

PREDICTING AND
UNDERSTANDING
SEXUAL AND NONSEXUAL
ADOLESCENT PEER
VICTIMIZATION IN SCHOOLS:
A MIXED METHODS
APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

There are several developmental tasks encountered during adolescence that may influence how sexual peer victimization is used and experienced by adolescents in the context of interacting with their peers. The characterization of high-status gender role conforming perpetrators and low-status gender role nonconforming victims in popular media suggests that gender role development and peer social status are important elements involved in how adolescents use and experience sexual peer victimization. In the present research the concept of gender policing (i.e., the use of social power to control and reinforce gender norms) was examined to help describe sexual peer victimization within the peer group context during adolescence. Three studies were conducted to explore (a) the prevalence of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization (i.e., physical, verbal, social, and cyber) in a large sample of high schools students ($N = 42, 818$; Study 1), (b) social status and gender role conformity in relation to retrospective accounts of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization in high school as reported by emerging adults in a university setting ($N = 247$; Study 2) who also reported on their current psychological functioning, and (c) in-depth accounts of peer victimization during adolescence obtained through interviews with a small group of adolescents ($N = 14$; Study 3).

The findings reported in this program of research clearly document the presence of both sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization in high schools and also suggest that experiencing peer victimization (in general rather than specific forms) may have an impact on later psychosocial functioning. Although there was minimal support for the hypothesized relationships between social status, gender conformity, and experiencing and perpetrating sexual peer victimization, the findings reported in this program of research suggest that there is a level

of complexity to sexual peer victimization that requires more refined examination of gender role conformity and social hierarchy alongside the identification of additional mechanisms.

Implications and limitations of each study are considered.

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Predicting and Understanding Sexual and Nonsexual Adolescent Peer Victimization in Schools:
A Mixed Methods Approach

Popular forms of media suggest adolescents frequently encounter and engage in aggressive behaviours that are sexual in nature such as starting rumours about others' sexual activities and being called names such as "fagot" and "slut." Specifically, in popular television series and movies the victims and perpetrators of these sexually aggressive behaviours are characterized in certain roles with the perpetrators depicted as gender stereotypical popular girls (e.g., cheerleaders in the movie *Mean Girls*) and boys (e.g., football players in the movie *Varsity Blues*) and the victims depicted as the socially awkward, nonconforming students with little or no social status (e.g., television series *Gossip Girls* and *Degrassi High: The Next Generation*). Moreover, the story lines for these characters describe adolescents with very different levels of psychosocial functioning within the context of their peer group. Victims are portrayed to express depressed affect and loneliness while the perpetrators are self-assured and confident in their interactions with peers. Reading news stories on adolescents' experiences and perpetrations of sexually aggressive behaviours appears to provide confirming evidence of the story lines of these popular television series and movies with some news coverage reporting even more grim outcomes for the victims of persistent sexual peer victimization (e.g., "The Untouchable Mean Girls," 2010; "Sticks, Stones and Bullies," 2010).

Despite rapidly growing interest in the topic of peer victimization over the last few decades, much of the existing empirical research has focussed on forms of victimization that are nonsexual in nature including physical, verbal, social, and more recently cyber, thereby neglecting the study of sexual victimization. Yet, sexual peer victimization between adolescents is an issue of concern that continues to gain the attention of an increasing number of researchers.

These researchers have identified adolescent sexual harassment as a prevalent form of peer victimization occurring both on and off school grounds (Casella, 2001; DeZolt & Henning-Stout, 1999; Fineran, 2002; Fineran & Bennett, 1998).

The terms *victimization* and *harassment* are often used interchangeably in the literature to describe harmful behaviours (Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Zins, Elias, & Maher, 2007), but in this program of research peer victimization is used to describe both sexual and nonsexual negative behaviours that occur between adolescents and their peers at school (i.e., perpetrators' acknowledgement of intention to harm their peers and victims' subjective experiences of being harmed by their peers). My choice to use "sexual peer victimization" rather than "peer sexual harassment" as preferred by some developmental researchers (e.g., Craig, Pepler, Connolly, & Henderson, 2001; McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2002; Pellegrini 2001a, 2001b) is in part about the desire to be consistent in terminology when comparing harmful peer interactions that are sexual and nonsexual in nature. In addition, however, the term sexual harassment is rooted in the literature on adults' experiences and perpetrations of hostile sexual behaviours that occur in the workplace (Gutek, 1993; Paludi & Paludi, 2003). Yet, there are key differences between the sexual harassment that takes place in adult workplaces and the nature of sexual peer victimization that occurs in secondary schools. Unlike workplace sexual harassment, sexual peer victimization in high school may be explained by developmental factors inherent within adolescence. Moreover, it is proposed that the hostile sexual behaviours experienced and perpetrated in schools are indeed a form of peer victimization during adolescence and should, thus, be labelled accordingly.

It is important to acknowledge that there are several developmental tasks encountered during adolescence that may influence how sexual victimization is used and experienced by

adolescents in the context of interacting with their peers. The characterization of high-status gender role conforming perpetrators and low-status gender role nonconforming victims in popular media suggest that *gender role* development and peer *social status* may influence how adolescents use and experience sexual peer victimization. Thus, in the present program of research the concept of gender policing (i.e., the use of social power to control and reinforce gender norms) was examined to help describe sexual peer victimization in the context of peer groups during this developmental period.

The present program of research is comprised of three separate studies designed to address limitations in the existing literature on peer sexual victimization and explore a theoretical framework to describe the prevalence of this type of peer victimization. The first study was conducted with a large sample of high schools students ($N = 42, 818$) to assess the prevalence of sexual peer victimization and compared this prevalence against more oft-studied nonsexual forms of peer victimization in high school. The second study involved retrospective accounts of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization experienced in high school obtained from emerging adults in a university setting ($N = 247$). The goal of this second study was to explore whether the constructs of social status and gender role conformity could be used within a theoretical framework to help explicate some of the mechanisms surrounding sexual victimization during adolescence. Of additional interest in Study 2 was whether the experience of sexual victimization in high school would be tied to difficulties in psychological well-being in emerging adulthood. The third study extended findings from the first two studies using an interview methodology to obtain more in-depth accounts of peer victimization during adolescence. Specifically, a small group of adolescents ($N = 14$) was asked to describe their perceptions and thoughts on the different forms of peer victimization that occur in high school

alongside their observations and beliefs about why these behaviours occur. Given the theoretical framework of interest, special attention was paid to adolescent beliefs about the role of social status and gender role conformity in sexual victimization.

Literature Review

The majority of existing research on adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization follows the work of the American Association of University Women (AAUW, 1993) who conducted a nationwide survey of sexual victimization in American high schools. The AAUW report and subsequent research has been predominately descriptive in nature, and essentially established the necessity for further research in this area. Although there is clear evidence that sexual peer victimization is prevalent in high schools, and experienced by both girls and boys, there are many limitations in the existing research.

The AAUW (1993) was first to empirically examine sexual victimization in North American public schools and to document the prevalence of sexual peer victimization in the lives of both adolescent boys and girls. The AAUW Educational Foundation argued that it was necessary to conduct a study examining adolescents' experiences of sexual victimization in light of another study by the AAUW (1991; *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*) revealing that sexual victimization was a significant problem encountered by many adolescents in high school. The findings reported in the AAUW (1993) study further alerted researchers to a prevalent and perhaps ignored form of peer victimization experienced by youth in school.

Assessing Sexual Peer Victimization in Adolescence

The study of peer victimization that is sexual in nature is a relatively new area of research in developmental psychology and its assessment is rooted in the literature examining women's experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace (AAUW, 1993, Fitzgerald, Gelfand &

Drasgow, 1995). The measure of sexual victimization used in the AAUW (1993) study, or slightly modified versions of it, has been the primary measure used in research on sexual peer victimization in schools. Although the goal of this program of research was not to test the psychometric properties of existing measures or to develop a new measure of adolescent sexual peer victimization, it is nevertheless important to carefully review how the construct has been assessed to date. Of particular interest was whether the differing item content across measures of sexual peer victimization has created limitations in the interpretation of findings.

The AAUW (1993) assessed physical and nonphysical forms of sexual victimization using items developed with assistance of experts in the area of sexual victimization. This questionnaire was originally completed by 1,632 students in Grade 8 through 11 from 79 high schools across the United States. In 2001, the same questionnaire was once again administered by the AAUW (2005) to 2,064 students in Grade 8 to 11 throughout the United States. In both studies by the AAUW (1993, 2005), participants were provided with the following definition of sexual victimization “Sexual harassment is unwanted and unwelcome sexual behaviour that interferes with your life. Sexual harassment is not behaviours that you like or want (for example: wanted kissing, touching, or flirting)” (AAUW, 1993, p. 6; 2005, p. 2). Participants were then asked to indicate how often during their entire school life they had experienced school-related sexual victimization (e.g., coming to or leaving school, while on school grounds, or on school trips). The items on the AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire are as follows (a) been a target of sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks; (b) been shown or given sexually explicit material such as pictures and notes; (c) had sexual messages or graffiti written about them on school property; (d) had sexual rumours spread about them; (e) been maliciously called gay or lesbian; (f) been spied on while dressing or showering; (g) been flashed or mooned; (h) been

touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way; (i) been intentionally brushed up against in a sexual manner; (j) clothing pulled at in a sexual way; (k) had clothing pulled off or down; (l) been blocked or cornered in a sexual manner; (m) been forced to kiss someone; and (n) been forced to do something sexual other than kissing.

The AAUW (1993, 2005) sexual victimization questionnaire has been used in a number of subsequent studies examining adolescents' experiences of sexual victimization in schools. For example, Stratton and Backes (1997) used the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire with 178 students in Grade 9 through 12 from North Dakota public schools. Like the AAUW approach (1993, 2005), Stratton and Backes (1997) asked participants to rate how frequently they had experienced sexual victimization during their time at school. Pellegrini (2001a) also used the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire, but he used this questionnaire to assess how often adolescents perpetrated sexual peer victimization. Specifically, Pellegrini had research assistants observe the behaviours of 138 students in Grade 7 over the course of a school year and code these behaviours using the items on the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire to record how frequently participants sexually victimized their peers.

Although the original questionnaire developed by the AAUW (1993) is widely used in assessing sexual victimization among adolescent peers, the psychometric properties of this measure were not provided in either of the AAUW reports (1993, 2005). Stratton and Backes (1997) indicated that they used the AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire to assess sexual victimization in high school because this particular measure is the most widely used assessment tool for these types of behaviours occurring in the school context. Yet, they did not describe the psychometric properties of the AAUW measure used with their sample of adolescents. Pellegrini

(2001a) also failed to provide information on the psychometric properties of this measure when used as a checklist for observing participants interactions with peers. Moreover, he did not report inter-rater reliability despite the fact that several researchers observed and coded the behaviours of each participant.

Several researchers have used slightly modified versions of the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire to assess adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization. For example, Craig et al. (2001) used a modified version of the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire with 999 students in Grade 5 through 8 from schools in Eastern Canada. Participants were asked to report how often they had experienced various forms of same- and other-sex sexual peer victimization in a six week period preceding the study. The authors removed five of the original items used by the AAUW (1993): (a) Spied on while dressing or showering, (b) pulled clothing off or down, (c) cornered or blocked in a sexual way, (d) forced to kiss, and (e) forced to do something sexual other than kissing. They also added one item; "made comments about or rated the parts of someone's body that makes them a boy/girl" (p. 95). Internal consistency was more than adequate; Cronbach's alpha = .78 for same-sex victimization and .86 other-sex victimization (Craig et al., 2001). McMaster and colleagues (2002) also examined sexual peer victimization with early adolescents using this modified version of the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire. They asked 1,213 students in Grade 6 through 8 from schools in Eastern Canada to indicate how frequently they experienced and perpetrated sexual peer victimization during the six weeks preceding the study. Students also described how often these behaviours involved same- and other-sex peers. McMaster et al. reported solid internal consistency for each administration of the modified AAUW (1993) sexual

victimization questionnaire; Cronbach's alpha = .75 for same-sex victimization, .84 other-sex victimization, .93 same-sex perpetration, .88 other-sex perpetration.

Fineran and Bennett (1999) modified the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire to assess sexual peer victimization with 2,808 students in Grade 9 to 12. This particular measure did not include two of the original items used by the AAUW (1993): (a) flashed or mooned, and (b) spied on while dressing or showering. The authors also created one item describing physical forms of sexual victimization by combining three original items from the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire: (a) Touched, grabbed or pinched in a sexual way, (b) intentionally brushed up against in a sexual way, and (c) cornered or blocked in a sexual way. In another item they combined the original items "forced to kiss someone" and "forced to do something sexual other than kissing." An additional item describing incidents of attempted rape or rape was also included. These researchers found their modified version of the AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire to be internally consistent; Cronbach's alpha = .78 for experiences and .80 for perpetration (Fineran & Bennett, 1999).

Fineran, Bennett, and colleagues have used items from their sexual victimization questionnaire to assess sexual peer victimization in schools outside of North America. Specifically, Fineran, Bennett, and Sacco (2003) compared experiences of sexual peer victimization of adolescents (ages 16-18 years) in Chicago ($n = 220$) and Johannesburg ($n = 208$). In this study, sexual peer victimization was assessed using 12 items that Fineran and Bennett (1999) had previously adapted. Participants in Chicago and Johannesburg were asked to rate how frequently they had experienced and perpetrated these 12 behaviours during the year preceding the study. Reliability coefficients with the entire sample were acceptable at .78 for experiences and .71 for perpetrations (Fineran et al., 2003).

Other studies conducted with adolescents outside of North America have also used modified versions of the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire. For example, Timmerman (2002, 2003) asked 2,802 students in their fourth year of high school (ages 14 to 16) in the Netherlands about their experiences of sexual victimization perpetrated by teachers and peers. Students rated how often they had experienced various forms of unwanted sexual behaviours at school during the past year using a modified version of the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire. For this measure of sexual victimization Timmerman (2002, 2003) added and modified a number of the original items from the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire as follows (a) “Said I was a slut or a whore,” (b) “made sexual comments about parts of my body,” (c) “made sexual remarks about my clothing,” (d) “made sexual remarks about my sexual activities,” (e) “made sexual jokes,” (f) “called me ‘babe’ or ‘sexy thing’,” (g) “leered or eyed-up my body,” (h) “stood too close behind me or leaned over me,” (i) “made sexual gestures at me,” (j) “touched my body underneath my clothes in a sexual way,” (k) “fondled me,” and (l) “kissed me” (p. 399). Students were also asked a specific question regarding molestation or rape. Timmerman (2002, 2003) found the modified questionnaire to be internally consistent reporting a Cronbach’s alpha of .87.

Some researchers have deviated slightly from the AAUW questionnaire by constructing their own measures of sexual peer victimization. For example, Zeira, Astor, and Benbenishty (2002) examined sexual peer victimization with 10,400 Jewish and Arab students in grades 7 to 11 in Israeli public schools using seven items describing sexual victimization perpetrated by peers. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate whether or not they had experienced one or more of the following forms of sexual peer victimization during the month preceding the study (a) “a student took off, or tried to take off part of your clothes when you didn’t agree;” (b)

“a student tried to touch you in a sexual manner when you didn’t want it;” (c) “a student tried to kiss you even when you didn’t want it;” (d) “a student peeked while you were in the bathroom;” (e) “a student tried to hit on you and made sexual remarks you didn’t want;” (f) “sexually insulting things about you were written on walls or spread as rumors;” and (g) “a student showed you offensive pictures or sent you obscene letters without your consent” (Zeira et al., 2002, p. 154). Although the authors do not explain how they constructed their measure of sexual peer victimization and do not provide any information about the psychometrics of this measure, these items are quite similar to several of the items listed on the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire.

Roscoe, Strouse, and Goodwin (1994) also constructed their own measure of sexual peer victimization to examine these experiences with 561 students from a Midwestern intermediate school in the United States (ages 11 to 16). Items on this particular measure of sexual peer victimization ranged from “relatively nonassaultive [*sic*] to highly assaultive” types of sexual victimization derived from the authors’ review of research on older adolescents’ experiences of sexual victimization (Roscoe et al., 1994, p. 517). Participants indicated whether or not they had, at any time, experienced one or more of the following forms of sexual peer victimization: sexual comments, letters and notes, pressure for dates, physical contact, and sexual advances. Unfortunately, Roscoe et al. did not report tests of validity and reliability.

Similarly, Murnen and Smolak (2000) constructed their own measure of sexual peer victimization based on their review of the literature on adolescents’ experiences of sexual victimization in schools. The eight scenarios used in their study described three dimensions of sexual victimization: visual victimization (e.g., target is stared at), verbal victimization (e.g., sexual comments are made about the target, whispering and giggling about target), and physical

victimization (e.g., flipping target's skirt/pulling down targets' pants, pinching target's bottom). The perpetrators in these scenarios were identified as other-sex peers. Children in grades 3 to 5 from two elementary schools in rural Ohio ($N = 73$) were asked to respond to several questions about each scenario to assess their understanding of how the victim felt, why the perpetrator harassed the victim, and whether they had personally experienced the victimization described. Murnen and Smolak (2000) did not provide details regarding validity and reliability of their measure.

In examining adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization, some researchers have used sexual victimization questionnaires originally constructed to assess women's experiences of sexual victimization in the workplace. For example, Lacasse, Purdy, and Mendelson (2003) modified the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ; Fitzgerald et al., 1995) to examine sexual peer victimization in schools. In this particular study, participants ($N = 324$) in Grades 8 and 11 were asked to identify the sex of the perpetrator and rate how frequently they experienced each of the 28 items describing moderate (e.g., sexual comments) and severe sexual peer victimization (e.g., forced sexual contact) while attending high school. These two scales, as revealed by a principal components analysis, were internally consistent (e.g., Cronbach's alpha for moderate sexual victimization scale = .90 and for severe sexual victimization scale = .95).

Qualitative methods have also been used in research examining adolescents' experiences of sexual victimization. Although Berman, Straatman, Hunt, Izumi, and MacQuarrie (2002) were specifically interested in sexual victimization, they used several research methods to collect data on past and concurrent experiences of violence and victimization in general. These researchers asked youth ages 8-18 ($N = 252$) from Eastern Canada to describe their experiences of victimization in focus groups (104 girls and 63 boys), in-depth interviews and semi-structured

questionnaires (77 girls and 41 boys), and/or photographic or written journals (24 girls and 20 boys, and 37 girls and 20 boys; respectively). Berman et al. conducted focus groups exploring participants' definition of victimization to develop questions for participants to complete in written journals. In-depth interviews were also conducted to create "a dialogue about personal experiences of violence and harassment" (p.26). Interviewees then completed semi-structured questionnaires aimed to collect data on fears and experiences of being teased or harassed. Following the completion of the questionnaire, participants were given the option of keeping a written or photographic journal to further explore and document their experiences relating to victimization.

Duncan (1999) also used qualitative methods to examine adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization. Informed by grounded theory, he conducted an ethnographic study of bullying with a focus on peer victimization that was sexual in nature, or what he labelled as *sexual bullying* among high school students. Duncan observed and interviewed boys and girls in Grade 7 and 10 in four British high schools over the course of one year. An example of a question asked during these interviews included "what do boys do that upsets girls and vice versa?" (p. 13). Renold (2002) also conducted an ethnographic study of gender and sexual identities exploring heterosexism, homophobia, and heterosexual harassment among children. She conducted group interviews over the course of a year with Grade 5 boys and girls in British elementary schools. In interviews she would ask questions such as "do boys pick on you like they do their friends?" and encourage interviewees to elaborate on their responses.

In summary, despite some diversity in how sexual peer victimization in adolescence is assessed, the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire and measures based on this questionnaire are most common in contemporary research (see Table 1). This is not surprising

Table 1

Assessing Sexual Victimization in Adolescence

| | Study | Measure | Assessment period | Age/Grade | Location |
|----|--------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | AAUW (1993, 2005) | AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire | School life | Grade 8 – 11 | Across the United States |
| | Stratton & Backes (1997) | AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire | School life | Grade 9 – 12 | North Dakota |
| | Pellegrini (2001a) | Participant observations using the AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire | Completed at the end of a 2-year observation period | Grade 6, followed into Grade 7 | United States |
| 13 | Craig et al. (2001) | Modified AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire | 6-week period preceding study | Grade 5 – 8 | Eastern Canada |
| | McMaster et al. (2002) | Modified AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire (Craig et al., 2001) | 6-week period preceding study | Grade 6 – 8 | Eastern Canada |
| | Fineran & Bennett (1999) | Modified AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire | Over the year preceding the study | Grade 9 – 12 | Midwestern United States |
| | Fineran et al. (2003) | Modified AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire (Fineran & Bennett, 1999) | Over the year preceding the study | Ages 16 – 18 | Chicago and Johannesburg |
| | Timmerman (2002, 2003) | Modified AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire | Over the year preceding the study | Ages 14 – 16 | The Netherlands |

| | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Zeira et al. (2002) | Constructed measure for study | Over a month preceding the study | Grade 7 – 11 | Israel (Jewish and Arabic students) |
| | Roscoe et al. (1994) | Constructed measure for study | At anytime | Ages 11 – 16 | Midwestern United States |
| | Murnen & Smolak (2000) | Constructed measure for study | At anytime | Grade 3 – 5 | Ohio |
| | Lacasse et al. (2003) | <i>Sexual Experiences Questionnaire</i> | Over their time in high school | Grade 8 and 11 | Eastern Canada |
| | Berman et al. (2002) | Multimethod approach | Past and concurrent experiences | Ages 8 – 18 | Eastern Canada |
| 14 | Duncan (1999) | Observations and interviews | Over the course of a school year | Grade 6 and 9 | England |
| | Renold (2002) | Interviews | Over the course of a school year | Grade 5 | England |

since the findings reported by the AAUW (1993) attracted the attention of several researchers who were interested in further exploring sexual peer victimization during adolescence. These researchers have used the original AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire and modified versions of it to further explore sexual victimization with different adolescent populations within North America (e.g., Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Stratton & Backes, 1997), in different countries (e.g., Fineran et al., 2003; Timmerman 2003, 2003), and with various age groups (e.g., Craig et al., 2001; McMaster et al., 2002; Pellegrini, 2001a).

Other researchers have constructed their own measures of adolescent sexual peer victimization but even these measures describe items that are similar to items appearing in the AAUW (1993) sexual harassment questionnaire (e.g., Murnen & Smolak, 2000; Roscoe et al., 1994; Zeira et al., 2002). In at least one study (Lacasse et al., 2002), adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization were assessed using an adult measure adapted for use with a younger sample. More recently, qualitative methods have been used to collect data on experiences of sexual peer victimization (e.g., Berman et al., 2002; Duncan, 1999; Renold, 2002).

Currently there is a lack of information on the psychometric properties of the various measures of sexual peer victimization used with adolescents. Very few researchers examined construct validity with any of the measures of sexual peer victimization. However, given the overlap in items on these various measures with items originally used in the AAUW (1993) questionnaire it appears that there is a shared understanding among researchers regarding the content domain of sexual victimization in adolescence. The few researchers who have reported the results of reliability diagnostics indicate that the AAUW (1993) questionnaire is internally consistent when used with both female and male adolescents to assess both same- and other-sex experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization. The use of the AAUW (1993) sexual

harassment questionnaire and similar measures have revealed interesting patterns and inconsistencies in reported experiences of sexual peer victimization during adolescence.

Prevalence of Sexual Peer Victimization

Much of the research on sexual peer victimization in adolescence describes high prevalence rates in school settings. Yet prevalence rates do vary across studies particularly when sex and age-related differences are reported. It is also important to note that prevalence ratings vary according to the identified perpetrator; thus *sexual peer victimization* is distinguished from sexual victimization perpetrated by other individuals in the school environment (e.g., teachers, coaches, school administrators). For example, results reported by the AAUW (1993) indicate that 81% of the students reported experiencing sexual victimization at least once during their entire school life. Of those students who reported experiencing sexual victimization, 18% indicated that the perpetrator was a school employee and 79% reported being sexually victimized by a peer. Stratton and Backes (1997) also found that the majority of participants they surveyed had experienced sexual victimization on one or more occasions during their time in school (88%), and peers were significantly more likely to be the perpetrator when compared to school employees. Specifically, 79% of the victimized students identified another student as the perpetrator and 14% of the students who were sexually victimized in school identified school personnel (e.g., teacher or coach).

Research conducted outside of North America also suggests that peers are more likely than school personnel to sexually victimize adolescents. In contrast to the previous studies, Timmerman (2002, 2003) reported that only 18% of the surveyed high school students in the Netherlands had experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention over the course of a year within the school context. However, similar to the AAUW (1993) and Stratton and Backes

(1997), Timmerman (2002, 2003) found that the majority of students who reported being sexually victimized identified a peer as the perpetrator (73%) while significantly fewer identified teachers (27%).

There may be cultural differences between North America and Netherlands that could explain the discrepancy between the prevalence rates obtained by the AAUW (1993; 81%), Stratton and Backes (1997; 88%), and Timmerman (2002, 2003; 18%). However, the observed differences in prevalence rates of sexual victimization experienced in school can be partially attributed to methodological issues since assessments of sexual victimization varied from over one's entire school life (AAUW, 1993; Stratton & Brakes, 1997) to over a one-year period (Timmerman, 2002, 2003). Despite assessment periods and possible cultural differences, there is a convergent finding that peers are more likely to be the perpetrator of sexual victimization than other individuals in the school environment.

Research conducted in North America that has solely focussed on the prevalence of sexual *peer* victimization also reports high prevalence rates. For example, Roscoe et al. (1994) found that 43% of students they surveyed in Midwestern United States (ages 11 to 16) had experienced sexual peer victimization at least once in their lifetime. Fineran and Bennett (1999) observed even higher levels of sexual peer victimization in Midwestern United States with 84% of students they surveyed (ages 14-16) reporting experiences of sexual peer victimization during the year preceding the study. Moreover, a study with elementary school students in Ohio suggests that sexual peer victimization, specifically other-sex sexual peer victimization, also occurs quite frequently. In this study, Murnen and Smolak (2000) found that, overall, 77% of students in grades 3 through 5 have experienced at least one form of other-sex sexual peer victimization. Research conducted in Eastern Canada also suggests that sexual peer victimization

is prevalent in schools. For example, Lacasse et al. (2003) found that approximately 80% of students in Grade 8 and 11 experienced sexual peer victimization while attending high school.

Research outside of North America also reveals that sexual peer victimization is prevalent in schools. For example, Fineran and colleagues (2003) examined how frequently students in Chicago and Johannesburg experienced and perpetrated sexual peer victimization over the course of a school year. These researchers observed that students in both Chicago and Johannesburg experienced high levels of sexual peer victimization in school (83% and 79%, respectively), and showed that the majority of participants in both Chicago and Johannesburg also reported perpetrating sexual peer victimization (74% and 78%, respectively). Yet some research outside of North America describes lower levels of sexual peer victimization. For example, Zeira et al. (2002) compared Jewish and Arabic students' experiences of sexual peer victimization in the Israeli public school system and found that 29% of students in Grade 7 through 11 reported experiencing one or more forms of sexual peer victimization during the month prior to the study.

Again, it should be noted that methodological issues may account for the different prevalence rates observed in and outside of North America since different measures and assessment periods (i.e., one month, one year, all years) were used in each study. But despite methodological differences, sexual peer victimization appears to be a common problem in schools in various countries affecting as many as four out of every five adolescents. This research on sexual peer victimization has also revealed important sex and age-related differences in adolescents' experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization.

Sex differences in prevalence rates of sexual peer victimization. The majority of research on adolescent sexual peer victimization suggests that both boys and girls experience

high levels of sexual peer victimization with some studies also reporting significant sex differences in experiences and perpetrations of same- and other-sex sexual peer victimization. Thus, the sex of the victim and perpetrator is important to consider in interpreting the prevalence of sexual peer victimization during adolescence.

As previously reviewed, the majority of adolescent girls and boys surveyed by the AAUW (1993) reported experiencing sexual peer victimization; however, more girls than boys indicated that they were sexually victimized by their peers. Specifically, 86% of the girls who reported being sexually victimized at school identified a peer as the perpetrator and 71% of the boys who reported experiencing sexual victimization at school identified a peer as the perpetrator. Stratton and Backes (1997) also observed that a greater proportion of girls reported experiencing sexual victimization from peers in school than boys (64% of the sexually victimized girls identified another student as the perpetrator versus 47% of the sexually victimized boys identifying another student as the perpetrator). These two studies suggest girls are more likely than boys to be victimized by their peers (AAUW, 1993; Stratton & Backes, 1997), however results obtained by Timmerman (2002, 2003) suggest that the sex difference may be somewhat reversed in the Netherlands. Specifically, Timmerman (2002, 2003) found that approximately 70% of the girls reporting experiences of sexual victimization identified peers as the perpetrators, while 80% of the boys reporting experiences of sexual victimization identified peers as the perpetrators. Similarly, a higher number of boys (51%) than girls (36%) reported experiencing at least one form of sexual peer victimization during a one month period prior to a study conducted in Israeli schools with Jewish and Arabic students (Zeira et al., 2002).

Some researchers have also examined sex differences in the identity of the perpetrators. Results obtained by the AAUW (1993), for example, suggest that a greater percentage of both

adolescent girls and boys are victimized by other-sex perpetrators when compared to same-sex perpetrators, yet a higher number of girls than boys reported experiencing sexual victimization from other-sex perpetrators. Of the girls reporting sexual victimization, 81% reported being sexually victimized by a male acting alone, 57% by a group of males, 11% by a mixed-sex group, 10% by a female acting alone, and 3% by a group of females. Fifty-seven per cent of the boys who reported experiencing sexual victimization identified a female acting alone, 35% reported that they were sexually victimized by a group of females, 25% by a male acting alone, 14% by a group of males, and 13% by a mixed-sex group.

Similarly, Stratton and Backes (1997) found that a greater proportion of adolescents reported experiencing other-sex sexual peer victimization than same-sex sexual peer victimization and a higher number of boys than girls reported experiencing same-sex sexual peer victimization. Specifically, 47% of the sexually victimized girls indicated they were victimized by a male acting alone and 33% by a group of males, while 6% of the girls reporting sexual victimization identified a female perpetrator acting alone (none identified a group of females). Thirty-five per cent of the sexually victimized boys identified a female acting alone and 14% identified a group of females, while a male perpetrator acting alone was identified by 14% of the sexually victimized boys and 7% indicated they were sexually victimized by a group of males.

Again, it is important to note that in examining the sex of perpetrators, the AAUW (1993) and Stratton and Backes (1997) did not distinguish sexual peer victimization from sexual victimization perpetrated by other individuals in the school (e.g., teachers, coaches, and school administrators). Yet there is some evidence suggesting that adolescent male peers are more likely than adolescent female peers to sexually victimize other adolescents. For example, Timmerman (2002, 2003) found that 77% of students who experienced sexual peer victimization identified

male peers as perpetrators, 13% identified female peers as perpetrators, and 10% reported that they were sexually victimized by both male and female peers. However, based on this study alone, it is not clear if adolescent girls and boys experience same- and other-sex sexual peer victimization differently because Timmerman (2002, 2003) did not report sex of victim separately in analysing the sex of the perpetrator.

Other researchers address this gap by directly examining sex differences in adolescents' experiences of same- and other-sex perpetrated sexual peer victimization. For example, Roscoe et al. (1994) found that 50% of the girls and 37% of the boys they surveyed reported experiencing sexual peer victimization, and according to participants both boys and girls were more likely to be sexually victimized by a male peer than a female peer. Moreover, adolescent boys appear to be more likely to admit to sexually victimizing their peers. For example, the AAUW (1993) found that 66% of the boys and 52% of the girls indicated that they had sexually victimized their peers, and boys were more likely than girls to admit to sexually victimizing other-sex peers (54% of boys and 43% of girls) and same-sex peers (15% boys and 5% of the girls).

Fineran and Bennett (1999) also asked students to indicate how frequently they experienced and perpetrated sexual peer victimization. Findings showed that 87% of the girls and 79% of the boys reported experiencing sexual peer victimization at least once during the school year, and 77% of the girls and 72% of the boys reported perpetrating sexual peer victimization at least once during the school year. Similarly, in the research conducted by Fineran and colleagues (2003) adolescent girls and boys were similarly likely to report experiencing sexual peer victimization in the South African (83% and 73%, respectively) and North American samples (83% and 80%, respectively). Moreover, adolescent girls and boys

were equally likely to perpetrate sexual peer victimization in Johannesburg (79% and 71%, respectively) and Chicago (78% and 73%, respectively). In contrast to the AAUW study (1993), Fineran and colleagues (1999, 2003) did not ask students to identify the sex of their victims or perpetrators. Yet based on previous research (e.g., AAUW, 1993), both the sex of victim and perpetrator are important factors in understanding who experiences and perpetrates sexual peer victimization in high school.

The sex differences that are typically reported in research on sexual peer victimization are not consistent across all studies particularly when the sex of the victim and perpetrator are analyzed. Results obtained by Lacasse et al. (2003) revealed interesting sex differences in experiences of sexual peer victimization suggesting boys reported more incidents of sexual peer victimization than girls ($M_s = 7.57$ and 5.97 , respectively), but both girls and boys reported being sexually victimized by male peers more often than by female peers. Results obtained by Craig and colleagues (2001) with early adolescents suggest that boys experienced more same-sex sexual peer victimization when compared to girls, but no sex differences were detected in the prevalence of experiencing other-sex sexual peer victimization. Some research suggests that boys and girls are also equally likely to perpetrate sexual peer victimization during early adolescence. For example, Pellegrini (2001a) assessed how frequently young adolescents sexually victimized their peers and he found no significant sex differences. However, sex differences were revealed in research by McMaster and colleagues (2002) that examined both experiences and perpetrations of same- and other-sex sexual peer victimization during a six-week period prior to the study with participants in early adolescence. The researchers found that boys and girls were equally likely to experience sexual peer victimization (42% and 38%, respectively) but boys were more likely than girls to report sexually victimizing their peers (36%

and 21%, respectively). Analyses further revealed that boys experience and perpetrate more same-sex than other-sex sexual peer victimization, while girls experience and perpetrate more other-sex than same-sex sexual peer victimization. Clearly the sex of the victim and perpetrator are important in understanding sex differences in sexual peer victimization during adolescence and some research suggests that age is related to these experiences and perpetrations as well.

Age-related differences in prevalence rates of sexual peer victimization. Although several studies examining sexual peer victimization have assessed these experiences across several grades and/or age groups, very few of these studies analyze and report age-related differences. Indeed, much of the existing research examines the aggregate results obtained from students who may be at fundamentally different developmental periods. Thus, the experiences of students in relatively younger grades (i.e., elementary school or adolescents entering high school) may be different in form and frequency when compared to sexual victimization experienced in later grades.

The experiences of sexual peer victimization may differ across developmental periods as there is some evidence suggesting that sexual peer victimization emerges during early adolescence. For example, participants in the AAWU (1993) study were asked to indicate the grade in which they had first experienced sexual victimization in school and the majority of students reported that these incidents occurred between the sixth- and ninth-grade (40% of the sexually victimized boys and 54% of the sexually victimized girls). An additional 32% reported experiencing sexual peer victimization prior to Grade 6 (34% of the girls and 32% of the boys). However, 36% of the boys and 18% of the girls reporting school-related sexual victimization could not recall when they first experienced unwanted sexual attention. Stratton and Backes (1997) also reported that some participants had difficulty recalling when they first experienced

sexual victimization in school (28% of the girls and 50% of the boys). For those who did remember, results suggested that adolescents are most likely to recall first experiencing sexual victimization during early adolescence. Specifically, 13% of sexually victimized girls recalled first experiencing sexual victimization in Grade 7, 4% in Grade 8 and 11% in Grade 9. The majority of the boys who indicated experiencing sexual victimization also reported that these incidents first occurred between grades 7 and 9 (7% in Grade 7, 7% in Grade 8, and 8% in Grade 9). However, it is not clear from these studies when *sexual peer victimization* emerges since these studies assessed experiences of school-related sexual victimization in general.

In view of the observation that sexual victimization perpetrated by peers generally occurs more frequently than sexual victimization perpetrated by school personnel (AAUW, 1993; Stratton & Backes, 1997; Timmerman, 2002, 2003), it is likely that some or a majority of the incidents of sexual victimization adolescents recalled experiencing prior to entering high school were perpetrated by peers. Indeed, some research suggests that sexual peer victimization becomes more prevalent during early adolescence. For example, Craig et al. (2001) observed age-related increases in early adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization. In this study, students in Grade 5 to 8 were asked to rate how frequently they had experienced same- and other-sex sexual peer victimization during a six week period preceding the study. Analyses did not reveal grade differences in same-sex sexual victimization but other-sex sexual victimization was reported more frequently by students in Grade 7 and 8 when compared to students in Grade 5 and 6. Thus, it appears that experiences of other-sex sexual peer victimization may intensify during this developmental period for both girls and boys. Furthermore, using a cross-sectional sample of students in grades 6 to 8, McMaster and colleagues (2002) found positive linear trends across grade for experiences and perpetrations of

other-sex sexual peer victimization suggesting that, for both adolescent girls and boys, other-sex sexual victimization increases with age during this developmental period.

Generally, research on sexual peer victimization has focussed exclusively on various stages of *adolescence*; but one study has explored sexual peer victimization in mid- to late childhood. In this particular study, Murnen and Smolak (2000) examined other-sex sexual peer victimization with children in Grade 3 to 5 using scenarios describing various forms of sexual victimization. The authors found that the majority of both girls and boys experienced at least one of the behaviours described in the scenarios (75% of the girls and 73% of the boys). Aside from examining only other-sex perpetrated sexual victimization, another major limitation of this study was that certain scenarios described peer victimization that may or may not be sexual in nature. For example, one scenario described other-sex peers whispering and giggling about an individual but the scenario did not describe the content of the whispering. Thus, the prevalence rates reported in this study may be inflated given sexual peer victimization was not distinguished from other forms of peer victimization occurring between other-sex peers. While it is less clear if sexual peer victimization occurs in childhood (Murnen & Smolak, 2000), current research provides evidence that this form of peer victimization is prevalent during early adolescence and may intensify during this developmental period particularly between other-sex peers (Craig et al., 2001; McMaster et al., 2002).

Unfortunately, existing research has not adequately compared early adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization with older adolescents. Lacasse et al. (2003) did attempt to conduct age-related comparisons between students in Grade 8 and 11, but their study was fundamentally flawed. Specifically, participants were asked to report how often they had experienced various forms of sexual peer victimization during their time in high school. It is

quite probable that students in Grade 11 experienced more sexual peer victimization cumulatively than students in Grade 8 simply because students in Grade 11 have been in high school longer than students in Grade 8. Not surprisingly, Lacasse and colleagues (2003) found that students in Grade 11 reported experiencing sexual peer victimization more frequently when compared to students in Grade 8. Although age-related differences were not revealed by analyses examining same- and other-sex perpetrated sexual victimization, a more restricted timeline for assessing these experiences may have revealed meaningful age-related differences. Indeed, in comparing Jewish and Arabic adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization during a one month period, Zeria and colleagues (2002) found that fewer eleventh graders reported experiencing sexual peer victimization when compared to seventh graders.

Qualitative research also suggests that age is an important factor influencing the prevalence of sexual peer victimization during adolescence. For example, interviews with youth ages 8-18 from Eastern Canada suggest that sexual peer victimization is a prevalent form of peer victimization that emerges during early adolescence and persists across adolescence (Berman et al., 2002). The narratives collected by Berman and colleagues (2002) suggested that peer victimization is pervasive in the lives of both girls and boys given the numerous accounts of personal experiences of peer victimization provided by participants; but the researchers also observed age-related differences in descriptions of this victimization. While young children provided general descriptions of victimization (e.g., "bothered" by others), youth 11-13 year-olds were more likely to describe their experiences as physical, emotional, and verbal victimization. By 14-years of age, girls described personal experiences of unwanted sexual attention. Moreover, many of the girls over 14-years of age (up to 18 years) readily provided personal

accounts of sexual peer victimization suggesting this form of peer victimization persists across adolescence, at least for girls.

The higher prevalence rates obtained in studies conducted with older adolescents (e.g., AAUW, 1993; Stratton & Backes 1997) may suggest that while sexual peer victimization emerges in early adolescence this form of peer victimization persists across the developmental period into later adolescence (e.g., Fineran & Bennett, 1999). Clearly, meaningful analyses examining age-related differences are limited considering how students' experiences of sexual peer victimization have been assessed in several studies. For example, some researchers asked students to report how often they had experienced various forms of sexual victimization over the course of their *entire* school life (e.g., AAUW, 1993; Stratton & Backes, 1997). However, more restricted time lines were used in other studies and these researchers also did not examine age-related differences. For example, Fineran and Bennett (1999) asked students in Grade 9 through 12 to report how frequently they experienced sexual peer victimization over the course of the school year, but researchers failed to analyze and report grade differences. There is a clear need for research that compares both boys' and girls' experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization across several grades to more carefully examine age-related changes in the frequency and intensity of form of sexual peer victimization.

Variability in experiences of specific types of sexual peer victimization. Many studies examining sexual peer victimization have found that boys and girls experience and perpetrate different types of sexual peer victimization and a few of these studies further suggest experiences vary according to age and ethnicity. Although the AAUW (1993) did not report age-related differences, they described significant sex differences in the type of sexual victimization experienced by students in Grade 8 through 11. Girls were more likely than boys to experience

being the target of sexual comments, jokes, gestures, and looks and also most physical types of sexual victimization (e.g., intentionally brushed up against, cornered or blocked, forced sexual advances). Boys were more likely than girls to be targets of homophobic name-calling. However, there were no sex differences in experiencing some types of sexual victimization that were physical (e.g., had clothing pulled off or down) and verbal (e.g., sexual messages written about them). Moreover, using the AAUW sexual victimization questionnaire with adolescents in Grade 9 to 12, Stratton and Backes (1997) found only one type of sexual victimization to be significantly different between the sexes; boys were more likely than girls to be called homophobic names.

Research assessing only sexual peer victimization in schools has also revealed sex differences in types of sexual peer victimization experienced and perpetrated. For example, Fineran and Bennett (1999) surveyed adolescents in Grade 9 through 12 and found that girls were more likely than boys to be pressured for a date, called sexually offensive names, cornered or blocked sexually, and pressured to do something sexual. Boys reported that they were more likely than girls to pressure someone for a date, tell sexually offensive jokes about someone, spread false sexual rumours, and pressure someone to do something sexual; while girls were more likely than boys to make negative comments about someone's body, weight, or clothing. Although boys were more likely than girls to experience certain types of sexual peer victimization, Fineran and Bennett found that girls perceived all forms of sexual victimization as more threatening or upsetting when compared to boys, with the exception of homophobic name-calling and sexual graffiti for which no differences were detected.

