Structure		$F(1,167)=.01$, n.s.
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	2.81	2.80	
Willingness to Seek Help from Teachers/Professionals	Family Structure		$F(1,167)=1.12$, n.s.
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	1.74	1.93	

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

Levene's test of equality of variance was not significant $F(1, 167)=.17$, n.s., indicating the variances across groups were similar. The analysis indicated a nonsignificant main effect of family structure ($F(1, 167)=.001$, n.s.).

To examine the effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help from teachers/professionals for a relational bullying problem a Univariate ANOVA was conducted. Levene's test of equality of variance was not significant $F(1, 167)=1.52$, n.s. indicating the variances across groups were similar. The analysis indicated a nonsignificant main effect of family structure on adolescents' willingness to seek help for a relational bullying problem ($F(1, 167)=1.00$, n.s.). The results are summarized in Table 13.

Grade level.

To examine the effect of grade level on adolescents' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians, peers, and teachers/professionals for a physical, verbal, and relational bullying problem, a series of Univariate ANOVAs were conducted. The analyses revealed no significant main effects.

School location.

To examine the effect of school location (i.e. urban vs. rural) on adolescents' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians, peers, and teachers/professionals for a physical and relational bullying problem a series of Univariate ANOVAs were conducted. No significant main effects were found.

To examine the effect of school location on adolescents' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians, peers, and teachers/professionals for a verbal bullying problem a series of Univariate ANOVAs were conducted.

Table 13

ANOVA Results of Family Structure for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Relational Bullying Problem

Outcome Variables [a]	Predictors		Significance
Willingness to Seek Help from Parents/Guardians	Family Structure		$F(1,167)=4.83, p<0.5$
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	2.76	2.27	
Willingness to Seek Help from Friends	Family Structure		$F(1,167)=.001$, n.s.
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	2.87	2.86	
Willingness to Seek Help from Teachers/Professionals	Family Structure		$F(1,167)=1.00$, n.s.
	Father (*M*)	Someone other than Father(*M*)	
	1.72	1.48	

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

The analyses indicated a significant main effect of school location ($F(1, 167)=6.98$, $p<0.05$) with adolescents living in a rural community being more willing to seek help for a verbal bullying problem from their teachers/professionals than adolescents living in an urban community (M=2.14 vs. 1.71). No other significant results were found. The results are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14

ANOVA Results of School Location for Adolescents' Willingness to Seek Help for a

Verbal Bullying Problem

Outcome Variables [a]	Predictors	Significance
Willingness to Seek Help from Parents/Guardians	School Location	$F(1,167)=.003$, n.s.
	Urban (*M*) Rural(*M*)	
	2.59 2.60	
Willingness to Seek Help from Friends	School Location	$F(1,167)=.11$, n.s.
	Urban (*M*) Rural(*M*)	
	2.79 2.85	
Willingness to Seek Help from Teachers/Professionals	School Location	$F(1,167)=6.98$, $p<0.5$
	Urban (*M*) Rural(*M*)	
	1.71 2.14	

Note: Higher scores indicate more willingness to seek help. [a] Possible range = 1 to 5.

Chapter IV: Discussion

The current study sought to examine adolescents' willingness to seek help from parents/guardians, peers, and teachers/professionals for physical, verbal and relational bullying problems. Overall, all three types of bullying occurred; however, verbal bullying was most commonly experienced, followed by relational bullying and physical bullying. As adolescents aged, the prevalence of verbal and relational bullying increased and the prevalence of physical bullying decreased.

The first purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between gender, recent experience with bullying, choice of helper, and adolescents' willingness to seek help for a physical, verbal or relational bullying problem. Overall, significant main effects of gender were found across all bullying situations, with females being more willing to seek help than males. Significant main effects of helper were also found in physical and relational bullying situations, with adolescents being most willing to seek help from peers and parents rather than teachers. These results may be best explained by the Helper x Gender interaction that was found across all bullying situations, with females being more willing than males to seek help from friends than males.

A secondary purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between gender, previous help-seeking, choice of helper, and adolescents' willingness to seek help for a physical, verbal or relational bullying problem for that subset of the sample that had a recent experience with the same bullying problem. Overall, significant main effects of helper were found across physical and relational bullying situations, with adolescents being more willing to seek help from friends and parents, rather than teachers. This result may be best explained by a Helper x Gender interaction that was found across all

bullying situations, with females being more willing to seek help from friends than males. Finally, a significant main effect of previous help-seeking was also found, with adolescents having a recent verbal bullying experience and seeking help, being more willing to seek help for the same problem than those who did not seek help.

The final purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between family structure, grade level, school location, and choice of peer, parent/guardian or teacher/professional as a helper in a physical, verbal or relational bullying situation. Overall, a significant main effect of school location was found for verbal bullying, with adolescents living in a rural community being more willing to seek help from teachers/professionals for a verbal bullying problem than adolescents living in an urban community. A significant main effect of family structure was also found in two of the bullying situations and approached significance in the third, with adolescents living with their biological fathers being more willing to seek help from parents/guardians for bullying problems than those who do not live with their biological fathers. No significant main effects were found across grade level.

Type of Bullying Problem

Type of problem has been identified as a key factor related to adolescent help-seeking behavior (Cauce et al., 2002; Sears et al., 2005). Type of bullying problem is also likely related to adolescent help seeking behavior; however, the majority of past help-seeking research has not examined bullying as a distinct problem type, let alone for types of bullying. The current study examined adolescents' willingness to seek help for three types of bullying problems (i.e., physical, verbal, relational) and revealed that overall adolescents were more willing to seek help for a physical bullying problem than a

relational bullying problem. There were no significant differences between adolescents' willingness to seek help for a relational and a verbal bullying problem. Overall, these findings indicate that willingness to seek help does vary by type of bullying problem. Specifically, adolescents were most willing to seek help for physical bullying problems and least willing to seek help for relational bullying problems.

This finding is supported by Eslea (as cited in Hunter et al., 2004) who found that help-seeking for bullying differed by type of victimization. While different labels for type of victimization were used, similar constructs were examined. It was reported that adolescents were most willing to seek help for direct bullying (e.g., physical bullying), followed by indirect bullying (e.g., relational bullying) and verbal bullying. Similarly, Rivers and Smith (1994) examined types of bullying behavior and their correlates. Here, bullying was also defined somewhat differently than in the current study, but analogous constructs were of interest. Adolescents were more likely to seek help from adults for a direct bullying problem (e.g., direct physical or direct verbal bullying) as opposed to an indirect bullying problem (e.g., relational bullying). These findings may be explained by the nature of physical and relational bullying. Owing to the commonly accepted nature of physical bullying, it is possible that adolescents are most willing to seek help for this form of bullying than the lesser known relational bullying. Olweus (1993) similarly found that physical bullying is the most widely accepted definition of bullying and is also the easiest type to identify due to its concrete and observable nature. In addition, Woods and Wolke (2004) reported that less is known about relational bullying due to its complex and difficult to distinguish nature. Furthermore, adolescents view relational or social exclusionary bullying as one of the most harmful types of bullying (Woods & Wolke,

2004). Finally, a study by Rickwood and Braithwaite (1994) examined help-seeking for broader categories of problems, and found that the key factor predicting help-seeking was symptoms of psychological distress.

In the current study, verbal bullying was also a key factor in help-seeking with respect to the following correlates: choice of helper, previous help-seeking, and school location. For example, while choice of helper influenced help-seeking for relational and physical bullying, there were no differences in choice of helper for verbal bullying problems. Also, adolescents who had previously experienced and sought help for verbal bullying were more likely to do so again. Finally, adolescents living in a rural community were more likely to seek help from their teachers for a verbal bullying problem than those who lived in an urban community.

These findings may be explained by the prevalence of verbal bullying. Olweus (1993) reported that verbal bullying is the most common form of bullying for both boys and girls. In addition, the rate of verbal bullying consistently increases as children age, as does the negative impact on adolescents' lives (Boulton & Underwood 1992; Olweus, 1991; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988). It is possible that teens are more apt to seek help for verbal bullying because it is the most prevalent type of victimization and as a result teens feel most distressed by it. Supporting this explanation, Hunter et al. (2004) found that the greater the experience of negativity during bullying, the more often victims sought help. Another explanation may be that the act of seeking help may be less stigmatizing due to the frequency at which other peers experience verbal bullying. Since adolescents are aware that other teens are also commonly experiencing verbal bullying, they may feel less alone, perceive the situation as normative, and exhibit more willingness to seek help.

In this age group, adolescents are frequently concerned with maintaining "in group" status (Hazler, 1996); therefore, teens are most likely to act in ways that are common amongst their peers. Overall, it appears that verbal bullying is a key factor relating to adolescents' help-seeking decisions.

The message taken from the current findings is that it is important to distinguish among types of bullying when investigating help-seeking. Future research will need to further differentiate these interesting findings. A more specific discussion of these relationships as found in the current study follow.

Gender

The results of this study suggest that overall, adolescent girls are more willing than adolescent boys to seek help. Specifically, adolescent girls are more willing to seek help for all types of bullying problems from their peers than boys. This pattern is consistent with help-seeking studies examining bullying problems, which have found that girls are more willing to seek help for bullying than boys (Glover et al., 2000; Hunter et al., 2004; Sharp, 1995). More specifically, this finding is also consistent with a study by Raviv et al. that indicates adolescent girls are more willing to seek help from their friends than adolescent boys.

These results may be explained by societal gender norms deeming help-seeking as an acceptable behavior for girls and not boys (Fortune et al., 2005). It is likely that help-seeking contradicts the societal image of masculinity, where expressing emotions, especially among male peers, is a symbol of weakness (Coloroso, 2002). Boys may also become preoccupied with their peers' opinions of masculinity and associate the possible risks of help-seeking as greater than the benefits (Coloroso, 2002; Gross & McMullen,

1983). Furthermore, boys are often less likely to recognize or acknowledge that they have a problem (Fortune et al.). This may further explain why boys are less willing to seek help for bullying problems, as they are often reluctant to admit that they have a problem and are less likely to recognize behaviors as bullying. In contrast, girls perceive certain bullying problems as more serious and acknowledge behaviors as bullying more often, thus increasing their willingness to seek help compared to boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Choice of Helper

Past literature has examined the important role of the helper in help-seeking scenarios (Hunter et al., 2004; Srebnik et al., 1996). Parent/guardians, peers, and teacher/professionals were the sources of help examined for bullying problems in the current study. Youths' willingness to seek support from peers and parents/guardians significantly exceeds their willingness to seek support from teachers/professionals in physical and relational bullying situations. While there were no significant differences among adolescents' willingness to seek help from peers and parents/guardians, there was a trend toward adolescents being more willing to seek help from peers. Additionally, there were no differences in choice of helper across verbal bullying situations. In summary, these results suggest that when deciding where to go for help, adolescents are most willing to seek help from peers, followed by parents/guardians and teachers/professionals, except when faced with a verbal bullying problem.