Findings reported by Lacasse et al. (2003) revealed both sex and age differences in type of sexual peer victimization experienced. Specifically, they found that moderate sexual peer

victimization (e.g., sexual comments) was reported by girls more frequently than boys. Also, students in Grade 11 reported experiencing more moderate behaviours when compared to students in Grade 8. However, as mentioned earlier, the timeline used to assess sexual peer victimization was *years in high school* making grade comparisons difficult to interpret. The chance of experiencing various types of sexual peer victimization is greater for students who have been in high school for a number of years when compared to students just beginning high school. Interestingly, despite the assessment period, Lacasse et al. (2003) did not observe any sex or age differences in experiences of severe sexual peer victimization.

Although age differences were not explored, research by Roscoe and colleagues (1994) revealed that girls were more likely than boys to experience “assaultive” types of sexual peer victimization. For example, of those reporting sexual victimization perpetrated by peers, 45% of the girls and 19% of the boys experienced unwanted physical contact that was sexual in nature. Although at least some students indicated that both boys and girls were more likely to be sexually harassed by boys, 16% of the girls compared to 22% of the boys were pressured for dates suggesting that boys also experience unwanted sexual attention from girls when specific types of sexual peer victimization are examined.

McMaster et al. (2002) also observed sex differences in experiences and perpetrations of various types of sexual peer victimization reported by students in Grade 6 to 8. Specifically, boys were more likely than girls to sexually victimize their peers by: touching, grabbing, or pinching in a sexual manner; brushing up against them in a sexual manner; spreading sexual rumours; giving them sexually explicit material; and engaging in homophobic name-calling. However, boys were more likely than girls to be given sexually explicit material (e.g., notes or pictures) and called homophobic names. Although age-differences relating to specific forms of

sexual peer victimization were not explored, McMaster and colleagues (2002) did observe age-related changes suggesting that other-sex sexual victimization increases with age during this developmental period. It is possible that certain types of sexual peer victimization may intensify with age or during specific developmental periods.

Generally the research suggests that girls are more likely than boys to experience physical and severe types of sexual peer victimization. However, Zeira and colleagues (2002) found that boys were more likely than girls to experience all types of sexual peer victimization. This apparent sex difference across all types of sexual peer victimization assessed in this study may reflect cultural differences. Zeira and colleagues found that Arabic boys consistently reported higher incidents of sexual peer victimization when compared to Arabic girls and this pattern was observed across grades 7 to 11. The authors suggest that Arabic girls likely avoid situations that may contribute to experiencing any form of unwanted sexual attention (e.g., avoid other-sex peers, dress modestly) and/or girls underreport experiences to avoid social sanctions (e.g., being blamed and harmed by family members for a perceived sexual indiscretion).

Clearly the current research suggests there are sex differences in the type of sexual peer victimization experienced (AAUW, 1993, Fineran & Bennett, 1999; McMaster et al., 2002; Roscoe et al. 1994; Stratton & Backes, 1997), as well as cultural differences (Zeira et al., 2002), and also possibly ages differences (Lacasses et al., 2002). However, longitudinal and cross-sectional research assessing sexual peer victimization over the course of adolescence is still necessary to determine the age-related differences in the experiences and perpetrations of various types of sexual peer victimization (e.g., homophobic name-calling, touching in a sexual manner).

The prevalence of sexual peer victimization has been clearly established in the literature with most studies indicating that girls are more likely than boys to experience this type of

victimization and boys more likely to be perpetrators. Moreover, in a few studies it appears that sexual victimization emerges during early adolescence and persists across this developmental period. Despite this ever-growing body of literature on sexual peer victimization, there are significant limitations that have yet to be addressed in the existing research.

The current program of research expands upon the existing research by addressing the identified limitations in this existing body of research. The main limitations identified include: (a) most studies reviewed have not adequately demonstrated the psychometric properties of a comprehensive measure of sexual peer victimization, (b) the reporting timeframe used to assess adolescents' experiences and perpetrations of this type of peer victimization has not generally permitted meaningful comparisons between different age groups participating in much of the existing literature, (c) and rarely has sexual peer victimization been compared to other forms of peer victimization occurring during adolescence. With respect to the third limitation, developmental researchers have frequently focussed on adolescents' experiences of peer victimization that is *nonsexual* in nature to the exclusion of sexual peer victimization thereby making it difficult to examine how sexual victimization might be understood within a developmental framework.

One of the major goals of the present research was to compare sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization occurring during adolescence. Developmental researchers have carefully documented both boys' and girls' experiences and perpetrations of physical, verbal, and social peer victimization (for reviews see Archer, 2004; Crick, Nelson, Morales, Cullerton-Sen, Casas, & Hickman, 2001). The existing research suggests there are no sex differences in experiences and perpetrations of verbal peer victimization. However, boys are more likely than girls to be victims and perpetrators of physical aggression whereas girls are generally more likely

than boys to be victims and perpetrators of social aggression although the sex difference for social aggression is often debated (for reviews see Archer, 2004; Crick, Nelson, Morales, Cullerton-Sen, Casas, & Hickman, 2001). Existing research also suggests that physical and social victimization peak in early adolescence, while verbal peer victimization increases across childhood and into adolescence (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992). Cyber peer victimization is another nonsexual form of peer victimization that is gaining attention from scholars and the general public alike. To the best of my knowledge there are no published empirical studies examining the age-related changes in cyber peer victimization in high school; but in a recent study involving focus groups with middle and high school students, both girls and boys described their experiences and perpetrations of peer victimization through text messages and online media (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007). There is a need for adolescent research that examines physical, verbal, social, and cyber, alongside sexual forms of peer victimization to better understand prevalence and outcomes associated with experiencing these different forms of peer victimization during adolescence.

Outcomes Associated with Adolescents' Experiences of Sexual Victimization

As in the case of victimization in general, the natural flow of inquiry in the study of sexual peer victimization moves from a consideration of prevalence to an examination of the “consequences” of these experiences although correlational designs significantly limit the capacity to make causal inferences. Again, consistent with the wider literature on physical, verbal, and social victimization (see Card, Isaacs, & Hodges, 2007 for a review), the primary focus in the study of outcomes associated with experiences of sexual victimization has been on concurrent correlates. Although, the AAUW (1993) did not solely examine outcomes associated with sexual *peer* victimization (i.e., sexual peer victimization was not differentiated from sexual

victimization perpetrated by other individuals in school), the researchers did examine the educational, emotional, and behavioural consequences of experiencing sexual victimization in the school context.

The AAUW (1993) report indicates that negative educational, emotional, and behavioural consequences were greater for girls than for boys. Girls were more likely than boys to report not wanting to attend school, not wanting to talk in class, experiencing difficulty concentrating, staying home or avoiding classes, finding it hard to study, receiving lower grades, and thinking about changing schools. Victimized girls also reported more negative emotions than victimized boys. Specifically, girls were more likely than boys to report feeling embarrassed, confused, self-conscious, afraid, less self-confident, less popular, and doubtful about future romantic relationships. In contrast, boys were twice as likely to report feeling more popular having experienced unwanted sexual attention from individuals at school when compared to girls. Girls were also more likely than boys to report negative behavioural consequences from being sexually victimized. That is, girls more frequently reported avoiding the harasser, avoiding certain areas of the school grounds, changing seating in classes, not attending an activity or sport, changing friends, and changing their route between home and school.

Using the AAUW (1993) data, Lee, Croniner, Linn, and Chen (1996) further explored the psychosocial difficulties associated with and severity of experiencing sexual victimization in school using a social context approach. That is, they examined both individual characteristics and the contextual factors associated with sexual victimization in high schools. According to Lee and colleagues (1996), demographic information (e.g., sex, race, SES, GPA) was used to assess individual characteristics and contextual factors were assessed by adolescents' perceptions of sexual victimization in their schools, victimization experienced by friends, whether they had

been sexually victimized by school personnel, and whether they had sexually victimized others. The severity of sexual victimization was measured by an index computed by multiplying participants' ratings for how upsetting each type of sexual victimization experienced was and the frequency of experiencing that particular form of unwanted sexual attention, and then summing across the products. Correlates of sexual victimization were assessed by examining academic performance (e.g., finding it difficult to study), psychological problems (e.g., having trouble sleeping), and avoidance behaviours (e.g., not wanting to go to school).

The results of the study by Lee and colleagues (1996) suggested that individual and contextual factors were strongly associated with the severity of sexual victimization experienced by adolescents. Specifically, girls were more likely to report being severely victimized when compared to boys. However, sex was not the only factor influencing outcomes associated with sexual victimization. Students who perceived higher levels of sexual victimization at their school, students who reported that their friends experience higher levels of sexual victimization, and students who admitted to victimizing others experienced more severe sexual victimization in school. In turn, both female and male students with higher severity scores were more likely to report experiencing psychological, academic, and behavioural problems.

Lee and colleagues (1996) proposed that individual factors such as being a female student and contextual factors such as high levels of sexual victimization among individuals at school are associated with negative outcomes of experiencing sexual victimization in school. However, Lee et al.'s definition and assessment of contextual factors could be questioned. Specifically, Lee et al. identified factors that assessed adolescents' *perceptions* of what was happening within their school environment. For example, they asked adolescents' how often and what forms of sexual victimization their friends have experienced, yet adolescents and their friends may or may not

perceive the same incident as sexual victimization. Thus, it may be more accurately stated that Lee et al.'s findings imply that the severity and consequences of sexual victimization experienced by adolescents at school are influenced by their own conceptions of sexual victimization within that particular context. Nonetheless, Lee et al.'s social context approach acknowledges that outcomes associated with experiencing sexual victimization exist within a particular context and highlights the need for research that examines factors beyond sex of the victim and perpetrator.

It is important to understand the outcomes associated with experiencing sexual peer victimization, however, it should be noted that the above reported findings may be misleading since sexual victimization perpetrated by peers and school personnel were not separately analysed (AAUW, 1993; Lee et al., 1996). The sex differences observed by the AAUW (1993) and Lee et al. (1996) may be inflated because these researchers assessed negative outcomes associated with experiences of school-related sexual victimization. For example, some girls may have completed measures evaluating their psychosocial functioning based on their experiences of sexual victimization perpetrated by teachers rather than peers. However, research has also demonstrated that both female and male adolescents are significantly more likely to experience sexual peer victimization than sexual victimization perpetrated by school personnel (AAUW, 1993, Stratton & Backes, 1997; Lee et al., 1996; Timmerman, 2003, 2003). Thus, it is quite likely that the majority of participants completed these measures assessing their psychosocial functioning based on their experiences of sexual peer victimization.

Indeed similar sex differences have been observed in research exclusively examining sexual peer victimization. In the qualitative study by Berman et al. (2002) described earlier, adolescent girls' narratives of sexual victimization perpetrated by their peers revealed themes of

fear, avoidance, self-consciousness, violation, and shame that were not as evident in boys' narratives. Girls also described the negative impact that experiences of sexual peer victimization had on their sense of well-being. Some girls reported negative outcomes even though they were not sure if what they had experienced was sexual victimization because they were confused as to whether or not they had invited the attention (e.g., flirting with the harasser). Thus it is important to assess how the experience of different types of sexual peer victimization affects adolescents.

Sex differences in associated outcomes of sexual peer victimization have also been observed in late childhood. Research by Murnen and Smolak (2002) with students in Grade 3 to 5 suggests that girls were more likely than boys to describe victims in each sexual victimization scenario as feeling negative emotions (e.g., scared), and that girls were more likely than boys to say that the perpetrator was teasing the victim. The authors propose that their findings suggest that while both boys and girls experience some forms of sexual victimization in younger grades, girls feel more threatened by these types of behaviours even though they believe the perpetrators intentions are not malicious. However, this interpretation is problematic given the limitations of their study. As mentioned earlier, the scenarios do not provide sufficient detail to differentiate sexual peer victimization from other forms of peer victimization. Thus, the girls in this study may attribute feelings of threat to other-sex peer victimization in general. Moreover, the authors only examined victimization occurring between other-sex peers. Without also examining same-sex interaction it is misleading to conclude that girls feel more threatened by these behaviours when it is possible that boys may also feel threatened by these same behaviours when perpetrated by same-sex peers.

Although most research on sexual victimization in adolescence clearly demonstrates that girls are more likely than boys to experience negative correlates of sexual victimization (AAUW, 1993; Berman et al., 2002; Lee et al., 1994), it must be noted that some boys do experience sexual victimization and do encounter negative consequences from these experiences. Moreover, some research suggests that there are factors other than sex associated with potential outcomes of sexual victimization (e.g., perceived severity of the experience; Lee et al., 1996). Thus, research is needed to further examine individual characteristics and factors related to the social context of sexual peer victimization. This research may help explain why certain adolescent girls and boys are more vulnerable to suffering negative outcomes associated with experiencing sexual peer victimization.

Another limitation in the reviewed literature describing the relationship between peer victimization and psychosocial well-being is that many studies assess only one form of peer victimization. In fact, there is currently only one published study that has assessed psychosocial adjustment and multiple forms of peer victimization experienced in adolescence. Felix and McMahon (2006) found that physical/verbal and sexual peer victimization (but not social) were related to internalizing behaviours. Moreover, these researchers found that being sexually victimized by a male peer was related to internalizing behaviours for both girls and boys but internalizing behaviours were not related to experiencing sexual peer victimized perpetrated by a female peer.

Taken together, the existing research clearly identifies negative outcomes associated with experiencing sexual peer victimization and also suggests that girls who experience this type of peer victimization report more negative outcomes than boys who experience sexual peer victimization. However, adolescent boys may also be at risk of experiencing negative outcomes

when sexually victimized by other boys. As mentioned at the outset, a reliance on correlational and descriptive approaches means that these “outcomes” must really be viewed as correlates until longitudinal work is done. Another major limitation in the literature on sexual peer victimization is the current lack of a theoretical framework for explaining why this form of victimization occurs among our youth. In the current program of research it is proposed that adolescent sexual peer victimization can be understood within a theoretical framework of three interconnected theories: cultural, abuse of power, and developmental.

Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Sexual Peer Victimization

In contrast to a focus on theory development, much of the research conducted on adolescents’ experiences of sexual peer victimization to date has been aimed at informing policy development (e.g., Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Timmerman, 2002, 2003), designing educational programs geared towards reducing sexual harassment in schools (e.g., Roscoe et al., 1994; Larkin & Popaleni, 1994; Timmerman, 2002, 2003), and understanding and reducing violence in girls’ lives (e.g., Berman et al., 2002). The existing research on sexual peer victimization provides a detailed description of the phenomenon rather than examining theoretical explanations for the prevalence of sexual peer victimization in schools. Moreover, current theoretical explanations for sexual harassment are predominately based on experiences of women who have encountered unwanted sexual attention in the workplace (e.g., Paludi & Paludi, 2003). Thus, there is a need for research on sexual peer victimization that expands theoretical explanations of sexual victimization to include adolescents’ perspectives of this type of peer victimization as it occurs on school grounds with their peers.

Lee and colleagues (1996) reviewed the usefulness of current theories of sexual harassment to explain adolescent sexual peer victimization. These authors identified five

theoretical explanations (biological, pathological, cultural, abuse of power, and developmental) and suggest that some theories are less helpful than others in explaining sexual peer victimization in schools.

Biological theory. According to the biological theory, sexual victimization evolves from biological differences between females and males. That is, males are assumed to be more aggressive than females because of their physical size and hormones such that males are perpetrators and females are the victims. As discussed by Lee and colleagues, there are two major problems with this theory. First, not all males are sexually aggressive towards females. Second, research with adolescent populations indicates that some males are victims of sexual victimization (e.g., Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Roscoe et al., 1994) and some females are perpetrators (Lee et al., 1996; McMaster et al., 2002).

Pathology theory. The pathology theory proposes that sexual victimization is an extreme form of antisocial behaviour. From this perspective, the aggressor does not empathize with victims and therefore continues to engage in this sort of inappropriate behaviour. Lee and colleagues suggest that this theory may only be applicable to severe incidents of sexual victimization such as sexual coercion but does not adequately explain sexual victimization in the general population. Indeed, it is unlikely that the majority of adolescent girls and boys are pathological given that a high number of both boys and girls report perpetrating at least some form of sexual victimization in the context of school (e.g., Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Lee et al., 1996; McMaster et al., 2002, Roscoe et al., 1994). The pathology theory may better explain why some girls and boys perpetrate extreme forms of sexual peer victimization or repeatedly engage in victimizing their peers in this manner without learning to inhibit these inappropriate behaviours.

Although interesting, the biological and pathology theories were not viewed to be particularly useful as a foundation for the present program of research. Of greater interest and applicability were the remaining three theoretical approaches reviewed by Lee et al. (1996) including cultural theory, abuse of power theory, and developmental theory.

Cultural theory. Generally, cultural frameworks are used to explain how a community or group of people influence individuals within that context (Shweder, Goodnow, Hatano, LeVine, Markus, & Miller, 1998). There is no single “cultural theory” as there are many definitions of culture (Cole, 1999; Shweder et al., 1998). With the exception of Lee and colleagues (1996), a cultural framework has not been used to explain adolescent sexual peer victimization.

Lee and colleagues (1996) proposed that sexual victimization in schools can be explained from a social context approach given that their results revealed contextual factors were associated with the occurrence and severity of sexual victimization in schools (i.e., adolescents’ perceptions of the occurrence of sexual peer victimization in school). This approach to understanding sexual victimization addresses the culture or context surrounding incidents of sexual victimization. Lee et al. suggest that the cultural context provides individuals with important information regarding norms, beliefs, and values that influence how sexual victimization is understood and dealt with within a particular context. These researchers advocate that we must consider the phenomenon of school-related sexual victimization to be embedded within interactions that occur as part of adolescents’ peer culture within the context of the school.

Corsaro and Eder (1990) define peer culture as “a set of stable activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers” (p. 197).

Adolescent peer cultures are characterized by interactions that can occur in different types of peer relationships such as friendships, cliques, and crowds (Brown, 1990). As with any culture, the members of peer cultures actively participate in establishing and maintaining norms (Corsaro, 1992). The peer culture is a particularly important context for adolescent development given the significant amount of time adolescents spend together (Brown, 1990) which in turn allows peers to play a salient role in socializing adolescents (Youniss & Smollar, 1989). To understand peer socialization during adolescence, Eder and Sanford (1986) advocate research that examines both the content of peers' norms and the process by which adolescents and their peers establish and maintain these norms. Adolescents are likely to share norms, beliefs, and values which influence how sexual victimization is understood and dealt with within the context of their interactions with peers.

Abuse of power theory. The abuse of power theory describes how individuals misuse or abuse their positions of power over individuals with less power (Lee et al., 1996). This theoretical perspective is frequently used to explain adults' experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace (Paludi & Paludi, 2003) particularly when sexual victimization occurs between employers and employees. Generally males are in more powerful positions within a workplace than are women, thus, some researchers have suggested that male employers use their positions of power to sexually intimidate or threaten female employees. The importance of the social context and individuals' use of power over peers has generally been overlooked in the research on sexual peer victimization.

Lee and colleagues (1996) propose that their data support the abuse of power theory but only with respect to sexual victimization perpetrated by school personnel and not sexual victimization perpetrated by students. For example, when students are being sexually victimized

by school personnel this suggests abuse of organizational power. School personnel are likely to have positions of authority over students and victimizing students sexually is clearly an abuse of that power. According to Lee and colleagues the abuse of power theory does not explain sexual peer victimization in schools because school personnel hold more powerful positions than students in the context of the school, but adolescents do not have organizational power from positions of authority over their peers in the school context.

However, this is a rather limited understanding of “power,” particularly with respect to peer relations, given hierarchical relationships do exist among adolescents and their peers (Adler & Adler, 1998). It is important to understand the definition of “power” in the adolescent social context. In childhood, physical size and strength are generally the characteristics associated with power in the peer group but during adolescence dominance status in the peer hierarchy may be a more significant characteristic of “power” than physical strength and size (Pellegrini, 2001b). Moreover, this social status is particularly important in early and mid-adolescence (Brown, 1990). Some adolescents are likely to misuse the power they have over their peers as bullying is, by definition, an abuse of power among peers (Olweus, 1994). According to Vaillancourt, McDougall, Hymel, and Sunderani (2010), these aggressive individuals are viewed by peers as being popular and powerful, possessing both implicit and explicit power; implicit power they achieve through social status (i.e., being liked by peers, being perceived by peers as popular) and explicit power achieved through outward behaviour (i.e., being aggressive towards peers).

Some research suggests that adolescents with high social status use aggressive strategies to establish and maintain group norms. For example, in their ethnographic work examining gender socialization among adolescent peers, Eder and Parker (1987) observed that male athletes were socially dominant peers in their adolescent peer group. Aggression displayed on and off

the game field set the norm for masculine behaviour and these socially dominant males victimized or threatened to harm boys who did not conform to the masculine standards valued within the peer group. Therefore, it is possible that adolescent males and females with high social status engage in aggressive behaviour, including that which is sexual in nature, to reinforce group norms such as gender role expectations.

There is also some evidence to suggest that social status may protect individuals from being sexually victimized while sexually victimizing peers helps them maintain social status. In the qualitative study by Berman et al. (2002), boys reported that they were less likely to sexually victimize girls with high social status. However, boys also admitted that they used sexual peer victimization to protect and defend their own masculinity. For example, some boys indicated that they would spread rumours that exaggerated their sexual escapades but they acknowledged that girls were victimized in the process of defending their own masculinity and protecting their own social status among peers. We need to understand sexual peer victimization in the social context of peer relations and there is some evidence supporting a theoretical framework of culture and power. The possible relationship between aggressive behaviours such as sexual victimization and social status among adolescent peers (hierarchical power relationships within adolescent peer culture) has not been adequately addressed in the literature thus far.

Some developmental researchers like Rodkin and Hodges (2003) have proposed that power relationships among peers are associated with being a perpetrator or victim of peer victimization within different “peer ecologies.” They define peer ecology as the immediate, proximal settings wherein the individual and her/his peers interact with, influence, and socialize one another. Like Brown (1990), they propose that adolescent peer ecology is not homogeneous but rather is a compilation of various peer systems (e.g., friendships, cliques, crowds). Rodkin

and Hodges identify horizontal and vertical structures that they suggest are important in understanding aggression and victimization occurring among peers. Horizontal relationships are characterized by mutual liking or disliking of peers whereas power differentials relating to social hierarchy among peers characterize vertical relationships. Their analysis of research on bullying and victimization places bullies and victims in both horizontal and vertical peer structures. For example, Rodkin and Hodges suggest bullies exist in diverse social networks. Some bullies have several horizontal relationships with peers; some are mutual friends with other bullies, some bullies receive social support from non-aggressive youth, and yet others are rejected by peers. On a vertical dimension some bullies are socially dominant and others are isolates within their peer ecologies. The peer ecologies of victims are not as diverse because victims may or may not develop mutual friendships with other peers but they are unlikely to have much social power.

Rodkin's and Hodges' (2003) review of the literature, however, does not examine different forms of peer victimization and it is possible that the type of victimization (e.g., sexual, physical, social, verbal, and cyber) used and experienced is associated with one's place in their peer ecologies, particularly from a developmental perspective. As previously described, Björkqvist and colleagues (1992) have identified age-related changes in aggression suggesting that physical aggression is more common among younger children and relational aggression is more common among older children. Björkqvist and colleagues propose that aggressive strategies change with social and cognitive maturity such that as children develop verbal skills, they use less physical forms of aggression and engage in more verbal aggression, but as they continue to develop advanced cognitive and social skills, they begin to be more relationally aggressive than physically or verbally aggressive.

Developmental changes associated with adolescence may also influence the prevalence and acceptance/tolerance of different forms of peer victimization occurring in adolescent peer ecologies. For example, during adolescence relational aggression may be a particularly effective strategy for girls to use in acquiring social status, an important developmental task associated with adolescence (Eder & Sanford, 1986). As some researchers have proposed, physical aggression is generally considered gender-inappropriate for girls at any age and therefore not an acceptable form of aggression to display in adolescent female peer groups (Buchanan, Sippola, Paget, & Closson, 2005; Sippola, Paget, & Buchanan, 2007). Thus, physically aggressive girls and relationally aggressive girls may exist on different horizontal and vertical dimensions within their adolescent peer ecologies. On a vertical dimension relationally aggressive girls are likely to have more social power than physically aggressive girls. That is, higher social status among adolescent girls may be achieved and maintained by girls using relational aggression whereas the gender-inappropriate behaviour of physically aggressive girls may relegate them to lower social positions among their peers. However, both relationally and physically aggressive adolescent girls may have horizontal relationships with peers being mutually disliked and/or liked by their peers. Indeed, more research is needed to understand the individual characteristics of victims and perpetrators of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization within adolescent peer ecologies. To my knowledge, no empirical work has examined the developmental changes associated with adolescents' use and experience of different forms of peer victimization such as sexual victimization within their peer ecologies.

Developmental theories. Developmental theories are used to explain systematic change across the life span or during stages of human development (Lerner, 1998). Research from a developmental perspective can contribute to our understanding of sexual peer victimization in

adolescent peer ecologies because a developmental framework can provide direction in understanding why sexual victimization emerges in adolescence. Currently, much of the research has simply demonstrated the prevalence rates of sexual victimization among adolescent peers rather than examining the factors associated with the emergence and persistence of this phenomenon during the developmental period of adolescence.

A developmental framework is implicit in some of the research reviewed. For example, Roscoe and colleagues (1994) did not specifically analyze or report any age differences in their research with adolescents, but they did propose that developmental factors may explain their findings. The results of their analyses suggest that girls were more likely than boys to experience “assaultive” forms of sexual peer victimization such as unwanted physical contact that was sexual in nature. Moreover, discussions with students regarding the results obtained from their study revealed that both boys and girls were more likely to be sexually victimized by a male peer than a female peer. During these follow-up discussions, some young adolescent girls described male-to-female sexual victimization as inappropriate, invasive, and disruptive, while some early adolescent boys perceived male-to-male sexual victimization as humorous. Roscoe and colleagues suggest that adolescent boys’ experiences should not be interpreted as sexual victimization; “it is more likely that they typified a form of physical interaction which occurs among early adolescent males as they explore and deal with physical change and a new dimension of their sexuality” (p. 520). Roscoe and colleagues also suggest that developmental factors explain why early adolescent girls sexually victimize boys (e.g., pressures for dates, unwanted phone calls, letters and notes). They suggest that since the onset of girls’ sexual maturation is earlier than boys, girls in their study were more ready than boys to be dating and thus pursued boys who were not ready for or comfortable with romantic relationships.

The explanations for early adolescent boys' experiences of sexual peer victimization provided by Roscoe et al. (1994) seem to dismiss certain interactions that are sexual in nature as sexual victimization and imply that only male-to-female sexual victimization can be appropriately interpreted as sexual peer victimization. Certainly, not all adolescent boys and girls are upset by their peers' actions if they perceive these actions as harmless (e.g., amicable teasing), but some boys and girls do perceive certain interactions with their peers as threatening or upsetting. Thus, it would seem that by definition (i.e., sexual victimization is unwanted or unwelcome sexual attention) both boys' and girls' experiences of same- and other-sex peer victimization that is sexual in nature can (and should) be interpreted as sexual peer victimization. While Roscoe and colleagues do not perceive certain behaviours as sexual harassment, they do propose that developmental factors may explain why boys and girls engage in this form of peer victimization during adolescence.

Not all researchers agree that developmental theories adequately explain adolescent sexual peer victimization. For example, Lee and colleagues (1996) dismissed the usefulness of developmental theories in explaining adolescents' experiences of sexual victimization. However they take a very narrow perspective of developmental changes associated with adolescence. Specifically, the developmental perspective presented by Lee et al. proposes that sexual victimization occurs when adolescents experience difficulty expressing their sexual interest for their peers and, consequently, sexual victimization should decrease as youths' communication skills improve. Lee et al. suggest a developmental theory is problematic since incidences of sexual victimization do not gradually diminish as adolescents become more skilled in expressing their sexual attraction given the elevated prevalence rates that continue to be reported in adult

populations. However, it is important to consider other developmental tasks associated with adolescence that may influence adolescents' experience of sexual peer victimization.

Adolescence may be a particularly important developmental period for examining sexual peer victimization because it is a period in which young individuals encounter physiological and social changes that influence their sexual development (Petersen, Leffert, & Graham, 1995). For example, physiological changes associated with pubertal maturation may heighten young adolescents' sexual interest in peers given their increased interest in sex, and the emergence of secondary sex characteristics in themselves and peers signalling sexual maturation (DeLamater & Friedrich, 2002). Furthermore, social changes characteristic of early adolescence may also influence their sense of self as sexual beings as adolescents' social worlds begin to expand beyond their family with increased attention on peers (Brown, 1990). It is also during this time that adolescents begin to more frequently interact with other-sex peers, thus, providing opportunities to develop sexual interests in peers (Feiring, 1999). Thus, developmental processes such as adolescents' emerging sense of self as sexual beings in the context of their changing relationships with peers are likely to influence how they experience and use sexual victimization.

Indeed, some researchers have observed significant relationships between the prevalence of sexual peer victimization and developmental processes such as sexual maturation. For example, Craig et al. (2001) examined the association between pubertal development and various forms of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization during early adolescence (grades 5 to 8). Results suggested that there were no age-related changes in verbal, physical, and social victimization but experiences of sexual peer victimization increased with age, particularly between other-sex peers. Craig et al. (2001) proposed that early pubertal development may make

some adolescents targets of this sexual peer victimization because visible secondary sex characteristics make adolescents' sexual development salient to peers. That is, being perceived by peers as an early-maturer may elicit negative attention given the sensitive nature of emerging sexuality. They also found that early-maturing adolescents were more likely than late and on-time maturing adolescents to experience same- and other-sex sexual victimization and other-sex social victimization. Craig and colleagues also suggest that the overlap of social and sexual victimization by other-sex peers implies that sexual harassment is a form of peer victimization; peer victimization may continue across childhood and into early adolescence but takes on sexual overtones with the onset of sexual maturation. Although Craig et al. did not examine peer networks, they further proposed that peer victimization becomes more sexualized when other-sex peers enter adolescents' peer groups.

There is some research that has examined developmental factors such as pubertal maturation and changes in adolescents' social context, specifically the emergence of mixed-sex peer groups. McMaster and colleagues (2002) found a significant association between pubertal maturation and more frequently experiencing and perpetrating other-sex sexual victimization. Also, adolescents who reported more other-sex peers in their social networks were more likely to report experiencing and perpetrating other-sex sexual victimization. Thus, the social and physical changes encountered during early adolescence appear to influence experiences of sexual peer victimization. That is, pubertal maturation and interacting with other-sex peers may increase the likelihood of experiencing and perpetrating other-sex sexual victimization for both boys and girls.

Similar to the supposition made by Roscoe et al. (1994) described earlier, McMaster et al. (2002) suggest that girls' earlier pubertal maturation may explain why some early adolescent

girls sexually victimize boys - girls develop sexual interest in other-sex peers sooner than the boys they are pursuing. McMaster et al. also suggest that sexual victimization among early adolescent boys is more a form of verbal peer victimization than sexual peer victimization. Moreover, McMaster and colleagues further hypothesize two developmental trajectories for sexual peer victimization emerging during early adolescence; (a) for many adolescents sexual peer victimization may be part of the normative transformation into sexual beings similar to what Craig et al. (2001) have proposed, and (b) sexual aggression lies on a continuum of a broader spectrum of interpersonal aggression (e.g., the schoolyard bully develops into a domestically violent adult).

While physical changes associated with puberty may be associated with adolescent sexual peer victimization, the above proposed developmental trajectories further emphasize the importance of understanding sexual victimization in the social context of adolescent peer groups. That is, Craig et al. (2001) and McMaster et al. (2002) suggest that interpersonal relationships with peers, particularly the development of mixed-sex social networks, may serve as a context for the emergence and prevalence of this form of peer victimization during adolescence.

Pellegrini (2001a, 2001b) has also proposed that sexual peer victimization emerges in the context of heterosexual relationships during early adolescence when sexuality becomes a salient developmental task. Indeed, Pellegrini (2001a) found that students who reported perpetrating higher levels of verbal and physical peer victimization across Grade 6 and 7 and reported higher frequency of dating activity also tended to sexually victimize their peers. He suggested that some bullies may become perpetrators of sexual peer victimization in the context of emerging heterosexual relations with peers, using sexual victimization to attain resources such as social status and attractive other-sex peers. He further suggests that bullies who use this form of peer

victimization may become domestically violent individuals during adulthood. However, it should be noted that in this study sexual peer victimization was recorded by researchers observing behaviour on school grounds and some types of sexual peer victimization may be difficult to observe or distinguish from other forms of peer victimization without knowing the content of or motivation behind the behaviour (e.g., an adolescent giving his/her peer a note describing sexually explicit activities). As acknowledged by Pellegrini, self-reported or peer assessments of perpetration of sexual peer victimization may have been more informative.

Current developmental research has certainly broadened our understanding of developmental factors that may be contributing to the emergence and prevalence of sexual peer victimization among adolescents. However, the theoretical frameworks proposed by these researchers may only explain a few developmental pathways for certain individuals who experience and perpetrate sexual peer victimization. As reviewed, some researchers propose that young adolescents perpetrate sexual peer victimization because they do not know how to express their sexual interest in other-sex peers in a socially appropriate manner (e.g., Craig et al., 2001; McMaster et al., 2002; Roscoe et al., 1994). This interpretation may partially explain the prevalence of sexual peer victimization during early adolescence, but as suggested by Lee et al. (1996) sexual peer victimization should then decrease with age as adolescents' social skills improve. Yet there is research supporting the fact that sexual peer victimization remains prevalent in older adolescent populations (AAUW, 1993; Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Stratton & Backes, 1997).

Similarly, developmental factors like pubertal status and the emergence of heterosexual relationships may only explain why *some* girls and boys experience sexual peer victimization during early adolescence (e.g., Craig et al., 2001; McMaster et al., 2002; Pellegrini, 2001a,

2001b). While early pubertal maturation may make some young adolescents targets of sexual peer victimization, sexual peer victimization persists across adolescence and current research has not examined if or how pubertal status continues to influence experiences of sexual peer victimization across this developmental period. Also, the emergence of heterosexual relationships may explain why sexual peer victimization emerges in early adolescence and persists across the lifespan for bullies who begin to sexually victimize their peers as they begin to engage more frequently with other-sex peers (e.g., dating). However, given the high levels of sexual peer victimization reported in research with older adolescents (AAUW, 1993; Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Stratton & Backes, 1997), it is unlikely that the majority of perpetrators of sexual peer victimization identified in adolescence are bullies who have incorporated sexual victimization into their behavioural repertoire.

Moreover, these developmental frameworks proposed by Craig et al. (2001), McMaster et al. (2002), Pellegrini (2001a, 2001b), and Roscoe et al. (1994) may only explain the sexual peer victimization that occurs between adolescents when one is sexually interested in other-sex peers and yet adolescents are likely to sexually victimize peers whom they are not sexually attracted to. The developmental perspectives presented by these researchers do not adequately explain why both girls and boys experience and perpetrate sexual peer victimization with same- and other-sex peers thus necessitating a broader approach to examining the sexual victimization at the level of adolescents' peer relations. While puberty and the emergence of heterosexual relationship may help us better understand adolescents' use and experiences of same- and other-sex sexual peer victimization, there are other developmental factors such as gender role development that should also be considered.

Hill and Lynch (1983) have proposed that pubertal development is a signal to others of gender role development. According to the gender intensification hypothesis proposed by Hill and Lynch (1983), pubertal change influences gender-intensification because signs of physical maturation serve as a stimulus to peers and other socialization agents. As adolescents develop adult-like characteristics, social agents expect maturing adolescents to behave like women and men by conforming to culturally appropriate gender roles. In addition, there is some research that suggests it is not individual pubertal status but the pubertal status of the cohort that influences gender-intensification during early adolescence. Specifically, Galambos, Almeida, and Petersen (1990) found that individual pubertal status was not related to gender-intensification and yet they did find grade-related differences implying that changes at the grade level may influence gender-intensification, particularly for boys. Thus, adolescents within the same age group or grade groups are all pressured by peers to conform to feminine and masculine roles. Some adolescents may actively resist peers' gender-related expectations (e.g., the tomboy) but some adolescents may have no control over their perceived gender norm violations (e.g., the late developer). Adolescents who are perceived as violating the gender norms of the peer group may be targets of various types of sexual peer victimization.

Expectations of conforming to gender-related peer expectations may explain some types of sexual peer victimization between same-sex peers. For example, some research suggests that boys engage in high levels of homophobic name calling particularly targeting other boys (McMaster et al., 2002; Roscoe, 1994). Indeed, the literature examining homophobia in adolescence suggests that this type of sexual victimization may be males policing masculinity in other males (Phonenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003; Redman, 2000). In turn, attacking other boys' masculinity may be an effective strategy used to attain social status and romantic partners by

discouraging girls' sexual interest in rival suitors within the context of emerging heterosexual relationships.

Girls may also use various types of sexual peer victimization to reinforce the peer groups' gender norms. For example, Fineran and Bennett (1999) reported that girls were more likely than boys to make negative comments about a peer's body and clothing. Ethnographic research by Eder and Parker (1986) describes how some girls criticize other girls about their clothing, make-up, hairstyles, and weight. Eder and Parker suggest that attractiveness is highly valued in female adolescent culture and those who do not conform to group norms were targets of ridicule. It is possible that girls may make derogatory remarks about other girls' appearance to police adolescent girls' expression of femininity (e.g., wearing "slutty" clothes that suggest sexual promiscuity). Thus, sexual peer victimization may be used by adolescents to establish and maintain gender norms in their peer cultures. To date, the role of gender role development in the context of the adolescent peer group has not been examined in the research on sexual peer victimization.

Expanding upon current developmental theories for sexual peer victimization. A major limitation in research examining sexual peer victimization among adolescents is the lack of a strong theoretical framework. The theoretical framework for the present program of research explores adolescent sexual peer victimization from three interconnected but distinct theoretical perspectives namely the cultural theory, abuse of power theory, and developmental theory.

As reviewed, Lee et al. (1996) propose that it is necessary to examine the culture or context of adolescents' experiences of sexual harassment since the cultural context informs adolescents of norms, beliefs, and values that influence how sexual victimization is understood

and dealt with within a particular context. While Lee and colleagues did examine the general context of the school and sexual harassment perpetrated in that environment (e.g., by peers and school personnel), I have argued that in order to better understand *sexual peer victimization* research must examine the adolescent *peer group* which is the cultural context that may inform adolescents of how sexual victimization is understood and dealt with among their peers.

The phenomenon of sexual peer victimization can also be viewed within a framework of abuse of power theory within the context of the peer group. Although Lee and colleagues (1996) limited their perspective to sexual victimization perpetrated by individuals with positions of power (e.g., school personnel), there are power relations among adolescent peers. For example, having high social status is related to perpetrating physical and social forms of peer victimization during adolescence (e.g., Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, 2003). According to Vaillancourt et al., those with power in the peer group wield that power (either overtly or covertly) and manage to effectively hold onto their power and achieve social goals. It is further argued in the present research that adolescents with more social power may experience and use sexual peer victimization differently from their peers with low social status. Indeed, some research suggests that high social status may protect adolescents from becoming targets of sexual peer victimization (Berman et al., 2002). Moreover, research by Eder and Parker (1987) suggests that adolescent girls and boys with high social status use peer victimization to enforce and maintain peer group norms. As proposed by Eder and Sanford (1986), research is necessary in developing an understanding of the content of peer group norms and processes by which adolescents and their peers establish and maintain these norms. Interestingly, Eder and Parker (1987) found that the content of peer group norms that were enforced and maintained by high status adolescents reflected gender-related expectations. Aggressive high status girls and boys have been identified

as exemplars of gender-appropriate behaviour and characteristics (e.g., Eder & Parker, 1987; Vaillancourt et al., 2003). As observed by Eder and Parker (1987), adolescents who failed to conform to these gender-related expectations were targets of peer victimization. Thus, the abuse of power framework would suggest that those with higher status sexually victimize those with little power in the peer group. Embedded more deeply into this argument is the more nuanced possibility that gender norms of adolescent peer groups may play an important role in the prevalence of sexual peer victimization as a form of gender policing.

Gender policing is the control and reinforcement of masculinity and femininity within particular contexts (Epstein, 1997). Perhaps because gender role development is a salient developmental task encountered during adolescence (Huston & Alvarez, 1990), adolescent peer groups develop and maintain norms that establish what behaviours and characteristics are appropriate for boys and girls to display in the peer group context (Eder & Parker, 1986). According to Hill and Lynch (1983), gender-related expectations conveyed by adolescents' peers may be one of the more influential sources of pressure to conform to stereotypical feminine and masculine roles. Therefore I propose that within the adolescent peer culture, adolescents are socialized into culturally appropriate gender roles and their gender-related behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes may significantly influence how they understand, experience, and use sexual victimization with their peers.

Some qualitative research has revealed the significance of gender role development in understanding sexual peer victimization in schools. Through observations and interviews with high school students in Britain, Duncan (1999) found that adolescents entering high school experience sexual peer victimization differently than their older schoolmates. For example, adolescent boys' personal accounts of experiencing and perpetrating sexual peer victimization in

high school indicated that many young boys were victimized by age-mates and older peers, but only a few boys in older grades were victimized by age-mates. Duncan proposed that upon entering high school most boys are targets of homophobic name-calling from schoolmates of all ages as a way of reinforcing peers' expectations regarding masculinity, and not necessary because they have (yet) violated these masculine norms. Duncan further proposed that older boys who are targets of homophobic name-calling are generally boys who do violate their peers' gender norms. In contrast to younger boys who are victimized by same- and other-sex peers of all ages, older adolescent males are likely to be singled out for their gender inappropriate behaviour and victimized by socially dominant boys and sometimes socially dominant girls in their grade. Moreover, Renold's (2002) qualitative work with students aged 10-11 in British elementary schools suggested that social power provides protection from victimization and entitlement to victimize others. Socially dominant individuals were more likely to perpetrate and less likely to experience sexual peer victimization when compared to students with lower social status. However, some lower status boys did physically harass girls (e.g., punching their breasts) but this behaviour was perceived as childish and unacceptable by both girls and boys.

Although there are few theory-based studies on adolescent sexual peer victimization, reported findings do suggest that there are three distinct yet interconnected theories that may explain sexual peer victimization during adolescence: cultural theory, abuse of power theory, and developmental theory. A cultural perspective is necessary to more fully understand sexual peer victimization within the cultural context of the peer group. Adolescent peer culture likely informs adolescents of norms, beliefs, and values that influence the experiences and perpetrations of sexual victimization within the peer group context. Moreover, within the peer group context are power relationships that should be examined in understanding peer

victimization including that which is sexual in nature. Indeed, abuse of power theory may help explain how and why sexual peer victimization occurs within the adolescent peer group context.