In examining helper preference overall, the results of the current study are similar to a study by Glover et al. (2000) that examined choice of helper in bullying situations among junior high school students. While the study used more narrowly defined helper

categories than the current study, (e.g., tutor vs. teacher/professional; mother vs. parent/guardian), similar constructs were examined. Glover and colleagues (2000) found that seeking help from peers was the most common choice of helper, followed by mother and tutor. With respect to the most preferred helper, Sears and colleagues (2005) further supported adolescents' preference for peer helpers. This preference was especially strong when the problem related to other peers (Sears et al., 2005). Alternatively, a study by Smith et al. (2004) reported that adolescents were more likely to seek help from parents as opposed to peers. The discrepancy could be in part due to differing research methodologies. For example, Smith et al. (2004) conducted semi-structured interviews and the current study utilized questionnaires. When utilizing interview methodology, the sample sizes are usually small and may not be representative of the larger population, whereas the sample sizes for studies using questionnaires are often much larger and thus may be more representative of the population. Future researchers may want to compare helper preference for the various forms of bullying as measured by standardized research methodology.

With respect to the least preferred helper for bullying problems, Smith et al. (2004) further supported adolescents' unwillingness to seek help from teachers. These findings are interesting given that most frequently, victims of school bullying are encouraged to tell the teacher (Hunter et al., 2004). It could be possible that adolescents may not believe that teachers will help them because teachers recognize and intervene in bullying problems infrequently. This finding has important implications for a more complex understanding of school culture and teacher variables that may be related to help-seeking.

Not surprisingly, choice of helper for bullying problems also varied by gender. In fact, helper preference was best explained in accordance with the youths' gender. Across all bullying situations, females were significantly more willing to seek help from friends than males. This pattern reflects girls' stronger preference for friends as helpers relative to boys, whereas girls and boys are more similar in their willingness to seek assistance from parents. This finding is consistent with other studies that have found females are more likely to seek help from friends than males, and males are most likely to seek help from parents overall (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Offer et al., 1991; Raviv et al., 2000; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994). This finding is also consistent with a study by Borg (1998) indicating that more girl victims of bullying shared their problem with a best friend than boys. It is likely that gender norms deeming help-seeking as "weak" inhibit adolescents from sharing their feelings about bullying with their peers (Coloroso, 2002). Furthermore, boys' typical communication patterns with their male peers are not often conducive to help-seeking. Men are more likely to communicate with their male peers for a direct purpose, whereas women's communication patterns are often directed at gaining rapport and a sense of social connectedness (Wisch et al., 1995). Therefore, it is probable that for adolescent males, the social cost of seeking help from peers (i.e. breaking typical gender norms and communication patterns) outweighs the benefits of seeking help (Gross & McMullen, 1983; Wisch et al., 1995).

Overall, the results suggest that we cannot expect males and females to seek help from the same helpers when facing bullying problems, as adolescent males prefer parents and adolescent females prefer friends. Finally, gender differences in helper preference were consistent across all types of bullying problems suggesting that choice of helper and

gender combined are more influential on adolescents' willingness to seek help than the type of bullying problem they are facing.

Recent Experience with Bullying

The current study sought to examine the relationship between adolescents' recent experience with a verbal, physical and relational bullying problem and their willingness to seek help. It was found that adolescents' willingness to seek help for bullying problems was not influenced by recent experience with the same type of problem.

While the previous help-seeking literature is sparse, past researchers indicated that exposure to a problem would likely have an affect on adolescents' willingness to seek help (e.g. either increasing or decreasing help-seeking; Newcomb, Huba, & Bentler, 1986; Kenney, 2002); however, this finding was not supported in the present study. A possible explanation of this statistically non-significant finding may be that recent experience by itself does not predict help-seeking, instead, previous help-seeking and the experience of help-seeking may be required to obtain a more thorough understanding of the impact of bullying on adolescents' willingness to seek help. For example, the preliminary findings in the current study suggest that adolescents' willingness to seek help for bullying problems is not influenced by recent experience alone, but rather by a combination of recent experience and past help-seeking. Following is a more detailed discussion of these variables as found in the current study.

Previous Help-Seeking

For the subset of the population that had recently experienced bullying problems in the past school year, previous help-seeking (e.g., whether the adolescent talked to someone about the problem or not) was examined for adolescents' willingness to seek

help. These findings are interesting as they demonstrate differences between youths' hypothetical and actual help-seeking behaviors.

In terms of youths' actual help-seeking for bullying, the majority of youth had talked to someone if they recently experienced relational bullying, followed by verbal bullying and physical bullying. In terms of hypothetical responses to bullying, youths reported they were most willing to seek help for a physical bullying problem, followed by verbal bullying, and relational bullying. Interestingly, youths' actual help-seeking behaviors were in reverse of teen's hypothetical help-seeking intentions. Specifically, teen's hypothetical and actual help-seeking responses were congruent for verbal bullying problems, and incongruent with respect to physical and relational bullying problems. This indicates that while adolescents reported they would be most willing to seek help for physical bullying, they actually sought help for this problem the least, and while adolescents indicated they were least willing to seek help for relational bullying, they sought help for this problem the most. These findings may be explained by the history of anti-bullying programs and school-wide bullying policies.