Developmental theory is also necessary to explain age-related changes (or stability) in sexual peer victimization during adolescence. Thus far, developmental theory has helped explain some incidents of adolescent sexual peer victimization relating to pubertal development and emerging other-sex peer interactions that influence sexual peer victimization during early adolescence, particularly that perpetrated by other-sex peers. However, I have argued that gender role development is another important developmental task of adolescence, thought by some to be most intense within adolescent peer groups (e.g., Hill & Lynch, 1983), that may help explain sexual peer victimization. Indeed, some qualitative research suggests that certain types of sexual peer victimization among adolescent peers occurs when adolescents with social status attempt to control and reinforce peer gender norms regarding appropriate masculine and feminine behaviours among their peers. Sexual peer victimization may be a form of gender policing during adolescence when gender role development is a salient development task.

Current Program of Research

The current program of research includes three studies intended to examine the prevalence of sexual peer victimization and nonsexual forms of peer victimization as well as address existing limitation in this area of research. Another major goal of this program of study was to explore a theoretical framework derived from cultural, abuse of power, and developmental theories that may help explain adolescents' experiences of sexual peer victimization. Specifically, within the peer group context, adolescents with high social status may use their social power to control and reinforce the peer groups' gender norms by sexually victimizing peers who violate gender-related expectations of the peer group. Social status within

adolescent peer groups is an important characteristic identifying both perpetrators and victims because research suggests that some adolescents with high social status are the role models for femininity and masculinity, and these same individuals may use aggressive strategies to establish and maintain these group norms as they relate to gender role conformity (Eder & Parker, 1987).

It is also important to compare developmental changes in experiences and perpetrations of nonsexual types of peer victimization across this developmental period. To this end, the current program of research examined whether sexual peer victimization follows a unique developmental trajectory in comparison to nonsexual types of peer victimization. Furthermore, previous research indicates that experiences of nonsexual forms of peer victimization are associated with negative outcomes (Hanish & Guerra, 2002; LaGreca & Harrison, 2005; Ray, Cohen, Secrist & Duncan, 1997) and similarly several researchers have observed an association between negative outcomes and experiencing sexual peer victimization (e.g., Lee et al., 1996). However, limited research has compared patterns of negative outcomes associated with different forms of peer victimization that are sexual and nonsexual in nature (exception being Felix & Mahon, 2006).

Embedded Mixed Method Design

This program of research used a mixed method approach to describe and understand the central phenomenon of sexual peer victimization occurring during adolescence. Specifically, in the present program of study an embedded mixed methods design was used in that the open-ended interview data served a supplemental role to the primarily quantitative data. As described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), embedded designs are used when different data are required to answer different questions but one data type is framed by the other data type. The variant of embedded design used in this program of research is the correlational model wherein descriptive

or qualitative data helped explain how the mechanisms assessed with quantitative data may work.

Although the main goal of this program of research was to better understand why sexual victimization occurs between adolescent peers, different research questions and hypotheses were examined in each study. The survey data collected in Study 1 was primarily used to assess the prevalence of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization during adolescence and to explore sex and age-related differences. The main focus of Study 2 was to explore developmental factors relating to hierarchical peer structures and gender role development within an integrated theoretical framework of culture, abuse of power, and developmental theories to better understand mechanisms surrounding sexual peer victimization during adolescence. The role of these mechanisms was further explored in the interview data collected in Study 3. The interviews provided adolescents with an opportunity to voice their accounts of why different forms of peer victimization occur and whether these occurrences (particularly of sexual peer victimization) relate to gender role conformity and social status within the context of peer groups at school. Of interest within Study 3 was whether the perspectives that adolescents provided in their interviews would correspond to and/or contradict survey findings obtained in Studies 1 and 2.

Study 1

The dataset used for Study 1 was provided by Drs. Shelly Hymel (University of British Columbia) and Terry Waterhouse (University of the Fraser Valley). Drs. Hymel and Waterhouse are principal investigators of a large ongoing cohort-sequential project that was initiated in 2006 to examine students' feelings of safety, interpersonal behavior, substance use, sexual and racial discrimination and victimization, bullying, school community and social responsibility. From

this ongoing project, I utilized a subset of variables from the 2008 data collection that included a large sample of adolescents in Grades 8 to 12 in Western Canada.

With this dataset, Study 1 of this program of research addresses some of the limitations identified in the review of existing literature. A comprehensive, psychometrically sound measure of sexual peer victimization was used to examine both sex and age-related differences in both experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization occurring within a concurrent school year. Study 1 further expands on existing research by examining the uniqueness of sexual peer victimization by comparing experiences and perpetrations of *sexual* peer victimization to experiences and perpetrations of *nonsexual* forms of peer victimization. In this study, I was able to examine one index of social status (i.e., social acceptance in being liked by peers) and its relation to experiencing and perpetrating sexual and nonsexual peer victimization. Also, I was able to examine the associations between self-esteem (one index of psychosocial adjustment) and experiencing and perpetrating sexual and nonsexual peer victimization. Based on the extant literature, a series of research questions were posited alongside hypotheses where appropriate.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. Are there sex differences in experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization? Does sexual peer victimization differ for boys and girls as a function of age or during specific developmental periods? If so, are these age-related changes unique to sexual peer victimization when compared to age-related differences in nonsexual forms of peer victimization? As reviewed, research on sexual peer victimization tends to identify girls as the victims and boys as the perpetrators (e.g., AAUW, 1993) and is believed to intensify with age (e.g., Craig et al., 2001; McMaster et al., 2002). Previous research examining nonsexual forms of peer victimization suggests

that there are no sex differences in experiences and perpetrations of verbal peer victimization, but boys are more likely than girls to be victims and perpetrators of physical peer victimization while girls are often found to be more likely than boys to be victims and perpetrators of social peer victimization (e.g., Archer, 2004; Crick et al., 2001). Existing research also suggests that physical and social peer victimization peak in early adolescence, while verbal peer victimization increases across childhood into adolescence (Björkqvist et al., 1992). Therefore, it was hypothesized that girls would report higher levels of sexual and social peer victimization than boys, and that boys would report higher levels of experiencing physical peer victimization than girls. With respect to perpetrations, it was expected that boys would report higher levels of perpetrating sexual and physical peer victimization, while girls would report perpetrating more social peer victimization than boys. However, sex differences were not expected to be detected in experiences and perpetrations of verbal peer victimization. It was also hypothesized that experiences and perpetrations of sexual and verbal peer victimization would be higher in older groups of adolescents when compared to younger groups of adolescents while there would be no age-related differences in experiences and perpetrations of physical and social peer victimization. While cyber peer victimization was included in this study, the current lack of research on this type of victimization prevents the formulation of hypotheses regarding sex and age-related differences in experiences and perpetrations of cyber peer victimization.

2. Do experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization differ as a function of whether students experience low, average, or high social status (i.e., social acceptance) among peers? Are there sex and age-related differences in these

connections? Aside from sex and age, it has been very rare for researchers to examine other correlates in previous studies on sexual peer victimization, however, social status is believed to be an important characteristic identifying victims and perpetrators of peer victimization. Existing research suggests that individuals with low social status are often victims of peer victimization and many socially aggressive girls and physically aggressive boys have high social status (Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2006). Accordingly, it can be argued that social status (in terms of acceptance and popularity) is an important characteristic in identifying victims (i.e., low status adolescents) and perpetrators (i.e., high status adolescents) of sexual peer victimization. Using measures available within the data set used for Study 1, status was operationalized as the extent to which adolescents felt as though they were liked (relative to their peers). It was hypothesized that girls and boys who reported being liked less than their peers experience lower status within the peer context and as such would more frequently be targets of both sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. Extending initial hypotheses about differences between boys and girls, it was also hypothesized that girls who reported being liked better than their peers would be perpetrators of social and sexual peer victimization while boys who reported being liked better than their peers would be perpetrators of physical and sexual peer victimization.

3. Is low self-esteem associated with experiencing sexual peer victimization? Is sexual peer victimization uniquely predictive of self-esteem when other forms of peer victimization are accounted for? Previous research examining nonsexual peer victimization suggests that adolescent victims experience low self-esteem (e.g., Salmivall, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999) yet in at least one earlier study sexual peer

victimization was not found to be associated with self-esteem (Timmerman, 2003). To date, no research has compared the unique contributions of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization in predicting self-esteem.

Method

Participants. Participants included 50,334 students from Grade 8 to 12 in 121 secondary schools in a large urban school district in British Columbia. The ethnic background for this full sample was diverse (35% Caucasian, 32% Asian, 10% Mixed racial background, 6% South Asian, 3% Aboriginal, 2% African/Caribbean, 2% Middle Eastern, 2% Latin American, 7% not reporting). At the suggestion of the principal investigators, participants from schools with fewer than 50 participating students were excluded from analyses ($n = 176$). These students were excluded on the premise that the smaller samples of students were consistently drawn from non-mainstream (i.e., alternative) high school programs and that such school programs may create atypical social contexts. Participants who were missing data on key variables such as sex, grade, social acceptance, physical victimization, verbal victimization, social victimization and composite scores on measures of cyber victimization, sexual victimization, and self-esteem were also excluded from analyses ($n = 7,340$). Thus, the final sample for the current study included 42,818 students (4510 girls and 4570 boys in Grade 8; 4660 girls and 4504 boys in Grade 9; 4662 girls and 4546 boys in Grade 10, 4386 girls and 4262 boys in Grade 11, and 3531 girls and 3187 boys in Grade 12).

Procedure. Passive consent procedures were used since data were collected by and for the schools and school system. Parents were provided with information about the survey through newsletters which were translated into different languages in particular districts. Parents were also notified through electronic notices and school announcements. Data were not collected

from students whose parents expressed that they did not want their adolescent to participate in this study. Students present at school on a given data collection day were asked to respond to the survey and were informed that their answers would be held in confidence (see Appendix A). To ensure confidentiality, each student was provided with a unique identifier. There was an overall participation rate of approximately 80%.

Measures. The measures used in Study 1 were included as part of a larger questionnaire package. Only those measures used for the purpose of this study are described below.

Social acceptance. Participants were asked “How well are you liked by other students?” and responded by selecting “better than most students,” “about the same,” “worse than most students,” and “I’m not sure.” Higher ratings of believing one is liked by peers reflect higher self-perceptions of social acceptance from peers (Zarbatany, McDougall, & Hymel, 2000). Participants who selected “better than most students” were identified as having high social acceptance, those who responded that they were “about the same as most students” were considered to have average social acceptance, and those who reported they were liked “worse than most students” were identified as having low social acceptance. Respondents who were unsure of their social acceptance were excluded from analyses involving this variable.

Nonsexual peer victimization. Experiences and perpetrations of nonsexual peer victimization occurring within the school year were assessed with 6 items. These items are often used in research on physical, verbal, social, and cyber peer victimization (e.g., Vaillancourt et al., 2010). Students read the following definition, “bullying and harassment happens when a person who has more power or some advantage (bigger, more status, etc.) tries to bother, hurt, make fun of or attack another person (it’s not an accident), and does so repeatedly. Sometimes several students will bully or harass another student or group of students.” A single question was used to

assess physical peer victimization such that participants were asked “How often have you had experiences with physical bullying (hitting, shoving, kicking)?” Verbal and social peer victimization were similarly assessed with one item each. Participants were asked “How often have you had experiences with verbal bullying (name calling, teasing, threats, putdown)?” and “How often have you had experiences with social bullying (exclusion, rumours, gossip, humiliation)?” For each form of peer victimization, experiences (i.e., ‘has been done to me’) and perpetrations (i.e., “has been done to other by me”) were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (i.e., 0 = *never*, 1 = *once or a few times*, 2 = *about once a month*, and 3 = *every week or more*). Cyber peer victimization was assessed using 3 items: “How often have you had experiences with cyber-bullying at school (using computer or text messages to exclude, threaten, or humiliate)?,” “cyber-bullying outside of school (using computer or text messages to exclude, threaten, or humiliate)?,” and “cyber-bullying that caused problems at school (using computer or text messages to exclude, threaten, or humiliate)?” These items were also rated on the same 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*every week or more*) and a composite score of at least 2 valid responses were computed for each participant. Internal consistency for experiencing and perpetrating cyber peer victimization was high ($\alpha = .90$ and $.92$, respectively).

Sexual peer victimization. Peer victimization that was sexual in nature was assessed with a 12-item scale (see Appendix B). This scale is a modified version of the Adolescent Sexual Harassment Perpetration questionnaire developed by White (ASHP, 2000) used to assess adolescent males’ experiences and perpetrations of sexual victimization with same- and other-sex peers. Items appearing on the ASHP included items from the original AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire along with items assessing gender harassment drawn from literature he reviewed. White created this comprehensive and psychometrically sound sexual peer

victimization questionnaire after reviewing the existing literature on adolescent sexual peer victimization. Factor analysis was conducted to assess construct validity and reliability was assessed using measures of internal consistency and temporal stability.

In completing this modified version of the ASHP, participants were asked to think about the current school year and indicate how often they had experienced the victimization described by the item and also how often they had victimized other students as described by the item. They were also provided with a definition of sexual harassment; “sexual harassment is unwelcome and unwanted behavior about sex and gender that interferes with your life and makes you feel uncomfortable, even if the people doing the harassing were only joking. These questions are not asking about behaviors you like or want (for example, when you want someone to kiss you or when you flirt with a girlfriend or boyfriend).” Experiences (i.e., “has been done to me”) and perpetrations (i.e., “has been done to others by me”) were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (i.e., 0 = *never*, 1 = *once or a few times*, 2 = *about once a month*, and 3 = *ever week or more*). Examples of items on this questionnaire are “calling me gay, fag, lesbian or something similar” and “making crude/unwelcomed comments about my body or sexual behavior.” Composite scores for experiencing and perpetrating sexual peer victimization were calculated for each participant with at least seven (of 12) valid responses on each of the victimization and perpetration measures. Higher scores indicated higher levels of self-reported experiences of sexual peer victimization and higher levels of self-reported perpetrations of sexual peer victimization. White (2000) found his questionnaire to be reliable in assessing peer sexual victimization among older adolescent males and reliability diagnostics suggest this version of his questionnaire was reliable with the current adolescent sample as well. Specifically, internal

consistency was found to be moderately high for experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization ($\alpha = .83$ and $.87$, respectively).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was assessed using the 8-item self-esteem scale on the *Self-Description Questionnaire II* (Marsh, 1990; see Appendix C). The validity of these items has been well documented (for review see Marsh, Parada, & Ayotte, 2004). Items appearing on this measure were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Examples of items include “I do lots of important things,” “Overall, I have a lot to be proud of,” and “I am as good as most other people.” A composite score was created for each participant by calculating an average of at least five valid item responses, and high scores indicated higher levels of self-reported self-esteem. Cronbach’s alpha of $.88$ suggests this measure was reliable with this sample.

Results

Data screening. An examination of the data set revealed that there was less than 5% missing data for each variable of interest, except perpetrations of sexual peer victimization (6.7%). As described above, cases with missing data on variables of interest were deleted from the data set. In further examining participants’ responses to the items assessing perpetrations of sexual peer victimizations, there appeared to be no patterns detected in the missing data. It may be that some participants intentionally did not respond to questions about perpetrating sexual peer victimization because they were not comfortable responding to these questions, however it is also possible that some students did not acknowledge the column of the questionnaire pertaining to perpetration because of the design of the questionnaire (see Appendix B). The decision to exclude all participants with one or more missing data point was feasible due to the large sample size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Data were screened for both univariate and multivariate outliers once cases with missing data were removed. Univariate outliers were identified as standardized z-scores greater than $|4|$, rather than the traditional cut-off value of $|3.29|$ because extreme scores are to be expected in a sample with a large N (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). There were 58 participants removed because they had extreme responses to all items suggesting they likely did not take the questionnaire seriously. Multivariate outliers were detected using a $p < .001$ criterion for Mahalanobis distance for the 30 cells for both MANOVAs and the regression analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Each analysis was run with and without identified multivariate outliers. In each case the pattern of results between those obtained after deleting these identified cases and those results that included such cases were similar in terms of p and η^2 values. Thus, findings reported herein are from analyses with multivariate outliers included. Because the data set for this study is large, conservative criteria were used to determine which of the significant findings were meaningful. For all analyses Type I error rate was set at $p < .001$. Depending on the type of analysis conducted, an additional criterion (i.e., effect size, variance accounted for) was used in identifying and interpreting meaningful findings.

Prevalence rates. Prevalence for sexual and nonsexual peer victimization was examined in terms of experiencing victimization and perpetrating each form of peer victimization.

Victimization. The total number of students responding “once or a few times,” “about once a month,” and “every week or more” to each form of peer victimization was tallied to assess the frequency with which adolescents experience peer victimization. The percentage of boys and girls in Grade 8 through 12 experiencing different forms of peer victimization at least once or more during the school year ranged from 16% to 65% (see Table 2). Specifically, over

half the boys and girls in Grade 8 to 12 indicated that they experienced sexual peer victimization at least

Table 2

Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Experiences of Sexual and Nonsexual Peer Victimization at Least Once During the School Year and Means and (Standard Deviations) for These Experiences

| Type of Peer Victimization | | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 | Total |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Physical | Girls | 24 .31 (.63) | 22 .30 (.65) | 21 .28 (.62) | 17 .22 (.55) | 18 .24 (.59) | 21 .27 (.82) |
| | Boys | 38 .52 (.79) | 41 .58 (.84) | 37 .53 (.81) | 34 .48 (.84) | 31 .48 (.84) | 37 .52 (.82) |
| Verbal | Girls | 56 .81 (.90) | 57 .82 (.90) | 56 .78 (.86) | 52 .69 (.80) | 48 .63 (.80) | 54 .75 (.86) |
| | Boys | 54 .82 (.95) | 55 .87 (.98) | 51 .83 (.97) | 51 .75 (.92) | 48 .74 (.96) | 52 .81 (.96) |
| Social | Girls | 51 .74 (.89) | 52 .76 (.89) | 51 .72 (.85) | 50 .66 (.79) | 44 .60 (.81) | 50 .70 (.85) |
| | Boys | 34 .50 (.80) | 36 .53 (.85) | 34 .52 (.85) | 34 .49 (.81) | 34 .52 (.88) | 34 .51 (.84) |
| Cyber | Girls | 28 .25 (.53) | 30 .27 (.56) | 28 .24 (.53) | 23 .19 (.46) | 20 .19 (.50) | 26 .22 (.59) |
| | Boys | 16 .16 (.48) | 21 .23 (.60) | 20 .23 (.60) | 20 .23 (.61) | 19 .26 (.67) | 19 .23 (.52) |
| Sexual | Girls | 57 .25 (.43) | 62 .31 (.48) | 65 .32 (.46) | 62 .27 (.40) | 57 .27 (.46) | 61 .28 (.45) |
| | Boys | 57 .23 (.44) | 59 .30 (.53) | 60 .33 (.57) | 58 .32 (.56) | 58 .34 (.62) | 58 .30 (.54) |

Note. For each cell, the percentage of students who indicated experiencing each form of peer victimization at least once during the school year is on the first line and the mean (and standard deviation) appear on the second line of the cell.

once in the school year. Similarly, over half of the girls and boys in grades 8 to 11 reported experiencing verbal peer victimization. The percentage of girls reporting experiences of social peer victimization at least once during the school year ranged from 44% to 52%, whereas 34% to 55% of boys reported experiences of social peer victimization at least once during the school year. By contrast, 31% to 41% of the boys experienced physical peer victimization at least once in the school year with a smaller proportion of girls (17% to 24%) experiencing this physical form of victimization. The percentage of girls reporting experiences of cyber peer victimization at least once during the school year ranged from 20% to 30%, whereas 16% to 20% of boys experienced cyber peer victimization at least once during the school year. Although different forms of peer victimization do appear to be prevalent in high schools as indicated by the percentages, the mean values (where frequency scores can range from 0 to 3) suggest that most students were not repeatedly experiencing victimization.

Given that a major focus of this work was on the study of sexual peer victimization, the prevalence of experiencing each behaviour that comprised the measure of sexual peer victimization was examined by tallying the total number of students responding “once or a few times,” “about once a month,” and “every week or more.” The percentage of boys and girls in Grade 8 through 12 experiencing different sexual peer victimization behaviours at least once or more during the school year ranged from 45% to 47% (see Table 3). The most commonly experienced sexual peer victimization for boys was homophobic name-calling, whereas girls were most likely to report experiencing sexual jeers. Both boys and girls were least likely to report being forced or threatened by peers to do something sexual (other than kissing) in comparison to other unwanted sexual behaviours. The means suggest that most students are not

Table 3

Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Experiences of Each Sexual Peer Victimization Behaviour at Least Once During the School Year and Means and (Standard Deviations) for These Experiences

| Item | | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 | Total |
|--|-------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Calling someone gay, fag, lesbian or something similar | Girls | 29 | 28 | 27 | 24 | 21 | 26 |
| | | .40 (.73) | .40 (.76) | .39 (.75) | .34 (.72) | .31 (.69) | .37 (.73) |
| | Boys | 46 | 48 | 47 | 46 | 45 | 47 |
| | | .72 (.94) | .79 (1.00) | .80 (1.04) | .78 (1.03) | .79 (1.06) | .77 (1.01) |
| Yelling something sexual or whistling/howling as someone walks by | Girls | 29 | 37 | 41 | 20 | 20 | 36 |
| | | .44 (.80) | .59 (.90) | .64 (.91) | .55 (.84) | .53 (.83) | .55 (.86) |
| | Boys | 15 | 18 | 20 | 37 | 35 | 19 |
| | | .24 (.64) | .31 (.76) | .34 (.77) | .34 (.77) | .36 (.82) | .31 (.75) |
| Saying someone did not seem masculine or feminine enough | Girls | 18 | 20 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| | | .23 (.56) | .27 (.61) | .27 (.60) | .25 (.58) | .28 (.64) | .26 (.60) |
| | Boys | 22 | 27 | 29 | 30 | 30 | 28 |
| | | .32 (.69) | .39 (.76) | .44 (.81) | .45 (.81) | .49 (.88) | .41 (.79) |
| Making someone uncomfortable by using sexual gestures or staring at someone in a sexual way | Girls | 24 | 31 | 33 | 28 | 27 | 29 |
| | | .36 (.73) | .46 (.79) | .48 (.81) | .39 (.72) | .40 (.76) | .42 (.77) |
| | Boys | 14 | 17 | 19 | 18 | 18 | 17 |
| | | .21 (.61) | .28 (.72) | .32 (.74) | .30 (.74) | .31 (.76) | .28 (.71) |
| Standing too close or brushing against someone in a sexual way when it is not wanted | Girls | 21 | 26 | 28 | 24 | 23 | 24 |
| | | .30 (.65) | .37 (.72) | .38 (.71) | .31 (.64) | .31 (.65) | .34 (.68) |
| | Boys | 12 | 14 | 16 | 15 | 15 | 14 |
| | | .18 (.55) | .23 (.64) | .25 (.67) | .25 (.68) | .27 (.72) | .23 (.65) |
| Making unwelcome or crude comments about someone's body or their sexual behaviour | Girls | 17 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 18 | 19 |
| | | .24 (.60) | .28 (.64) | .28 (.63) | .25 (.59) | .27 (.46) | .26 (.62) |
| | Boys | 15 | 18 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 19 |
| | | .23 (.61) | .30 (.73) | .33 (.75) | .32 (.74) | .35 (.78) | .30 (.72) |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Touching, kissing, grabbing, or pinching someone in a sexual way when it is not wanted | Girls | 19 .27 (.64) | 23 .23 (.64) | 24 .25 (.68) | 22 .28 (.60) | 20 .27 (.61) | 22 .30 (.65) |
| | Boys | 11 .17 (.55) | 12 .37 (.72) | 14 .33 (.67) | 14 .24 (.68) | 14 .25 (.72) | 13 .22 (.65) |
| Pressure from same-sex peers to engage in sexual activities with others | Girls | 11 .16 (.51) | 13 .19 (.56) | 14 .20 (.55) | 13 .17 (.50) | 11 .16 (.53) | 13 .18 (.53) |
| | Boys | 13 .20 (.58) | 14 .25 (.67) | 18 .30 (.73) | 18 .30 (.73) | 18 .32 (.79) | 16 .27 (.70) |
| Making someone uncomfortable by using hurtful sexual language | Girls | 12 .17 (.52) | 14 .21 (.59) | 15 .20 (.55) | 13 .17 (.51) | 13 .19 (.56) | 13 .19 (.55) |
| | Boys | 11 .17 (.54) | 13 .22 (.64) | 14 .24 (.67) | 13 .22 (.64) | 13 .25 (.71) | 13 .22 (.64) |
| Spreading sexual rumours or notes, writing sexual graffiti | Girls | 10 .14 (.49) | 12 .18 (.55) | 13 .18 (.53) | 11 .15 (.47) | 11 .16 (.51) | 12 .16 (.51) |
| | Boys | 10 .16 (.53) | 13 .22 (.65) | 15 .24 (.67) | 14 .24 (.65) | 15 .28 (.73) | 13 .22 (.65) |
| Persuading or bribing someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) when it is not wanted | Girls | 9 .13 (.48) | 14 .19 (.57) | 13 .19 (.55) | 10 .14 (.46) | 10 .15 (.50) | 11 .16 (.51) |
| | Boys | 6 .10 (.46) | 9 .16 (.59) | 11 .20 (.65) | 10 .18 (.62) | 10 .20 (.67) | 9 .17 (.60) |
| Forcing or threatening someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) when it is not wanted | Girls | 5 .09 (.41) | 8 .13 (.50) | 8 .11 (.45) | 6 .08 (.38) | 7 .11 (.45) | 7 .11 (.44) |
| | Boys | 5 .09 (.44) | 7 .13 (.54) | 9 .17 (.61) | 8 .16 (.59) | 9 .19 (.65) | 7 .14 (.57) |

Note. For each cell, the percentage of students who indicated experiencing each specific sexual peer victimization behaviour at least once during the school year is on the first line, the mean appears on the second line, and the standard deviation on the third line of the cell. repeatedly experiencing these behaviours during the school year. However, the means do reveal great variability in students' experiences of specific behaviours.

repeatedly experiencing these behaviours during the school year. However, the means do reveal great variability in students experiences of specific behaviours.

Perpetration. The percentage of boys and girls in Grade 8 through 12 perpetrating sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization at least once during the school year ranged from 20% to 68% (see Table 4). Over half the boys and girls in grades 8 to 12 indicated that they perpetrated sexual peer victimization at least once in the school year. Slightly fewer students reported perpetrating verbal peer victimization. The percentage of girls perpetrating social peer victimization at least once during the school year ranged from 42% to 48%, whereas a smaller number of boys reported perpetrating social peer victimization (32% to 37%). However, 38% to 43% of the male high school students reported perpetrating physical peer victimization at least once during the school year, whereas 23% to 30% of the girls in high school reported perpetrating physical peer victimization. Fewer students reported perpetrating cyber peer victimization at least once during the school year with ranges from 20% to 29%. The low mean values for all types suggest that adolescents reported perpetrating peer victimization infrequently during the school year.

The prevalence of perpetrating each behaviour that comprised the measure of sexual peer victimization was examined by tallying the total number of students responding “once or a few times,” “about once a month,” and “every week or more.” The percentage of boys and girls in Grade 8 through 12 perpetrating different sexual peer victimization behaviours at least once or more during the school year ranged from 5% to 61% (see Table 5). The most commonly perpetrated behaviour reported by students was homophobic name-calling whereas persuading or bribing someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) was least likely to be perpetrated by students.

Table 4

Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Perpetrations of Sexual and Nonsexual Peer Victimization at Least Once During the School Year and Means and (Standard Deviations) for These Perpetrations

| Type of Peer Victimization | | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 | Total |
|----------------------------|-------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Physical | Girls | 29 .40 (.74) | 30 .43 (.77) | 27 .38 (.72) | 25 .34 (.68) | 23 .34 (.71) | 27 .38 (.72) |
| | Boys | 39 .58 (.85) | 43 .68 (.93) | 43 .67 (.92) | 40 .62 (.92) | 38 .61 (.93) | 41 .63 (.91) |
| Verbal | Girls | 49 .73 (.92) | 52 .80 (.95) | 53 .78 (.91) | 47 .67 (.87) | 45 .64 (.87) | 49 .73 (.91) |
| | Boys | 50 .79 (.97) | 55 .92 (1.04) | 55 .92 (1.03) | 53 .88 (1.03) | 50 .83 (.1.03) | 53 .87 (1.02) |
| Social | Girls | 44 .68 (.92) | 46 .73 (.95) | 48 .72 (.92) | 45 .67 (.89) | 42 .62 (.87) | 45 .68 (.91) |
| | Boys | 32 .49 (.84) | 35 .58 (.93) | 36 .59 (.93) | 37 .60 (.94) | 36 .60 (.95) | 35 .57 (.92) |
| Cyber | Girls | 27 .27 (.61) | 29 .30 (.62) | 28 .28 (.60) | 24 .24 (.56) | 20 .22 (.58) | 26 .26 (.59) |
| | Boys | 20 .23 (.60) | 25 .31 (.71) | 26 .33 (.72) | 26 .34 (.74) | 24 .34 (.76) | 24 .31 (.70) |
| Sexual | Girls | 58 .26 (.47) | 61 .30 (.51) | 64 .29 (.47) | 62 .26 (.45) | 58 .28 (.50) | 61 .28 (.48) |
| | Boys | 65 .36 (.57) | 68 .44 (.64) | 70 .48 (.68) | 68 .48 (.69) | 68 .50 (.74) | 68 .45 (.66) |

Note. For each cell, the percentage of students who indicated experiencing each form of peer victimization at least once during the school year is on the first line and the mean (and standard deviation) appear on the second line of the cell.

Table 5

Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Perpetrations of Each Sexual Peer Victimization Behaviour at Least Once During the School Year and Means and (Standard Deviations) of These Perpetrations

| Item | | Grade 8 | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 | Total |
|--|-------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Calling someone gay, fag, lesbian or something similar | Girls | 46 .69 (.92) | 46 .73 (.96) | 47 .72 (.94) | 44 .65 (.90) | 39 .60 (.89) | 45 .68 (.93) |
| | Boys | 57 .96 (1.05) | 61 1.10 (1.12) | 61% 1.13 (1.14) | 59 1.12 (1.16) | 58 1.10 (1.17) | 59 1.08 (1.13) |
| Saying someone did not seem masculine or feminine enough | Girls | 34 .44 (.71) | 39 .52 (.76) | 45 .56 (.77) | 40 .53 (.76) | 40 .54 (.78) | 39 .52 (.75) |
| | Boys | 35 .51 (.83) | 42 .64 (.91) | 43 .72 (.96) | 47 .76 (.98) | 47 .78 (1.01) | 43 .68 (.94) |
| Making unwelcome or crude comments about someone's body or their sexual behaviour | Girls | 22 .32 (.69) | 26 .38 (.73) | 25 .35 (.70) | 25 .35 (.70) | 25 .36 (.73) | 25 .35 (.71) |
| | Boys | 25 .38 (.77) | 32 .51 (.89) | 32 .54 (.91) | 34 .57 (.93) | 34 .60 (.98) | 31 .51 (.89) |
| Yelling something sexual or whistling/howling as someone walks by | Girls | 20 .29 (.67) | 22 .35 (.76) | 23 .34 (.72) | 21 .31 (.68) | 21 .33 (.73) | 21 .32 (.71) |
| | Boys | 25 .40 (.60) | 30 .50 (.89) | 31 .54 (.94) | 31 .54 (.94) | 31 .57 (.97) | 29 .51 (.91) |
| Making someone uncomfortable by using sexual gestures or staring at someone in a sexual way | Girls | 13 .21 (.61) | 16 .26 (.68) | 16 .25 (.64) | 14 .21 (.59) | 14 .23 (.63) | 15 .23 (.63) |
| | Boys | 20 .32 (.73) | 24 .40 (.82) | 25 .44 (.87) | 25 .44 (.88) | 25 .45 (.89) | 24 .40 (.84) |
| Spreading sexual rumours or notes, writing sexual graffiti | Girls | 14 .21 (.60) | 17 .25 (.64) | 17 .25 (.62) | 15 .22 (.60) | 15 .24 (.64) | 16 .23 (.62) |
| | Boys | 17 .28 (.70) | 21 .35 (.78) | 22 .38 (.81) | 22 .39 (.84) | 23 .40 (.85) | 21 .36 (.80) |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Making someone uncomfortable by using hurtful sexual language | Girls | 10 .16 (.53) | 11 .18 (.57) | 11 .16 (.52) | 10 .15 (.51) | 10 .17 (.56) | 11 .16 (.54) |
| | Boys | 17 .26 (.67) | 19 .33 (.77) | 20 .35 (.80) | 20 .35 (.81) | 21 .39 (.85) | 19 .33 (.78) |
| Standing too close or brushing against someone in a sexual way when it is not wanted | Girls | 10 .16 (.53) | 12 .19 (.57) | 11 .17 (.55) | 10 .14 (.50) | 11 .17 (.55) | 11 .17 (.54) |
| | Boys | 15 .24 (.66) | 18 .31 (.74) | 19 .32 (.77) | 19 .33 (.79) | 19 .36 (.83) | 18 .31 (.76) |
| Touching, kissing, grabbing, or pinching someone in a sexual way when it is not wanted | Girls | 10 .15 (.52) | 12 .18 (.57) | 10 .15 (.51) | 9 .14 (.49) | 10 .16 (.55) | 10 .16 (.53) |
| | Boys | 13 .22 (.64) | 16 .28 (.72) | 17 .31 (.77) | 17 .31 (.76) | 18 .33 (.80) | 16 .28 (.74) |
| Pressure from same-sex peers to engage in sexual activities with others | Girls | 8% .13 (.48) | 10 .15 (.53) | 9 .14 (.46) | 8 .12 (.45) | 8 .13 (.51) | 9 .13 (.49) |
| | Boys | 13 .22 (.63) | 16 .27 (.71) | 18 .32 (.77) | 18 .33 (.78) | 20 .38 (.85) | 17 .30 (.75) |
| Persuading or bribing someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) when it is not wanted | Girls | 6 .10 (.44) | 7 .12 (.47) | 7 .11 (.44) | 6 .09 (.41) | 7 .12 (.50) | 7 .11 (.45) |
| | Boys | 10 .17 (.58) | 13 .23 (.68) | 14 .26 (.73) | 13 .25 (.72) | 15 .29 (.78) | 13 .24 (.70) |
| Forcing or threatening someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) when it is not wanted | Girls | 5 .08 (.41) | 6 .10 (.44) | 6 .09 (.42) | 5 .08 (.40) | 6 .11 (.48) | 5 .09 (.43) |
| | Boys | 8 .14 (.54) | 11 .20 (.64) | 12 .23 (.70) | 12 .23 (.70) | 14 .27 (.76) | 11 .21 (.67) |

Note. For each cell, the percentage of students who indicated experiencing each specific sexual peer victimization behaviour at least once during the school year is on the first line, the mean appears on the second line, and the standard deviation on the third line of the cell.

Relation between sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. The magnitude of the relations between the different forms of peer victimization suggested that peer victimization that is sexual in nature is a unique construct but also overlaps with nonsexual forms of peer victimization that are more commonly assessed in developmental research. Experiencing sexual peer victimization was related to experiencing physical, verbal, social, and cyber peer victimization, $r_{s(42,816)} = .47 - .61$, all p 's $< .001$; and perpetrating sexual peer victimization was related to perpetrating physical, verbal, social, and cyber peer victimization, $r_{s(42,816)} = .57 - .67$, all p 's $< .001$ (see Table 6). Experiencing and perpetrating sexual peer victimization were positively correlated as well, $r(42,816) = .58$, $p < .001$ (see Table 6).

Comparing experiences of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. A 2 (sex: girl and boy) X 5 (grade: Grade 8-12) X 3 (social acceptance: low, average, and high) repeated measures MANOVA with 5 forms of peer victimization (experiences of sexual peer victimization, physical peer victimization, verbal peer victimization, social peer victimization, and cyber peer victimization) was conducted to examine differences in experiences of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization (see Appendix D Table D1). In addition to setting the Type I error rate at $p < .001$, only significant findings with an effect size of 1% or greater were interpreted. Also, Pillai's Trace criterion is reported for multivariate tests because the sample sizes are unequal and the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices may have been violated (i.e., Box's M was significant). A multivariate effect of the form of peer victimization was revealed by the results of this MANOVA, Pillai's Trace = .27, $F(4, 37644) = 3483.50$, $p < .001$, $est \eta^2 = .27$. There was also a significant between-subjects effect of social acceptance, $F(2, 37647) = 532.03$, $p < .001$, $est \eta^2 = .03$. These two main effects were qualified

Table 6

Intercorrelations for Experiencing and Perpetrating Different Forms of Peer Victimization

| Variables | Physical PV | Verbal PV | Social PV | Cyber PV | Sexual PV |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Physical Peer Victimization | .51 | .56 | .45 | .51 | .50 |
| Verbal Peer Victimization | .66 | .49 | .65 | .48 | .47 |
| Social Peer Victimization | .56 | .69 | .44 | .57 | .50 |
| Cyber Peer Victimization | .61 | .56 | .63 | .55 | .61 |
| Sexual Peer Victimization | .61 | .57 | .57 | .67 | .58 |

Note. Intercorrelations involving experiencing victimization are presented above the diagonal, intercorrelations involving perpetration are presented below the diagonal ($N = 42,818$), and intercorrelations between experiencing and perpetrating within the same form of peer victimization are presented on the diagonal.

by a significant interaction between form of peer victimization and social acceptance, Pillai's Trace = .02, $F(8, 75290) = 82.15$, $p < .001$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .01$.

As a way to interpret the significant 2-way interaction, sexual peer victimization was compared to nonsexual forms of peer victimization for each level of social acceptance using paired sample *t*-tests (see Figure 1). As a general pattern, mean differences for comparisons suggested that despite level of social acceptance, adolescents reported experiencing higher levels of physical, verbal, and social peer victimization as compared to sexual peer victimization. In addition, students with average and high social acceptance also reported experiencing more sexual victimization than cyber victimization. In contrast, the comparison between cyber and sexual victimization did not reach significance for those in the low social acceptance group (i.e., $p > .001$, see Appendix D Table D2 for statistics).

Following Vaillancourt et al. (2010), the interaction between peer victimization and social acceptance was further examined by looking at differences between levels of social acceptance for each form of peer victimization. One-way ANOVAs for each form of victimization were conducted. All five ANOVAs detected significant differences between levels of social acceptance for each form of peer victimization (see Appendix D Table D3 for statistics). Across all five forms of victimization, Bonferroni post hoc analyses indicated that students with low social acceptance reported experiencing more peer victimization when compared to students with average and high social acceptance. Bonferroni post hoc analyses for physical, cyber, and sexual peer victimization further suggested that students with high social acceptance experienced higher levels of peer victimization when compared to students with average social acceptance (see Figure 1). These same differences between the average and high

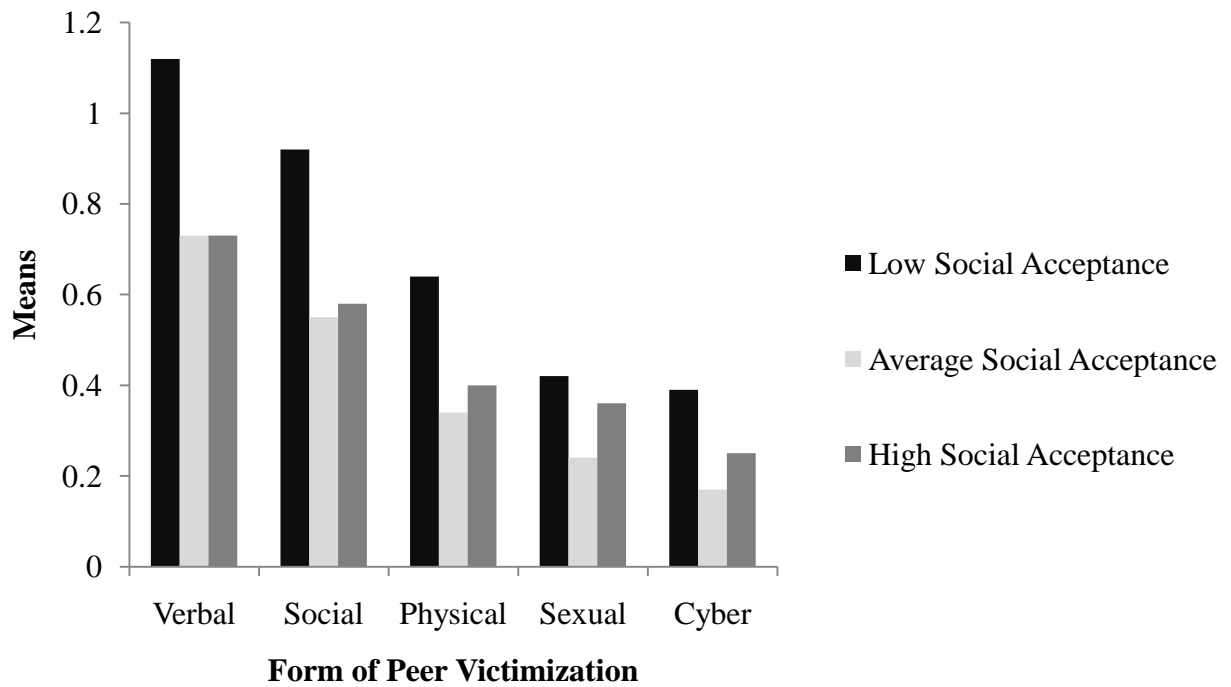


Figure 1. Mean levels for each form of self-reported peer victimization experienced in high school according to level of self-reported social acceptance.

acceptance groups did not exist in the case of verbal or social victimization ($p > .001$, see Appendix D Table D4 for statistics).

The multivariate effect of form of peer victimization was also qualified by an interaction between this effect and sex, Pillai's Trace = .054, 37644 = 507.41, $p < .001$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .05$. Again sexual peer victimization was compared with nonsexual forms of peer victimization for boys and girls separately using paired sample t -tests (see Figure 2). Boys reported experiencing more physical, verbal, and social peer victimization than sexual peer victimization; whereas girls reported experiencing more verbal and social peer victimization than sexual peer victimization with no difference when compared to levels of physical victimization ($p > .001$, see Appendix D Table D5 for statistics). Both boys and girls reported experiencing sexual peer victimization more frequently than cyber peer victimization.

In an effort to explore sex differences found in existing literature, independent samples t -tests (boys versus girls) were conducted for each form of peer victimization (see Figure 2). Results suggest that boys experienced higher levels of physical, verbal, and sexual peer victimization when compared to girls; whereas girls experienced higher levels of social victimization than boys. The mean difference between boys' and girls' experiences of cyber peer victimization was not significant ($p > .001$, see Appendix D Table D6 for statistics).

Neither the main effect of sex, grade, nor interactions involving grade were observed to reach the 1% effect size cut-off for interpretation in the analysis of experiencing peer victimization (see Appendix D Table D1 for statistics).