It is likely that the overt nature and commonly accepted definition of physical bullying led to school wide anti-bullying programs that primarily focused on physical bullying. This explanation is supported by Birkinshaw and Elsea (1998) who indicated that anti-bullying programs have predominantly targeted physical aggression, to the detriment of other more prevalent forms of victimization (e.g., verbal and relational). Teachers intervene in physical bullying problems more often than any other type of bullying (Birkinshaw & Elsea, 1998). It is likely that adolescents in the school system are conditioned to perceive they would be most willing to seek help for physical bullying

problems.   Perhaps once it is evident to youth that they are actually experiencing relational bullying more frequently than physical bullying, it is possible that they are increasingly distressed by the problem and thus seek help more often. This finding points to the importance of increasing educational efforts to increase individuals' awareness of relational bullying and its harmful effects.   It will also be important to promote help-seeking for this lesser recognized form of bullying.

With respect to gender differences in previous help-seeking, there is a discrepancy between males reported and actual help-seeking behaviors for a physical bullying problem.   While boys indicated they were less willing to seek help for a physical bullying problem than females, those boys who actually experienced this type of bullying problem in the past school year sought help more often that girls. This finding is interesting because how adolescent boys think they may respond in a physical bullying situation, does not reflect the reality of what they actually do. It is possible that boys' initial reaction to seeking help for physical bullying problems is consistent with societal gender norms of masculinity (Coloroso, 2002), whereas in the face of the actual bullying situation they are more prone to seek help.

Another interesting finding is that youth who had a recent experience with a verbal bullying problem and sought help, were more willing to seek help for the same type of bullying problem in the future. An explanation may be that youth perceived the experience of seeking help as a positive one and were more willing to seek help again in the future. This situation is similar to a study by Ciarrochi and Dean (2001) that found individuals were more willing to seek help from a variety of sources if they had sought professional help at least one time in the past. This promising finding suggests that if

youth seek help for verbal bullying problems one time they will be willing to do so again in the future. More research is needed to distinguish what aspects of help-seeking for verbal bullying problems lead to an increased willingness to seek help in the future. It will also be important to examine what barriers exist for those adolescents who sought help for physical and relational bullying problems and were not willing to do so again. By examining the factors that facilitated or hindered help-seeking it will greatly contribute to our understanding of adolescents' willingness to seek help for future bullying problems.

<div align="center">*Demographic Correlates of Help-Seeking*</div>

Differences in adolescents' willingness to seek help for bullying problems have been infrequently examined as a function of the following demographic variables: grade, school location and family structure. The current examination of these variables has been largely exploratory in nature and has raised many interesting questions.

Grade/Age

Descriptive statistics were used to describe overall age trends in the prevalence of bullying. The current study found that bullying increased until age 14. Specifically, verbal and relational bullying also steadily increased until age 14, whereas physical bullying decreased by age 13. These findings are generally consistent with past research indicating that the frequency of verbal bullying increases as children age and the frequency of physical bullying decreases as children age.

Differences in adolescents' willingness to seek help by grade were examined in the present study. It was found that grade level did not significantly affect adolescents' willingness to seek help for bullying problems. A similar finding was found in a study by

Hunter et al. (2004) that examined differences in help-seeking across school stage, as measured by students in Grade 6, 7 and 8. It was found that help-seeking did not differ based on school-stage (Hunter et al.). It is likely that among the age cohort of the current study, that adolescents' willingness to seek help is best explained in terms of its association with other variables, such as problem type, helper and gender.

School Location

Urban and rural differences were examined for adolescents' willingness to seek help from a choice of parent/guardian, peer, and teacher/professional for bullying problems. It was found that adolescents living in rural communities were more willing to seek help from teachers for verbal bullying problems than adolescents living in urban communities. No other differences in adolescents' willingness to seek help across school location were found.

A possible explanation for this finding is that the school climate and culture of rural schools is more conducive to help-seeking. For the most part, students attending rural schools are more familiar and comfortable with both their teachers and classmates. Similarily, Mok and Flynn (1997) found that small schools were perceived as more warm and caring environments than large schools. In a related study, Fin, Pannozzo and Achilles (2003) proposed that the small class sizes in rural schools contribute to a greater sense of belonging and higher class engagement. It could be possible that students attending rural schools feel more comfortable turning to teachers for assistance with a wide variety of problems, including bullying, because the students feel more connected to their teachers.

It is also interesting that overall, adolescents are least willing to seek assistance

from their teachers; however, if the bullying problem is verbal in nature and the adolescent lives in a rural community, then the student is willing to seek help from a teacher. This finding points to the importance of the student-teacher relationship in rural schools. Rural communities are often isolated and lack resources; therefore, teachers become an integral part of the student's life. It is very promising that teenagers in rural communities are willing to utilize this invaluable resource when they experience verbal bullying problems. It is also promising coupled with the finding that adolescents who recently experienced a verbal bullying problem, and sought help for it, were more willing to seek help again. Overall these findings are important for broadening our understanding of help-seeking in the larger context of the community.

Family Structure

Several studies have found that family structure is a very important part of help seeking (Offer et al., 1991; Boldero & Fallon, 1995). The current study sought to examine the relationship between adolescents' family structure and their willingness to seek help from parents/guardians, peers, and teachers/professionals with a verbal, physical and relational bullying problem. The results indicate that adolescents living with their biological fathers were more willing to seek help from their parents/guardians for bullying problems than those who were not. Specifically, this relationship was found for verbal and relational bullying problems and approached significance for physical bullying problems. No other family structure differences were found.

This statistically significant finding differs in some respects from previous gender norm research. It has previously been found that adolescents perceive mothers as creating the most supportive and encouraging environments for help-seeking (Schonert-

Reichl & Muller, 1996). Adolescents are also more willing to seek help from mothers because they are expected to be more nurturing than fathers (Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996). Based upon traditional male gender norms, it might be expected that the presence of a biological father would influence adolescents to adopt masculine help-seeking tendencies, but in the current study we see the opposite. The presence of a biological father actually increases adolescents' willingness to seek help from their parents/guardians.