Comparing perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. A 2 (sex: girl and boy) X 5 (grade: Grade 8-12) X 3 (social acceptance: low, average, and high) repeated measures MANOVA with 5 forms of peer victimization (perpetrations of sexual PV,

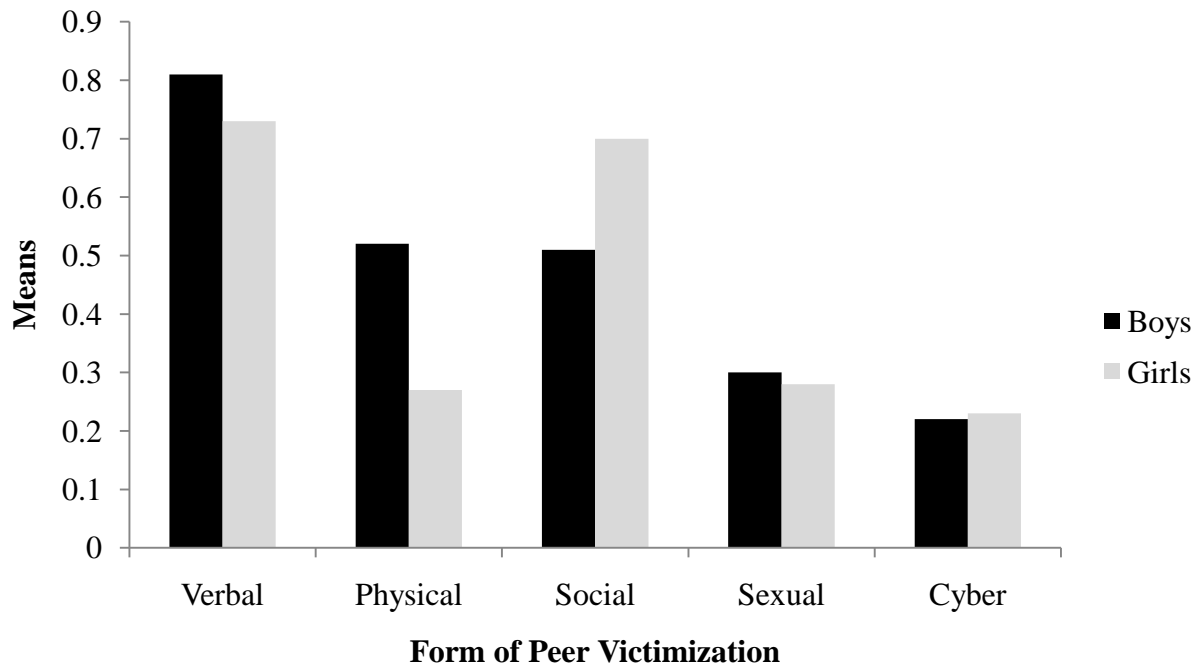


Figure 2. Mean levels for each form of self-reported peer victimization experienced in high school according to sex of participant.

physical PV, verbal PV, social PV, and cyber PV) was conducted to examine differences in perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of PV (see Appendix E Table E1 for statistics). Once again, in addition to setting the Type I error rate at $p < .001$, only significant findings with an effect size of 1% or greater were interpreted. Also, Pillai's Trace criterion is reported for multivariate tests because the sample sizes are unequal and the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices may have been violated (i.e., Box's M was significant).

Results of this repeated measures MANOVA revealed a multivariate effect of the form of peer victimization, Pillai's Trace = .22, $F(4, 37644) = 2646.56$, $p < .001$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .22$. This effect was qualified by an interaction between form of peer victimization and sex, Pillai's Trace = .04 $F(4, 37644) = 383.97$, $p < .001$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .04$. Using paired sample t -tests, perpetrations of sexual peer victimization were compared to perpetrating nonsexual forms of peer victimization for boys and girls separately (see Figure 3). Post hoc analyses for both boys and girls detected similar patterns of differences with perpetrations of physical, verbal, and social peer victimization being reported as more frequent than sexual peer victimization, and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization being reported more frequently than cyber peer victimization (see Appendix E Table E2 for statistics).

The interaction between the effects of peer victimization and sex was further examined using independent sample t -tests to assess differences between boys and girls for each form of perpetrated victimization (see Figure 3). Results suggest that for physical, verbal, cyber, and sexual peer victimization boys were more likely to report higher levels of perpetrations than girls; whereas girls were more likely than boys to report higher levels of perpetrating social peer victimization (see Appendix E Table E3 for statistics).

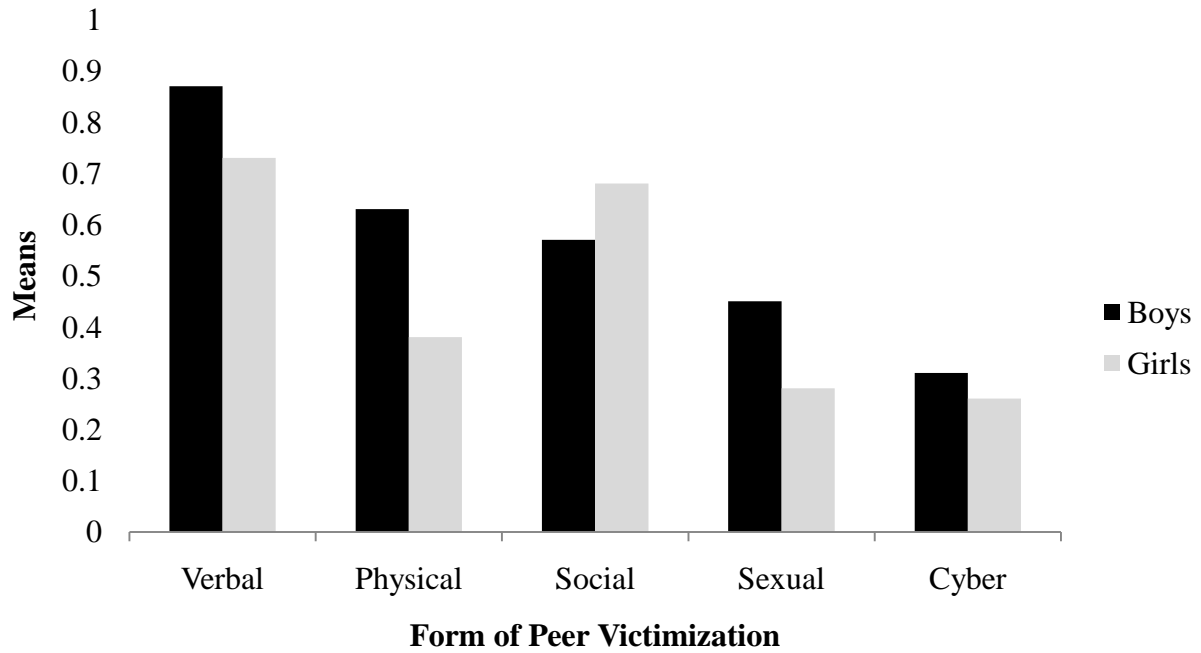


Figure 3. Mean levels for each form of self-reported peer victimization perpetrated in high school according to sex of participant.

There was also a significant between-subjects effect of social acceptance, $F(2, 77182) = 295.68, p < .001, \text{est } \eta^2 = .02$. Bonferroni post-hoc analyses were used to assess mean differences in perpetrations of various forms of peer victimization among levels of social acceptance. These analyses suggested students with either high ($M = .62, SD = .007$) or low ($M = .62, SD = .010$) social acceptance reported perpetrating more peer victimization (of all types) than students with average social acceptance ($M = .45, SD = .004$).

Neither the main effect of sex, grade, nor interactions involving grade were observed to reach the 1% threshold for interpretation in the analysis of perpetrating peer victimization. The interaction between form of peer victimization and social acceptance also did not reach this threshold (see Appendix E Table E1 for statistics).

Predicting self-esteem with experiences of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. Zero-order correlations between self-esteem and each form of victimization showed that lower ratings of self-esteem were correlated with higher levels of experiencing each form of peer victimization (see Table 7). In order to investigate the relative contributions of different forms of peer victimization in the prediction of self-esteem a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted. Sex, grade, social acceptance, and each form of peer victimization were entered on the first step accounting for a significant amount of variance in self-esteem, $R^2 = .094, F(8, 37668) = 488.81, p < .001$. Interaction terms involving sex by each form of peer victimization and social acceptance by each form of peer victimization were entered on the second step, producing a statistically significant but extremely small increment in variance accounted for, $R^2 \text{ change} = .001, F(5, 37663) = 4.43, p < .001$. Given that the increment of variance accounted for by Step 2 did not meet the 1% threshold, the interpretation of findings was limited to Step 1 (see Table 7). Semipartial correlations for Step 1 suggest that students'

Table 7

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Self-Esteem

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi- partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|-----------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|---------------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | 3.45 | .026 | | | |
| | Sex ^a | .05 | .007 | .04*** | .04 | .05*** |
| | Grade | -.01 | .002 | -.01 | -.01 | < -.01 |
| | Social Acceptance | .23 | .005 | .21*** | .21 | .21*** |
| | Physical Peer Victimization | -.05 | .006 | -.06*** | -.04 | -.18*** |
| | Verbal Peer Victimization | -.01 | .005 | -.02 | -.01 | -.15*** |
| | Social Peer Victimization | .01 | .005 | .01 | .01 | -.14*** |
| | Cyber Peer Victimization | -.10 | .008 | -.09*** | -.06 | -.19*** |
| | Sexual Peer Victimization | -.14 | .009 | -.11*** | -.08 | -.19*** |

Note. $R = .31$.

^aBoys = 0 and girls = 1.

*** $p < .001$.

sex, social acceptance, and experiences of physical, cyber, and sexual peer victimization uniquely predicted self-esteem. Specifically, lower levels of self-esteem were associated with being a male and having self-perceptions of lower social acceptance. In addition, greater experiences with physical, verbal, cyber, and sexual victimization were tied to lower self-esteem. Although it was of value to note that sexual peer victimization emerged as uniquely predictive of self-esteem in the presence of other forms of peer victimization, the unique contribution of sexual peer victimization did not reach the 1% cut off for effect size. Indeed, the only unique predictor to meet the 1% threshold for effect size was social acceptance.

Summary of findings in relation to hypotheses. A number of analyses were conducted both to build on existing research by addressing limitations identified in this existing body of research and to test hypotheses. Table 8 summarizes the key findings as they relate to the hypotheses proposed for this study.

Discussion

A comprehensive and psychometrically sound measure of sexual peer victimization was used to further expand our understanding of peer victimization during adolescence that is sexual in nature. What many label sexual victimization is proposed in this study to be a distinct form of peer victimization during adolescence, therefore, experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization were compared to nonsexual forms of peer victimization. In this study, sex and age differences were examined in both sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. Also, differences related to adolescents' self-reported social acceptance among their peers were examined in their experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization. Finally, the associations between self-esteem and experiencing sexual and nonsexual peer victimization were assessed.

Table 8

Hypotheses and Related Findings

| | Hypotheses | |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| | Experiencing Victimization | Perpetrating Victimization |
| Sex differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual: Girls > boys (Not Supported: Boys > girls) • Physical: Boys > girls (Supported) • Social: Girls > boys (Supported) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual: Boys > girls (Supported) • Physical: Boys > girls (Supported) • Social: Girls > boys (Supported) |
| Age differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual & verbal: ↑ across grades (Not Supported: no age differences) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual & verbal: ↑ across grades (Not Supported: no age differences) |
| Social acceptance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All forms of PV: Lo > hi (Supported) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Girls</i> - Social & sexual: Hi > lo (Not supported: Hi ≈ lo > average) • <i>Boys</i> - Physical & sexual: Hi > lo (Not supported: Hi ≈ lo > average) |
| Connections with self-esteem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ↑ nonsexual PV related to ↓ self-esteem (Supported for all forms with zero-order correlations; physical & cyber uniquely predictive but not at 1% variance cut-off; same link observed for sexual PV though not hypothesized) | |
| | Summary of Related Findings | |
| Differences in forms of PV | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys: physical, verbal, & social > sexual; sexual > cyber • Girls: verbal & social > sexual; sexual > cyber | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys & girls: physical, verbal, & social > sexual; sexual > cyber |

Existing research has tended to examine sexual peer victimization in isolation from nonsexual forms of peer victimization thus one of the goals of this study was to build on this body of research by comparing experiences and perpetrations of *both* sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization during adolescence in terms of prevalence (i.e., has it ever occurred?) and frequency (i.e., how often has it occurred?). For both sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization, the prevalence rates and means frequencies appear similar when comparing experiences and perpetrations reported by adolescents (although statistical comparisons were not undertaken). Previous research on non-sexual forms of victimization provides mixed findings in this regard. Whereas some researchers have observed reports of victimization to be higher than reports of perpetration (e.g., Graham, Bellmore & Mize, 2006; Vaillancourt et al., 2010), other researchers have observed similar prevalence or frequency estimates particularly when a definition of bullying/victimization is provided (e.g., Seals & Young, 2003; Vaillancourt et al., 2008). Given that the measure of non-sexual victimization used in this first study began with a definition, it may not be surprising to see similar levels of experience and perpetration of these negative peer interactions.

Consistent with what has been reported in existing research (AAUW, 1993; Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Fineran et al., 2003; Stratton & Backes, 1997; Timmerman, 2002, 2003) the results obtained in the current study demonstrate that peer victimization that is sexual in nature is pervasive in high schools affecting a significant number of students. Indeed in the current study, over half of all adolescents in grades 8 through 12 reported experiencing and perpetrating sexual peer victimization at least once within the school year assessed. In comparing rates of sexual peer victimization and nonsexual forms of peer victimization that are more typically assessed in developmental research, it appears that fewer students reported experiences and perpetrations of

nonsexual peer victimization; cyber and physical peer victimization were the least prevalent forms of peer victimization occurring within the school year.

In contrast, mean frequency values for each form of peer victimization illustrate that students are not being repeatedly exposed to peer victimization at high school nor repeatedly victimizing their peers. Indeed, in terms of on-going frequency, students reported lower levels of sexual peer victimization than nonsexual forms of peer victimization. However, caution is necessary in interpreting mean differences between the various forms of peer victimization because of the measurement used in this study. Specifically, physical, verbal, and social victimization were each assessed with a single item (including multiple examples of that form of victimization) whereas the measure of cyber peer victimization had three items and the measure of sexual peer victimization had 12 items. Using a single item means that participants may have identified one or more of the examples as being relevant to their experience and then judged their frequency response on that basis thereby ignoring examples that they did not find personally relevant. Asking separate items to represent different exemplars of sexual peer victimization and then aggregating across items means that each behaviour, regardless of how central it may or may not be to the construct and/or to the individual, is weighted equally. Thus, more infrequent aspects of sexual peer victimization would serve to reduce the overall or aggregate frequency score.

Building upon the existing body of research examining adolescent sexual peer victimization, variability across means obtained for individual items on the measure used in this study suggests that students experience and perpetrate certain types of sexual peer victimization more frequently than other types. Generally consistent with existing research, the most prevalent (%) and frequently (*Ms*) experienced and perpetrated behaviour within the cluster for sexual

peer victimization was homophobic name-calling for boys (e.g., AAUW, 1993; McMaster et al., 2002; Stratton & Backes, 1997), whereas for girls it was experiencing sexual jeers (e.g., AAUW, 1993) and maliciously calling peers gay. Similarly observed by other researchers, the least prevalent form of sexual peer victimization experienced was being forced to engage in unwanted sexual behaviours and when this behaviour was reported, the means levels suggested it happened infrequently to both girls and boys (e.g., AAUW, 1993; Lacasse et al., 2003; Stratton & Backes, 1997). This was also true for girls' and boys' self-reported perpetrations of forcing peers to engage in unwanted sexual behaviours (e.g., AAUW, 1993).

Measurement aside, the current study revealed numerous interconnections between sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization (both experience and perpetration) but also demonstrated that sexual peer victimization can be distinguished. Although most developmental researchers studying peer victimization have not typically included sexual peer victimization, the results of this study suggest that, at least during adolescence, sexual peer victimization should be included in studies of peer victimization. Aside from the current study, the only study to have examined both sexual and nonsexual peer victimization was by Craig et al. (2001). Unfortunately, Craig et al. used a measure of sexual peer victimization with a different metric scale than their measure of nonsexual peer victimization thus making it challenging to conduct needed comparisons.

In comparing sexual and nonsexual forms of sexual peer victimization, both grade and sex differences were hypothesized but results did not fully support these predictions. Although the extremely large sample size made virtually every comparison statistically significant, there were no meaningful grade-related differences in the forms of self-reported peer victimization from Grade 8 to Grade 12. Previous research examining developmental trajectories of nonsexual

forms of peer victimization suggest that physical and social peer victimization peak in early adolescence decreasing thereafter whereas verbal peer victimization continues to increase across adolescence (Björkqvist et al., 1992). The two existing developmental studies of sexual peer victimization suggest that this form of victimization increases with age, particularly other-sex sexual victimization, but both studies were conducted in early adolescence (Craig et al., 2001; McMaster et al., 2002). With the present sample all forms of peer victimization appear to have peaked in early adolescence and remained stable across mid- and late adolescence. Given that the sample consisted entirely of students in high school, it is not possible to know what the pattern of self-reports might look like in earlier adolescence just prior to entering Grade 8.

Results from this study do replicate what has been reported in the literature with respect to sex differences in experiencing and perpetrating peer victimization (e.g., Archer, 2004; Crick et al., 2001). As hypothesized, boys were found to experience higher levels of physical peer victimization than girls and girls experienced higher levels of social peer victimization than boys in this study (e.g. Archer, 2004). In addition, results from this study also suggest that boys experienced higher levels of verbal and sexual victimization than girls during adolescence. In terms of sex differences in experiences of sexual victimization, much of the literature on sexual peer victimization suggests girls are often victims (e.g., AAUW, 1993; Stratton & Backes, 1997), but a few studies have reported finding no sex differences in experiences of peer victimization that is sexual (e.g., Timmerman, 1993) or reported that boys experience more sexual victimization than girls (e.g., Craig et al., 2001; Zeira, 2002). In this study, perpetrations of sexual victimization were compared to nonsexual forms of victimization and consistent with existing research, boys were found to perpetrate physical, verbal, and sexual peer victimization more frequently than girls, whereas girls were more likely than boys to perpetrate social peer

victimization (e.g., Archer, 2004; Crick et al., 2001; McMaster et al., 2002). Although there is limited developmental research on cyber victimization, these findings suggests boys perpetrate cyber victimization more frequently than girls but Barrett, Levin, and Dickinson (2010) found girls perpetrated cyber peer victimization more often than boys in grades 7 and 8.

The sex differences in experiences and perpetrations of both sexual and nonsexual peer victimization should be further explored by assessing the sex of the victims and perpetrators to determine: (a) if same- or other-sex peers are more likely to be identified as perpetrators in assessing adolescents' experiences of peer victimization and (b) if same- or other-sex peers are more likely to be identified as victims in assessing adolescents' perpetrations of peer victimization. Sex differences have been revealed in early adolescent research that has examined same- and other-sex experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization. For example, Craig and colleagues (2001) found that in grades 5 through 8 boys experienced higher levels of same-sex sexual peer victimization when compared to girls, but they experienced similar levels of other-sex peer victimization. McMaster and colleagues (2002) found that in grades 6 through 8 boys experienced and perpetrated more sexual peer victimization involving same-sex peers than other-sex peers, whereas girls experienced and perpetrated more sexual peer victimization involving other-sex peers than same-sex peers.

Although sex is clearly an important characteristic to consider in identifying victims and perpetrators, there are additional characteristics such as social status that should be considered. The results of this study provide further evidence that social status (measured in this study as social acceptance or liking) is related to experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization during adolescence. Adolescents who perceived themselves to be of average social acceptance were least likely to report experiencing and perpetrating both sexual

and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. As hypothesized, adolescents who perceived themselves as low in social acceptance were most likely to experience both sexual and nonsexual peer victimization. Interestingly, adolescents who perceived themselves to be well-liked by peers were also more likely to report experiencing physical, verbal, and sexual peer victimization when compared to students with average social acceptance. The plight of low status individuals is not difficult to understand within a peer culture based on social hierarchy whereas the observation that higher status individuals are targets of victimization at first glance may be less intuitive. It is certainly possible that individuals with high social status may be highly visible to peers and therefore targets of peer victimization though it is not clear why they would be targets of some forms of peer victimization and not other forms. Moreover, adolescents who believe they are well-liked (as hypothesized) and adolescent who believe they are not well-liked (contrary to what was hypothesized) were more likely to perpetrate peer victimization when compared to students with average social status.

Previous researchers have similarly found that adolescents with low *and* high social status use aggressive strategies. Vaillancourt and colleagues (2010) demonstrated that different indices of social status (i.e., social acceptance and perceived popularity) are differentially related to being identified by peers as a bully. Using peer nominations, they found that perceived power (i.e., nominations for having power, being listened to and followed, and being a leader) was more strongly related to perceived popularity (i.e., nominations for being “popular”) than social preference (i.e., nominations for being liked and disliked). In fact, some aggressive adolescents were found to be rated by peers as powerful and popular but they were disliked by many. These researchers further demonstrated that some aggressive adolescents with power are actually popular because they possessed peer-valued characteristics related to gender role stereotypes

(i.e., attractive girls and athletic boys). Future research on peer victimization comparing experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization should explore adolescents' popularity within the group (rather than social acceptance alone) and gender-role conformity. As discussed in the literature review, adolescence is the developmental stage wherein popularity (Adler & Adler, 1998; Brown, 1990) and gender role development (Hill & Lynch, 1983) are especially salient. In the current study, the effect size for the main effects of sex and social acceptance were small suggesting that there are other factors at play. Of interest in the present program of research was whether the inclusion of popularity and gender-conformity would further explain victimization and perpetration of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization (Study 2).

In this study there is evidence suggesting that experiences of sexual and nonsexual victimization were related to low self-esteem with no evidence that these connections between forms of victimization and self-esteem look different for boys and girls across different forms of peer victimization. It was particularly interesting in the present study to note that sexual peer victimization made a unique contribution to the prediction of self-esteem (although very small in magnitude) even after the effects of other forms of victimization were taken into account. Low self-esteem is often associated with experiencing nonsexual forms of peer victimization (e.g., see Hawker & Boulton, 2000 for a review), but some research suggests that there is no relationship between experiencing sexual victimization and self-esteem (e.g., Timmerman, 2003). However in the only other study examining negative outcomes associated with different forms of peer victimization during adolescence including that which is sexual in nature, Felix and McMahon (2006) found that experiences of physical, verbal, and sexual peer victimization were related to internalizing problems (e.g., withdrawn, anxiety, and depressed affect). Moreover, both girls and

boys with higher levels of internalizing problems were more likely to report being sexually victimized by male peers. The sex of the perpetrator and victim appears to be important to consider in examining the connection between different forms of peer victimization and psychosocial functioning. Yet, self-esteem is only one indicator of psychosocial adjustment and in examining other adjustment outcomes such as loneliness and depressed affect (Study 2), we may also find that sexual peer victimization makes a unique contribution to the prediction of different aspects of maladjustment.

Careful consideration of the limitations of the present study is necessary in making any generalizations about adolescents' experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization from the findings reported herein. Future research should: (a) assess same- and other-sex experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization, (b) include an index of social status among adolescent peers that more closely approximates perceived popularity, (c) assess gender role conformity as another characteristic that may identify victims and perpetrators of peer victimization, and (d) include more than one index of psychosocial adjustment.

Despite these limitations the findings reported in this study do provide some insight into understanding peer victimization that is sexual in nature as it occurs in high schools. Clearly sexual peer victimization is another form of peer victimization experienced and perpetrated by a number of boys and girls during adolescence. Fortunately, the results of this study suggest that despite the prevalence of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization (i.e., proportion of students who have experienced and perpetrated these behaviours at least once during the school year), students infrequently experience and perpetrate these behaviours in high school (i.e., low mean values for each form of peer victimization). Although traditional definitions of bullying

(e.g., Vaillancourt et al., 2008) highlight the requirement of a “repeated” quality, it is certainly possible that some students encounter devastating critical events (sexual or non-sexual) with devastating implications for their subsequent psychosocial functioning. The matter of how much importance to place on frequency is a salient one both in the present program of research as well as in the field of peer victimization as a whole. This program of research continues to build on existing research including the present study by addressing limitations of Study 1 and moving beyond the descriptive level of assessing prevalence and frequency of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization to begin exploring a theoretical explanation for why these behaviours occur during adolescence.

Study 2: Exploring Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Sexual Peer Victimization

A theoretical framework for understanding experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization during adolescence should include the role of social status (i.e., popularity) and conformity to peers’ expectations regarding gender appropriate behaviour (e.g., girls being attractive, boys being athletic) and how these different experiences relate to one’s well-being. Indeed, as described in qualitative research on peer victimization that is sexual, it can be predicted that perpetrators of sexual peer victimization are gender role conforming adolescents with high social status whereas victims are gender role nonconforming adolescents with low social status. These hypotheses along with the underlying theoretical framework are further explored in Study 2 and 3 of this program of research.

Ideally, a study designed to examine the theoretical framework proposed in this program of research would be a longitudinal study beginning prior to early adolescence and carried out into late adolescence with a large sample of adolescents. Such a study should include peer-reported assessments of different indices of social status (e.g., acceptance and popularity) and

gender role conformity within the peer group along with self-reports of experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization involving both same- and other-sex peers. Despite efforts to conduct a study like this as part of the present program of research, numerous obstacles were encountered in recruiting participants and the desired study design could not be implemented. In an effort to nevertheless expand this body of research by considering the constructs of social status in combination with gender role conformity, a retrospective study with emerging adults was undertaken.

Study 2 of this program of research was carried out with undergraduate students and builds upon the findings reported in the first study by examining retrospective accounts of experiencing and perpetrating sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization with same- and other-sex peers in high school. This study also expands on the theoretical framework proposed to help explain sexual peer victimization during adolescence by examining retrospective assessments of gender role conformity and popularity (i.e., an index of social status important in adolescence). Of additional interest was whether multiple indices of psychosocial adjustment would be associated with peer victimization that is sexual or nonsexual in nature.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. Would the sex differences reported in Study 1 be replicated when examining retrospective accounts of sexual peer victimization and nonsexual forms of peer victimization? Based on the findings reported in Study 1 it was hypothesized that males would recall experiencing higher levels of physical peer victimization than females and females would recall experiencing higher levels of social peer victimization than males. It was further hypothesized that males would recall experiencing higher levels of verbal and sexual victimization than females during high school. It was also hypothesized that

males would recall perpetrating physical, verbal, and sexual peer victimization more frequently than females, whereas females would be more likely than males to recall perpetrating social peer victimization. The prevalence of these experiences and perpetrations were further delineated across same- and other-sex peer victimization for each form.

2. Do gender role conformity and social status predict experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization? Specifically do gender role conforming adolescents with high social status perpetrate sexual peer victimization? Are gender role nonconforming adolescents with low social status more likely to be victims? In Study 1, social status (i.e., feeling accepted by peers) was examined revealing that when compared to students with average and high social status, students with low social status (i.e., not well-liked) reported experiencing higher levels of all forms of peer victimization. Interestingly, students with high social status (i.e., well-liked) reported experiencing higher levels of physical, cyber, and sexual peer victimization in comparison to students with average social status. In comparing perpetrations of peer victimization, both students with high and low social status reported higher levels of victimizing their peers. Of interest in this study was whether the combinations of gender role conformity and social status (i.e., popularity) would be evident in the prediction of experiencing and perpetrating both sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. I have proposed that to understand sexual peer victimization during adolescence, we need to study gender role conformity and social power relations within adolescents peer groups. To date, there are no empirical studies that have examined the links between gender role conformity, social status, and different forms of peer victimization that are both sexual and nonsexual in

nature. Yet findings reported in ethnographic research suggest that high social status, gender-conforming adolescents may be more likely than low status, gender-nonconforming youth to be perpetrators of sexual peer victimization (e.g., Eder & Parker, 1987; Duncan, 1999). Accordingly, it was hypothesized that high status, gender-conforming adolescents would be more likely than their peers to *perpetrate* sexual peer victimization. In turn, low-status, gender-nonconforming adolescents may be more likely to be *targets* of sexual peer victimization.

3. As an extension of Study 1, it was of interest to ask the question of whether negative outcomes commonly associated with experiencing nonsexual forms of peer victimization would also be associated with experiencing sexual peer victimization and to explore whether these associations were moderated by sex. Specifically, previous research examining nonsexual peer victimization suggests that victims experience low self-esteem, depressed affect, and loneliness (for review see Card et al., 2007). Felix and McMahon (2006) found that adolescents reporting sexual, physical, and verbal peer victimization were more likely to report internalizing behaviours particularly when victimized sexually by male peers but they did not explore differences among various negative outcomes (i.e., withdrawn, somatic complaints, and anxious/depressive subscales on the Internalizing scale of the Youth Report; Achenbach, 1991, as cited by Felix & McMahon, 2006). Thus Study 2 builds on previous research by comparing the associations between three different markers of psychosocial well-being including self-esteem, depressed affect, and loneliness, and different forms of peer victimization. Specifically, examined in this study were the relationships of emerging adults' concurrent self-esteem, depressed affect, and

feelings of loneliness to experiences of different forms of peer victimization in high school.

Method

Participants. Emerging adults (i.e., age 18-29) attending the University of Saskatchewan were recruited to participate in this study through introductory psychology courses and the university webmail service. Students in the introductory courses who participated in this study included 57 males and 80 females who received credit for participation. Their ages ranged from 17 to 48. The students recruited through the university webmail service included 21 males and 119 females. Individuals recruited through the web could email the researcher to be entered into a draw for one of two \$50 gift certificates to use at the campus book store. The age range of the participants recruited through the webmail service was 17 to 45 years of age.

Seventeen participants were removed because they were not in emerging adulthood (18-29 years of ages; Arnett, 2004). Specifically, one male who did not indicate his age and seven females who indicated they were over the age of 29 were removed from the introductory psychology student sample. In the sample obtained through university webmail service, one 18-year-old female and eight females over the age of 29 were removed. An additional 13 participants were also excluded because of missing data on key variables (e.g., sex, social acceptance, nonsexual peer victimization and perpetration and composite scores for popularity, sexual victimization experiences and perpetrations variables of interest, self-esteem, depressed affect, and loneliness).

The final sample size included 247 participants (70 males and 177 females) with a mean age of 20.62 ($SD = 2.54$). The majority of the participants were under the age of 21 (62%) and in their first year of university (40%). Participants were asked to indicate what their sexual

orientation was in high school and 93% reported being heterosexual, 4% reported being bisexual, 2% reported that they were unsure, and 2 participants reported being homosexual. Although ethnicity was not collected through the online survey accessed by the introductory psychology students, data on ethnicity were collected through the university webmail service survey and 93% of these participants indicated they were White, Caucasian, European, Latino/Hispanic, 5% indicated they were Asian, 2% indicated they were Aboriginal, 1 person indicated they were Black or African American, and 2 participants indicated other.

Measures. Data were collected using several measures administered online. Demographic information was collected including sex, age, year of study, ethnicity (for those recruited using the university webmail service), and current sexual orientation and sexual orientation in high school. Online measures included assessments of participants' retrospective accounts of their social status, gender conformity, and of both same- and other-sex experiences and perpetrations of different forms of peer victimization during high school. They were also asked to complete online measures assessing their current psychosocial adjustment including self-esteem, depressed affect, and loneliness.

Social status. Two indices of social status among peers, social acceptance and popularity, were assessed and compared. To assess social acceptance participants were asked "When you were in high school, how well were you liked by other students in your high school?" and responded by selecting "better than most students," "about the same," "worse than most students," and "I'm not sure." Participants who selected "better than most students" were identified as having been high in social acceptance in high school, those who responded that they were "about the same as most students" were defined as having average social acceptance, and those who reported they were liked "worse than most students" were identified as having low

social acceptance. Popularity was assessed with two items. These items “I was popular” and “I was someone with a lot of friends” were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all true of me* (0) to *very true of me* (4). Participants were asked to “to think back to when you were in high school” and rate themselves according to how they described themselves in the context of peer group in high school. Individuals scores on these items were averaged given the high degree of overlap, $r(245) = .76, p < .001$. Higher scores reflect higher levels of self-reported popularity.

The two indices of social status including social acceptance and popularity, were highly correlated, $r(233) = .67, p < .001$. The considerable overlap between social acceptance and popularity was taken into consideration in conducting analyses for Study 2.

Self-reported gender role conformity. A revised version of the Class Play measure (Masten, Morison, & Pellegrini, 1985) was used to assess the extent to which participants believed they conformed to feminine and masculine norms while they were in high school (see Appendix F). The items on this measure were derived from the ethnographic work of Eder and Parker (1987) and from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974). The items selected were gender characteristics found to be relevant in adolescent peer groups (Buchanan et al., 2005; Eder & Parker, 1987).

The gender role conformity scale consisted of 14 items describing seven feminine characteristics and seven masculine characteristics which were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all true of me* (0) to *very true of me* (4); internal consistency was acceptable for both femininity ($\alpha = .74$) and masculinity ($\alpha = .77$). Participants were asked to “think back to when you were in high school” and indicated “how well each characteristic described you around other students in your high school.” Composite scores for femininity and masculinity were

calculated by averaging across at least five valid responses to each scale. As done in previous research (e.g., Aspenlieder, Buchanan, McDougall, & Sippola, 2009), gender nonconformity scores were calculated by adding the overall feminine score and the reversed overall masculine score for females and by adding the overall masculine score and the reversed overall feminine score for males. Thus, high positive scores indicate greater self-reported gender-conformity while negative scores indicate greater self-reported gender-nonconformity.

Nonsexual peer victimization. Experiences and perpetrations of nonsexual peer victimization were assessed with four individual items (see Appendix G). The same items used in Study 1 were used to assess physical, verbal, and social peer victimization. Unlike Study 1, cyber peer victimization was assessed using 1 item, “used text messages, emails, or pictures on a computer/cellphone to hurt or make you look bad.” Each form of nonsexual peer victimization experienced and perpetrated was rated on a 4-point Likert scale (i.e., 0 = *Never*, 1 = *Seldom*, 2 = *Often*, and 3 = *Very often*). Participants were instructed to “keep in mind these are behaviours that you felt were unwanted or unwelcome (that is not friendly joking around or flirting)” while rating their experiences of peer victimization in high school. In describing their perpetrations of peer victimization in high school, they were instructed to “keep in mind these are behaviours that were intended to hurt or bother someone (that is not friendly joking around or flirting).” In assessing experiences and perpetrations, participants were also asked to indicate the sex of the peers who victimized them and the sex of the peers they victimized. Scores for each form of nonsexual peer victimization between same, other-, and mixed-sex peers were created for experiences and perpetrations of same-, other-, and mixed-sex physical, verbal, social, and cyber peer victimization.

Sexual peer victimization. Peer victimization that was sexual in nature was assessed using a modified version of the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire (see Appendix G). Twelve of the items appearing on this scale were drawn from the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire. One of the original items was modified; “gestures and looks” was deleted from “been a target of sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks” because this original item was considered to be a double-barrel question. Also one of the original items from the AAUW (1993) sexual harassment questionnaire was deleted since not all high school students participate in physical education and, therefore, would rarely be in the situation of “been spied on while dressing or showering.” In addition to the 12 items originating from AAUW (1993) measure, the following items by Timmerman (2002, 2003) and McMaster et al. (2002) were included: “made sexual comments about parts of my body” and “made sexual remarks about my clothing.” One set of instructions were provided for rating experiences and perpetrations of all forms of peer victimization with the sexual peer victimization items following immediately after the nonsexual peer victimization items. Thus, participants indicated on a 4-point Likert scale for each of the 14 items how frequently they experienced and perpetrated the described type of sexual victimization from same-sex and other-sex peers while in high school; 0 = *Never*, 1 = *Seldom*, 2 = *Often*, and 3 = *Very often*. Composite scores were created by averaging across at least nine valid responses with higher scores indicating greater experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization. Internal consistency for retrospective accounts of experiencing and perpetrating sexual peer victimization was high at .84 and .81 respectively.

In assessing self-reported experiences of peer-victimization, participants were also asked to indicate “who did this to you?” and they could respond by selecting “boys,” “girls,” or “both.” After indicating how often they had perpetrated each type of sexual peer victimization, they were

asked “who did you do this to?” and they responded by selecting “boys,” “girls,” or “both.” The prevalence of same-, other-, and mixed-sex experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization was of interest in this study.

Items used on the measure of sexual peer victimization varied for Study 1 and Study 2 because the survey design and data collection for each study was planned and executed at different sites with different primary investigators at varying times. Although there is moderate overlap in the items used in both Study 1 and 2, there are a few items used in Study 1 that are not used in Study 2 and vice versa (see Table 9).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was assessed using five items from the self-esteem scale on the *Self-Description Questionnaire II* (Marsh, 1990; see Appendix H). The validity of these items has been well documented (for review see Marsh, Parada, & Ayotte, 2004). Items appearing on this measure were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = *Not at all true about me*, 2 = *Hardly true about me*, 3 = *Sometimes true about me*, 4 = *Most of the time true about me*, and 5 = *Always true about me*). Examples of items include “I do lots of important things,” “Overall, I have a lot to be proud of,” and “I am as good as most other people.” A composite score was created for each participant by averaging across at least three valid responses with high scores indicating higher levels of self-reported self-esteem. Cronbach’s alpha of .89 suggests this measure was reliable with this sample.

Depressed affect. Current depressive affect was assessed using the *Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale* (CES-D, Radloff, 1977; Appendix H). Items on this questionnaire describe experiences associated with depression (e.g., “I felt that everything I did was an effort” and “I talked less than usual.” These 20 items were rated on a 4-point scale; 1 = *Rarely or none of the time*, 2 = *Some or a little of the time*, 3 = *Somewhat or occasionally*, and 4

Table 9

Item comparison of Sexual Peer Victimization Measures used in Study 1 and 2

| Study 1 Sexual Peer Victimization Measure | Study 2 Sexual Peer Victimization Measure |
|--|---|
| Calling someone gay, fag, lesbian, or something similar | Maliciously called you gay or lesbian |
| Spreading sexual rumours or notes, writing sexual graffiti | Spread sexual rumours about you |
| Making unwelcome or crude comments about someone's body or their sexual behaviour | Made sexual comments about parts of your body |
| Yelling something sexual or whistling/howling as someone walks by | Made you the target of sexual comments or jokes |
| Standing too close or brushing against someone in a sexual way when it is not wanted | Intentionally brushed up against you in a sexual manner |
| Touching, kissing, grabbing or pinching someone in a sexual way when it's not wanted | Touched, grabbed, or pinched you in a sexual way |
| Forcing or threatening someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) when it is not wanted | Forced you to do something sexual other than kissing |
| Pressure from other girls/boys to engage in sexual activities with others | |
| Saying someone did not seem masculine or feminine enough | |
| Making someone uncomfortable by making sexual gestures or staring at someone in a sexual way | |
| Making someone uncomfortable by using hurtful sexual language | |
| Persuading or bribing someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) when it is not wanted | |
| | Showed or gave you sexually explicit material such as pictures and notes Flashed or mooned you Pulled your clothing off or down Pulled at your clothing in a sexual way Blocked or cornered you in a sexual manner Forced you to kiss someone Made sexual remarks about your clothing |

= *Most or all of the time*. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire has been well documented in university populations (see Santor, Zuroff, Ramsay, Cervantes, & Palacios, 1995). Internal reliability was found to be high with Cronbach's alpha = .92. Composite scores for depressed affect were calculated across 12 or more valid responses to this scale. Higher mean scores reflect higher levels of depressed affect.

Loneliness. Participants were also asked to self-report current feelings of loneliness using the *UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3* (Russell, 1996; Appendix H). The 10 items on this questionnaire describe subjective experiences of loneliness (e.g., "How often do you feel that you lack companionship?" and "How often do you feel isolated from others?") and were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, and 4 = *Always*). The *UCLA Loneliness Scale Version 3* has been used extensively with university populations (Russell, 1996). This measure was found to be reliable with high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$). Composite scores for loneliness were calculated across at least six valid responses to this scale. Higher mean scores reflect greater feelings of loneliness.

Procedure. Recruitment began in spring and ended in summer. Participants were able to access the study online where they were first asked to read a description of the study and consent form (see Appendices I and J). Participants completed all measures online at their own convenience and were then directed to a debriefing webpage (Appendix K). Participants were also made aware of their right to skip questions or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Results

Data screening. As previously described, missing data on key variables were excluded from analyses. Further examination of the data set revealed that there were less than 5% missing

data for variables of interest. Data were then screened for both univariate and multivariate outliers once cases with missing data were removed. Univariate outliers were identified as cases with one or more variables with standardized z-scores greater than $|3.29|$. There were 17 participants that provided responses that were considered extreme but reflected actual experiences. For example, many participants reported never or rarely experiencing physical victimization in high school thus the five participants who indicated experiencing physical victimization very often became extreme scores in comparison. Multivariate outliers were detected using a $p < .001$ criterion for Mahalanobis distance for the separate cells for MANOVAs and the regression analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Each analysis was run with and without identified multivariate outliers. In each case the pattern of results between those obtained after deleting these identified cases and those that included such cases was similar. Thus, findings reported herein are from analyses with outliers included.

Prevalence rates. Prevalence for sexual and nonsexual peer victimization in high school was examined in terms of experiencing victimization and perpetrating each form of peer victimization.

Victimization. The total number of participants responding “seldom,” “often,” and “very often” to each form of peer victimization was tallied to assess the frequency at which emerging adults recalled experiencing peer victimization in high school. The percentage of males and females who recalled experiencing peer victimization during high school ranged widely from a low of 16% to a high of 93% (see Table 10). In recalling their experiences of different forms of peer victimization, the vast majority of emerging adults reported experiencing sexual peer victimization while attending high school. A majority also reported having experienced verbal and social peer victimization in high school whereas less than half of emerging adults recalled

Table 10

Percentage of Participants Reporting Experiences of Sexual and Nonsexual Peer Victimization at Least Once During the High School and Means and (Standard Deviations) for These Experiences

| Type of Peer Victimization | Females (<i>n</i> = 176-177) | | | Males (<i>n</i> = 69-70) | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Total | Same-sex Peers | Other-sex Peers | Mixed-sex Peers | Total | Same-sex Peers | Other-sex Peers | Mixed-sex Peers |
| Physical ^a | 25 .25 (.45) | 7 | 9 | 3 | 40 .47 (.63) | 28 | 6 | 8 |
| Verbal | 84 1.15 (.75) | 23 | 12 | 49 | 79 1.00 (.66) | 46 | 6 | 26 |
| Social | 83 1.20 (.81) | 57 | 1 | 25 | 70 .96 (.79) | 15 | 13 | 42 |
| Cyber ^a | 33 .37 (.59) | 23 | 2 | 8 | 16 .16 (.37) | 4 | 0 | 10 |
| Sexual | 88 .38 (.33) | See Table 11 | | | 93 .40 (.37) | See Table 11 | | |

Note. For each cell, the percentage of participants who indicated experiencing each form of peer victimization behaviour at least once in high school is on the first line, the mean appears on the second line, and the standard deviation on the third line of the cell.

^aOne or more participants reported the frequency with which a particular form of peer victimization occurred but they did not indicate the sex of the perpetrator thus same-, other-, and mixed sex percentage do not equal the total percentage.

experiencing physical and cyber peer victimization. Emerging adults' recollections of peer victimization during their high school years suggest that peer victimization did indeed take place in high school but the mean values for frequencies (scores ranged from 0 to 3) suggested that most students did not report being repeatedly victimized while attending high school.

The prevalence of experiencing each behaviour that comprised the sexual peer victimization measure was also examined given this form of peer victimization is of greatest interest in this program of research. The total number of students responding "seldom," "often," and "very often" was tallied to examine the percentage of participants who recalled experiencing each unwanted sexual behaviour while in high school. The percentage of participants experiencing different sexual peer victimization behaviours at least once during high school year ranged from 0% to 64% (see Table 11). The most commonly experienced behaviour for males was being the target of sexual comments or jokes whereas females reported that they frequently encountered peers making sexual comments about their bodies. Both females and males were least likely to report having been forced to kiss someone. The means suggest that most students were not repeatedly experiencing these behaviours while in high school, however, the variability across the means suggests some participants may have been repeatedly exposed to certain behaviours in the context of high school.

Across the various forms of sexual peer victimization, females were most likely to indicate that other-sex peers sexually victimized them in high school. The two exceptions to this pattern included "spreading sexual rumours" and "maliciously being called gay" for which females were most likely to indicate that the perpetrators were both girls and boys at their school. Males, too, were most likely to identify both boys and girls as spreading sexual rumours about them. Similar to females, males were most likely to identify other-sex peers as the main

Table 11

Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Experiences of Each Sexual Peer Victimization Behaviour at Least Once During the School Year and Means and (Standard Deviations) for These Experiences

| Item | Females (n = 176-177) | | | Males (n = 69-70) | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | Total | Same- sex Peers | Other- sex Peers | Mixed -sex Peers | Total | Same- sex Peers | Other- sex Peers | Mixed -sex Peers |
| Made sexual comments about parts of your body | 64 .64 (.48) | 2 | 53 | 9 | 40 .40 (.49) | 13 | 24 | 3 |
| Made you the target of sexual comments or jokes | 57 .57 (.50) | 3 | 28 | 26 | 48 .47 (.50) | 28 | 3 | 17 |
| Intentionally brushed up against you in a sexual manner | 44 .44 (.50) | 0 | 41 | 3 | 47 .47 (.50) | 1 | 43 | 3 |
| Touched, grabbed, or pinched you in a sexual way | 47 .47 (.50) | 1 | 40 | 6 | 37 .37 (.49) | 4 | 30 | 3 |
| Made sexual remarks about your clothing | 44 .44 (.50) | 3 | 26 | 15 | 23 .23 (.42) | 1 | 16 | 6 |
| Flashed or mooned you | 35 .34 (.48) | 1 | 27 | 7 | 40 .40 (.49) | 20 | 11 | 9 |
| Spread sexual rumours about you | 35 .35 (.48) | 9 | 5 | 21 | 36 .36 (.48) | 13 | 7 | 16 |
| Showed or gave you sexually explicit material such as pictures and notes | 20 .20 (.40) | 2 | 15 | 3 | 40 .40 (.49) | 16 | 13 | 11 |
| Maliciously called you gay or lesbian | 15 .15 (.36) | 4 | 4 | 7 | 33 .33 (.47) | 23 | 0 | 10 |
| Pulled at your clothing in a sexual way | 21 .21 (.41) | 1 | 17 | 3 | 26 .25 (.44) | 0 | 23 | 3 |
| Pulled you clothing off or down ^a | 18 .22 (.76) | 5 | 8 | 5 | 30 .30 (.46) | 14 | 11 | 4 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|---|----|---|--------------------|---|----|---|
| Blocked or cornered you in a sexual manner | 18 .18 (.39) | 0 | 18 | 0 | 17 .17 (.40) | 0 | 15 | 2 |
| Forced you to something sexual other than kissing | 14 .14 (.35) | 0 | 13 | 1 | 10 .10 (.30) | 1 | 9 | 0 |
| Forced you to kiss someone ^a | 10 .10 (.30) | 2 | 5 | 3 | 17 .17 (.30) | 3 | 11 | 3 |

Note. For each cell, the percentage of participants who indicated experiencing each specific sexual peer behaviour at least once in high school is on the first line, the mean appears on the second line, and the standard deviation on the third line of the cell.

^aOne or more participants reported the frequency with which a particular form of peer victimization occurred but they did not indicate the sex of the perpetrator thus same-, other-, and mixed sex percentage do not consistently equal the total percentage calculated for each form.

perpetrators of certain forms of sexual peer victimization (e.g., being touched, having clothes pulled at, being brushed up against). However, males were most likely to recall other boys as the perpetrators of making them the targets of sexual comments and jokes, homophobic name-calling, being flashed or mooned, having clothing pulled down or off, and receiving sexually explicit material while in high school.

Perpetrations. The percentage of males and females who recalled perpetrating various forms of peer victimization during high school ranged from 9% to 76% (see Table 12). Over half the males and females reported that they perpetrated sexual, social, and verbal peer victimization while in high school. Less than half of the emerging adults reported perpetrating physical peer victimization during high school, and even fewer recalled perpetrating cyber peer victimization. Once again the low mean values suggest that they reported perpetrating peer victimization infrequently.

The prevalence of perpetrating each unwanted sexual behaviour was examined by tallying the total number of students responding “seldom,” “often,” and “very often.” The percentage of female and male participants perpetrating different sexual peer victimization behaviours at least once during high school year ranged from 0% to 64% (see Table 13). The most commonly perpetrated behaviour for males was making sexual remarks about peers’ bodies. Females reported that they frequently victimized peers by making sexual comments about their peers’ clothing. Both females and males were least likely to report having forced someone to engage in unwanted sexual behaviours. The means suggest that most students were not repeatedly victimizing their peers with unwanted sexual attention while in high school. However, again the range of variability across the means suggests some participants may have more frequently engaged in certain behaviours with peers in their high schools.

Table 12

Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Perpetrations of Sexual and Nonsexual Peer Victimization at Least Once During the School Year and Means and (Standard Deviations) of These Perpetrations

| Form of Peer victimization | Female (<i>n</i> = 176-177) | | | | Male (<i>n</i> = 69-70) | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Total | Same-sex Peers | Other-sex Peers | Mixed-sex Peers | Total | Same-sex Peers | Other-sex Peers | Mixed-sex Peers |
| Physical ^a | 16 .19 (.45) | 3 | 8 | 5 | 43 .44 (.53) | 34 | 6 | 0 |
| Verbal | 61 .67 (.60) | 17 | 6 | 38 | 71 .80 (.58) | 31 | 3 | 37 |
| Social | 67 .80 (.67) | 37 | 1 | 29 | 53 .56 (.56) | 17 | 0 | 36 |
| Cyber | 17 .18 (.41) | 8 | 2 | 7 | 9 .09 (.28) | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Sexual | 58 .14 (.19) | See Table 13 | | | 76 .27 (.14) | See Table 13 | | |

Note. For each cell, the percentage of participants who indicated perpetrating each form of peer victimization at least once in high school is on the first line, the mean appears on the second line, and the standard deviation on the third line of the cell.

^aOne or more participants reported the frequency with which a particular form of peer victimization occurred but they did not indicate the sex of the victim thus same-, other-, and mixed sex percentage do not consistently equal the total percentage calculated for each form.

Table 13

Percentage of Adolescents Reporting Perpetrations of Each Sexual Peer Victimization Behaviour at Least Once During the School Year and Means and (Standard Deviations) of These Perpetrations

| Item | Females (n = 176-177) | | | | Males (n = 69-70) | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| | Total | Same- sex Peers | Other- sex Peers | Mixed -sex Peers | Total | Same- sex Peers | Other- sex Peers | Mixed -sex Peers |
| Made sexual comments about parts of someone's body | 28 .28 (.45) | 2 | 20 | 6 | 53 .52 (.50) | 10 | 40 | 3 |
| Made sexual remarks about someone's clothing | 31 .31 (.46) | 14 | 5 | 12 | 47 .47 (.50) | 1 | 33 | 13 |
| Made someone the target of sexual comments or jokes ^a | 27 .27 (.44) | 6 | 3 | 17 | 43 .43 (.50) | 9 | 9 | 25 |
| Spread sexual rumours about someone | 21 .21 (.41) | 9 | 0 | 12 | 25% .26 (.44) | 1 | 7 | 17 |
| Maliciously called someone gay or lesbian | 18 .18 (.38) | 2 | 6 | 10 | 28 .29 (.46) | 14 | 1 | 13 |
| Intentionally brushed up against someone in a sexual manner | 15 .15 (.36) | 1 | 13 | 1 | 20 .20 (.40) | 0 | 19 | 1 |
| Flashed or mooned someone | 9 .10 (.30) | 1 | 3 | 5 | 23 .23 (.42) | 4 | 9 | 10 |
| Touched, grabbed, or pinched someone in a sexual way | 12 .12 (.33) | 1 | 10 | 1 | 14 .14 (.35) | 0 | 14 | 0 |
| Pulled at someone's clothing in a sexual way | 8 .08 (.27) | 0 | 7 | 1 | 19 .19 (.39) | 0 | 17 | 2 |
| Pulled someone's clothing off or down | 7 .07 (.25) | 2 | 3 | 2 | 16 .16 (.37) | 6 | 10 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|---|---|-------------------|---|---|---|
| Shown or gave someone sexually explicit material such as pictures and notes | 4 .04 (.20) | 0 | 3 | 1 | 9 .09 (.28) | 6 | 0 | 3 |
| Forced someone to kiss someone | 2 .02 (.13) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7 .07 (.26) | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Blocked or cornered someone in a sexual manner | 1 .01 (.08) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6 .06 (.23) | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| Forced someone to do something sexual other than kissing ^a | 2 .02 (.13) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 .01 (.12) | 0 | 1 | 0 |

Note. For each cell, the percentage of participants who indicated perpetrating each specific sexual peer behaviour at least once in high school is on the first line, the mean appears on the second line, and the standard deviation on the third line of the cell.

^aOne or more participants reported the frequency with which a particular form of peer victimization occurred but they did not indicate the sex of the victim thus same-, other-, and mixed sex percentage do not consistently equal the total percentage calculated for each form.

Variability was also noted when it came to recalling the sex of victim in perpetrating different forms of sexual peer victimization while in high school. Males were most likely to recall victimizing girls in their high school with exception of homophobic name-calling and showing someone sexually explicit material and for these behaviours they were more likely to target other boys. Males recalled that they were also most likely to victimize both girls and boys when making sexual comments about other's clothing, flashing or mooning, spreading sexual rumours, and making sexual comments and jokes. Females, too, were most likely to recall victimizing boys in their school except for when they reported engaging in homophobic name-calling, spreading sexual rumours, making sexual comments or jokes, and flashing or mooning and for these behaviours they were most likely to victimize both girls and boys. Females were also most likely to victimize girls when making sexual comments about peers' clothing.

Relation between sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. Experiencing and perpetrating different forms of peer victimization during high school are not distinct phenomena. Retrospective accounts of experiencing sexual peer victimization were associated with experiences of physical and verbal peer victimization; whereas perpetrations of sexual peer victimization were related to all forms of nonsexual peer victimization (see Table 14). As can be seen on Table 14, the experience of sexual peer victimization was positively correlated with the perpetration on these same behaviours, $r(245) = .57, p < .001$.

Comparing experiences of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization.

Sex and social acceptance. Analyses were first conducted to attempt to replicate the findings reported in Study 1 wherein differences related to sex, grade, and social acceptance were examined in comparing experiences of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. Given Study 2 used retrospective accounts of these experiences across time in high school, age-

Table 14

Intercorrelations for Experiencing and Perpetrating Different Forms of Peer Victimization

| Variables | Physical PV | Verbal PV | Social PV | Cyber PV | Sexual PV |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Physical PV | .47*** | .38*** | .23*** | .01 | .24* |
| Verbal PV | .31*** | .23*** | .59*** | .30*** | .13* |
| Social PV | .05 | .32*** | .25** | .34*** | .12 |
| Cyber PV | .03 | .20*** | .30*** | .26*** | .21*** |
| Sexual PV | .34*** | .37*** | .19*** | .15* | .57*** |

Note. PV = peer victimization. Intercorrelations involving experiencing victimization are presented above the diagonal, intercorrelations involving perpetration are presented below the diagonal ($N = 247$), and intercorrelations between experiencing and perpetrating within the same form of peer victimization are presented on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

related differences could not be assessed in Study 2 as was done in Study 1. However, differences related to sex and social acceptance were explored in Study 2.

Although it was desirable to examine experiences of peer victimization using a 2 (sex: female and male) X 3 (social acceptance: low, average, and high) repeated measures MANOVA with 5 forms of peer victimization (experiences of sexual PV, physical PV, verbal PV, social PV, and cyber PV) a very small n within 1 of the 6 cells of the design (i.e., males with low social acceptance) made this impossible. Instead, two separate repeated measures MANOVAs were conducted: (1) 2 (sex: female and male) with 5 forms of peer victimization, and (2) 3 (social acceptance: low, average, and high) with 5 forms of peer victimization (see Appendix L Table L1 and Appendix M Table M1, respectively). As recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), Pillai's Trace criterion was reported for multivariate tests because the sample sizes for each cell are unequal and the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was violated (Box's M was significant for each MANOVA).

The one-way MANOVA examining sex differences in self-reported experiences of different forms of peer victimization in high school revealed a multivariate effect of peer victimization, Pillai's Trace = .58, $F(4, 242) = 83.55, p < .001$, $est \eta^2 = .58$. This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between form of peer victimization and sex, Pillai's Trace = .09, $F(4, 242) = 5.99, p < .001$, $est \eta^2 = .09$. The main effect of sex was not significant (see Appendix L Table L1 for statistics).

The interaction was examined by comparing sexual peer victimization with each nonsexual form of peer victimization for females and males separately using paired sample t -tests (see Figure 4). In recalling their experiences of peer victimization during high school, both males and females reported experiencing more verbal and social peer victimization when

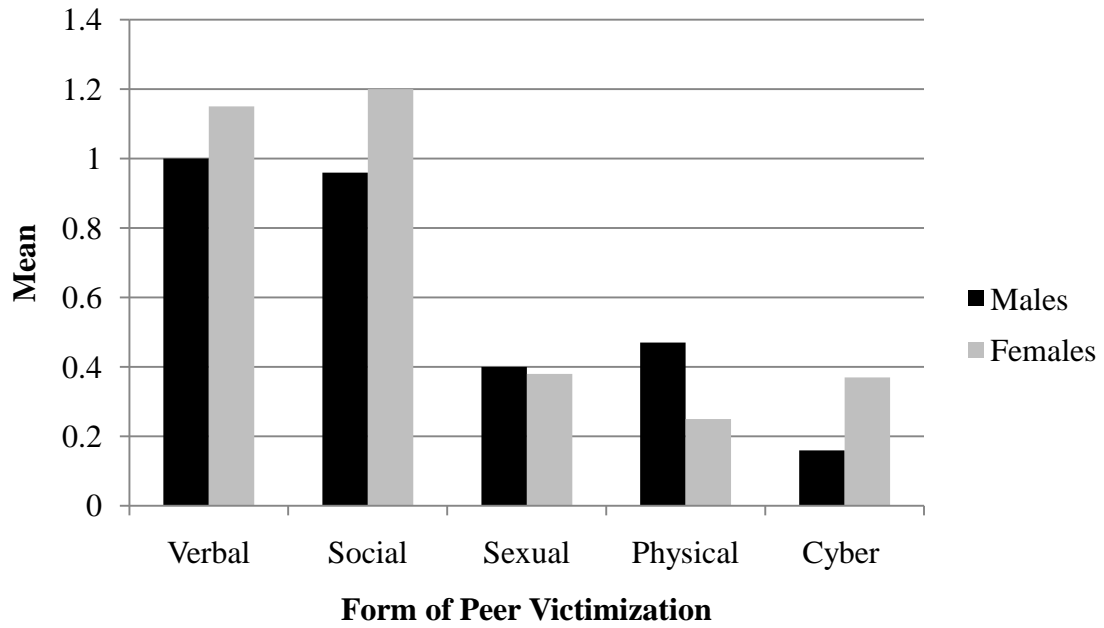


Figure 4. Mean levels for each form of self-reported peer victimization experienced in high school according to sex of participant.

compared to sexual peer victimization. In addition, females recalled experiencing more sexual peer victimization than physical peer victimization in high school, whereas males recalled experiencing more sexual peer victimization than cyber peer victimization in high school (see Appendix L Table L2 for statistics).

Although the main effect of sex was not significant, the interaction was further examined by comparing males' and females' experiences of each form of peer victimization (see Figure 4).

The results of the independent samples t-tests suggested that males recalled experiencing higher levels of physical peer victimization than females, whereas females recalled experiencing higher levels of cyber peer victimization than males. These post hoc analyses did not reveal significant sex differences in recalling experiences of verbal, social, and sexual peer victimization (see Appendix L Table L3 for statistics).

A one-way MANOVA examining differences among the three levels of social acceptance in self-reported experiences of each form of peer victimization in high school revealed a multivariate effect of peer victimization, Pillai's Trace = .69, $F(4, 229) = 131.63$, $p < .001$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .70$ (see Appendix M Table M1 for statistics). A between-subjects effect of social acceptance was also revealed, $F(2, 232) = 25.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$. These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between form of peer victimization and social acceptance, Pillai's Trace = .37, $F(8, 460) = 13.13$, $p < .001$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .19$.

The interaction was first examined by conducting five one-way ANOVAs to examine differences among the levels of social acceptance for each form of peer victimization separately (see Figure 5). These analyses detected reliable differences among social acceptance levels for experiencing verbal, social, and sexual peer victimization in high school but not for physical or cyber peer victimization (see Appendix M Table M2 for statistics). A general pattern emerged

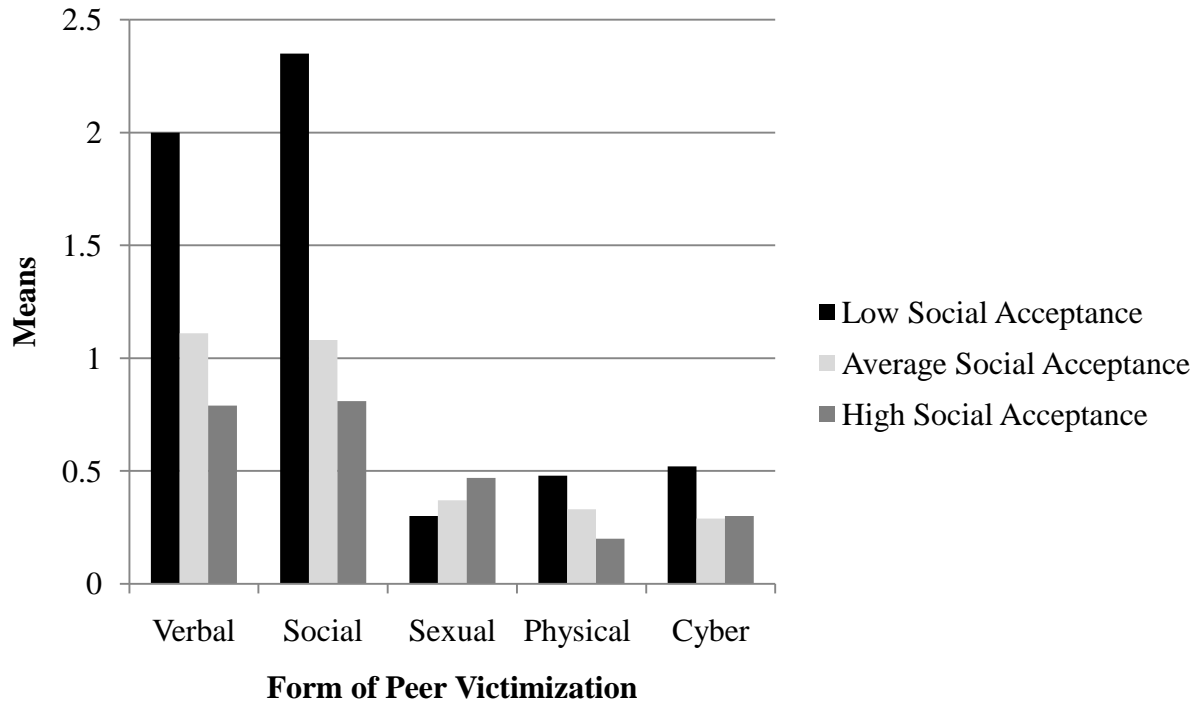


Figure 5. Mean levels for each form of self-reported peer victimization experienced in high school according to level of self-reported social acceptance.

for verbal and social peer victimization with post hoc analyses suggesting that participants who rated themselves as being not well-liked in high school were more likely to experience these forms of peer victimization than participants with average and high social acceptance. Also participants with average social acceptance were more likely to recall experiencing higher levels of these forms of peer victimization than those who had high social acceptance. In contrast, post hoc analyses for sexual peer victimization suggest that participants with high social acceptance recalled experiencing more sexual peer victimization than those with average and low social acceptance (see Appendix M Table M3 for statistics).

The interaction between social acceptance and peer victimization was further examined by comparing sexual peer victimization with each form of nonsexual peer victimization at each level of social acceptance separately using paired sample *t*-tests (see Figure 5). Participants recalled higher levels of verbal and social peer victimization in high school than sexual peer victimization for all three levels of social acceptance. In addition, participants who rated themselves as being well-liked in high school recalled experiencing more sexual peer victimization than both physical and cyber peer victimization (see Appendix M Table M4 for statistics).

Sex, popularity, and gender role conformity. Of interest in Study 2 was whether gender role conformity and social status (i.e., social acceptance, popularity) were related to different forms of peer victimization. As already described, there was considerable overlap between the two different indices of social status assessed in this study. Thus, only the two-item index of popularity was included in the analyses predicting experiences of different forms of peer victimization. Popularity was deemed to be the more suitable construct for inclusion given that perceived popularity is more strongly associated with perceived power than social acceptance

during adolescence (Vaillancourt et al., 2010), likely because perceived popularity is valued more than peer acceptance during adolescence (Brown, 1990).

Hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted to determine whether retrospective accounts of experiencing different forms of peer victimization in high school were predicted by self-reported gender role conformity and popularity. Each form of peer victimization (physical, verbal, social, cyber, sexual) was evaluated on its own (5 regressions). Table 15 shows the pattern of variable entry on each step for the five regressions. Sex is a categorical variable that was dummy coded such that “0” represented males and “1” represented females. Continuous variables for gender role conformity and popularity were centred on their respective grand means to avoid problems of multicollinearity between variables of an interaction term (Aiken & West, 1991). The products of these centered variables were entered as interaction terms on Steps 2 and 3 for each regression analysis.

In predicting self-reported experiences of physical, verbal, social, and cyber peer victimization in high school, only the variables on Step 1 account for a significant portion of the variance (see Table 16 and Appendix N Table N1 for additional statistics). The addition of interactions terms on Steps 2 and 3 did not increase the variance accounted for in recalling experiences of nonsexual forms of peer victimization. The standardized beta weights suggest that one’s sex and self-reported popularity in high school uniquely predicted recalled experiences of physical peer victimization (see Table 16 and Appendix N Table N1 for additional statistics). Specifically, in recalling high school experiences, higher levels of physical peer victimization were associated with being male and being less popular. The standardized beta weights for predicting verbal peer victimization suggest that self-reported popularity in high school uniquely predicted experiencing verbal peer victimization in high school such that higher levels of verbal

Table 15

Variables on each Step of Hierarchical Regression

| Regression steps | Variables |
|------------------|--|
| Step 1 | Sex SR popularity in high school SR gender conformity in high school |
| Step 2 | Sex X SR popularity SR popularity X SR gender conformity |
| Step 3 | Sex X SR popularity X SR gender conformity |

Note. SR = self-reported.

Table 16

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Experiences of Peer Victimization

| Variables | | Physical | Verbal | Social | Cyber | Sexual |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|----------|---------|---------|-------|--------|
| Step 1 | R^2 | .10*** | .19*** | .26*** | .03* | .05* |
| | $F(3,243)$ | 9.02 | 18.33 | 28.92 | 2.78 | 2.83 |
| | Sex ^a (β) | -.16* | -.10 | .13* | .16* | -.02 |
| | SR popularity (β) | -.23*** | -.41*** | -.49*** | <-.01 | .20** |
| | SR gender conform (β) | -.11 | -.08 | -.07 | -.04 | .03 |
| Step 2 | ΔR^2 | < .01 | < .01 | .02 | .01 | .03* |
| | $F(3,240)$ | 0.26 | 0.04 | 2.10 | 0.50 | 2.66 |
| | Sex (β) | | | | | -.10 |
| | SR pop. (β) | | | | | .17 |
| | SR gender conf. (β) | | | | | .34* |
| | Sex X SR pop. (β) | | | | | .01 |
| | Sex X SR gender conf. (β) | | | | | -.34** |
| | Pop X SR gender conf. (β) | | | | | -.01 |
| Step 3 | ΔR^2 | < .01 | < .01 | < .01 | .01 | .01 |
| | $F(1,239)$ | 0.27 | 0.03 | 0.02 | 2.07 | 2.01 |

Note. SR = self-reported. Pop. = popularity. Gender conf. = gender conformity.

^a Boys = 0 and Girls = 1

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

peer victimization were associated with lower perceived popularity in high school (see Table 16 and Appendix N Table N2 for additional statistics). The standardized beta weights for social peer victimization suggest that one's sex and self-reported popularity uniquely predicted experiences of social peer victimization (see Table 16 and Appendix N Table N3 for additional statistics). Thus higher levels of experiencing social victimization in high school were associated with being female and being less popular. The standardized beta weights for cyber peer victimization suggested that one's sex uniquely predicted recalling experiences of cyber peer victimization in high school such that higher levels of cyber peer victimization were associated with being female (see Table 16 and Appendix N Table PN for additional statistics).

In predicting self-reported experiences of sexual peer victimization in high school, Step 1 accounted for a significant portion of the variance (see Table 16 and Appendix N Table N5 for additional statistics). The addition of 2-way interactions on Step 2 also increased the variance accounted for in recalling experiences of sexual peer victimization but the addition of the 3-way interaction term on Step 3 did not increase the variance accounted for in experiences of sexual peer victimization. The standardized beta weights Step 2 suggested that self-reported gender conformity and the interaction between sex and gender conformity uniquely predicted experiencing sexual peer victimization in high school (see Table 16 and Appendix N Table N5 for additional statistics). Higher levels of experiencing sexual victimization in high school were associated with being more gender role conforming but this main effect was qualified by an interaction between sex and gender role conformity.

Aiken and West's (1991) recommendations of conducting simple slopes tests were followed to interpret all significant interaction terms. An univariate test of the interaction between sex and gender role conformity suggests that higher levels of experiencing sexual peer

victimization in high school were associated with being more gender conforming for males ($b = .11, p = .01$) but a similar relationship was not detected for females ($b = -.04, p = .17$).

Comparing perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization.

Sex and social acceptance. To replicate the findings reported in Study 1 on perpetrations of different forms of peer victimization as a function of sex and social acceptance, two separate repeated measures MANOVAs were conducted: (1) 2 (sex: female and male) with 5 forms of peer victimization, and (2) 3 (social acceptance: low, average, and high) with 5 forms of peer victimization (see Appendix O Table O1 and Appendix P Table P1, respectively). Similar to examining experiences of peer victimization, a 2 (sex) X 3 (social acceptance) repeated measures MANOVA with the 5 forms of peer victimization was not possible given a very small n within 1 of the 6 cells of the design (i.e., males with low social acceptance). Again, Pillai's Trace criterion was reported for multivariate tests because the sample sizes for each cell were unequal and the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was violated (Box's M was significant for each MANOVA). The one-way MANOVA examining sex differences in self-reported perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization in high school revealed a multivariate effect of form of peer victimization, Pillai's Trace = .53, $F(4, 242) = 69.07, p < .001, \text{est } \eta^2 = .53$. This main effect was qualified by an interaction between sex and the form of peer victimization, Pillai's Trace = .12, $F(4, 242) = 8.07, p < .001, \text{est } \eta^2 = .12$. The main effect of sex did not reach significance (see Appendix O Table O1 for statistics).

The interaction between sex and form of peer victimization was examined by comparing sexual peer victimization with nonsexual forms of peer victimization for males and females separately using paired sample t -tests (see Figure 6). These post hoc analyses revealed that both

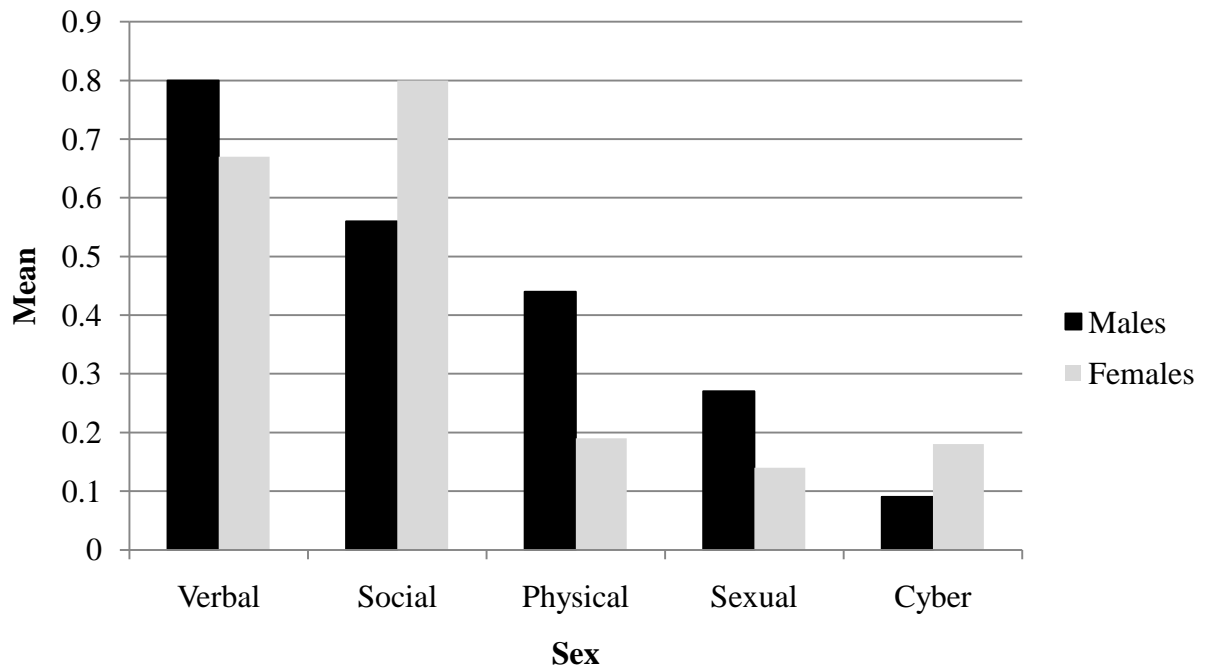


Figure 6. Mean levels for each form of self-reported peer victimization perpetrated in high school according to sex of participant.

males and females recalled perpetrating higher levels of verbal and social peer victimization when compared to sexual peer victimization. Males also reported that in high school they perpetrated more physical than sexual peer victimization but perpetrated more sexual than cyber peer victimization (see Appendix O Table O2 for statistics).

Although the main effect of sex was not significant, the interaction was further examined by comparing males' and females' perpetrations of each form of peer victimization (see Figure 6). The results of the independent samples t-tests suggest that males recalled perpetrating higher levels of physical and sexual peer victimization than females, whereas females recalled perpetrating higher levels of social and cyber peer victimization than males. These post hoc analyses did not reveal significant sex differences in recalling perpetrations of verbal peer victimization (see Appendix O Table O3 for statistics).

A one-way MANOVA examining differences among the three levels of social acceptance in self-reported perpetrations of different forms of peer victimization in high school revealed a multivariate effect of form of peer victimization, Pillai's Trace = .53, $F(4, 229) = 64.41$, $p < .001$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .53$. This main effect was qualified by a marginally significant interaction between form of peer victimization and social acceptance, Pillai's Trace = .06, $F(8, 460) = 1.77$, $p = .081$, $\text{est } \eta^2 = .03$. The main effect for social acceptance was not significant (see Appendix P Table P1 for statistics).

Given the interaction between form of peer victimization and social acceptance did not reach significance, only the multivariate effect of form of peer victimization was examined further (see Appendix P Table P2 for statistics). Pairwise comparisons suggest that participants were more likely to recall perpetrating more verbal when compared to perpetrating physical, cyber, and sexual peer victimization (see Figure 7). Similarly, they recalled perpetrating more

social peer victimization when compared to perpetrating physical, cyber and sexual peer victimization.

Sex, popularity, and gender role conformity. It was also of interest in Study 2 to determine whether gender role conformity and popularity were related to retrospective accounts of perpetrating different forms of peer victimization. As described in predicting retrospective experiences of peer victimization, the analyses for predicting perpetrations of different forms of peer victimization examined social status in terms of popularity rather than both indices of social status (i.e. social acceptance and popularity) because of the high correlation between recalled popularity and social acceptance. Hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted to determine whether retrospective accounts of perpetrating sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization were predicted by self-reported gender role conformity and popularity. Once again each form of peer victimization (physical, verbal, social, cyber, sexual) was evaluated on its own (5 regressions) using the same pattern of variable entry delineated in Table 15.

In predicting self-reported perpetrations of physical peer victimization in high school, a significant portion of the variance was accounted for by variables on Step 1, and the addition of interaction terms on Step 2 (see Table 17 and Appendix Q Table Q1 for additional statistics). The addition of interactions terms on Step 3 did not produce a significant increment in variance accounted for. On Step 2, the standardized beta weights suggest that sex, popularity, and the interaction between sex and popularity uniquely predicted perpetrating physical peer victimization high school. It appears that higher levels of perpetrating physical peer victimization in high school were associated with being male and being popular but these main effects were qualified by an interaction between these variables.

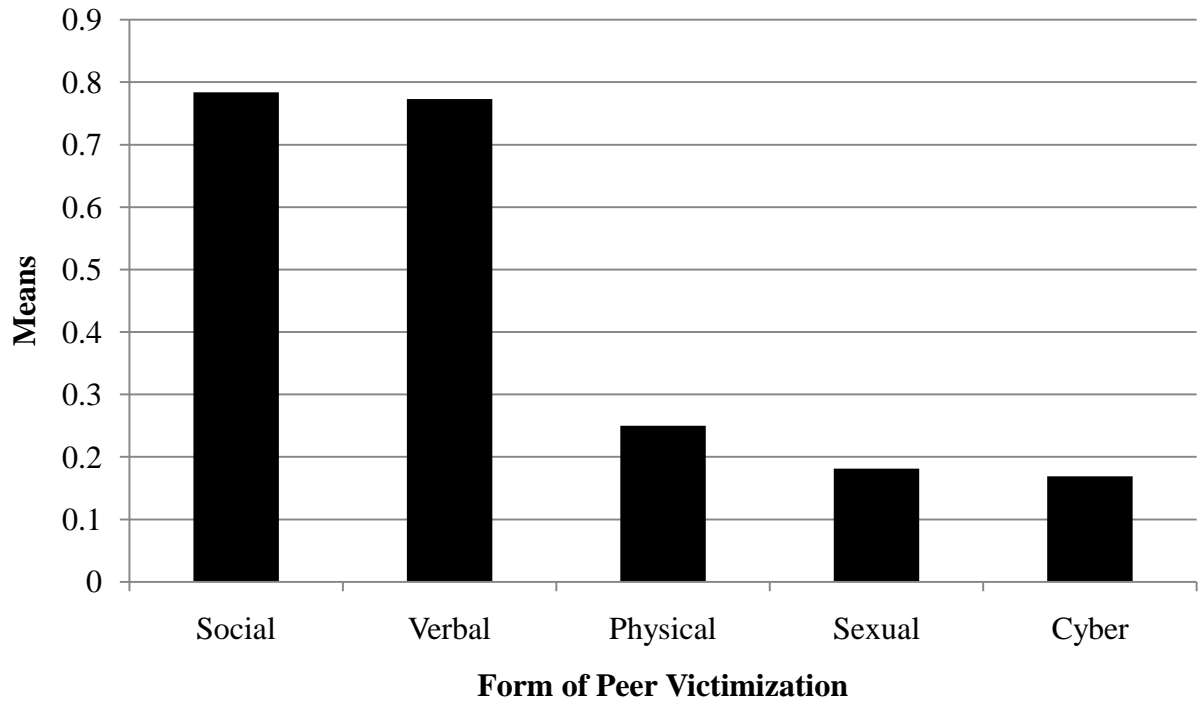


Figure 7. Mean levels for each form of self-reported peer victimization perpetrated in high school.

Table 17

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Perpetrations of Peer Victimization

| | Variables | Physical | Verbal | Social | Cyber | Sexual |
|--------|-----------------------------------|----------|---------|--------|-------|--------|
| Step 1 | R^2 | .08*** | .04* | .06** | .02 | .11*** |
| | $F(3,243)$ | 6.64 | 3.28 | 5.22 | 1.95 | 9.53 |
| | Sex ^a (β) | -.18** | -.03 | .25*** | | -.20** |
| | SR popularity (β) | < -.01 | < -.01 | < -.01 | | .21*** |
| | SR gender conform (β) | -.15* | -.19** | -.19** | | -.08 |
| Step 2 | ΔR^2 | 0.03* | 0.07*** | .02 | .01 | .02 |
| | $F(3,240)$ | 0.28 | 6.20 | 2.05 | 0.70 | 2.16 |
| | Sex (β) | -.19* | -.16* | | | |
| | SR pop. (β) | .27 | -.18 | | | |
| | SR gender conf. (β) | -.04 | .30* | | | |
| | Sex X SR pop. (β) | -.32* | -.16 | | | |
| | Sex X SR gender conf. (β) | -.15 | -.52** | | | |
| | Pop X SR gender conf. (β) | .03 | -.06 | | | |
| Step 3 | ΔR^2 | < .01 | < .01 | < .01 | < .01 | < .01 |
| | $F(1,239)$ | 0.27 | 0.12 | 0.26 | 0.55 | 0.20 |

Note. SR = self-reported. Pop. = popularity. Gender conf. = gender conformity.

^a Boys = 0 and Girls = 1

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The interaction was further examined by testing the significance of the simple slopes for male and females. These analyses suggest that for males, perpetrating higher levels of physical victimization during high school was associated with seeing oneself as being more popular ($b = .12, p = .04$). In contrast, the link between physical victimization and popularity was not significant for females ($b = -.04, p = .24$).

In predicting self-reported perpetrations of verbal peer victimization in high school, a significant portion of the variance was accounted for by variables on Step 1, and the addition of the 2-way interactions on Step 2 (see Table 17 and Appendix Q Table Q2 for additional statistics). The addition of 3-way interactions on Step 3 did not increase the variance accounted for in predicting perpetrations of verbal peer victimization. The standardized beta weights on Step 2 suggest that sex, self-reported gender role conformity, and the interaction between sex and self-reported gender role conformity in high school uniquely predicted perpetrating verbal peer victimization. Higher levels of perpetrating verbal peer victimization in high school were associated with being male and more gender role conforming but these main effects were qualified by the interaction between sex and gender role conformity.

Further examination of this interaction suggests that for females, perpetrating verbal peer victimization during high school was predicted by being less gender role conforming ($b = -.25, p < .001$). Although the direction of the association went in the opposite direction for males (greater gender role conformity corresponding to greater verbal peer victimization), the magnitude of this connection was not statistically significant ($b = .09, p = .22$).

In predicting self-reported perpetrations of social peer victimization in high school, only the variables on Step 1 accounted for a significant portion of the variance, (see Table 17 and Appendix Q Table Q3 for additional statistics). The addition of interaction terms on Steps 2 and

3 did not increase the variance accounted for in perpetrations of social peer victimization in high school. The standardized beta weights suggest that one's sex and gender conformity uniquely predicted perpetrating social peer victimization in high school such that higher levels of perpetrating social peer victimization were associated with being female and being less gender conforming. The variables of interest did not significantly predict retrospective accounts of perpetrating cyber peer victimization (see Table 17).

In predicting self-reported perpetrations of sexual peer victimization in high school, the variables on Step 1 accounted for a significant portion of the variance (see Table 17 and Appendix Q Table Q4 for additional statistics). The addition of interaction terms on Step 2 was marginally significant in predicting perpetrations of sexual peer victimization and the addition of interaction terms on Step 3 did not increase the variance accounted for in perpetrations of sexual peer victimization in high school. Given that the predictors on Step 2 did not account for a significant portion of the variance in predicting perpetrations of sexual peer victimization, only the predictors on Step 1 were interpreted. The standardized beta weights on Step 1 showed that sex and self-reported popularity uniquely predict perpetrating sexual peer victimization in high school. Higher levels of perpetrating sexual peer victimization were associated with being male and being popular.

Predicting psychosocial adjustment with experiences of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. Three separate hierarchical multiple regressions were conducted to determine whether different indices of negative psychosocial adjustment are more strongly predicted by experiencing sexual or nonsexual forms of peer victimization. The three indices of psychosocial adjustment included self-esteem, depressed affect, and loneliness. Sex and centred variables for popularity, gender conformity, and each form of peer victimization were entered on

the first step. Interaction terms between sex and each form of peer victimization were entered on the second step (see Table 18) although Step 2 was not significant in predicting any of the three indices of psychosocial functioning.

Bivariate correlations were computed to examine the zero-order connections between self-esteem and the predictor variables of interest in including sex, popularity, gender conformity, as well as sexual and nonsexual victimization. Self-esteem in emerging adulthood was correlated with sex, self-reported popularity in high school, and experiences of physical, verbal, and social peer victimization in high school (see Table 19 and Appendix R Table R1 for additional statistics). In predicting self-esteem in emerging adulthood, the variables on Steps 1 accounted for a significant portion of the variance, but the addition of the interaction terms on Step 2 was not significant. On Step 1, the standardized beta weights revealed that sex and popularity uniquely predicted participants' self-esteem in emerging adulthood (see Table 19). Higher levels of self-reported self-esteem in emerging adulthood were associated with being female and seeing oneself as more popular in high school.