While no definitive conclusions can be made, the current findings may be a function of the type of problem adolescents are experiencing. In past studies, help-seeking was examined for problems related to friends, family and interpersonal relationships; however, the current study examined help-seeking for bullying problems, which has been largely unexplored in the literature. It is possible that for bullying problems, adolescents expect their fathers to have a greater level of expertise in this area than their mothers. For those adolescents living with their biological fathers, this perception of their father's expertise in handling bullying may provide adolescents with a sense of comfort, thus increasing their willingness to seek help. Sullivan and colleagues (2002) also found that when selecting a parent helper, adolescents' expectancies that the help-giver will know how to help is very influential in their help-seeking decision. It is also possible the fathers are linked to feelings of security and safety. Diamond (1995) found that fathers nurture the development of the emotional bond between mother and child and are commonly seen as protector figures. It is possible that the presence of a father in the home creates an environment where the adolescent feels safe to divulge his or her problems.

Future research should further investigate the reasons why adolescents' willingness to seek help for bullying problems increases when living with a biological father. It would also be interesting to examine differences in adolescents' willingness to seek help when living with a step-father compared to a biological father.

Implications and Recommendations

The current study revealed that help-seeking for bullying problems is much more complex and differentiated than previously thought. The following are specific implications for the school system that can be derived from the findings of this study:

1. While it was encouraging that students were willing to seek help half of the time, school wide efforts still need to be made to increase help-seeking for such a pervasive problem.

2. Relational bullying was found to be the second most prevalent form of bullying; however, adolescents indicated they were least willing to seek help for this type of bullying. Education regarding relational bullying, as well as help-seeking strategies for this problem, should be increasingly promoted for students, school staff and community members.

3. Different helpers should be promoted for different genders. Males prefer parent helpers and females prefer friend helpers.

4. Efforts should be made to increase adolescents' willingness to seek help from teachers. Currently, anti-bullying programs are designed to encourage students to seek help from teachers (Hunter et al., 2004); however, it was evident from the current study that students were least willing to seek help from this source overall. Special training should be provided for teachers to

increase their knowledge of the various types of bullying problems and effective intervention strategies, and to increase their own helping skills (e.g., active listening, body language, empathy). Teachers/professionals should also be trained to help students effectively solve bullying problems, increase their awareness of possible sources of help, and acquire conflict resolution skills.

5. In order to be maximally effective, bullying initiatives should be extended to children's home and community lives. Increased efforts should be made to educate parents about bullying, and what they can do to increase their children's help-seeking behavior.

6. It was a very positive finding that rural students were willing to seek help from their teachers; therefore, this behavior should be further encouraged. Teachers are a very important source of help in rural communities because access to resources is challenging.

7. Overall, it was evident that bullying initiatives must not only target specific groups of individuals, but also the school culture as a whole. In order for help-seeking behaviors to increase, school personnel will need to strive for a primary prevention multi-modal service delivery model.

The results and conclusions of the current study also have implications for the field of school psychology. School psychologists can play a vital role in changing school culture to one that is more conducive to help-seeking. For example, a school psychologist may have a primary role in disseminating information to schools and communities about the importance of help-seeking for bullying problems. They could also dispel traditional gender norms for help-seeking and create awareness about the

harmful effects of lesser known bullying types. School psychologists can work also act as bridge between resources, collaborating with educators, school personnel and community members to best meet students' needs. Finally, school psychologists can play a crucial role in the development and provision of educational workshops and bullying programs. They are in a unique position to understand both the dynamics of the school, as well as practices best supported by research.

Limitations

One limitation in the current study stems from selecting questionnaire research. Inherent in this study's design is the possibility that participants answered questions in a manner that may seem favorable to the researcher or teacher. The research did make attempts to control for this limitation as confidentiality was verbally discussed and a statement of confidentiality was included at the beginning of the questionnaire. In addition, there is a possibility that the non-respondents were systematically different than those who responded.

The second limitation of the study is that willingness to seek help was examined from adolescents' perspective alone and not outside perspectives. Perhaps adolescents and their parents differ in identifying various behaviors as bullying or as help seeking. Future research should attempt to compare adolescents' perspectives of willingness to seek help for bullying problems to the perspectives of other sources, such as their peers, parents/guardians or teachers/professionals.

Finally, the current study examined adolescents' hypothetical intentions regarding help-seeking. As was evident in the study, what youth report they would do in hypothetical situations does not always reflect their actual behavior when faced with the

situation. Making causal inferences from the hypothetical results may be less reliable without first comparing them to the actual help-seeking responses. While this may appear as a limitation in some respects, the contrasting findings addresses a purpose of the study by pointing to the importance of comparing hypothetical versus actual behaviors in research among adolescents.

Directions for Future Research

First, the significant findings established in the current study were exploratory. It will be important for future research to replicate the results with different groups of youth, for example, youth outside of Cape Breton, youth who are not in school, youth in private school and youth of different ages/grades. In addition, it will also be important to replicate these results with specific at-risk groups of children, such as children diagnosed with disabilities. Youths' willingness to seek help may differ based on these populations. By examining help-seeking for diverse groups, it will assist in developing more inclusive/diverse anti-bullying programs.

Secondly, while the current study examined physical, verbal and relational bullying, it excluded cyber bullying. This relatively new form of bullying is conducted on the internet via instant messaging, chat rooms or web pages. Research in the area of cyber bullying is sparse, thus little is known regarding adolescents' willingness to seek help-seeking for cyber bullying. Furthermore, it is predicted that due to the anonymous nature of cyber bullying, the profile of bullies and victims may change (Li, 2007). While it was beyond the scope of the current study, future research in this area will assist in broadening our understanding of this increasingly prevalent type of bullying.