An examination of the bivariate correlations between depressed affect and the predictor variables of interest reveal that depressed affect in emerging adulthood was correlated with sex, self-reported popularity in high school, and experiences of physical, verbal, social, and cyber peer victimization in high school (see Table 19 and Appendix R Table R2 for additional statistics). In predicting depressed affect in emerging adulthood, only the variables on Step 1 accounted for a significant portion of the variance. The addition of interaction terms on Step 2 did not increase the variance accounted for in predicting depressed affect in emerging adulthood. The standardized beta weights suggest that sex and experiences of social peer victimization in high school uniquely predicted depressed affect in emerging adulthood such that higher levels of

Table 18

Variables on each Step of Hierarchical Regression Predicting Psychosocial Adjustment

| Regression steps | Variables |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Step 1 | Constant |
| | Sex |
| | Popularity |
| | Gender Conformity |
| | Physical PV |
| | Verbal PV |
| | Social PV |
| | Cyber PV |
| | Sexual PV |
| Step 2 | Sex X Physical PV |
| | Sex X Verbal PV |
| | Sex X Social PV |
| | Sex X Cyber PV |
| | Sex X Sexual PV |

Table 19

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Psychosocial Adjustment

| Variables | | Self-Esteem | Depressed Affect | Loneliness |
|-----------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------|
| Step 1 | R^2 | .11*** | .14*** | .14*** |
| | $F(8,248)$ | 3.63 | 4.69 | 4.97 |
| | Sex | (<i>r</i>) .14* | .17** | .09 |
| | | (β) .15* | .15* | .09 |
| | SR Popularity | (<i>r</i>) .27** | -.20** | -.34** |
| | | (β) .26*** | -.07 | -.20 |
| | SR Gender Conformity | (<i>r</i>) .12 | .02 | -.03 |
| | | (β) .05 | -.01 | -.03 |
| | Physical PV | (<i>r</i>) -.14* | .15*** | .11 |
| | | (β) -.05 | .08 | .01 |
| | Verbal PV | (<i>r</i>) -.14* | .28** | .22** |
| | | (β) .02 | .10 | .07 |
| | Social PV | (<i>r</i>) -.17** | .30** | .26** |
| | | (β) -.03 | .15 | .11 |
| | Cyber PV | (<i>r</i>) -.06 | .16* | -.04 |
| | | (β) -.08 | .04 | -.12 |
| | Sexual PV | (<i>r</i>) .02 | .09 | -.04 |
| | | (β) < -.01 | .05 | .01 |
| Step 2 | ΔR^2 | .03 | .03 | .03 |
| | $F(5, 223)$ | 1.68 | 1.73 | 1.45 |

Note. SR = self-reported.

^a Boys = 0 and Girls = 1.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

depressed affect in emerging adulthood were associated with being female and recollections of high school social peer victimization, although the latter link was only marginally significant.

The zero-order connections between feelings of loneliness and the predictor variables indicate that loneliness in emerging adulthood was correlated with popularity and experiences of verbal and social peer victimization in high school (see Table 19 and Appendix R Table R3 for additional statistics). In predicting loneliness in emerging adulthood, the variables on Step 1 accounted for a significant portion of the variance, but not the interaction terms added on Step 2. On Step 1, the standardized beta weights suggest that emerging adults' level of loneliness is uniquely predicted by retrospective accounts of being less popular in high school.

Summary of findings in relation to hypotheses. A number of analyses were conducted both to test hypotheses and build on existing research and Study 1. Table 20 summarizes the key findings as they relate to the hypotheses proposed for this study.

Discussion

The goal of Study 2 was to expand on findings reported in Study 1 by exploring a theoretical framework for understanding sexual peer victimization during adolescence and by examining how different experiences of victimization relate to psychosocial well-being. Prevalence and frequency of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization occurring in high school were examined in Study 2. In addition, however, this study also moved beyond describing the phenomenon and attempted to develop an understanding of potential mechanisms that may explain why sexual peer victimization occurs in adolescence. Of specific interest were the constructs of social status and gender role development. Study 2 made use of emerging adults' retrospective accounts of peer victimization in high school, along with self-reported social status

Table 20

Hypotheses and Related Findings

| | Hypotheses | |
|------------------------|--|---|
| | Experiencing Victimization | Perpetrating Victimization |
| Sex differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual: Males > females (Not supported: Males \approx females); \uparrow sexual PV related to being a male (Partially supported: \uparrow sexual PV related to being a gender role conforming male) • Physical: Males > females (Supported); \uparrow physical PV related to being a male (Supported) • Verbal: Males > females (Not supported: Males \approx females); \uparrow verbal PV related to being a male (Not supported) • Social: Females > males (Not supported: Females \approx males); \uparrow social PV related to being female (Supported) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual: Males > females (Supported); \uparrow sexual PV related to being a male (Supported) • Physical: Males > females (Supported); \uparrow physical PV related to being a male (Not supported) • Verbal: Males > females (Not supported: Males \approx females); \uparrow verbal PV related to being a male (Not supported: for females, \uparrow PV related to being \downarrow gender role conforming) • Social: Females > males (Supported); \uparrow social PV related to being a female (Supported) |
| Social acceptance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All forms of PV: Lo > Hi (Partially supported; Verbal & social: Lo > average > hi; Sexual: Hi > average & lo) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All forms of PV: Hi \approx lo > average (Not supported: Hi \approx average \approx lo) |
| Popularity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \uparrow sexual PV related to \downarrow popularity (Not supported) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \uparrow sexual PV related to \uparrow popularity (Supported) |
| Gender role conformity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \uparrow sexual PV related to \downarrow gender role conformity (Not supported: \uparrow PV related to being a gender role conforming male) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \uparrow sexual PV related to \uparrow gender role conformity (Not supported) |

| | Experiencing Victimization | Perpetrating Victimization |
|--|--|---|
| Connections with psychosocial function | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ↑ sexual, physical, & verbal PV related to ↓ self-esteem, ↑ depressed affect, & ↑ loneliness in emerging adulthood (Partially supported: Forms of PV not predictive but zero-order correlations revealed that ↑ physical, verbal, & social PV related to ↓ self-esteem; ↑ nonsexual forms of PV related to ↑ depressed affect; and ↑ loneliness related to ↑ verbal & social PV) | |
| | Summary of Related Findings | |
| Differences in forms of PV | <p><i>By Sex:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males: physical, verbal, & social > sexual; sexual > cyber • Females: verbal & social > sexual; sexual > physical <p><i>By Social Acceptance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lo, Average, & Hi: Verbal & social > sexual • Hi: Sexual > Physical & Cyber <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ↑ physical PV related to being ↓ popular • ↑ social PV related to being ↓ popular | <p><i>By Sex:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Males: physical, verbal & social > sexual; sexual > cyber • Females: verbal & social > sexual <p><i>By Social Acceptance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lo, Average, & Hi: Verbal & social > sexual • Average: Physical > sexual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ↑ social PV related to being ↓ gender role conforming |

(i.e., social acceptance and popularity) and gender role conformity in high school, and current psychosocial adjustment (i.e., self-esteem, depressed affect, and loneliness).

In terms of the prevalence of different forms of peer victimization that young adults recalled experiencing and perpetrating during adolescence, sexual peer victimization was the most pervasive form of peer victimization occurring in high school (i.e., happened at least once over the course of attending high school) and cyber peer victimization seemed to be the least prevalent. Although sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization have rarely been compared in previous research, these findings are similar to what was revealed in Study 1. Replicating Study 1 findings with these retrospective accounts of peer victimization in high school provides some evidence to support the contention that retrospective accounts of peer victimization are reliable. In addition, these similar findings further highlight how prevalent sexual peer victimization is in high school.

The prevalence of *specific* unwanted sexual behaviours was also examined given that the focus of this program of research is sexual peer victimization. At the extremes of recalling experiences and perpetrations of different forms of sexual peer victimization, very few males and females recalled being forced or forcing someone to engage in unwanted sexual behaviours (1% or less) which is consistent with other studies that have examined the prevalence of specific type of sexual peer victimization (e.g., AAWU, 1993; Lacasse et al., 2003; Stratton & Backes, 1997). Yet nearly half of the males recalled being the target of peers' sexual jokes and comments (perpetrated mainly by other boys in their high school) and over half recalled making sexual comments about peers' bodies (victimizing mainly girls in their high school), whereas females were most likely to recall having peers make sexual comments about their bodies (perpetrated mainly by boys in their high school) and were most likely to recall making sexual comments

about peers' clothing (victimizing mainly other girls in their high school). The fact that there was some convergence in females' and males' recollections of sexual peer victimization in high school speaks to the veracity of emerging adults' retrospective accounts of specific types of sexual peer victimization.

In addition, Study 2 findings further build on both Study 1 and existing research by examining the specific type of sexual peer victimization occurring between same- and other-sex peers. In this study, for many of the types of sexual peer victimization, both males and females were most likely to identify other-sex peers as the perpetrators of sexual peer victimization that they experienced in high school, and they were also most likely to report sexually victimizing other-sex peers while in high school. While McMaster and colleagues (2002) similarly found that girls perpetrate more other-sex sexual peer victimization, they also found that boys perpetrated more same-sex sexual victimization than girls. However, for certain behaviours assessed in this study, males and females both recalled victimizing and being victimized by same-sex peers. For example, males identified other boys in high school as being the main perpetrators of homophobic name-calling and also admitted to victimizing other boys in high school by maliciously calling them gay which is a consistent finding in both this program of research and existing research (e.g., AAWU; McMaster et al, 2002; Stratton & Backes, 1997). Although females did not identify other girls in high school as the main perpetrators of any type of sexual peer victimization assessed in this study, they did report that they were most likely to victimize other girls in high school by making sexual comment about girls' clothing. In addition, males and females recalled both girls and boys in their high school spreading sexual rumours about them and they also reported victimizing both girls and boys in their high schools by spreading sexual rumours. The variability in males' and females' recalled experiences and

perpetrations of sexual peer victimization must be taken into consideration when deciphering the results obtained in this study. Indeed an aggregate score for sexual peer victimization was created in assessing retrospective accounts of this form of peer victimization, yet it is clear that not all types of sexual peer victimization are prevalent and certain types of these unwanted behaviours appear to vary in terms of same- and other-sex peer interactions.

Although sexual peer victimization does appear to be prevalent in high school in terms of the percentage of emerging adults who recalled experiencing and perpetrating this form of peer victimization at least once while in high school, the mean levels for sexual peer victimization suggest that they were not repeatedly victimized by their peers or victimizing their peers in this manner. Again the use of an aggregate score created for sexual peer victimization has to be cautiously interpreted given the variability across the items used to assess this form of peer victimization. Being cognizant of this limitation, sexual peer victimization was compared to nonsexual forms of peer victimization to examine sex differences and explore the theoretical framework that includes the role of social status (i.e., social acceptance and popularity) and conformity to peers' expectations regarding gender appropriate behaviour.

In comparing sexual peer victimization to nonsexual forms of peer victimization, most hypothesized sex-differences revealed in Study 1 were similarly detected in Study 2. As hypothesized, in comparison to females, males were found to report higher levels of experiencing and perpetrating physical peer victimization, and perpetrating higher levels of sexual peer victimization in high school. Similarly observed in Study 1, in comparison to males, females reported higher levels of perpetrating social peer victimization. Yet in contrast to what was revealed in Study 1, females in Study 2 recalled experiencing and perpetrating higher levels of cyber peer victimization than males. These sex differences were further evidenced in

predicting each form of peer victimization except for perpetrating cyber peer victimization. However results obtained from regression analyses further suggested that being a female was associated with recalling experiences of social peer victimization in high school, whereas being a male was associated with recalling perpetrations of verbal peer victimization. These retrospective accounts of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization during high school are for the most part consistent with developmental research with adolescents: Boys generally are the victims and perpetrators of physical peer victimization (Archer, 2004) and sexual peer victimization (Craig et al., 2001; McMaster et al., 2002), whereas girls generally are victims and perpetrators of social peer victimization (Crick et al., 2001) and cyber peer victimization (Barrett et al., 2010). Thus these findings replicate and build on existing developmental research in being one of the only empirical studies to compare sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization occurring in high school.

In further comparing forms of peer victimization for each sex, it was found that both males and females recalled experiencing and perpetrating higher levels of verbal and social peer victimization than sexual peer victimization. However, males recalled experiencing and perpetrating more sexual peer victimization than cyber peer victimization, whereas females recalled experiencing more sexual peer victimization than physical peer victimization. These findings may reflect the developmental changes associated with adolescents' aggressive strategies such that with social and cognitive maturity they are much more likely to use their verbal and social skills to harm their peer (Björkqvist et al., 1992). Cyber peer victimization may be found to be infrequent in this study because the emerging adults participating in this study perhaps did not have as widespread access to the technology that is currently available to adolescents today therefore making cyber victimization less relevant for at least some in this

cohort. Yet the low prevalence of cyber peer victimization revealed in both survey studies may reflect that most high schools restrict adolescents' access to cell phones and computers for personal use, which perhaps minimizes opportunities for cyber-bullying. The wording of the item used to assess cyber peer victimization does not tap into what is experienced and perpetrated outside of school.

A discussion of the problematic nature of assessing sexual peer victimization is also warranted due to the problems with current assessment tools of sexual peer victimization. As previously discussed, the items on the measure used in this study and most sexual peer victimization assessment tools cover an array of behaviours that vary in degree of severity (e.g., being called sexual names versus being forced to engage in unwanted sexual activity). As described in Study 1, it may be problematic to assess on-going frequency of sexual victimization by aggregating scores across these varied items (i.e., more infrequent behaviours may reduce the overall frequency score for sexual peer victimization). Improvements to existing measures of sexual peer victimization may address this limitation by testing for and creating subscales.

Some researchers have made attempts to categorize the items on measures of sexual peer victimization. For example, the AAUW (1993) sexual victimization questionnaire was developed to assess physical and nonphysical forms of sexual victimization. Murnen and Smolak (2000) identified visual, verbal, and physical peer sexual victimization. Roscoe and colleagues (1994) made the distinction between "assaultive" and "nonassaultive" types of sexual peer victimization, and a principal components analysis conducted by Lacasse and colleagues revealed two subscales that they labelled moderate and severe. In this study, correlations suggest overlap between sexual, physical and verbal peer victimization. Perhaps during adolescence, the verbally and physically aggressive strategies used in the context of peer groups do become more

sexualized. Indeed other developmental researchers like Craig and colleagues (2001) have argued that sexual peer victimization is a form of peer victimization that emerges in early adolescence as nonsexual forms of peer victimization become more sexualized with the onset of sexual maturation.

In this program of research, I have argued that there are other developmental factors associated with adolescent development that may help us explain sexual peer victimization during this developmental period. Specifically, I proposed a theoretical framework that addresses the culture of the peer group wherein adolescents use their social power to establish and maintain gender role norms by sexually victimizing those who violate these expectations. The current findings did not fully support the hypotheses that (1) high status, gender-conforming adolescents would be more likely than their peers to *perpetrate* sexual peer victimization and (2) low-status, gender-nonconforming adolescents would be more likely to be *targets* of sexual peer victimization.

Although individuals who were not well-liked in high school were at greater risk of experiencing verbal and social peer victimization when compared to well-liked individuals, it was the well-liked individuals who emerged at the greatest risk of experiencing sexual peer victimization. Similarly, when social status was assessed in terms of popularity rather than social acceptance, it was found that being less popular in high school predicted being verbally and socially victimized by peers in high school and also being physically victimized by peers. However, popularity was not predictive of retrospective accounts of sexual peer victimization in the full model. Extant literature on social status and nonsexual forms of peer victimization has documented the link between being rejected and being victimized by peers (see Rodkin & Hodges, 2003; Boivin, Hymel, & Hodges, 2001). Interestingly, the same link between lower

social status (both in terms of social acceptance and popularity) and higher levels of peer victimization that is sexual in nature was not detected in this study. In fact the reverse may be true at least with respect to believing one was well-liked in high school. Perhaps adolescents who are more socially visible are more readily targeted by sexually aggressive peers. Thus far no other empirical study has examined social status and sexual peer victimization so it would be important for future research to replicate this connection between being well-liked by peers and experiencing peer sexual victimization in high school.

In terms of perpetration, there were no significant differences among the different levels of social acceptance (i.e., being liked) but in predicting different forms of peer victimization it was revealed that emerging adults who saw themselves as being more popular in high school also reported greater perpetration of physical peer victimization (although this connection was only true for popular males) and greater perpetration of sexual peer victimization within the context of high school. Thus partial evidence supporting the hypothesis that adolescents with high social status sexually victimize their peers in high school was found in this study.

When taking into account gender role conformity in predicting sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization the picture becomes even more complex. In this study, being a gender conforming male was associated with being sexually victimized by peers in high school. It is possible that boys who embody the masculine gender norms (e.g., athletic) may be exposed to higher levels of sexual peer victimization because they are more attractive to females (i.e., targets of sexual comments about their bodies, being touched, pinched or grabbed in a sexual manner) and perhaps more sexually active (i.e., sexual rumours spread about them).

In predicting perpetrations of peer victimization, it was found that being less gender role conforming in high school predicted victimizing peers verbally for females, and being more gender role conforming in high school predicted victimizing peers socially.

The lack of support for hypotheses examining the underlying theoretical framework proposed in this program of research may be partially attributed to relying on retrospective accounts of popularity, gender role conformity, and experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization. Certainly the reliability and validity of retrospective accounts of peer victimization have been challenged and the use of retrospective accounts could be construed as a limitation. However, some researchers have found these recollections to be accurate and consistent over time (e.g., Brewin, Andrews, & Gotlib, 1993; Eslea & Rees, 2001). The fact that the findings reported in this study are for the most part consistent with existing research may also provide further proof of the veracity of retrospective accounts of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization.

Another limitation in this study is the sole use of self-reports, retrospective and current. Certainly self-reports are informative and useful in assessing peer victimization because an understanding of the subjective experiences of peer victimization is important (Juvonen, Nishina, & Graham, 2001). However, *peer-reported* popularity and gender role conformity would likely have been more informative in assessing the social hierarchy within existing adolescent peer groups and determining who is violating gender-related expectations of the peer group. An implicit assumption in identifying adolescents who violate gender-related expectations of the peer group is that we understand what adolescents' gender-related expectations are. A measure of gender role conformity was used in this study and the gendered characteristics described by this measure were assumed to be valued by adolescents based on existing literature. However,

the social construction of femininity and masculinity is highly context specific and therefore can be difficult to measure (Mahalik et al., 2003; Mahalik et al., 2005). Ideally, a researcher should first assess what feminine and masculine characteristics are important to a specific adolescent peer group and then have adolescents identify who exemplifies and violates these group norms. Ethnographic research suggests that the consequences of violating these gender norms during adolescence can take the form of sexual peer victimization perpetrated by high status, gender-conforming adolescents (e.g., Duncan, 1999; Eder & Parker, 1986). Moreover, being sexually victimized by peers has also been found to have a negative impact on one's psychosocial well-being (e.g., AAUW, 1993; Lee et al., 1996).

Of interest in the present study was whether emerging adults' psychosocial well-being could be tied to previous experiences of sexual and non-sexual victimization, gender conformity, and popularity. Only a small proportion of variability in self-esteem, depression, and loneliness (11 to 14%) could be accounted for by the variables of interest collected retrospectively.

Females appeared to be both higher in self-esteem and more depressed with sex remaining a strong predictor even when other variables were considered. Similarly, feeling popular in high school was connected to having a more positive sense of self and feeling less lonely years later. Interestingly, however, neither sexual nor nonsexual forms of peer victimization experienced in high school were uniquely predictive of psychosocial functioning in emerging adulthood. The presence of correlations at the bivariate level between recollected peer victimization, depression, loneliness and self-esteem seem to suggest that variability in psychosocial functioning measured in emerging adulthood may be tied to earlier experiences of nonsexual peer victimization in general (i.e., shared variance), rather than specific forms of sexual or nonsexual victimization. It is possible that given the high prevalence – low frequency nature of sexual peer victimization in

high school these occurrences become normalized in the context of adolescent peer groups in high school.

Despite some research that suggests that earlier experiences of peer victimization in childhood and adolescence do have long-term negative effects, other studies have not detected these links (see McDougall, Hymel, Vaillancourt, Trach, & Darwich, 2010 for a review). For example, Tritt and Duncan (1997) did not find that self-esteem varied between victims and non-victims of childhood experiences of peer victimization. Other researchers have found that poor childhood psychosocial functioning may account for the link between peer victimization and depression (e.g., Matsui, Kakuyama, Tsuzki, & Onglatco, 1996). McDougall and colleagues (2010) suggest that if youth are not already struggling with depression prior to being victimized, they may indeed recover from these experiences once removed from the context wherein the victimization occurs. The findings in the current study may suggest that this may be true for self-esteem and feelings of social isolation as well. Longitudinal research is needed that takes into account earlier psychosocial functioning, form of peer victimization experienced, and later well-being.

Although the variances accounted for by popularity and gender role conformity in predicting sexual and nonsexual peer victimization were small and relations between these variables were not always in the direction hypothesized, popularity and gender role conformity were associated with different forms of peer victimization as they occur in adolescence. The presence of these relationships may reflect identified limitations (e.g., retrospective data, measurement issues). Further research on adolescent sexual peer victimization should address the limitations described above to obtain a more accurate picture of social status and gender role conformity within the adolescent peer group. However, it is also possible that gender policing

(i.e., the use of social power to control and reinforce gender norms in the context of adolescent peer groups) may better explain nonsexual peer victimization than sexual peer victimization.

Study 3

The final study in this program of research was designed to attain a more in-depth account of peer victimization (particularly sexual peer victimization) during adolescence. Specifically, a small number of interviews were conducted with adolescents to better understand the role of social status and gender role conformity in sexual and nonsexual peer victimization. Study 3 complements the first two studies by having adolescents voice their accounts of why and how these behaviours occur in high school. Specifically, adolescents were asked about their thoughts and opinions on the prevalence of peer victimization in their schools particularly in relation to what is portrayed in the media (i.e., gender role conforming, high status adolescents sexually victimizing gender role nonconforming, low status adolescents). To further expand on the findings in the previous two studies, the adolescents participating in this interview portion were also asked to describe perpetrators and victims of peer victimization within different school contexts (elementary versus high school) and different peer relationships (same- versus other-sex peer interactions).

Although participants in Study 1 and 2 rated their own perpetrations and experiences of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization in high school, interviewees in Study 3 were not required to share personal accounts of peer victimization. By allowing responses to be at “arms-length” (i.e., not necessarily the experience or behaviour of the person being interviewed) it was hoped that participants would be encouraged to speak openly and candidly in their responses. Questions asked during the interviews were developed from the literature as well as through a review of the underlying goals of this program of research, namely to tap into

adolescents' perspectives on peer victimization during adolescence. Indeed the goal of the interviews was to gain a broader understanding of peer victimization during adolescence according to adolescents themselves in terms of (1) the form of peer victimization that is viewed as being most prevalent, (2) sex and age-related differences in peer victimization, (3) characteristics of perpetrators and victims, and (4) the extent to which the proposed theoretical framework (involving social status and gender conformity) is tenable.

Although questions used in the interviews were not based specifically on the results of the previous studies within this program of research (i.e., the question script was developed prior to the completion of Study 1 and 2 data analyses), experiences and insights shared by adolescents clearly build on the findings reported in these previous studies. The interview questions were designed to address the main hypothesis regarding gender policing wherein it is proposed that gender role conforming, high status popular adolescents sexually victimize gender role nonconforming, low status adolescents to reinforce gender role norms of adolescent peer culture. In addition, interviewing adolescents about their observations, thoughts, and opinions allowed for a more in-depth and broader understanding of peer victimization during adolescence that surveys are less likely to capture. Thus, using interviews to examine the overall research questions and gender policing hypothesis provided a unique but complementary perspective on adolescents' experiences of different forms of peer victimization.

This approach of using different designs to answer different questions within a program of research wherein one type of data (i.e., interviews) serves a complementary role to the primary data (i.e., survey) is an embedded design of mixed methods research. The variant of the embedded design used in this program of research is the correlational model in which qualitative data helps explain the workings of mechanisms assessed with quantitative data (Creswell &

Plano Clark, 2007). Indeed, adolescents' perspectives on peer victimization experienced during adolescence captured in these interviews do reveal interesting similarities and contradictions to what was found in the first two studies.

Method

Participants. A total of 14 adolescents (7 girls, 7 boys) from elementary and high schools in Saskatoon were interviewed for this study. The students interviewed included two adolescents in Grade 8 (same elementary school; 1 girl and 1 boy), two adolescents in Grade 9 (different high schools; 1 girl and 1 boy), two adolescents in Grade 10 (same school; 1 girl and 1 boy), and one boy in Grade 11 who attended the same school as the seven participating Grade 12 students (4 girls and 3 boys). In sum, the 14 students in Grades 8 to 12 came from four schools.

Data collection. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Based on the theoretical framework for this program of research, a set of questions was developed to obtain adolescents' viewpoints on peer victimization within their schools and determine if there is evidence of gender policing within adolescent peer groups (i.e., gender role conforming, high status adolescents sexually victimizing gender role nonconforming, low status adolescents). The interview questions were also intended to obtain adolescents' perspective on other aspects of peer victimization that were examined in the two previous studies such as prevalence (e.g., what do students perceive as the most prevalent form of peer victimization in their schools?), age-related changes (e.g., do students believe there are differences between younger and older students' experiences of peer victimization? And if so, why?), sex differences (e.g., do students perceive peer victimization perpetrated and experienced by girls and boys to differ in anyway? What occurs between same- and other-sex peers?), and characteristics associated with being a perpetrator and victim of peer victimization. The same questions were used in all interviews but

probes were posed as required during the interviews to encourage students to elaborate or clarify structured questions as needed (see Appendices S and T for a list of interview questions used for boys and girls, respectively).

Procedure. After receiving ethics approval from the university ethics board and the school division, visits to various schools in Saskatoon were made to recruit adolescents to participate in what was originally designed as a combined survey study plus interview study. Due to an extremely low number of returned parental consent forms, it was no longer feasible to conduct the survey element and, thus, this component was discontinued. Adolescents with parental consent to participate in the interview component were contacted and interviews were arranged and carried out at the participants' convenience. Adolescents outside of the school division were also recruited to participate in the interviews alone using a snowball procedure. Specifically, interested adolescents were provided with information packages that consisted of a letter describing the study and a parental consent form (see Appendix U) and were asked to pass along the invitation to others they thought might be interested in the study. When students themselves also provided assent to participate (see Appendix V), interviews were electronically recorded and later transcribed by a research assistant. Audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim but speech fillers (e.g., "uh", "uhm") were ignored.

Results and Discussion

Analysing data. Accuracy of transcribed interviews was reviewed by the principal investigator reading the transcripts while listening to recorded interviews. At this point any identifying names were changed to pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants. Although participants were encouraged to describe their general thoughts and opinions on peer victimization and instructed to not describe specific incidents wherein schools and other students

were named, occasionally interviewees used names in providing examples of peer victimization they had witnessed or participated in. In those cases where personal accounts were shared by interviewees, no abuse or severe peer victimization was described. In fact, these personalized accounts were often shared to highlight how some peer victimization is exchanged between peers in jest (e.g., making fun of friends but not to the point of causing distress).

The first step taken in analysing the interview data was to group interviewees' responses to each question asked during the interview. Text deemed relevant to the research questions was highlighted within each adolescent's response to each interview question. Once all the transcribed text was grouped according to structured interview questions, notes were made in comparing and contrasting the highlighted text.

The second step involved coding the data according to an organizational framework developed on the basis of the underlying research goals and questions (see Appendix W for outline of organizational framework). Key pieces of text from the transcripts were then sorted according to where they applied within the organizational framework. It was possible for an individual's response (or segment of a response) to appear in more than one place depending on whether it was considered relevant in answering more than one question. In addition, data were aggregated numerically for certain questions as appropriate (e.g., percentage of interviewees that responded in the affirmative to a direct yes/no question). The principal investigator and a second researcher reviewed the sorting of text within the organizational framework, as well as the interpretation of students' responses and discussed any differences in interpretations of coded interviews.

Findings derived from this analysis process are described below alongside interpretations. Direct quotes from participants are included where appropriate with modifications used only in cases where portions of the direct quote would compromise anonymity.

Describing accepted, rejected, and victimized adolescents. In an effort to create a more general profile of the social context in schools for these interviewees, students were asked to describe characteristics and behaviours that they associated with being well-liked, disliked, and victimized by peers in their school. A few adolescents suggested that the characteristics that made one well-liked were dependent on the social network that an individual belonged to (or wished to belong to). However some of the interviewees were able to describe specific characteristics that girls and boys had to possess to be well-liked in their school. Some female interviewees mentioned that being physically attractive was particularly important in order for girls to be well liked by peers (e.g., “have make-up” and “dress a certain way”). This is consistent with ethnographic work by Eder and Parker (1986) who found that physical attractiveness is highly valued in adolescent peer culture of girls. In the present study, boys in particular reported that girls’ attitudes are also important in being well-liked at school (e.g., “they’re really outgoing,” “just a little bit wicked,” “real confidence,” and “flirty...outgoing...comfortable with themselves”). This more positive perspective that boys had regarding the attitudes of well-liked girls was countered by one female participant who adopted a more negative position about well-liked girls (i.e., “they got really bad attitudes”). It seems that when girls display a certain attitude it garners boys’ attention and certainly during adolescence the pursuit of romantic relationships is an important developmental task (Brown 1990; Fering, 1999).

A few of the interviewed adolescents further explained that the qualities of well-liked girls were not necessarily just applicable to girls who were perceived as the popular girls in their school. Specifically, the well-liked girls included girls who were genuinely liked by other students alongside girls who were perceived as being popular but in some cases were in fact disliked by many students. Thus being well-liked appears to be connected to social status attained through perceived popularity but perceived popularity also linked to being disliked by peers, a feature that several interviewees described during the interview. This complex interplay between liking and status is discussed in greater detail below.

In describing the characteristics that well-liked boys possessed, most interviewees expressed that there was “nothing” specific that boys needed to display to be accepted by peers in their school. However, a few adolescents expressed that well-liked boys had to dress a certain way, “have to have a sense of humour,” and be comfortable with themselves. Interestingly, three interviewees indicated that conforming to stereotypes of masculinity were very important for boys to be well-liked. For example, one boy relayed a story of an adolescent boy who was both athletic and musically talented but due to pressure “to be popular” he chose participation in sports over being the lead in a musical. Eder and Parker (1986) have similarly found that athleticism was highly valued by adolescent boys. Indeed, according to some adolescents in this study, masculinity is synonymous with athleticism and physical appearance is also important. In turn, participant responses suggest that social status may be threatened if boys do not conform to these masculine stereotypes.

A girl in Grade 12: just like their masculinity kind of thing. Being, being like, yeah, just being like you know, being quarterback of the football team kind of thing... athletics is probably a big deal for them because it's like they get to show off kind of thing...I think appearance matters a lot more to guys. I actually, I really think appearance matters for them...academics too I think. Because if you're, well there's, that's kind of a line

because there's, there is a group of guys who are super smart and super athletic and are popular. And then there's the other group that's not on the athletics and not smart but they somehow seem to be popular too. It's, I think it's really all about your attitude and just like how people react to you really. Just kind of the power you have over people. I'm not really sure if it's a quality you can get easily. You learn how to do it.

A boy in Grade 12: you are like physically good looking or you like lift weights or something, then you're also in. Or if you like work in the shop or something like that, doing like metal work, then that's another way of being accepted. So you don't have to be all of them but if you have one of them at least it's like 'oh yeah, that's, that's a dude thing to do.' You like fishing, you like sports...It's the masculine stereotype. And so while there's guys who don't like stuff like that sometimes, like they'll like it but then some unmanly stuff, they'll hide that.

When interviewees were asked about what characteristics or behaviours they associated with adolescents who are not well-liked or at risk of being rejected by peers in their school, very few students had much to say. Those adolescents who did identify specific characteristics and behaviours suggested that girls who were "slutty," not comfortable with themselves, or "different" were most likely to be rejected by peers. In turn, boys who "who are not bright...lack commonsense," lack a sense of humour and are "a total jerk to people" were at greater risk of being rejected by peers. Gender role nonconformity was also identified as putting boys at greater risk of being rejected by peers by the Grade 12 boy who suggested that gender role conformity is important for boys to display to be accepted by peers. This young man also discussed how masculine stereotypes, while prevalent, are being challenged.

A boy Grade 12: some unmanly stuff, they'll hide that. And they usually only show it to their group of friends. And so sometimes they're singled out. But like, even times where people say of them "oh that guy must be gay" but they're far from it. You got one of their friends who's all jocky and stuff, they'll find out later that guy was gay. And it's not what you expect because it's, because of I guess the stereotype that's going on these days... But it's just a shock because it's your world crashing under you. Everything you realize, the stereotypes, it's not true.

Although not being well-liked by peers or being rejected by peers does not necessarily equate with being the target of peer victimization, peer rejection does place one at greater risk of

being victimized (Bierman, 2004; Hodges, Malone, & Perry, 1997). When interviewees were asked to describe girls and boys who are frequent targets of peer victimization, this set of interview questions produced more dialogue than when they were asked to describe students who are rejected by peers. Moreover, there is overlap in the descriptions of characteristics associated with being rejected by peers and victimized by peers. In fact, it seems that characteristics associated with being rejected may elicit negative reactions from peers (e.g., elementary boy described victimized boys as “they’re not that bright so they do stupid things to the wrong people...the more popular people.”). Also, in describing victimized boys, one interviewee suggested that some boys who were targets in elementary school suffer the same torment in high school because “they’re easy victims...they don’t feel they can stand up for themselves.” Another interviewee similarly has observed victimized boys “who aren’t like everyone else...they can’t or they won’t defend themselves.” Gender role nonconformity also made boys targets of peer victimization as discussed by one male interviewee (e.g., “don’t want to be like the bitch... certain type of persona about you that doesn’t allow not much weakness to show”). Although only mentioned by this one adolescent, this observation is consistent with the gender policing hypothesis in that gender role nonconforming boys (i.e., those showing weakness) may be targets of peer victimization (form of peer victimization was not specified). In addition, other interviewees suggested that being “cocky” and a “man-whore” also could make a boy a target of peer victimization.

Similarly for victimized girls, interviewees mentioned characteristics and behaviours that were reported in describing rejected girls (e.g., promiscuity and being different). Interviewees also mentioned that girls who displayed poor hygiene, did not wear fashionable clothing, were shy, or were socially awkward were also targets of peer victimization. One female interviewee

suggested that some victimized girls were targets of victimization within their *own* social network. Being victimized by one's apparent friends in certain social networks was raised by other interviewees during discussions of popularity (again discussed in greater detail below).

Boy or girl, adolescents were also believed to be targets of peer victimization if they displayed signs of experiencing poverty, were perceived by peers as being insecure, or were isolated from social networks. A few interviewees did not want to place blame on the targets of peer victimization but they did suggest that some victimized students behave in ways that elicit negative attention from peers (e.g., "I don't want to say that they bring it on themselves because they don't, but at the same time"). It seems that in some cases adolescents create situations that then become a source of entertainment as peers make fun of these individuals. Yet, a few interviewees argued that the perpetrators were not intentionally trying to hurt the target because they believe the remarks made to other students do not get back to the target.

Also some interviewees suggested that everyone is teased but acknowledged that odd behaviour and characteristics put some adolescents at higher risk of being teased and talked about, however, the individual's personality may play a role. For example, a cheerful person may laugh along with the teasing about their odd behaviour, but "oddies" who are more reserved or even deemed unapproachable can be the targets of more malicious teasing.

Possessing certain characteristics, or more specifically lacking certain peer-valued characteristics, may put some youth at higher-risk of being victimized by peers. Existing research on victimization in childhood suggests that physical attractiveness, affluence, intelligence, and athleticism are peer-valued characteristics that serve as moderators in the relationship between peer rejection and victimization (e.g., Due et al., 2009; LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002; Vaillancourt & Hymel, 2006). It appears that during adolescence gender –

related characteristics (e.g., physical beauty and athleticism), affluence, intelligence, prosociability, and sense of humour are peer-valued characteristics that moderate the relationship between rejection and victimization within adolescent peer groups.

Prevalence of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization. One of the major goals of this study was to have adolescents describe what form of peer victimization they believe is most prevalent in their schools. Some research suggests that sexual peer victimization is very pervasive in high school (AAWU, 1993; Fineran, 2002; Fineran & Bennett, 1998) but very few studies have compared sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization (see Felix & Mahon, 2006, for an exception) in order to make a relative determination. When sexual and nonsexual peer victimization have been compared in previous research, including two studies within this program of research, self-reports of the frequency of peer victimization are used to assess prevalence. Existing comparisons, then, are quantitatively based. In contrast, it is important to get a sense of what adolescents themselves see as salient forms of peer victimization. Accordingly, in this study, adolescents were asked to describe how students in their school harm one another (i.e., victimize peers).

Interestingly, a few students were very quick to point out that bullying is not a problem in their school but suggested that bullying was a problem in other schools, often identifying schools that were nearby. Although the adolescents did not perceive peer victimization to be severe in their own schools, they were all able to describe incidents of peer victimization in both general (i.e., what they commonly witnessed between students) and specific terms (i.e., detailed accounts of peer victimization that had occurred on school grounds). A few interviewees identified physical (e.g., pushing and hitting) and cyber peer victimization (e.g., threats on Facebook) as prevalent forms of peer victimization in their school, but most students described verbal (e.g.,

name-calling and teasing) and social peer victimization (e.g., social exclusion, gossiping, talking behind others' back) as the most common forms.

Interestingly, only two interviewees (out of 14) immediately referred to sexual peer victimization in response to describing how students harm one another in their school. However, when interviewees were further asked to describe the content of the peer victimization (i.e., what was said or done), two other adolescents indicated that these negative peer interactions were sexual in nature such as gossiping about students' presumed sexual activity and homophobic name-calling. Descriptions of sexual peer victimization were more readily provided when students were asked specifically about same- and other-sex peer victimization particularly peer victimization involving girls.

Students describing same-sex peer victimization among girls included accounts of verbal and social peer victimization. Both boys and girls indicated that girls in their schools often engaged in "name-calling" either in person or via Facebook. Moreover, the content of these verbal attacks were often sexual in nature (e.g., a boy in Grade 8: "Calling each other whores and stuff;" a girl in Grade 10: name-calling because of a "relationship with some other guy;" a boy in Grade 10: "calling each other names, like bad names...like a slut or something"). Similarly, social peer victimization among girls as described by the interviewees often revolved around girls' presumed sexual activities. The reason provided by students suggested that most girls victimize other girls because "they want attention," or they are "trying to steal their boyfriends." A few students associated this behaviour with trying to gain and maintain social power thus providing partial support for the hypothesis that adolescents with social power victimize peers and as already described this peer victimization can be sexual in nature.

A boy in Grade 9: like of the three preppy girls, there's one girl who actually calls the other ones fat. And they're friends. It's like "wow, you're so mean"...Making themselves feel better, by hurting someone else.

A boy in Grade 10: Try to get a rise out of them and then to make her and her friends feel powerful

A girl in Grade 10: Because they're insecure...need to feel superior to somebody

A boy in Grade 11: In the popular group, then because I think a lot of them make themselves feel good by saying other people are below you

A girl in Grade 12: they're all really insecure about themselves and they've clung to each other to kind of like, kind of mask that insecurity and, and then the only way to make themselves feel better is to be above other people and by doing that they just ignore them, to make them feel like they're more important

A girl in Grade 12: I think their group has that little pecking order where this person's the most popular and what not

A boy in Grade 12: it happens more often in the so-called popular girls or the ones that are beautiful and that stuff because they seem to be the ones who want to pull their reputation highest

A boy in Grade 12: I find it's more girls who like, are just part of that like popular group and they sort of do it to each other and become enemies or friends again

Although some interviewees reported that girls do not victimize boys, others did indicate that girls also verbally (e.g., "calling guys fat") and socially victimize boys (e.g., "whispering about guys"). Some students suggested girls tease boys but that these interactions were not malicious but done in the "name of fun" or to "flirt." One boy in Grade 9 reported that girls sexually touch boys but further suggested this was not malicious (e.g., "usually they're joking"). This description of female-to-male sexual peer victimization aligns with Roscoe and colleague's (2004) suggestion that perhaps girls' unwelcome sexual advances targeting boys is not really victimization because it is NOT perceived as threatening by boys. However, a few students described girls who sexually victimized boys. For example, a girl in Grade 12 reported that

some girls target a “low self-esteem guy” by sleeping with him and not talk to him again or picking on a boy and she further described the perpetrators as “the girls who are really insecure about themselves who always need a guy by their side and will like go after, even if they have a guy, will go after other girls’ guys because they’re so insecure.” A boy in Grade 12 indicated that both girls and boys sexually victimize the other-sex after the dissolution of a romantic relationship:

They’ll try to lash out, maybe spread stories or something like that. It’s usually relationships that end badly but that can go the same way for men, where they can spread something about the girl and that’s usually relationship wise...usually like something about their physical appearance, like something they got wrong. Like they’re weak or you know, uh, physical extremities being small, you know stuff like that. And, or just like random stories that maybe they didn’t want to tell...they’re hurting and they want to get their self value back so they bring the other person down so they can feel high.

Interestingly, students’ descriptions of other-sex peer victimization wherein the perpetrator was male and the victim was female paralleled their descriptions of a female perpetrator victimizing a male. For example, boys also were reported to verbally (e.g., teasing and giving girls nicknames) and socially victimize girls (e.g., “taunts” and “making fun”). Although a few interviewees suggested that some of the verbal exchanges between boys and girls were in jest (e.g., “girl’s in on it”), the descriptions of the social peer victimization were more malicious. For example, a boy in Grade 12 suggested that boys rate and make fun of girls they have dated or had sexual contact with to get “laughs out of their friends.” One boy in Grade 11 suggested that boys who display hyper masculinity and insecurity were often the perpetrators of social victimization that was sexual in nature:

A whole bunch of guys who just really make fun of girls. Like especially about looks. Just how they look, I mean not necessarily how they dress, mostly about just like kind of weight, shape... that super macho, these, I mean like, they kind of want to have a girlfriend but they want to put down pretty much all other girls...a lot of them are extremely vulnerable because they’re so incredibly self-conscious.

Both boys and girls indicated that boys tend to victimize other boys physically (e.g., “throw stuff at each other”, “corndog... that’s where you, uh, go behind a guy and knee him in the butt”) and verbally (e.g., “mocking interest” and “chirp and beaks... it’s kind of like teasing somebody”). Interestingly, two boys associated same-sex peer victimization with displays of masculinity.

A boy in Grade 10: some guys pick on others guys is because it makes them feel tougher...to attract other girls

A boy in Grade 11: they’re just super ultra-macho...it gives them power...if the more you can push somebody else down, the more you kind of push yourself up. And you think that the more somebody laughs at your jokes and the more that they put, agree with you in pushing other people down then the more support.

Two students did not perceive same-sex peer victimization as a problem in adolescent male peer culture since, as stated by a girl in Grade 12, “I think that if a guy had a problem with a guy, he’s going to just say it to his face.” A boy in Grade 12 further suggested that “guys get along far better than the girls” although he indicated that peer victimization is more prevalent within the “jock clique.” Another girl in Grade 12 reported that boys will make fun of one or two boys within their social network who are “really easy targets...they have kind of support system but really isn’t supporting them.”