It would also be useful to examine adolescents' perceptions of bullying. It is

possible that youth have different definitions of bullying, teasing, and taunting. Future studies may want to qualitatively examine differences in youths' perceptions of bullying and its influence on help-seeking.

Another area that should be examined by future research is the experience of help-seeking for bullying problems. For example, was the experience of seeking help positive or negative? It would be interesting to investigate how the experience of help-seeking moderates adolescents' willingness to seek help in the future.

Finally, research should also continue to examine adolescents' reluctance to seek help from their teachers/professionals and investigate ways to promote turning to them for assistance. Perhaps examining teacher's perceptions about being a helper for bullying problems and the methods in which they handle bullying could elicit important information to promote help-seeking. It is extremely important to find ways to increase help seeking from teachers so that adolescents may receive the help they need.

Conclusion

The current study has made some important additions to a relatively unexplored literature base. For instance, adolescents' willingness to seek help for bullying does vary based on the type of bullying problem and the helper choice. Another interesting finding was that adolescents who had a recent experience and sought help for a verbal bullying problem were more willing to seek help in the future. Important gender differences were also found, with females being more willing to seek help for all bullying problems from friends than males. Furthermore, the presence of a biological father also influences adolescent help-seeking. It was also found that adolescents living in rural communities who had a verbal bullying problem were more willing to seek help from their teachers

than those adolescents living in urban communities. In summary, the results reinforce the main goal of the current study: to broaden the research in help-seeking for bullying problems. It is evident that help-seeking for bullying problems is much more complex than previously thought as it is influenced by an interplay of factors. Future bullying programs should increase adolescents' awareness of potential sources of help and should be tailored to meet the individual needs of each school or community.

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Appendix A
Demographic Characteristics

1. I am _____ years old.

2. I am a: girl   boy   (please circle **one**)

3. What school do you attend? _____

4. What grade are you in? _____

5. With whom do you live right now (please circle **one**):

    a. mother and father
    b. mother and stepfather
    c. father and stepmother
    d. mother only
    e. father only
    f. mother half the time and father half the time
    g. someone other than a parent (e.g., a grandparent(s), group home, friend)
    h. on my own

Appendix B
Willingness to Seek Help

Sometimes teenagers have bullying problems that make them feel stressed or upset. When this happens, they may think or do many different things to help make their situation better or to make themselves feel better. For the different types of bullying problems below, please tell us how much you would think or do each of the different things listed to try and make things better or to make yourself feel better if you had that problem.

A Physical Bullying Problem (Some examples are: being hit, kicked, tripped, aggressively grabbed, shoved, touched, pushed or having one's hair pulled)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the Time	Always
You would ask your mother/father/guardian for help in figuring out what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you felt about the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you would like to solve the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your friends about what made you feel the way you did.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your teacher/other professional about what made you feel the way you did.	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with friends about what you would like to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with teachers/other professionals about what you would like to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you felt.	1	2	3	4	5
You would figure out what you could do by talking with one of your friends	1	2	3	4	5
You would figure out what you could do by talking with one of your teachers/other professionals	1	2	3	4	5

| | | | | | Most of | |
| | Never | Sometimes | Often | the Time | Always |

You would talk with your friends about your feelings.   1   2   3   4   5

You would talk with your teachers/other professionals about your feelings.   1   2   3   4   5

A Verbal Bullying Problem (Some examples are: name-calling, insults, threats, and cruel jokes about your sex, race, appearance, a disability, religion and/or other).

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the Time	Always
You would ask your mother/father/guardian for help in figuring out what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you felt about the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you would like to solve the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your friends about what made you feel the way you did.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your teacher/other professional about what made you feel the way you did.	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with friends about what you would like to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with teachers/other professionals about what you would like to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you felt.	1	2	3	4	5
You would figure out what you could do by talking with one of your friends	1	2	3	4	5
You would figure out what you could do by talking with one of your teachers/other professionals	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with your friends about your feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with your teachers/other	1	2	3	4	5

professionals about your feelings.

A Relational Bullying Problem (Some examples are: being gossiped about, when people try to leave you out on purpose, tell your secrets to others, pretend they don't know you, tell bad things behind your back, try to get the others to dislike you, spread rumors and lie about you.)

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the Time	Always
You would ask your mother/father/guardian for help in figuring out what to do.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you felt about the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you would like to solve the problem.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your friends about what made you feel the way you did.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your teacher/other professional about what made you feel the way you did.	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with friends about what you would like to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with teachers/other professionals about what you would like to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
You would tell your mother/father/guardian how you felt.	1	2	3	4	5
You would figure out what you could do by talking with one of your friends	1	2	3	4	5
You would figure out what you could do by talking with one of your teachers/other professionals	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with your friends about your feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
You would talk with your teachers/other professionals about your feelings.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Recent experience with the same type of problem/ Previous Help-Seeking Response to the same type of problem

1. a.) Have you had a **physical bullying problem** during this school year?

NO   YES

If NO, continue to question 2/ If YES continue to 1b

   b.) Did you talk to anyone about this problem?

NO   YES

If NO, continue to question 2/ If YES continue to 1c

   c.) Talking to someone about this problem was…: (please circle one)

positive   somewhat positive   neither+ or -   somewhat negative   negative

2. a.) Have you had a **verbal bullying problem** during this school year?

NO   YES

If NO, continue to question 3/ If YES continue to 2b

   b.) Did you talk to anyone about this problem?