The majority of the interviewees reported that the prevalence and form of victimization used by their peers also varies according to age. Consistent with existing developmental literature (Björkqvist et al., 1992; Crick et al., 2001), almost all of the adolescents interviewed indicated that peer victimization decreases with age suggesting that elementary school students were more likely to engage in physical peer victimization and verbal and social peer victimization increased into high school. Moreover, one female interviewee specifically

suggested that peer victimization peaks with the emergence of dating relationships in Grade 8 wherein students begin to start rumours about classmates' sexual activity and begin calling girls 'sluts.' She reported that this form of peer victimization continued into high school. Indeed, Craig et al. (2001) and McMaster et al. (2002) have posited that sexual peer victimization emerges during adolescence because sexual maturation and other-sex interactions are salient developmental tasks during adolescence (e.g., Craig et al., 2001; McMaster et al. 2002).

Within elementary school, age differences were described by one female interviewee who suggested that younger students throw objects at one another while the older kids use name-calling to harm one another (although a boy also in elementary school did not believe there are any age differences in the form of peer victimization used by students in the same school). The interviewees in high school attributed differences in peer victimization experienced in elementary and high school and even junior and senior grades of high school to maturity. Developmental researchers have also suggested that cognitive and social maturation explain developmental changes in the prevalence of various forms of peer victimization (Björkqvist et al., 1992; Crick et al, 2001).

The interviewees who did not believe development played a role in peer victimization suggested that any differences between their experiences of peer victimization and others' could be explained by the younger cohort's exposure to violent media and individuals' lack of peer support in elementary school wherein students interact with the same peers. The connection between peer victimization and exposure to violent media was explained by one boy in Grade 12 as follows:

It seems that the younger generations are starting to get more violent I guess, I mean look at what the media has for us. I mean everything's gore or violence, drugs, alcohol and I mean that wasn't around twenty years ago so much. We're really getting to the point where

it's normal for us... I think it's more a generation thing. It's how they're affected, 'cause they're pushed into the media more, like uh, sooner in their life.

The ability to establish and maintain friendships was also mentioned as a reason why there are age differences in peer victimization within high school in that high school provides adolescents with greater opportunities to interact with potential friends (i.e., a wider array of opportunities) and friendship was viewed as a protective buffer from being victimized by peers.

A girl in Grade 12: I don't really think grade matters a whole lot. Um, I guess maybe like, as you get through the grade, like grade nine to grade twelve it's like you probably, you, when you find out your friends, stuff like that. And so it like doesn't really happen so much in your friend groups.

In turn, elementary school was described by a few interviewees as a context that facilitated peer victimization because the "same group of people" are in frequent contact so they "just had more ways to really hurt that person."

Although several interviewees admitted to being perpetrators of verbal peer victimization, they would elaborate on how their acts were done in jest. Similarly, they admitted to being targets of peers' teasing but stated they were able to laugh it off. While no interviewees mentioned being perpetrators of sexual peer victimization, two adolescents reported being targets of this form of peer victimization. For example, one female interviewee shared a personal encounter with a male friend who made remarks that were sexual in nature and she indicated that she was disgusted and angered and confronted him about his behaviour. One male interviewee indicated he and other boys had experienced different types of sexual peer victimization from girls but further indicated that the girls' were "just joking" and while it "bugs them" he suggested "nothing really comes bad out of that." One might argue that this is not really peer victimization if the individual is merely annoyed and not distressed by the behaviour. Perhaps even in collecting self-reports of peer victimization via surveys, an effort to assess students' actual

distress should be made such that it is clearer as to which negative peer interactions actually do cause harm and distress (i.e., a definition about the intention of the behaviours in survey instructions is perhaps not sufficient).

A few of the interviewed adolescents who did perceive other adolescents' negative peer interactions as malicious discussed how they did not understand why these individuals behave this way with others. Yet some interviewees offered explanations for perpetrators' behaviours such as low self-confidence, poor parenting, and psychological problems.

Gender policing in adolescent peer victimization. Another major goal of this study was to further explore the hypothesis that gender norms within adolescent peer culture were established and maintained through gender policing wherein gender role conforming, high status adolescents sexually victimize peers who are gender role nonconforming, low status adolescents. Adolescents interviewed in the present study rarely described explicit examples of sexual peer victimization that would support the gender policing hypothesis proposed in this program of research. However, in discussing peer victimization, peer-valued characteristics, and social status throughout the interview a number of connections were made between these elements that suggest adolescent peer victimization (including that which is sexual in nature) is indeed related to conforming to peers' expectations (including gender-related expectations) at least within popular social networks.

To better understand adolescents' perceptions of social status in their school, interviewees were asked to consider media that tends to portray popular students victimizing unpopular students and explain if and how this portrayal of adolescent peer culture was reflective of their own school. All but one adolescent reported that this was not an accurate reflection of their school, and even the male interviewee who agreed that popular students pick on unpopular

students further suggested that it was “nowhere near the point you see on media.” Interestingly many of the adolescents who did not believe their school resembled media portrayals of adolescent peer culture did describe a group of adolescents who were perceived as popular. These popular groups including girls and boys were also described by a few interviewees as being good-looking, coming from affluent families, having a large network of friends, and having active social lives outside of school (e.g., drinking excessive amounts of alcohol at parties).

A couple of interviewed adolescents reported that certain members of these popular groups were also perpetrators of peer victimization, however, the targets of these perpetrators of peer victimization were individuals within their own social network. Moreover this seemed to be particularly true in popular girl groups wherein a few interviewees described the members as students who were not well-liked by peers despite their social status. Defining perceived popularity is difficult. In the developmental literature social status has often been associated with being well-liked by peers but more contemporary peer researchers acknowledge that some individuals with high social status (i.e., those perceived by the peer group to be popular; “peer perceived popularity”) are not well-liked by all peers and are in fact strongly disliked by many peers (e.g., de Bruyn & Cillessen, 2006; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998) as echoed in these quotes below.

A boy in Grade 11: I think of the person who has a lot of friends and goes to a lot of parties and goes and drinks a lot and maybe even bullies some people. But then when you start to think about it actually it's not really true, because they probably are just as sad in their lives as the people who are getting bullied. I mean not necessarily sad but they probably feel as much pain.

A boy in Grade 12: they just think that everybody likes them and they have that confidence or whatever. But, um, popularity is such a misused word. Because the people that are the popular people are usually the most hated

A boy in Grade 12: There's, like, there's the groups where they're kind of like known as the snotty people or they're higher than everyone because they're, like either they're very physically attractive or they have lot of wealth or something like that. And so, yeah I guess there's a small group of people like that in the school...so they're in a large group of friends but when you hear people behind them, behind their back, like they don't like them

Media portrayal of unpopular students being targets of peer victimization also seems to be inaccurate according to the adolescents interviewed in this study. Most interviewees did not believe there were unpopular groups in their high school. However, a boy in elementary school did agree that unpopular students are victimized by peers because “unpopular students wouldn't have friends so they're easy targets.” Another student suggested that there are certain cliques of students who choose not “to be part of the big group” and the more “popular” groups do “publicly humiliate them.” A few interviewees suggested that all students experience some form of peer victimization in school, but individual characteristics such as “oddies” described earlier in this analysis may put some students at greater risk of being victimized.

General Conclusions

In general students did not perceive peer victimization as a problem in their schools. Yet students seemed acutely aware of bullying and readily engaged in a dialogue about peer victimization using terms such as “bullying” to describe what occurs in other schools and in media representations. Perhaps this reflects the exposure students have to the discourse of bullying in schools (involving parents, teachers and administrators) as well as in the media (e.g., TV commercials, news, plot lines in TV series and movies). So while these interviewed adolescents did not perceive peer victimization to be a problem in their own social context, it is apparent from these interviews that sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization do occur between adolescents in their interactions with both same- and other-sex peers. Certainly each

interviewed adolescent was readily able to describe incidents of peer victimization at various points during the interview and often the content of these negative peer interactions was sexual in nature. Perhaps the various forms of peer victimization, including sexual peer victimization, are prevalent but infrequent within schools as revealed in the survey studies of the present program of research.

When students do identify perpetrators and victims of peer victimization in their schools, there appears to be some general consensus regarding the characteristics of these individuals. Specifically, both perpetrators and victims are described as having poor self-esteem. Indeed, past research has consistently documented that rejected peers who are aggressors and victims suffer from poor psychosocial adjustment (e.g., Graham et al., 2006; Schwartz, 2000). Interestingly, adolescents interviewed in this study associated negative psychosocial adjustment with being a popular aggressive peer. Specifically, perpetrators of peer victimization were believed to have “false confidence” despite being surrounded by a network of peers whereas victims who lacked peer support were therefore believed to be at greater risk of suffering from poor self-esteem. While the presence of a friendship can buffer against the negative outcomes associated with peer victimization, the quality of the relationship will dictate the extent to which having a friend is protective in facing peer victimization (Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, & Bukowski, 1999). Similarly, it is possible that aggressive youth with low-quality friendships (i.e., belonging to unsupportive social networks) are at risk of suffering from poor psychosocial well-being.

Based on this set of interviews, it seems that peer rejection is not synonymous with peer victimization but not being accepted by peers is associated with peer victimization, which is consistent with existing research (e.g., Bierman, 2004; Hodges et al., 1997). Likewise, certain characteristics (e.g., good sense of humour which allows one to credibly “laugh off” verbal

teasing, good hygiene, and fashionable clothes) serve a protective function, reducing the likelihood that someone will be repeatedly targeted. This finding is also supported by existing literature documenting that peer-valued characteristics (e.g., attractiveness, affluence, intelligence, and athleticism) moderate the connection between rejection and victimization to buffer young people (Knack, Tsar, Vaillancourt, Hymel, & McDougall, in press).

Although not explicitly described by interviews, there is evidence to suggest that gender policing occurs within groups who value gender conformity and this may be particularly true among girls who use social and sexual peer victimization to establish and maintain gender norms within their peer groups. Adolescents interviewed in this study did describe groups of peers who could be characterized as popular individuals. Their popularity was further associated with displaying certain peer-valued characteristics that included gender-related norms such as feminine beauty and masculine athleticism. Within these popular social networks, violating peers' expectations elicit negative reactions such that popular peers often victimize one another by talking about one another and starting rumours (content of these negative behaviours was sometimes sexual).

General Discussion

The goal of this program of research was to better understand adolescent sexual peer victimization by exploring a theoretical framework derived from cultural, abuse of power, and developmental theories. Specifically, it was hypothesized that within the peer group context, gender role conforming adolescents with high social status use their social power to control and reinforce the peer groups' gender norms by sexually victimizing low status peers who violate gender-related expectations of the peer group (i.e., gender policing).

Another major goal of the current program of research was to address several limitations identified in the existing research on adolescent sexual peer victimization. Very few developmental studies on peer victimization include *sexual* peer victimization (see Craig et al.; 2001; Felix & Mahon, 2006; McMaster et al., 2002, for exceptions). To fill this gap, the current program of research compared adolescents' experiences and perpetrations of sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization. Similarly, unlike the current program of research, few studies have compared patterns of negative outcomes associated with different forms of peer victimization that are sexual and nonsexual in nature (see Felix & Mahon, 2006, for an exception).

In this program of research, results suggested that the majority of adolescents experience and perpetrate sexual peer victimization at school which is consistent with existing research (e.g., AAUW, 1993; Fineran & Bennett, 1999; Fineran et al., 2003; Stratton & Backes, 1997). Despite the fact that different assessment periods were used in all three studies that comprise this program of research as well as different reporting perspectives (i.e., current and retrospective), similar patterns of findings were discovered. In Study 1, adolescents in grades 8 to 12 were asked to report on their experiences and perpetrations of peer victimization within the month prior to data collection whereas in Study 2 emerging adults were asked to recall their experiences and perpetrations across their entire time in high school. In Study 3, adolescent interviewees reflected upon their time in both elementary and high school. Results obtained in Study 1 and 2 expand upon existing research by comparing sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization revealing that sexual peer victimization is the most prevalent form of peer victimization experienced and perpetrated in high school. The only exception to this was observed in Study 2 wherein social peer victimization was the form of peer victimization that the greatest number of

females recalled perpetrating at least once while in high school. Although a vast number of adolescents reported experiencing and perpetrating sexual peer victimization within the assessed time periods of the first two studies, they also reported that these experiences and perpetrations did not happen with any great frequency.

In comparing sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization in terms of frequency, sexual peer victimization is experienced and perpetrated less frequently than some forms of nonsexual forms of peer victimization. Across all three studies participants were more likely to report higher levels of verbal peer victimization than sexual peer victimization. Moreover, sex difference were apparent in both survey studies such that in comparing sexual peer victimization to nonsexual forms of peer victimization females reported higher levels of social victimization whereas males reported higher levels of physical peer victimization. Although the frequency of experiencing and perpetrating sexual peer victimization is lacking in developmental research, the present findings are consistent with research on nonsexual peer victimization (e.g., Archer, 2004; Björkqvist et al., 1992; Crick et al., 2001).

Adolescents' accounts of peer victimization shared in the third study provided at least some converging evidence to suggest that sexual peer victimization was prolific but at the same time infrequent. That is, few interviewees described sexual peer victimization as being the most common form of peer victimization that they have been exposed to in the school context yet throughout the interviews numerous incidents of sexual peer victimization were described by both boys and girls. Perhaps sexual peer victimization has become normalized in peer interactions at school such that when it occurs it is rarely acknowledged by most students as being a real or true form of peer victimization.

In a recent study, Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, and Lichty (2009) argued that high school staff may normalize “gender-based bullying” (i.e., “threatening and harassing behaviours based on gender or the enforcement of gender-role expectations....includes verbal and physical harassment; unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion; and insults, intimidation, and assaults based on sexual orientation” page 520). Specifically, in interviewing several high school staff members the researchers concluded that peer victimization that is sexual in nature is perceived by school staff as a “natural part of adolescent male sexual development” (page 535). Although the focus in that assertion was on male-on-female victimization, one could argue that the attitudes of authority figures in the school context may influence and even reinforce adolescents’ attitudes towards sexual peer victimization in high school.

Research by Francis and Skelton (2001) further suggests that the construction of gender identities within classrooms creates a hostile environment of sexism and homophobia. Specifically, they examined the role that male teachers play in constructing gender and sexuality in their classrooms. Francis and Skelton reported that some male teachers use discourses of gender and sexuality to construct masculinity within their classrooms that encourages sexist and homophobic behaviours. They suggest that because these teachers are in a position of authority, homophobic and misogynistic discourses are encouraged within classrooms and certain forms of sexual victimization may be normalized. Arguably, students may feel that it is acceptable to engage in homophobic and misogynistic behaviours modeled by their teachers, in turn, homophobic and sexist discourse may become an encouraged form of gender policing within the school environment (Epstein, 1997). Future research should examine not only adolescent peer groups but the school climate within which peer groups exist. Interestingly, adolescents often denied that sexual or nonsexual peer victimization occurred in their own schools but recognized

these behaviours in other schools. Based on these adolescents' observations, perhaps some schools do foster certain gender norms that adolescents then reinforce in their interactions with their peers.

One form of peer victimization that was not found to be prolific in schools according to the survey studies is cyber peer victimization. In addition, only a few interviewees described incidents of cyber-bullying where adolescents used Facebook to threaten others with physical harm and call others names that called into question the targeted peer's sexual orientation or presumed sexual activity. The low rates of prevalence for cyber victimization reported in Study 1 and 2 may reflect the fact that this form of peer victimization is possibly encountered more frequently off school grounds where use of cell phones and engagement with social media are not restricted or monitored by school staff. Thus, given most adolescents have their own cell phone (Lenhart, 2009) and frequent social media websites (Hampton, Goulet, Raine, & Purcell, 2011), it is quite likely that adolescents are experiencing and perpetrating cyber peer victimization outside the school context involving peers from their school and possibly other non-school social networks.

Given that the focus of this program of research was on sexual peer victimization, the prevalence of *specific* unwanted sexual behaviours was examined in greater detail and was found to differ slightly across the three studies. Consistent with existing research (e.g., AAWU, 1993; Lacasse et al., 2003; Stratton & Backes, 1997), participants were least likely to report either being forced or forcing someone to engage in unwanted sexual behaviours in both survey projects. However, the most common unwanted sexual behaviours varied between males and females and between these two studies. For current high school students, the most common form of sexual peer victimization experienced and perpetrated by boys was homophobic name-calling,

whereas for girls it was being the target of sexual jeers (e.g., whistling and howling) and maliciously calling others gay. For emerging adults looking back on high school, the most common form of sexual peer victimization recalled by males was being the target of peers' sexual jokes and making sexual comments about peers' body, whereas for females it was having peers make sexual comments about their bodies and making sexual remarks about peers' clothing. Clearly not all types of sexual peer victimization are prevalent in high school but certainly some types are more common.

Despite the differences between the measures of sexual peer victimized used in the two survey projects, the commonly experienced and perpetrated sexual behaviours can all be categorized as negative verbal interactions that are sexual in nature (similarly observed by Timmerman, 2005). However, the verbal peer victimization that is sexual in nature may differ according to sex such that females' physical appearance and males' sexual orientation are being targeted by both adolescent girls and boys. However, it is possible that the sexual jokes and comments are not about their sexual orientation. Certainly, literature on adolescents' gender-role expectations suggests that heterosexuality is the most valued aspect of displayed masculinity (Esptein, 1997) and females' physical attractiveness is the most valued aspect of displayed femininity (Duke, 1998). Thus future research should continue to examine differences between boys' and girls' experiences and perpetrations of different types of sexual peer victimization.

Interviews with a small group of adolescents provided further support for addressing possible sex differences in experiences and perpetrations of sexual peer victimization during adolescence in the context of interacting with same- and other-sex peers. Specifically, adolescents' accounts of sex differences were particularly marked in descriptions of what girls and boys do to same- and other-sex peers. For example, adolescents reported that homophobic

name-calling occurs between boys whereas girls frequently gossip about other girls' looks and presumed sexual activities. By contrast, both boys and girls were viewed to spread sexual rumours about other-sex peers (particularly upon the dissolution of a romantic relationship). Although empirical studies have compared adolescent boys' and girls' experiences and perpetrations of same- and other-sex sexual peer victimization (e.g., Craig et al., 2000; McMaster et al., 2002), the specific content of the sexual peer victimization has not been previously compared. It is possible that if gender policing does occur within adolescent peer groups, then boys and girls may police different aspects of same- and other-sex gendered expressions. That is, boys are punished by boys for not displaying heterosexuality, girls are punished by girls for being too sexy, and both boys and girls are punished by other-sex peers for not meeting expectations as romantic partners with sexual scripts being very gender specific.

A study conducted by Hird and Jackson (2001) revealed how discourses of gender and sexuality were used by adolescent girls to label the various roles adolescents adopt in their romantic relationships. Hird and Jackson suggested that female adolescents' perceptions of sexual victimization, particularly sexual coercion, reflected their notions of feminine and masculine roles. For example, Hird and Jackson identified labels such as "stud", "wuss", "slut", and "angel" that were attached to the roles adolescent boys and girls occupy in sexual relationships. Name-calling that was sexual in nature was described by adolescents in Study 3 and thus, it does appear that adolescents' gender-related behaviours and attitudes influence same- and other-sex sexual peer victimization. For example, adolescents indicated that some girls are called "sluts" and Tanenbaum (1999) has argued that girls may also use sexually offensive name-calling such as "slut" to reprimand girls who do not conform to peer groups' standards for gender-appropriate sexual behaviours. Ethnographic research and in-depth interviews may be

more suitable approaches to conducting research on why certain adolescents are targets of specific types of sexual peer victimization.

One notable explanation for the variability in reported behaviours of boys and girls is that different measures of sexual peer victimization were used in each study. While there is overlap in the items appearing on each measure used in the two survey studies (e.g., homophobic name-calling and forced to engage in unwanted sexual behaviours; see Table 9), there are also a number of items exclusive to each measure (e.g., being made the target of sexual jokes or being whistled/howled at). The different measures of sexual peer victimization used in this program of research and by other researchers perhaps reflects the fact that adolescent sexual peer victimization is a relatively new area of research. It would be beneficial to the advancement of this body of research if a *single* measure of adolescent sexual peer victimization was developed, rigorously tested for psychometric soundness, and used consistently by researchers to assess prevalence and further our understanding of why these behaviours occur.

As discussed in the literature review, the most commonly used assessment of sexual peer victimization is the measure developed by AAWU (1993) and the modified version of the SEQ (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Despite correspondence in item content that may suggest a shared understanding of what constitutes sexual victimization in adolescence, the results in the present program of research challenge the content validity of these measures. As already discussed at length, the behaviours described on existing measures of sexual peer victimization do not occur with the same frequency or intensity (e.g., homophobic name-calling vs. forced to engage in unwanted sexual behaviours). In recognition of this measurement issue some researchers have attempted to categorize the items on measures of sexual peer victimization (e.g., physical and nonphysical in AAUW, 1993; moderate and severe in Lacasse et al., 2002; visual, verbal, and

physical in Murnen & Smolak, 2000; assaultive and nonassaultive in Roscoe et al., 1994).

However, it has been argued in this program of research that sexual peer victimization is a form of peer victimization and the correlations reported in Study 1 and 2 support the contention that sexual peer victimization is unique but related to the more traditionally studied forms of peer victimization. Adolescent accounts of peer victimization in Study 3 suggest that sexual peer victimization is often another layer added to physical, verbal, and social victimization that occurs in school and even online (cyber peer victimization). Thus what is perhaps needed is a measure of peer victimization that includes subcategories that allow participants to indicate if the form of peer victimization experienced and perpetrated was sexual or nonsexual in nature (or both) and where the interaction was carried out (e.g., on school grounds or online). In the early development of such a measure, it would be particularly helpful to ask participants to provide their own examples of what they perceive to be sexual and nonsexual subcategory behaviours inside the traditional forms of physical, verbal, social, and more recently cyber peer victimization.

Over and above the issue of prevalence and the inherent measurement difficulties that currently exist in this field, characteristics associated with being a perpetrator and victim of adolescent peer victimization beyond sex were also of interest in this program of research. Social status and gender conformity were both hypothesized to be factors that distinguished victims from perpetrators such that high status, gender role conforming adolescents were believed to be sexually victimizing low status, gender role nonconforming adolescents. Findings from all three studies provided only partial support for this hypothesis.

Some support for the hypothesis that social status (assessed in terms of both social acceptance and perceived popularity) is associated with being victims and perpetrators of sexual

peer victimization was found in each study but not always in the direction that was hypothesized (i.e., high status perpetrators and low status victims). As predicted, high school students who did not perceive themselves to be well-liked by peers were more likely than adolescents with average and high social acceptance to report being victimized by peers (sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization) and adolescents who perceived themselves as being well-liked were more likely than adolescents with average social acceptance to perpetrate peer victimization. But contrary to what was hypothesized, adolescents who reported being well-liked by peers were more likely than peers of average social acceptance to report being sexually, physically, and verbally victimized by peers. Emerging adults who believed they were well-liked in high school were also most likely to recall being sexually victimized by peers. Yet, social status in terms of perceived popularity was not associated with being a victim or perpetrator of sexual victimization. Interestingly, when speaking directly with adolescents they denied that there were “popular” students in their schools yet very often described individuals in certain social networks who possessed social power. Moreover, it became clear in these interviews that the relationship between being liked by peers and being popular among peers is not simple but was linked to both sexual and nonsexual peer victimization.

Adolescents and developmental researchers alike have struggled with defining popularity. Specifically, having social power among peers does not ensure being liked by peers (de Bruyn & Cillessen, 2006; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998), with some adolescents who are perceived as popular being strongly disliked by peers. Interviewees often identified adolescents who possessed social power but were disliked by many within the school, and some interviewees further suggested that these individuals victimize their peers, particularly peers within their own social network (i.e., adolescents who also had social power). These accounts are very similar to

what Merten (1997) observed in the interactions of a group of popular junior high school girls who in vying for social power often victimized other clique members to achieve and maintain their position in the peer group hierarchy.

Perhaps the victimized adolescents who believe themselves to be well-liked by peers are not only more visible to peers due to their high social acceptance but they become targets of sexual peer victimization because they are seen as threats to other adolescents who are attempting to achieve and maintain their own social power. The hypothesized link between perceived popularity and sexual victimization was not supported in the survey research (specifically Study 2), but the interview data does suggest that peers with social power do victimize other peers with social power and those with social power are not always well-liked by peers. In the survey studies self-reported social acceptance and popularity were used to index aspects of social status. Although perceptions of status are informative, these reports limit the conclusions that can be drawn. It would be particularly useful if future research could also include peer-reports of social status which are thought to be better suited for identifying adolescents who have or lack social acceptance and social power among their peers. Reporters aside, social acceptance and perceived popularity from the perspective of adolescents appear to distinguish victims and perpetrators and, thus, these different dimensions of social status should continue to be examined in future survey-based studies of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization.

Gender role conformity was also hypothesized to play an important role in distinguishing victims from perpetrators (i.e., conforming perpetrators and nonconforming victims). However, retrospective accounts of peer victimization experienced in high school suggested that gender *conforming* males were sexually victimized by peers. As previously discussed in the second

study, boys who possess masculine characteristics that are valued by peers may be targets of sexual peer victimization because they are more attractive to females (i.e., targets of sexual comments about their bodies, being touched, pinched or grabbed in a sexual manner) and perhaps more sexually active (i.e., sexual rumours spread about them). Using retrospective accounts of self-reported gender conformity in high school may not be as informative as gathering data on what adolescents believe are the gender norms of the peer group and having adolescents identify peers who do or do not conform to these gender-related expectations. Indeed, in the interviews adolescents did identify peer-valued characteristics that were specific to girls and boys such as physical attractiveness for girls and athleticism boys. Eder and Parker (1986) similarly observed that these gender-related characteristics were linked to being popular. Thus from the perspective of adolescents, certain gender specific characteristics may be valued more by adolescents who also value social status and, in turn, conforming to these norms becomes more important in social networks comprised of popular adolescents.

There is very limited support for the gender policing hypothesis originally proposed in this program of research. If gender policing exists during adolescence, then it may exist in a more complex pattern of behaviours mixed with social status. Perhaps adolescents who value having social status also value certain gender-related characteristics, and possessing these characteristics helps these adolescents achieve and maintain their social status via victimizing others who are threats to their social hierarchy. Adolescents who do not possess these peer-valued gender specific characteristics are unlikely to have social status but they also do not seem to be punished for violating these norms. Thus, the adolescents who are targets of peer victimization, including sexual peer victimization, are other high status gender role conforming adolescents. In light of Merten's (1997) research on competition among popular early adolescent

girls, it seems likely that these high status gender role conforming adolescents pose the greatest threat to other high status gender conforming adolescents. Thus gender policing may be more likely to occur within high status social networks wherein adolescents are attentive to perceived violations of peers' gender-related expectations (even starting rumours to fabricate violations and jeopardize the status of members within their own peer group).

It remains important to consider that some research does suggest that expressing gender inappropriate behaviours may elicit reactions from peers such as peer victimization that is sexual in nature. For example, the current findings and existing research suggest that boys frequently engaged in and experienced homophobic name-calling (AAUW, 1993; Stratton & Backes, 1997; McMaster et al., 2002; Roscoe et al., 1994) and homophobic name-calling may be used by peers to police adolescent boys' display of masculinity (Phoenix et al., 2003; Redman, 2000).

Although homophobic name-calling may not negatively impact the majority of adolescents when compared to other types of unwanted sexual attention (Fineran & Bennett 1999), it is important to identify which students feel threatened by this type of sexual peer victimization since it is possible that certain subgroups of adolescents are adversely affected when they are targets of homophobic name-calling. For example, Duncan's (1999) qualitative work with high school students suggests that early adolescent boys who do not conform to masculine standards are likely to be targets of homophobic-name calling from older adolescents, particularly older adolescent boys. It is possible that some lower status boys are perceived by their peers as violating gender norms (e.g., boys who do not join the football team but instead join the debate team), and these boys may be targets of homophobic name-calling from socially dominant males (e.g., boys who are on the football team). This abuse of social power may be upsetting for boys who fail to meet their peer groups' gender-related expectations. As advocated earlier,

ethnographic research and in-depth interviews could help us better understand why certain adolescents are targets of specific types of sexual peer victimization and furthermore help us understand how experiencing these different types of sexual peer victimization affect various adolescent victims.

Existing research reveals that a host of negative outcomes are related to experiencing both sexual and nonsexual peer victimization (e.g., AAUW, 1993; Felix & McMahon, 2006; for review see Card et al., 2007). In this program of research, bivariate correlations showed that experiences of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization could be connected to self-esteem in high school. Similar links were found between retrospective accounts of physical, verbal, and social peer victimization and poor psychosocial functioning in emerging adulthood. It was interesting to note in both studies that although the set of predictors (including sexual and non-sexual peer victimization) accounted for a notable amount of variability in indices of psychosocial functioning (9.4% to 14.3%), no single form of peer victimization (sexual or non-sexual) emerged as uniquely and meaningfully significant when the effects of the others were controlled. Despite the fact that no causal inferences can be drawn, it is noteworthy that the impact of peer victimization on psychosocial functioning may well be about the generalized “victimization” experience and not about what form that experience takes. Interestingly, interviewees suggested that victims likely suffer from low self-esteem and therefore are easy targets. From this perspective low self-esteem is identified as a pre-existing characteristic of a victim rather than an outcome of being victimized. Interviewed adolescents also ascribed “fake confidence” and other psychological problems with perpetrating peer victimization and further suggested that these individuals victimize others to feel better about themselves. In a study comparing different dimensions of self-esteem, Salmivalli and colleagues (1999) found that victims do indeed report

low self-esteem whereas bullies report having “defensive” self-esteem. Being correlational, it is not clear if these different aspects of self-esteem are existing characteristics or the consequence of becoming a victim or bully. Indeed, as argued earlier, much of the research examining the relationship between psychosocial adjustment and peer victimization is correlational, thus longitudinal research examining different forms of peer victimization needs to assess earlier psychosocial functioning. It is conceivable (for example) that there is a cycle in place whereby those low in self-esteem become targeted and once targeted suffer increased damage to their sense of self.

It is important to conduct studies that further explore why adolescents engage in these negative peer interactions that are sexual in nature. Although some developmental researchers have proposed that adolescents own sexual maturation explains why sexual peer victimization is prevalent during adolescence (e.g., Craig et al., 2001; Roscoe et al., 1994), the current findings add to this discussion with the suggestion that during adolescence there is pressure from peers to conform to gender specific expectations within popular peer networks. It is quite likely that sexual peer victimization emerges in early adolescence and Craig et al. (2001) found that early pubertal status was associated with experiencing higher levels of sexual peer victimization in grades 5 to 8. Although the timing of the onset of sexual peer victimization is likely early adolescence, it is far less clear what developmental variability (if any) takes place between early and later adolescence (i.e., during high school). In this program of research reports of sexual peer victimization were relatively stable across adolescence (i.e., no age differences detected between Grade 8 to 12). Perhaps adolescents express their gender-related expectations through first targeting early developers. For example, a girl showing early breast growth may be the target of derogatory remarks if her attire is perceived by peers to be provocative. Victimizing this girl

would demonstrate to other girls that there are certain expectations regarding appropriate displays of femininity (e.g., must be physically attractive but not too sexually appealing). These gender-related expectations may continue to be salient beyond early adolescence in certain peer groups such as those comprised of popular adolescents who are perhaps more inclined to adopt gender specific characteristics. Indeed, Hill and Lynch (1983) propose that pubertal change influences gender-intensification because signs of physical maturation serve as a stimulus to peers that adolescents must adopt culturally appropriate gender roles.

Future Directions and Conclusions

The findings reported in this program of research clearly document the presence of both sexual and nonsexual forms of peer victimization in high schools. As argued, it is quite possible that during adolescence nonsexual forms of peer victimization such as physical, verbal, and social peer victimization manifest as sexualized forms of victimization that occur between same- and other-sex peers both at school and online. It is important that longitudinal research examining peer victimization begins prior to adolescence to better capture when peer victimization becoming sexualized. Longitudinal survey research should include both self- and peer-reported measures of social status (i.e., social acceptance and perceived popularity), conformity to peer groups' gender-related expectations, and sexual and nonsexual peer victimization (both experiences and perpetrations between same- and other-sex peers). It would also be helpful to include assessments of perceived severity of experiences of sexual and nonsexual peer victimization to determine if different forms of peer victimization, including that which is sexual, have become normalized and if these experiences are negatively affecting a particular subgroup of adolescents. The findings in this program of research suggest that peer victimization in general (rather than specific forms) may have an impact on psychosocial

functioning, thus, it is quite likely that some individuals are adversely affected by these experiences.

Individual's interpretations of these behaviours are important if we want to develop effective interventions and prevent negative outcomes associated with these behaviours. The low frequency of behaviours and experiences (e.g., as in the case of sexual peer victimization described in this research) may actually mask devastating critical events that have a strong impact on individuals. Peer victimization remains a significant concern even in those cases in which behaviours or experiences are not high in frequency. Ethnographic and in-depth interviews may be best suited to developing an understanding of adolescents who are negatively affected by sexual and nonsexual peer victimization and how best to intervene on the behalf of these individuals. In addition, further research using retrospective accounts of peer victimization in adolescence may be beneficial in developing an understanding of what experiences have a lasting impact. That is, examining the relationship between individuals' current psychosocial well-being and what they perceive as memorable in terms of adolescent peer victimization could help us better identify where preventive efforts are most needed during adolescence.

The prolific nature of sexual peer victimization in high school observed in the present program of research draws attention to the prospect that these behaviours and experiences have become ingrained in the culture of most (if not all) high schools and as such take on a normalized quality. This likelihood, in turn, sharply draws attention to the need to continue with research that will shed light on the mechanisms that explain why these behaviours happen, how/why students become targets (and perpetrators), and how/why different students are impacted by these experiences. The present research explored two important mechanisms within peer culture including gender role conformity and social hierarchy. Although this work represents an

important contribution, there is a level of complexity to sexual peer victimization that requires more refined examination of gender role conformity and social hierarchy alongside the identification of additional mechanisms.

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Appendix A

Student Assent Form for Study 1

INTRODUCTION

This survey is designed to provide important information about student experiences with personal safety and social responsibility. This survey also provides an opportunity for students' voices to be heard and students' experiences considered.

The information provided by you is very valuable for your school and the school district. This information can assist your school district in planning to support students' success. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and your answers are confidential and anonymous, which means that your information will be kept private and your name will not be associated with any of your responses. This is not an exam and there are no right or wrong answers to the questions, although it is important that you answer the questions as honestly as possible.

PRIVACY CODE INFORMATION

Over the next few years, the school district may ask you to complete this survey again in order for comparisons to be made between previous and future responses. To ensure your privacy and confidentiality, we are asking you to create your own "privacy code" (Questions 1 - 5), which is a personal identity number unique to you. If you complete this survey again in the future, we will ask that you re-create your "privacy code". This information will never be provided back to the school. If you are not comfortable providing this information do not answer Questions 1 - 5.

Appendix B

Sexual Peer Victimization Measure for Study 1

IMPORTANT DEFINITION

Sexual harassment is unwelcome and unwanted behavior about sex and gender that interferes with your life and makes you feel uncomfortable, even if the people doing the harassing were only joking. These questions are NOT asking about behaviors you like or want (for example, when you want someone to kiss you or when you flirt with a girlfriend or boyfriend).

Now we would like to ask you about your experiences with sexual harassment **at school and school events, this school year.** For each item please tell us about:

| | |
|--|--|
| When it has been DONE TO ME | When it has been DONE TO OTHERS by me |
|--|--|

Be sure to mark one response in each column using the following scale for each column:

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Never | 2. Once or a few times | 3. About once per month | 4. Every week or more |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|

How often have you had experience with...

- a. saying someone did not seem masculine or feminine enough?
- b. calling someone gay, fag, lesbian, or something similar?
- c. spreading sexual rumours or notes, writing sexual graffiti?
- d. making unwelcome or crude comments about someone's body or their sexual behavior?
- e. yelling something sexual or whistling/howling as someone walks by?
- f. making someone uncomfortable by making sexual gestures or staring at someone in a sexual way?
- g. making someone uncomfortable by using hurtful sexual language?
- h. standing too close or brushing against someone in a sexual way when it is not wanted?
- i. touching, kissing, grabbing or pinching someone in a sexual way when it's not wanted?
- j. persuading or bribing someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) when it is not wanted?
- k. forcing or threatening someone to do something sexual (other than kissing) when it is not wanted?
- l. **Girls only:** pressure from other girls to engage in sexual activities with others?
Boys only: pressure from other boys to engage in sexual activities with others?

Appendix C

Self-Esteem Measure for Study 1

These questions ask how you feel about things - about yourself and about school, this school year.

Please answer **Question 18** on the Answer Form using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Strongly Disagree | 2. Disagree | 3. Undecided | 4. Agree | 5. Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|

- a. I do lots of important things.
- b. In general I like being the way I am.
- c. Overall, I have a lot to be proud of.
- d. I can do things as well as most other people.
- e. Other people think I am a good person.
- f. A lot of things about me are good.
- g. I am as good as most other people.
- h. When I do something, I do it well.

Appendix D

Source Tables for Analyses for Experiencing Peer Victimization, Sex, Grade, and Social Acceptance

Table D1

Sex X Grade X Social Acceptance Repeated Measures Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Experiencing Peer Victimization

| Source | <i>df</i> | Error | <i>F</i> | Est. η^2 | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Multivariate effects | | | | | |
| Type of PV | 4 | 37644 | 3483.50 | .27 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Sex | 4 | 37644 | 507.41 | .05 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Grade | 16 | 150588 | 14.30 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X SA | 8 | 75290 | 82.15 | .01 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Sex X Grade | 16 | 150588 | 5.50 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Sex X SA | 8 | 75290 | 8.45 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Grade X SA | 32 | 150588 | 1.36 | < .01 | .083 |
| Type of PV X Sex X Grade X SA | 32 | 150588 | 1.57 | < .01 | .021 |
| Between-subjects effects | | | | | |
| Sex | 1 | 37647 | 3.06 | < .01 | .081 |
| Grade | 4 | 37647 | 14.25 | < .01 | < .001 |
| SA | 2 | 37647 | 532.03 | .03 | < .001 |
| Sex X Grade | 4 | 37647 | 8.79 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Sex X SA | 2 | 37647 | 0.02 | < .01 | .978 |
| Grade X SA | 8 | 37647 | 2.21 | < .01 | .023 |
| Sex X Grade X SA | 8 | 37647 | 4.95 | < .01 | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization. SA = social acceptance.

Table D2

Paired Sample T-Tests Comparing Experiences of Nonsexual Forms of Peer Victimization With Sexual Peer Victimization for Each Level of Social Acceptance

| SA Level | Variables | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----------|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Low | Physical –Sexual PV | 19.94 | 4682 | < .001 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 50.27 | | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 38.20 | | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -.2.84 | | .005 |
| Average | Physical –Sexual PV | 26.01 | 24126 | < .001 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 100.43 | | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 71.24 | | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -23.54 | | < .001 |
| High | Physical –Sexual PV | 5.15 | 8866 | < .001 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 43.10 | | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 28.27 | | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -20.38 | | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization. SA = social acceptance.

Table D3

Analysis of Variance for Comparing Levels of Social Acceptance for Experiencing Each Type of Peer Victimization Level of Social Acceptance

| Type of PV | Source | <i>df</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Physical | Between groups | 2 | 362.31 | < .001 |
| | Within groups | 37674 | | |
| Verbal | Between groups | 2 | 390.58 | < .001 |
| | Within groups | 37674 | | |
| Social | Between groups | 2 | 387.68 | < .001 |
| | Within groups | 37674 | | |
| Cyber | Between groups | 2 | 336.42 | < .001 |
| | Within groups | 37674 | | |
| Sexual | Between groups | 2 | 413.11 | < .001 |
| | Within groups | 37674 | | |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Table D4

Bonferroni Post Hoc Tests Between Levels of Social Acceptance for Experiencing Each Type of Peer Victimization Level of Social Acceptance

| Type of PV | Level of SA | Mean Difference | <i>p</i> |
|------------|--------------|-----------------|----------|
| Physical | Lo – Average | 0.31 | < .001 |
| | Average – Hi | -0.06 | < .001 |
| | Lo – Hi | 0.25 | < .001 |
| Verbal | Lo – Average | 0.39 | < .001 |
| | Average – Hi | < 0.01 | 1.00 |
| | Lo – Hi | 0.39 | < .001 |
| Social | Lo – Average | 0.37 | < .001 |
| | Average – Hi | -0.03 | .006 |
| | Lo – Hi | 0.34 | < .001 |
| Cyber | Lo – Average | 0.22 | < .001 |
| | Average – Hi | -0.07 | < .001 |
| | Lo – Hi | 0.14 | < .001 |
| Sexual | Lo – Average | 0.18 | < .001 |
| | Average – Hi | -0.12 | < .001 |
| | Lo – Hi | 0.06 | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization. SA = social acceptance.

Table D5

Paired Sample T-Tests Comparing Experiences of Nonsexual Forms of Peer Victimization With Sexual Peer Victimization for Each Sex

| Sex | Variables | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------|----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Females | Physical – Sexual PV | -3.11 | 21748 | .002 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 91.50 | 21748 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 81.98 | 21748 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -17.42 | 21748 | < .001 |
| Males | Physical – Sexual PV | 45.10 | 21068 | < .001 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 85.94 | 21068 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 43.21 | 21068 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -24.29 | 21068 | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Table D6

Independent Samples T-Tests Comparing Males and Females for Experiencing Each Type of Peer Victimization

| Type of PV | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Physical | 35.61 | 42816 | < .001 |
| Verbal | 6.36 | 42816 | < .001 |
| Social | -22.95 | 42816 | < .001 |
| Cyber | -1.96 | 42816 | .050 |
| Sexual | 3.36 | 42816 | .001 |

Appendix E

Source Tables for Analyses for Perpetrating Peer Victimization, Sex, Grade, and Social Acceptance

Table E1

Sex X Grade X Social Acceptance Repeated Measures Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Perpetrating Peer Victimization

| Source | <i>df</i> | Error | <i>F</i> | Est. η^2 | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Multivariate effects | | | | | |
| Type of PV | 4 | 37644 | 2646.56 | .22 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Sex | 4 | 37644 | 383.97 | .04 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Grade | 16 | 150588 | 9.34 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X SA | 8 | 75290 | 5.42 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Sex X Grade | 16 | 150588 | 1.81 | < .01 | .024 |
| Type of PV X Sex X SA | 8 | 75290 | 2.99 | < .01 | .002 |
| Type of PV X Grade X SA | 32 | 150588 | .54 | < .01 | .985 |
| Type of PV X Sex X Grade X SA | 32 | 150588 | 1.30 | < .01 | .121 |
| Between-subjects effects | | | | | |
| Sex | 1 | 37647 | 127.13 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Grade | 4 | | 13.19 | < .01 | < .001 |
| SA | 2 | | 295.68 | .02 | < .001 |
| Sex X Grade | 4 | | 9.32 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Sex X SA | 2 | | 8.59 | < .01 | < .001 |
| Grade X SA | 8 | | 1.83 | < .01 | .067 |
| Sex X Grade X SA | 8 | | 1.50 | < .01 | .152 |

Note. PV = peer victimization. SA = social acceptance.