NO   YES

If NO, continue to question 3/ If YES continue to 2c

   c.) Talking to someone about this problem was…: (please circle one)

positive   somewhat positive   neither+ or -   somewhat negative   negative

3. Have you had a relational bullying problem during this school year?

NO   YES

If NO, please discontinue the survey at this point/ If YES continue to 3b

   b.) Did you talk to anyone about this problem?

NO   YES

If NO, please stop the survey at this point/ If YES continue to 3c

   c.) The experience of talking to someone about this problem was…: (please circle one)

positive   **somewhat positive**   **neither+ or -**   **somewhat negative**   **negative**

Appendix D
Teacher's Information Letter

Dear Teacher:

My name is Ainsley Boudreau and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in School Psychology program at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am interested in how adolescents deal with bullying problems, especially factors that help them or prevent them from turning to others for assistance. For this project, I would like to ask teenagers how likely they would be to ask for help for different types of bullying problems and whether these discussions are influenced by the student's grade, gender or previous experience with a similar problem. The project will be under the supervision of Dr. Anne MacCleave. This research project has been approved by the Mount Saint Vincent Research Ethics Board, the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board, and the school principal.

Your class was one of several chosen to participate. I am inviting you to participate in my study that involves having students in your class, for whom consent has been granted, complete a brief survey during one class period at school. This booklet will include background information questions (e.g., youth's age, parent or guardian's occupation), and questions asking teenagers how likely it would be that they would turn to others for information or support if they had specific bullying problems (e.g., physically bullying problem, verbal bullying problem, and relational bullying problem). It is requested that you distribute the attached Information Letter for Students and Parents/Parent's or Guardian's Consent forms to the students for distribution to parents/guardians. The attached information letter describes the study and requests that the consent form be returned to you by the student. Once all of the consent forms have been returned, the researcher will administer the survey to selected classes. Only those students for whom consent has been granted are permitted to participate in the study. Completion of the survey is voluntary. The study involves minimal risk and the participants will be given a resource list for follow-up. Participants will not be asked to indicate any identifying information on the survey and all information will be kept confidential.

By the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year, the results of the study will be mailed to all of the participating schools. No individuals will be identified in the study.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your consideration of this request. If you

have any questions regarding this research or the survey itself, please contact me (████████████;
████████████████████, or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Anne MacCleave, (902 - 457-6182;
anne.maccleave@msvu.ca).   You are also welcome to contact Dr. Elizabeth Bowering, Acting
Chair of Research at Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board (902- 457-6535;
research@msvu.ca) if you have any concerns about the study.

Sincerely,

_____

Ainsley Boudreau, BA
Graduate Student School Psychology Program
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix E
Information Letter for Students and Parents

Dear Students and Parents:

My name is Ainsley Boudreau and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in School Psychology program at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am interested in how adolescents deal with bullying problems, especially reasons that help them or keep them from turning to others for help. For this project, I would like to ask teenagers how likely they would be to ask for help for different types of bullying problems and whether these discussions are influenced by the student's grade, gender or previous experience with a similar problem. I would like to hear from students whether or not they've experienced bullying. The project will be under the supervision of Dr. Anne MacCleave. This research project has been approved by the Mount Saint Vincent Research Ethics Board, the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board, and your school principal.

I would like to conduct this study with students at your school. This will take place during instructional time; however, it will only take 20 minutes to complete. Interested students who have a parent or guardian's consent will be invited to complete an **anonymous** survey during one class period at school. This booklet will include background information questions (e.g., youth's age, grade), and questions asking teenagers how likely it would be that they would turn to others for information or support if they had specific bullying problems (e.g., physical bullying problem, verbal bullying problem, and relational bullying problem). Before the surveys are handed out the researcher will describe the study, the students will have an opportunity to ask questions about the project, and then they will be asked to read and sign a consent form that is similar to the one that parents or guardians are being asked to sign. Students' decision to participate or not in the study will have no effect on their grades or school placement.

Students who participate in the study may refuse to answer any item in the survey booklet and they may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. In addition, students in the class will not be permitted to view other students' survey responses. While the study is minimal risk, there is a chance that some of the questions may be upset individuals; therefore, when the project is finished, students who have participated will receive an information sheet that contains a list of community resources. All information collected during the study will be confidential, and the background information we ask for cannot be used to identify individual participants. Completed survey booklets will be stored in a locked research room and will be identified only by a code

number. Signed consent forms will **not** be stored with the surveys. Any computer disks holding data will be erased, and surveys/consent forms will be shredded immediately after completion of the study. A summary of the results will be distributed to the school district, the school principal, and any interested parents and students when it is available. This summary will report on groups of participants only and not on specific individuals in the study.

If you are interested in participating in our study and your parent or guardian is willing to have you participate, please have him or her sign the attached consent form and then return it to your school. If you or your parent have any questions before you make your decision, please contact me (   ), or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Anne MacCleave, (902 - 457-6182; anne.maccleave@msvu.ca). You are also welcome to contact Dr. Elizabeth Bowering, Acting Chair of Research at Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board (902- 457-6535; research@msvu.ca) if you have any concerns about the study. Finally, if your parent or guardian would like to receive a copy of the summary mentioned above, please make sure that he or she includes your address on the consent form.

Thank you for considering this request. The goal of this project is to better understand how teenagers make decisions about whether or not to approach others for help with bullying problems so that potential helpers (e.g., parents, teachers) are better able to meet their needs and so that better anti-bullying interventions can be developed and implemented in the school system. This information will help parents/guardians, teachers and school personnel to create a friendlier/safer school environment for all students.

Sincerely,

_____
Ainsley Boudreau, BA
Graduate Student School Psychology Program
Mount Saint Vincent University

Appendix F
Parent's or Guardian's Consent Form

I understand that Ainsley Boudreau, a graduate student of the Faculty of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University is conducting a survey study of factors that help or prevent teenagers from turning to others when they have bullying problems. The purpose of this study is to better understand how likely it is that teenagers would ask for help with different types of bullying problems. Teenagers who agree to participate in this project will be asked to fill out an *anonymous* survey booklet during one class period at school. The booklet will contain background information questions, and questions about how likely it is that they would turn to others for information or support if they had specific bullying problems.

Before the survey is distributed, the researcher will discuss the study with the teenagers and they will have an opportunity to ask questions. They will also be asked to sign a consent form. Students' decision to participate or not in the study will have no effect on their grades or school placement. During the study, students may refuse to answer any item in the survey booklet, and they may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. While the study is minimal risk, there is a chance that some of the questions may be upset individuals; therefore, when the project is finished, students who have participated will receive an information sheet that contains a list of community resources.

All information collected during the study will be confidential, and the background information we ask for cannot be used to identify individual participants. Completed survey booklets will be stored in a locked research room and will be identified only by a code number. Signed consent forms will **not** be stored with the surveys. The school district and school principal will receive a summary of the results as soon as it is available. A copy of this summary is also available to you upon request. This summary will report on groups of participants only (e.g., all teenage boys or girls) and not on specific individuals in the study.

I have read the information letter for students and parents as well as the consent form above and give permission for my teenager to participate in this survey study.

Signature of Parent or Guardian:_____

Date:_____

Name of Teenager:_____

School and Grade:_____

_____   I wish to receive a copy of the summary of results when it becomes available.

Mailing or E-mail Address: _____

Appendix G
Student's Consent Form

I understand that Ainsley Boudreau, a graduate student of the Faculty of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University is conducting a survey study of factors that help or prevent teenagers from turning to others when they have bullying problems. The purpose of this study is to better understand how likely it is that teenagers would ask for help with different types of bullying problems. I also understand that participation in this study involves filling out an *anonymous* survey booklet during one class period at school. The booklet will contain background information questions, and questions about how likely it is that I would turn to others for information or support if I had specific bullying problems (e.g., physical bullying problem).

I understand that my decision to participate or not in this study will have no effect on my grades or school placement. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any item in the survey booklet, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I am aware that while the study is minimal risk, there is a chance that some of the questions may be upsetting; therefore, when the project is finished, I will receive an information sheet that contains a list of community resources.

I understand that all information collected during this study will be confidential, and that the background information cannot be used to identify individual participants. I also understand that completed survey booklets will be stored in a locked research room and will be identified only by a code number. Signed consent forms will **not** be stored with the surveys. The school district and school principal will receive a summary of the results as soon as it is available. A copy of this summary is also available to you upon request. This summary will report on groups of participants only (e.g., all teenage boys or girls) and not on specific individuals in the study.

I have read and understood the consent form above and agree to participate in this survey study.

Date:_____

Youth's Name (please print):_____

Youth's Signature:_____

I would like to receive a summary of the results.

Mailing or E-mail Address: _____

_____

Appendix H
Verbal Instructions

Prior to Administration of the Survey:

My name is Ainsley Boudreau and I am a graduate student in the Master of Arts in School Psychology program at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am presently working on my thesis. I am interested in how students deal with bullying problems, especially factors that help you or prevent you from turning to others for assistance. For this project, I would like to find out how likely you would be to ask for help for different types of bullying problems, and whether these discussions are influenced by your other experiences at school. This is a survey, not a test, and it will have no affect on your grades. Everything in it will be kept private so please do not write your name anywhere on the booklet. You are free to withdraw your participation at any point during the study. Does anyone have any questions? You may begin the survey when you feel comfortable.

Post-Administration of the Survey:

Thank you for your participation in the study. If you, a friend, or a family member could use some assistance or would like someone to talk to, I am giving you an information sheet that contains resources who may be able to help. A summary of the results will also be mailed to your school principal at the beginning of the next school year and additional copies will be made available if you wish to see the results.

Appendix I
Information Sheet

How adolescents manage bullying problems is a topic that is of interest to parents, teachers, other professionals, and youths themselves. Over the past 10 years, we have learned a lot about how teenagers cope with stress and, in particular, bullying. We know that they respond to stressful feelings in several ways. For example, some youths do nothing, some avoid the problem, some try and solve the problem themselves, and some turn to others for help, usually a friend, parent or a teacher/professional. We also know that adolescents may do each of these things in different types of bullying situations.

To follow up some of these issues I prepared the survey that you completed today. We asked questions about how likely they would be to ask for help for different types of bullying problems (physical, verbal, and relational bullying problems), and whether these discussions are influenced by the student's grade, gender or previous experience with a similar problem. We will let you know about our results as soon as they are available.

We would like to thank you for participating in our study today and for contributing to our understanding of factors that affect the likelihood of adolescent girls and boys turning to others when they have bullying problems.

Some teenagers would like to talk to someone about a problem, but they may not know who to contact. The following is a list of services that are available to adolescents who are living in and around your community. If you, a friend, or a family member could use some assistance or would like someone to talk to, one of the resources below may be able to help.

Kids Help Phone	1-800-668-6868
NS Youth Help Line for Teens	1-800-420-8336
Cape Breton Help Line	1-800-957-9995 (6 p.m. to 12 midnight)
Cape Breton Teen Time Help Line	567-0330 (7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday to Thursday)