Table E2

Paired Sample T-Tests Comparing Perpetrations of Nonsexual Forms of Peer Victimization With Sexual Peer Victimization for Each Sex

| Sex | Variables | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Females | Physical –Sexual PV | 26.58 | 21748 | < .001 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 90.15 | 21748 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 80.57 | 21748 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -3.73 | 21748 | < .001 |
| Males | Physical –Sexual PV | 36.47 | 21068 | < .001 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 72.19 | 21068 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 24.85 | 21068 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -36.31 | 21068 | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization. SA = social acceptance.

Table E3

Independent Samples T-Tests Comparing Males and Females Perpetrations of Each Type of Peer Victimization

| Type of PV | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Physical | 31.61 | 42816 | < .001 |
| Verbal | 14.96 | 42816 | < .001 |
| Social | -12.74 | 42816 | < .001 |
| Cyber | 6.96 | 42816 | < .001 |
| Sexual | 30.74 | 42816 | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Appendix F

Gender Role Conformity Measure for Study 2

About Me

Now we would like you to think back to when you were in high school and think about how well the characteristics below described you when you were with other students at your high school. Using the scale below please mark the response choice that best expresses how well each characteristic described you around other students in your high school.

| I was.... | Not at all true about me 1 | Hardly true about me 2 | Sometimes true about me 3 | Most of the time true about me 4 | Very true about me 5 |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. someone who had a lot of friends | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 2. willing to take risks | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 3. affectionate | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 4. feminine | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 5. athletic | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 6. understanding | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 7. someone who was eager to sooth hurt feelings | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 8. someone who had a cheerful personality | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 9. tough | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 10. a leader | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 11. forceful | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 12. sensitive to the needs of others | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 13. someone who kept up with the latest fashion trends | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 14. someone who could stand up to authority | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 15. masculine | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |
| 16. popular | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ |

Appendix G

Nonsexual and Sexual Peer Victimization Measure for Study 2

Things that happened to me in high school

Please read each of the behaviours below and again think back to when you were in high school. Circle the answer that best fits with how often students **DID THIS TO YOU** while you were in high school. Keep in mind these are behaviours that you felt were unwanted or unwelcome (that is not friendly joking around or flirting). Also indicate if girls or boys did this to you.

| | Never | Seldom | Often | Very Often | Who did this to you? |
|--|-------|--------|-------|------------|---|
| 1. Hurt you physically by hitting, shoving, or kicking you | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 2. Hurt you with words by insulting, threatening, or putting you down | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 3. Hurt you socially by excluding you, gossiping about you, or getting others to not to like you | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 4. Used text messages, emails, or pictures on a computer/cell phone to hurt or make you look bad | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 5. Made you the target of sexual comments or jokes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 6. Showed or gave you sexually explicit material such as pictures and notes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 7. Spread sexual rumours about you | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 8. Maliciously called you gay or lesbian | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 9. Flashed or mooned you | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 10. Touched, grabbed, or pinched you in a sexual way | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 11. Intentionally brushed up against you in a sexual manner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |

| | Never | Seldom | Often | Very Often | Who did this to you? |
|--|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|---|
| 12. Pulled your clothing off or down | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 13. Pulled at your clothing in a sexual way | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 14. Blocked or cornered you in a sexual manner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 15. Forced you to kiss someone | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 16. Forced you to do something sexual other than kissing | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 17. Made sexual comments about parts of your body | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 18. Made sexual remarks about your clothing | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |

What I did at High School

Now please read each of the behaviours below and again think back to when you were in high school. Circle the answer that best fits with how often **YOU DID THIS** to other students while you were in high school. Again, keep in mind these behaviours were intended to hurt or bother someone (that is not friendly joking around or flirting). Also indicate if you did this to girls or boys.

| | Never | Seldom | Often | Very Often | Who did you do this to? |
|---|-------|--------|-------|------------|---|
| 1. Hurt someone physically by hitting, shoving, or kicking them | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 2. Hurt someone with words by insulting, threatening, or putting them down | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 3. Hurt someone socially by excluding them, gossiping about them, or getting others to not to like them | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 4. Used text messages, emails, or pictures on a computer/cell phone to hurt or make someone look bad | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 5. Made someone the target of sexual comments or jokes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 6. Showed or gave someone sexually explicit material such as pictures and notes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 7. Spread sexual rumours about someone | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 8. Maliciously called someone gay or lesbian | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 9. Flashed or mooned someone | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 10. Touched, grabbed, or pinched someone in a sexual way | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |

| | Never | Seldom | Often | Very Often | Who did you do this to? |
|---|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|---|
| 11. Intentionally brushed up against someone in a sexual manner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 12. Pulled someone's clothing off or down | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 13. Pulled at someone's clothing in a sexual way | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 14. Blocked or cornered someone in a sexual manner | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 15. Forced someone to kiss another | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 16. Forced someone to do something sexual other than kissing | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 17. Made sexual comments about parts of someone's body | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |
| 18. Made sexual remarks about someone's clothing | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | <input type="radio"/> Boys <input type="radio"/> Girls <input type="radio"/> Both |

Appendix H

Psychosocial Functioning Measure for Study 2

How I feel

Below is a list of the ways you might have felt or behaved. Please tell us how often you have felt this way during the past month.

| | Rarely or none of the time 1 | Some or a little of the time 2 | Somewhat or occasionally 3 | Most or all of the time 4 |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| 1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 4. I felt I was just as good as other people. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 6. I felt depressed. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 7. I felt that everything I did was an effort. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 8. I felt hopeful about the future. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 9. I thought my life had been a failure. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 10. I felt fearful. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 11. My sleep was restless. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 12. I was happy. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 13. I talked less than usual. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

| | Rarely or none of the time 1 | Some or a little of the time 2 | Somewhat or occasionally 3 | Most or all of the time 4 |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| 14. I felt lonely. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 15. People were unfriendly. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 16. I enjoyed life. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 17. I had crying spells. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 18. I felt sad. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 19. I felt that people dislike me. | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |
| 20. I could not get “going.” | ① | ② | ③ | ④ |

Appendix I

Consent Form (PSY 110 Participant Pool) for Study 2



Examining Adolescents' Peer Experiences in High

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled ***Examining Adolescents' Peer Experiences in School***. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to email the researcher with any questions you might have about the study.

Principle Researcher: Carie M. Buchanan, Department of Psychology, 966-8078, Carie.Buchanan@usask.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Patti McDougall, Department of Psychology, 966-8919, pmcdougall@stmcollege.ca

Purpose and Procedure: Researchers in North America say that teen sexual victimization is a widespread form of victimization occurring between adolescents both on and off school grounds. We are speaking here about a type of victimization that is sexual in nature such as calling someone a “fag” or “slut” or making sexual comments about someone’s appearance. This type of victimization is an issue of concern that is gaining a great deal of attention from teachers, researchers and the general public. This study is meant to gain a better understanding of victimization experienced by teens in school. You will be asked to think back to when you were in high school and answer questions about experiences and use of different types of victimization with peers in your high school (for example, calling someone a name, pushing someone, getting someone in trouble with their friends, starting rumours about someone). We are also interested in how you viewed yourself in your social relationships with other students while in high school (for example, being a leader, being popular). We will also be asking questions about your current well-being (for example, “enjoying life,” “feeling sad,” “liking how you lead your life”). The study should take approximately 15-20 minutes of your time. This study is a doctoral dissertation project so combined results will be presented at the University of Saskatchewan and possibly reported in academic journals and conference presentations.

Risks: It is possible that you may experience some discomfort or distress in responding to certain questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. If you experience negative emotions in completing this survey you may contact Student Counselling Services 966-4920 to speak to someone about your experiences of victimization during high school. Contact information for researchers and counselling services will be provided again at the end of the study.

Anonymity: Your data are completely anonymous and no personally identifying information will be linked to your data. All data will be reported in aggregated form. The data will be stored securely at the University of Saskatchewan for a minimum of five years after completion of the study. When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

Right to Withdraw: Participants are free to leave any questions in the survey unanswered. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort and without loss of research credit for the session. If you withdraw from the study, you will be given the option of not saving your data and any data that you have contributed will be destroyed beyond recovery. However, as the data collected is anonymous, once you have completed the survey and chosen to save your data, there is no way for the researcher to locate and delete your data. If you choose to withdraw from the study prior to completion, you will need to e-mail the researcher if you would like a copy of the debriefing form.

Questions: If at any time during the study you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to email or phone the researchers. You are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers or email addresses provided above if you have questions at a later time. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on *Amendment Date*. Any questions and/or concerns regarding participants’ rights may be addressed to that

committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. You may obtain a copy of the results of the study by contacting the researchers.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw my consent to participate at any time. (Please print off a copy of this consent form for your records prior to proceeding to complete the survey).

There will be an approval response option to indicate consent.

Appendix J

Consent Form (PAWS Recruited Participants) for Study 2



Examining Adolescents' Peer Experiences in High School

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled ***Examining Adolescents' Peer Experiences in School***. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to email the researcher with any questions you might have about the study.

Principle Researcher: Carie M. Buchanan, Department of Psychology, 966-8078,

Carie.Buchanan@usask.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Patti McDougall, Department of Psychology, 966-8919,

pmcdougall@stmcollege.ca

Purpose and Procedure: Researchers in North America say that teen sexual victimization is a widespread form of victimization occurring between adolescents both on and off school grounds. We are speaking here about a type of victimization that is sexual in nature such as calling someone a "fag" or "slut" or making sexual comments about someone's appearance. This type of victimization is an issue of concern that is gaining a great deal of attention from teachers, researchers and the general public. This study is meant to gain a better understanding of victimization experienced by teens in school. You will be asked to think back to when you were in high school and answer questions about experiences and the use of different types of victimization with peers in your high school (for example, calling someone a name, pushing someone, getting someone in trouble with their friends, starting rumours about someone). We are also interested how you viewed yourself in your social relationships with other students while in high school (for example, being a leader, being popular). We will also be asking questions about your current well-being (for example, "enjoying life," "feeling sad," "liking how you lead your life"). The study should take approximately 15-20 minutes of your time. This study is a doctoral dissertation project so combined results will be presented at the University of Saskatchewan and possibly reported in academic journals and conference presentations.

Risks: It is possible that you may experience some discomfort or distress in responding to certain questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. If you experience negative emotions in completing this survey you may contact Student Counselling Services 966-4920 to speak to someone about your experiences of victimization during high school. Contact information for researchers and counselling services will be provided again at the end of the study.

Anonymity: Your data are completely anonymous and no personally identifying information will be linked to your data. All data will be reported in aggregated form. The data will be stored securely at the University of Saskatchewan for a minimum of five years after completion of the study. When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

Right to Withdraw: Participants are free to leave any questions in the survey unanswered. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study, you will be given the option of not saving your data and any data that you have contributed will be destroyed beyond recovery. However, as the data collected is anonymous, once you have completed the survey and chosen to save your data, there is no way for the researcher to locate and delete your data. If you choose to withdraw from the study prior to completion, you will be directed to a debriefing form.

Questions: If at any time during the study you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to email or phone the researchers. You are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers or email addresses provided above if you have questions at a later time. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on

Amendment Date. Any questions and/or concerns regarding participants' rights may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. You may obtain a copy of the results of the study by contacting researchers.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw my consent to participate at any time. (Please print off a copy of this consent form for your records prior to proceeding to complete the survey).

Additional information for those recruited from the UofS virtual message board: *For your participation, you will have the opportunity to enter into a draw for a \$50 gift certificate at the University of Saskatchewan Bookstore. To ensure that there is no identifying information collected with responses, if you wish to be entered into the prize draw please e-mail Carie Buchanan at Caire.Buchanan@usask.ca after you have completed the study.* If you choose to enter the draw, your participation in the study will no longer be anonymous as you have emailed the researcher your name, however, your participation will remain confidential and your data will still remain anonymous. It should be noted that your right to withdraw from the survey at any time will not impact your eligibility to enter into the prize draw. The odds of winning the draw are approximately 1 in 50.

There will be an approval response option to indicate consent.

Appendix K

Debriefing Form for Study 2

Examining Adolescents' Peer Experiences in High School

Thank you for participating in the study. The first set of questions you completed are used to gather information about the demographics of the sample participating in this study. The second questionnaire is used to assess gender role conformity (e.g., were your behaviours typically masculine or feminine) during high school. The third, fourth, and fifth set of questions are used to determine the prevalence of different forms of peer victimization in high schools. The final set of questionnaires is used to assess current well-being such as depressed affect, loneliness, and self-worth. The present study examines a retrospective account of various developmental factors (e.g., gender role development, popularity, sexual orientation) that may influence adolescents' experiences of peer-based sexual victimization. Also of interest is the association between experiences of victimization in high school and current well-being.

Individuals in the general public and academia have become increasingly concerned about the negative impact that victimization at the hands of peers can have on young people and how these experiences during adolescence impact well-being during adulthood (Vaillancourt et al., 2008). Much effort has gone into studying victimization that is physical, verbal, relational/social, and more recently cyber-based. What we know little about, however, is the experience of peer-based sexual victimization in adolescence. However, some researchers have identified adolescent peer-based sexual victimization as a prevalent form of victimization in high school (AAUW, 2001). Currently, we do not understand what factors contribute to this type of victimization during adolescence. A few qualitative studies identify social status and gender conformity as important factors in experiencing and perpetrating both sexual and non-sexual forms of peer victimization (Duncan, 1999; Renold, 2002). The main hypothesis to be examined in this quantitative study is that adolescents with high social status are more likely to be gender-conforming adolescents and more likely than their peers to perpetrate peer-based sexual victimization (i.e., gender policing). In turn, adolescents who do not conform to their peers' gender-related expectations may have lower social status and may be more likely to be targets of peer-based sexual victimization. Finally, it is hypothesized that negative outcomes continue to be associated with different types of peer victimization that were experienced in high school.

This present study is a doctoral dissertation project so combined results will be presented at the University of Saskatchewan and possibly reported in academic journals and conference presentations. Thank you very much for participating in our study. If you have any questions about the study or anything else you experienced in the study please feel free to email me (Carie.Buchanan@usask.ca) or my supervisor (pmcdougall@stmcollege.ca). If any questions come to mind at a later date, please feel free to contact us. If you experience negative emotions in completing this survey you may contact Student Counselling Services 966-4920 to speak to someone about your experiences of victimization during high school.

Thank you again for your help in conducting this study!

Appendix L

Source Tables for Analyses for Experiencing Peer Victimization and Sex

Table L1

Repeated Measures Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Experiencing Peer Victimization by Sex

| Source | <i>df</i> | Error | <i>F</i> | Est. η^2 | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Multivariate effects | | | | | |
| Type of PV | 4 | 242 | 83.55 | .58 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Sex | 4 | | 5.99 | .09 | < .001 |
| Between subjects effects | | | | | |
| Sex | 1 | 245 | 1.74 | < .01 | .188 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Table L2

Paired Sample T-Tests Comparing Experiences of Nonsexual Forms of Peer Victimization With Sexual Peer Victimization for Each Sex

| Sex | Variables | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Females | Physical –Sexual PV | -3.50 | 176 | .001 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 13.50 | 176 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 13.30 | 176 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -0.18 | 176 | .859 |
| Males | Physical –Sexual PV | 0.89 | 69 | .375 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 6.42 | 69 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 5.29 | 69 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -4.21 | 69 | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Table L3

Independent Samples T-Tests Comparing Males and Females for Experiencing Each Type of Peer Victimization

| Type of PV | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Physical | 3.03 | 245 | .003 |
| Verbal | -1.43 | 245 | .155 |
| Social | -2.12 | 245 | .035 |
| Cyber | -2.85 | 245 | .005 |
| Sexual | .39 | 245 | .694 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Appendix M

Source Tables for Analyses for Experiencing Peer Victimization and Social Acceptance

Table M1

Repeated Measures Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Experiencing Peer Victimization by Social Acceptance

| Source | <i>df</i> | Error | <i>F</i> | Est. η^2 | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Multivariate effects | | | | | |
| Type of PV | 4 | 299 | 131.63 | .70 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X SA | 8 | 460 | 5.99 | .19 | < .001 |
| Between subjects effects | | | | | |
| SA | 2 | 232 | 25.46 | .18 | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization and SA = social acceptance.

Table M2

Analysis of Variance for Comparing Levels of Social acceptance for Experiencing Each Type of Peer victimization Level of Social Acceptance

| Type of PV | Source | <i>df</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Physical | Between groups | 2 | 362.31 | .047 |
| | Within groups | 232 | | |
| Verbal | Between groups | 2 | 390.58 | < .001 |
| | Within groups | 232 | | |
| Social | Between groups | 2 | 387.68 | < .001 |
| | Within groups | 232 | | |
| Cyber | Between groups | 2 | 336.42 | .163 |
| | Within groups | 232 | | |
| Sexual | Between groups | 2 | 413.11 | .040 |
| | Within groups | 232 | | |

Note. PV = peer victimization and SA = social acceptance.

Table M3

Bonferroni Post Hoc Tests Between Levels of Social acceptance for Experiencing Each Type of Peer Victimization Level of Social Acceptance

| Type of Peer Victimization | Level of Social Acceptance | Mean Difference | <i>p</i> |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Physical | Lo – Average | 0.15 | .193 |
| | Average – Hi | 0.13 | .073 |
| | Lo – Hi | 0.28 | .022 |
| Verbal | Lo – Average | 0.89 | < .001 |
| | Average – Hi | 0.32 | .001 |
| | Lo – Hi | 1.21 | < .001 |
| Social | Lo – Average | 1.27 | < .001 |
| | Average – Hi | 0.26 | .009 |
| | Lo – Hi | 1.53 | < .001 |
| Cyber | Lo – Average | 0.23 | .060 |
| | Average – Hi | -0.01 | .888 |
| | Lo – Hi | 0.22 | .093 |
| Sexual | Lo – Average | -0.06 | .399 |
| | Average – Hi | -0.11 | .031 |
| | Lo – Hi | -0.17 | .036 |

Table M4

Paired Sample T-Tests Comparing Experiences of Nonsexual Forms of Peer Victimization With Sexual Peer Victimization for Each Level of Social Acceptance

| SA Level | Variables | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|----------|---------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Low | Physical –Sexual PV | 1.56 | 22 | .133 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 10.06 | 22 | .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 16.69 | 22 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | 1.19 | 22 | .247 |
| Average | Physical –Sexual PV | -0.78 | 141 | ..439 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 14.18 | 141 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 11.71 | 141 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -1.72 | 141 | .087 |
| High | Physical –Sexual PV | -4.95 | 69 | < .001 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 3.69 | 69 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 4.26 | 69 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -2.69 | 69 | .009 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Appendix N

Regressions for Predicting Experiences of Peer Victimization

Table N1

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Experiences of Physical Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .45 | .06 | | | |
| | Sex | -.18 | .08 | -.16* | -.15 | -.19** |
| | Self-reported popularity | -.10 | .03 | -.23*** | -.22 | -.22*** |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | -.07 | .04 | -.11 | -.10 | -.19** |

Note. Total *R* = .32.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

Table N2

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Experiences of Verbal Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .99 | .09 | | | |
| | Sex | .16 | .10 | .10 | .09 | .09 |
| | Self-reported popularity | -.27 | .04 | -.41*** | -.41 | -.42*** |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | -.07 | .05 | -.08 | -.07 | -.07 |

Note. Total *R* = .40.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001

Table N3

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Experiences of Social Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .96 | .09 | | | |
| | Sex | .24 | .11 | .13* | .12 | .13* |
| | Self-reported popularity | -.36 | .04 | -.49*** | -.48 | -.50*** |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | -.06 | .06 | -.07 | -.06 | -.04 |

Note. Total $R = .53$.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

Table N4

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Experiences of Cyber Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .17 | .07 | | | |
| | Sex | .20 | .08 | .16* | .15 | .18** |
| | Self-reported popularity | <-.01 | .03 | <-.01 | <-.01 | -.01 |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | .02 | .04 | -.04 | .03 | -.10 |

Note. Total *R* = .22.

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

Table N5

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Experiences of Sexual Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>B</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .40 | .04 | | | |
| | Sex | -.02 | .05 | -.02 | -.02 | -.03 |
| | Self-reported popularity | .06 | .02 | .20** | .20 | .20** |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | .01 | .03 | .03 | .03 | .03 |
| Step 2 | Constant | .47 | .05 | | | |
| | Sex | -.08 | .06 | -.10 | -.08 | |
| | Self-reported popularity | .05 | .05 | .17 | .07 | |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | .13 | .05 | .34* | .15 | |
| | Sex and popularity | <.01 | .06 | .01 | <.01 | .15* |
| | Sex and gender role conformity | -.17 | .06 | -.34** | -.17 | -.07 |
| | Popularity and gender role conformity | <.01 | .02 | -.01 | -.01 | <.01 |

Note. Total *R* = .28.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

Appendix O

Source Tables for Analyses for Perpetrating Peer Victimization and Sex

Table O1

Repeated Measures Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Perpetrating Peer Victimization by Sex

| Source | <i>df</i> | Error | <i>F</i> | Est. η^2 | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Multivariate effects | | | | | |
| Type of PV | 4 | 242 | 69.07 | .53 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X Sex | 4 | | 8.07 | .12 | < .001 |
| Between-subjects effects | | | | | |
| Sex | 1 | 245 | 0.69 | < .01 | .406 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Table O2

Paired Sample T-Tests Comparing Perpetrations of Nonsexual Forms of Peer Victimization With Sexual Peer Victimization for Each Sex

| Sex | Variables | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------|----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Females | Physical – Sexual PV | 1.34 | 176 | .184 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 12.49 | 176 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 14.01 | 176 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | 1.24 | 176 | .216 |
| Males | Physical – Sexual PV | 2.94 | 69 | .004 |
| | Verbal – Sexual PV | 8.18 | 69 | < .001 |
| | Social – Sexual PV | 4.01 | 69 | < .001 |
| | Cyber – Sexual PV | -3.82 | 69 | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Table O3

Independent Samples T-Tests Comparing Males and Females for Perpetrating Each Type of Peer Victimization

| Type of PV | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Physical | 3.86 | 245 | < .001 |
| Verbal | 1.59 | | .113 |
| Social | -2.73 | | .007 |
| Cyber | -1.76 | | .079 |
| Sexual | 3.98 | | < .001 |

Note. PV = peer victimization.

Appendix P

Source Tables for Analyses for Perpetrating Peer Victimization and Social Acceptance

Table P1

Repeated Measures Multivariate Analysis of Variance for Perpetrating Peer Victimization by Social Acceptance

| Source | <i>df</i> | Error | <i>F</i> | Est. η^2 | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------|----------|---------------|----------|
| Multivariate effects | | | | | |
| Type of PV | 4 | 299 | 64.41 | .53 | < .001 |
| Type of PV X SA | 8 | 460 | 1.77 | .03 | .081 |
| Between-subjects effects | | | | | |
| SA | 2 | 232 | 0.66 | .01 | .516 |

Note. PV = peer victimization. SA = social acceptance.

Table P2

Pairwise Comparisons Between Form of Peer Victimization

| Forms of Peer victimizations Compared | Mean Difference | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|----------|
| Physical – Verbal | -0.52 | < .001 |
| Physical – Social | -0.53 | < .001 |
| Physical – Cyber | 0.07 | 1.000 |
| Physical – Sexual | 0.08 | .421 |
| Verbal – Social | -0.01 | 1.000 |
| Verbal – Cyber | 0.59 | < .001 |
| Verbal – Sexual | 0.60 | < .001 |
| Social – Cyber | 0.60 | < .001 |
| Social – Sexual | 0.62 | < .001 |
| Cyber – Sexual | 0.01 | 1.000 |

Appendix Q

Regressions for Predicting Perpetrations of Peer Victimization

Table Q1

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Perpetrations of Physical Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|--------------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .40 | .06 | | | |
| | Sex | -.19 | .07 | -.18** | -.16 | -.24*** |
| | Self-reported popularity | < -.01 | .03 | < -.01 | -.01 | < -.01 |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | -.08 | .04 | -.15* | -.13 | -.22*** |
| Step 2 | Constant | .42 | .07 | | | |
| | Sex | -.20 | .08 | -.19* | -.15 | |
| | Self-reported popularity | .12 | .07 | .27 | .11 | |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | -.02 | .07 | -.04 | -.02 | |
| | Sex and popularity | -.16 | .08 | -.32* | -.13 | -.08 |
| | Sex and gender role conformity | -.10 | .09 | -.15 | -.07 | -.21** |
| | Popularity and gender role conformity | .01 | .03 | .03 | .03 | < .01 |

Note. Total *R* = .33.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Table Q2

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Perpetrations of Verbal Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .73 | .08 | | | |
| | Sex | -.03 | .09 | -.03 | -.02 | -.10 |
| | Self-reported popularity | < .01 | .03 | < -.01 | < -.01 | -.01 |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | -.13 | .05 | -.19** | -.17 | -.20** |
| Step 2 | Constant | .94 | .09 | | | |
| | Sex | -.22 | .10 | -.16* | -.13 | |
| | Self-reported popularity | -.10 | .08 | -.18 | -.07 | |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | .20 | .09 | .30* | .14 | |
| | Sex and popularity | .10 | .09 | -.16 | .06 | -.01 |
| | Sex and gender role conformity | -.45 | .11 | -.52** | -.26 | -.29*** |
| | Popularity and gender role conformity | -.04 | .04 | -.06 | -.06 | -.02 |

Note. Total $R = .33$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table Q3

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Perpetrations of Social Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|--------------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .48 | .08 | | | |
| | Sex | .36 | .10 | .25*** | .23 | .17** |
| | Self-reported popularity | < -.01 | .04 | < -.01 | < -.01 | -.03 |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | -.14 | .05 | -.19** | -.18 | -.09 |

Note. Total $R = .40$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table Q4

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Perpetrations of Sexual Peer Victimization

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi- partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|---------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------|---------------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | .25 | .03 | | | |
| | Sex | -.10 | .03 | -.20** | -.18 | -.25*** |
| | Self-reported popularity | .04 | .01 | .21*** | .21 | .21** |
| | Self-reported gender conformity | -.02 | .02 | -.08 | -.07 | -.15* |

Note. Total $R = .36$.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Appendix R

Regressions for Predicting Psychosocial Functioning

Table R1

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Self-Esteem

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|-------------------|----------|-------------|---------|--------------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | 3.50 | .10 | | | |
| | Sex | .26 | .12 | .15* | .13 | .14* |
| | Popularity | .19 | .06 | .26*** | .20 | .27** |
| | Gender Conformity | .04 | .06 | .05 | .04 | .12 |
| | Physical PV | -.07 | .11 | -.05 | -.04 | -.14* |
| | Verbal PV | .02 | .09 | .02 | .02 | -.14* |
| | Social PV | -.03 | .09 | -.03 | -.03 | -.17** |
| | Cyber PV | -.12 | .10 | -.08 | -.07 | -.06 |
| | Sexual PV | -.01 | .16 | < -.01 | < -.01 | .02 |

Note. Total $R = .37$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table R2

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Depressed Affect

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|-------------------|----------|-------------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | 1.95 | .06 | | | |
| | Sex | .17 | .08 | .15* | .14 | .17** |
| | Popularity | -.03 | .04 | -.07 | -.06 | -.20** |
| | Gender Conformity | -.01 | .04 | -.01 | -.01 | .02 |
| | Physical PV | .08 | .07 | .08 | .07 | .15* |
| | Verbal PV | .07 | .06 | .10 | .08 | .28** |
| | Social PV | .09 | .05 | .15 | .10 | .30** |
| | Cyber PV | .04 | .06 | .04 | .04 | .16* |
| | Sexual PV | .07 | .10 | .05 | .05 | .09 |

Note. Total $R = .41$.

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

Table R3

Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for Predicting Loneliness

| | Variables | <i>b</i> | SE <i>b</i> | β | Semi-partial <i>r</i> | <i>r</i> |
|--------|-------------------|----------|-------------|---------|--------------------------|----------|
| Step 1 | Constant | 2.39 | .07 | | | |
| | Sex | .11 | .08 | .09 | .08 | .09 |
| | Popularity | -.12 | .04 | -.25*** | -.20 | -.34** |
| | Gender Conformity | -.02 | .04 | -.03 | -.02 | -.03 |
| | Physical PV | .01 | .07 | .01 | .01 | .11 |
| | Verbal PV | .06 | .06 | .07 | .05 | .22** |
| | Social PV | .08 | .06 | .11 | .08 | .26** |
| | Cyber PV | -.12 | .07 | -.12 | -.10 | -.04 |
| | Sexual PV | .02 | .11 | .01 | .01 | -.04 |

Note. Total $R = .41$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Appendix S

Interview Questions Used for Boys

Introduction

Recently you and other students completed a number of questionnaires for a research project examining high school students' experiences and use of different forms of peer victimization. A lot of attention has been paid to adolescents who harm other adolescents (i.e., adolescents who victimize their peers) and to adolescents who are harmed by other adolescents (i.e., adolescents who are victimized by their peers). Media, people in schools, parents, and adolescents are trying to understand why these behaviours occur and offer different explanations for why some adolescents victimize others and why some adolescents are victims of different forms of aggression in high school. The purpose of this interview is to hear what you think about peer victimization in high school and why you think it occurs. This is very important because you and the other students in your school are more knowledgeable about what is happening between students. Adults who produce media images, teachers, parents, and researchers have been out of high school for too long and times have changed so we may not have a clear understanding of what is actually going on in schools today.

I want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in what you believe; your honest opinion is what matters most. Also, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. Like the responses you provided in questionnaires, no one but me will know what you specifically said, and I will never be sharing your responses with people at school. If I use what you say to me in reports, I will use a pseudonym which is like a fake name that could never be traced back to this school and never directly to you. Also, it is important that you do not to reveal the identities of students you are thinking about when answering my questions about the peer victimization that occurs at your school. I ask that you DO NOT use anyone's name when you're answering questions. There will be no information shared in my reports that could be used to identify you or any student at your school. I also should remind you that it is my ethical responsibility to report any incidents of abuse that you describe to me to the proper authorities. Therefore I would have to break our confidentiality agreement in order to protect you and report the situation.

This interview should not take longer than 20-30 minutes. Do you have any questions before we start?

Questions

(Have list of the behaviours appearing in the peer victimization questionnaires. Again remind the interviewee not to use students' actual names or other identifying details during the interview.)

1. How do students in your school harm other students?
 - a. If they do not offer much, provide the list. Can you tell me which (if any) of these behaviours occur between students in your school?
 - b. Do students in your school harm other students in ways not described on this list?
2. Does age matter?
 - a. Does it happen differently for younger and older students? (Do older students only harm other older students? Do younger students only harm other younger students? Do older student harm younger students? Do younger students harm older students?)
3. Media tends to portray adolescents who hurt others as the popular people such as the stereotypical cheerleader type or the star football player. Why do you think media does this?
 - a. Is this true in your school?

4. What do guys in your school do to harm other guys in your school? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls engage in various forms and elaborate on differences).
 - a. Are there certain guys in your school who are more likely than other guys to harm guys in your school?
 - b. How would you describe these guys? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other guys?
 - c. Why do you think they do this to other guys?

5. What do guys in your school do to harm girls in your school? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls engage in various forms and elaborate on differences).
 - a. Are there certain guys in your school who are more likely than other guys to harm girls in your school?
 - b. How would you describe these guys? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other guys?
 - c. Why do you think they do this to girls?

6. What do girls in your school do to harm other girls in your school? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls engage in various forms and elaborate on differences).
 - a. Are there certain girls in your school who are more likely than other girls to harm girls in your school?
 - b. How would you describe these girls? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other girls?
 - c. Why do you think they do this to girls?

7. What do girls in your school do to harm guys in your school? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls engage in various forms and elaborate on differences).
 - a. Are there certain girls in your school who are more likely than other girls to harm guys in your school?
 - b. How would you describe these girls? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other girls?
 - c. Why do you think they do this to guys?

8. Media also tends to portray the target of these harmful behaviours as unpopular adolescents, students who do not fit in at school. Why do you think media does this?
 - a. Is this true in your school?

9. Are there certain guys in your school who are targets of peer victimization? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls experience various forms and elaborate on differences.)
 - a. How would you describe these guys? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other guys?
 - b. Why do you think students victimize these guys?

10. Are there certain girls in your school who are targets of peer victimization? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls experience various forms and elaborate on differences.)
- How would you describe these girls? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other girls?
 - Why do you think students victimize these girls?
11. Are there certain behaviours or characteristics that make guys less accepted by other students (is it different for being like by other guys and girls)? What would make one guy more disliked or rejected than another guy? (Are there guys who are completely opposite of these super masculine boys?)
- Are they popular or unpopular?
 - How do they treat others at your school?
 - How are they treated by others at your school?
12. Are there certain characteristics or behaviours that guys have to display to be accepted by other students (is it different for being like by other girls and guys)? What would make one guy more well-liked or accepted than another guy? (Are there ultra or super masculine guys in your school?)
- Are they popular or unpopular?
 - How do they treat others at your school?
 - How are they treated by others at your school?
13. Are there certain behaviours or characteristics that make girls less accepted by other students (is it different for being like by other girls and guys)? What would make one girl more disliked, or rejected than another girl? (Are there girls who are completely opposite of these super feminine girls?)
- Are they popular or unpopular?
 - How do they treat others at your school?
 - How are they treated by others at your school?
14. Are there certain characteristics or behaviours that girls have to display to be accepted by other students (is it different for being like by other girls and guys)? What would make one girl more well-liked or accepted than another girl? (Are there ultra or super feminine girls in your school?)
- Are they popular or unpopular?
 - How do they treat others at your school?
 - How are they treated by others at your school?

That answers all of my questions. Do you have any questions for me? Is there anything else you would like to tell me about? (If not then I will thank them for their participation and provide the debriefing form for the interview.)

Appendix T

Interview Questions Used With Girls

Introduction

Recently you and other students completed a number of questionnaires for a research project examining high school students' experiences and use of different forms of peer victimization. A lot of attention has been paid to adolescents who harm other adolescents (i.e., adolescents who victimize their peers) and to adolescents who are harmed by other adolescents (i.e., adolescents who are victimized by their peers). Media, people in schools, parents, and adolescents are trying to understand why these behaviours occur and offer different explanations for why some adolescents victimize others and why some adolescents are victims of different forms of aggression in high school. The purpose of this interview is to hear what you think about peer victimization in high school and why you think it occurs. This is very important because you and the other students in your school are more knowledgeable about what is happening between students. Adults who produce media images, teachers, parents, and researchers have been out of high school for too long and times have changed so we may not have a clear understanding of what is actually going on in schools today.

I want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in what you believe; your honest opinion is what matters most. Also, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. Like the responses you provided in questionnaires, no one but me will know what you specifically said, and I will never be sharing your responses with people at school. If I use what you say to me in reports, I will use a pseudonym which is like a fake name that could never be traced back to this school and never directly to you. Also, it is important that you do not to reveal the identities of students you are thinking about when answering my questions about the peer victimization that occurs at your school. I ask that you DO NOT use anyone's name when you're answering questions. There will be no information shared in my reports that could be used to identify you or any student at your school. I also should remind you that it is my ethical responsibility to report any incidents of abuse that you describe to me to the proper authorities. Therefore I would have to break our confidentiality agreement in order to protect you and report the situation.

This interview should not take longer than 20-30 minutes. Do you have any questions before we start?

Questions

(Have list of the behaviours appearing in the peer victimization questionnaires. Again remind the interviewee not to use students' actual names or other identifying details during the interview.)

1. How do students in your school harm other students?
 - a. If they do not offer much, provide the list. Can you tell me which (if any) of these behaviours occur between students in your school?
 - b. Do students in your school harm other students in ways not described on this list?
2. Does age matter?
 - a. Does it happen differently for younger and older students? (Do older students only harm other older students? Do younger students only harm other younger students? Do older student harm younger students? Do younger students harm older students?)
3. Media tends to portray adolescents who hurt others as the popular people such as the stereotypical cheerleader type or the star football player. Why do you think media does this?
 - a. Is this true in your school?

4. What do girls in your school do to harm other girls in your school? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls engage in various forms and elaborate on differences).
 - a. Are there certain girls in your school who are more likely than other girls to harm girls in your school?
 - b. How would you describe these girls? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other girls?
 - c. Why do you think they do this to girls?

5. What do girls in your school do to harm guys in your school? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls engage in various forms and elaborate on differences).
 - a. Are there certain girls in your school who are more likely than other girls to harm guys in your school?
 - b. How would you describe these girls? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other girls?
 - c. Why do you think they do this to guys?

6. What do guys in your school do to harm other guys in your school? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls engage in various forms and elaborate on differences).
 - a. Are there certain guys in your school who are more likely than other guys to harm guys in your school?
 - b. How would you describe these guys? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other guys?
 - c. Why do you think they do this to other guys?

7. What do guys in your school do to harm girls in your school? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls engage in various forms and elaborate on differences).
 - a. Are there certain guys in your school who are more likely than other guys to harm girls in your school?
 - b. How would you describe these guys? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other guys?
 - c. Why do you think they do this to girls?

8. Media also tends to portray the target of these harmful behaviours as unpopular adolescents, students who do not fit in at school. Why do you think media does this?
 - a. Is this true in your school?

9. Are there certain girls in your school who are targets of peer victimization? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls experience various forms and elaborate on differences.)
 - a. How would you describe these girls? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other girls?
 - b. Why do you think students victimize these girls?

10. Are there certain guys in your school who are targets of peer victimization? (Go back to list and get them to describe any behaviours not on the list. If different forms are identified then ask if the same girls experience various forms and elaborate on differences.)
- How would you describe these guys? Do they have certain characteristics or behave differently than other guys?
 - Why do you think students victimize these guys?
11. Are there certain characteristics or behaviours that girls have to display to be accepted by other students (is it different for being like by other girls and guys)? What would make one girl more well-liked or accepted than another girl? (Are there ultra or super feminine girls in your school?)
- Are they popular or unpopular?
 - How do they treat others at your school?
 - How are they treated by others at your school?
12. Are there certain behaviours or characteristics that make girls less accepted by other students (is it different for being like by other girls and guys)? What would make one girl more disliked, or rejected than another girl? (Are there girls who are completely opposite of these super feminine girls?)
- Are they popular or unpopular?
 - How do they treat others at your school?
 - How are they treated by others at your school?
13. Are there certain characteristics or behaviours that guys have to display to be accepted by other students (is it different for being like by other guys and girls)? What would make one guy more well-liked or accepted than another guy? (Are there ultra or super masculine guys in your school?)
- Are they popular or unpopular?
 - How do they treat others at your school?
 - How are they treated by others at your school?
14. Are there certain behaviours or characteristics that make guys less accepted by other students (is it different for being like by other guys and girls)? What would make one guy more disliked or rejected than another guy? (Are there guys who are completely opposite of these super masculine boys?)
- Are they popular or unpopular?
 - How do they treat others at your school?
 - How are they treated by others at your school?

That answers all of my questions. Do you have any questions for me? Is there anything else you would like to tell me about? (If not then I will thank them for their participation and provide the debriefing form for the interview.)

Appendix U

Parental Consent Form for Study 3



Dear Parents,

My name is Carie Buchanan and I am a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. I am inviting your daughter/son and other adolescents in Grades 7-12 to take part in a research study entitled *Examining Adolescents' Peer Experiences in School*. This project is being supervised by Dr. Patti McDougall, a professor in the Department of Psychology. Please carefully read this letter and feel free to contact us if you have any questions and/concerns.

Why are we doing this study? Researchers in North America say that teen sexual victimization is a widespread form of victimization occurring between adolescents both on and off school grounds. We are speaking here about a type of victimization that is sexual in nature such as calling someone a “fag” or “slut” or making sexual comments about someone’s appearance. This type of victimization is an issue of concern that is gaining a great deal of attention from teachers, researchers, and the general public. This study is meant to gain a better understanding of victimization experienced by teens in school.

What will happen in the study? Adolescents are being asked to take part in an interview where they will be asked questions about how they describe students who use and experience different forms of peer victimization (for example, compare and contrast media portrayals of peer victimization and what they witness at school, provide descriptions of how students cause harm to each other, why certain students victimize others, and why certain students are targeted). Adolescents will be asked not to use names in the interviews. All interviews will be conducted within your home or over the phone. When you and your child have provided consent, we will make contact with your son or daughter to set up an interview.

Who will know what my child said in their responses? Only the researchers will have access to the names of interviewees and contact information all of which will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University. Names and contact information will be destroyed after the interviews are completed. All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed into electronic data files by researchers and research assistants with all identifying information removed (for example, names, school). Some interviewed participants may be quoted in reports but there will be no identifying information provided with these quotes such that no one would be able to track the quote directly back to the participant or any specific adolescent potentially described by a participant during an interview. However, if an adolescent reports that he or she has been involved in an abusive situation I will have to break confidentiality and report such incidents to the appropriate authorities.

Will anything bad happen during the study? What good things could happen if my son or daughter takes part? There are no individual benefits to your daughter/son for taking part in this study. The information gathered in this project will help researchers, teachers, parents, and adolescents better understand sexual and non-sexual forms of victimization as it occurs among peers. Our findings may also help people to design better programs that help reduce specific forms of

victimization by peers that happens at school. We do not think there are any risks involved in this study. Participants will be asked to answer questions about what goes on in their school and their thoughts and opinions on why these behaviours occur between students. Adolescents often feel good about the opportunity to voice their opinions. At the same time, it is possible that because of the subject matter adolescents might feel uncomfortable or unhappy when discussing some of their beliefs about victimization in high school. Participants will be told that they do not have to answer any questions that they do not want to answer. The number for Kids Help Phone will be provided at the end of the study for participants who wish to speak to someone about their experiences of victimization at school.

What happens to this information once it is gathered? The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. All recordings and transcripts will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in a laboratory at the University of Saskatchewan for a minimum of five years. Only Carie Buchanan and Dr. Patti McDougall will have access to stored data. All information will be destroyed beyond recovery when it is no longer needed. None of the information collected from the participants can be used to identify your daughter/son or other adolescents. Specifically, all stored transcripts and recordings will be assigned a pseudonym and identifying information (for example, names of students and schools) will be removed to protect confidentiality.

This study is part of Carie Buchanan's doctoral studies and the results will be presented at the University of Saskatchewan and possibly reported in academic journals and conference presentations.

Can my son/daughter decide to stop participating? Taking part in this study is voluntary, and you or your daughter/son can withdraw from the study at any time. She/he does not have to answer any question she/he does not feel comfortable answering. No one will be upset or angry and there will be no penalties for not participating or withdrawing from the study. A participant's recording of the interview will be destroyed if you or your daughter/son withdraws consent during the study. However, once interviews are transcribed and pseudonyms applied to the recordings and transcripts, all identifying information is removed so there will be no way for us to pull out individual recordings or transcripts to destroy them.

Questions: This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on July 7th, 2010. Any questions and/or concerns regarding participants' rights may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. If you have questions about this research project you may also contact me by phone (966-8078) or e-mail (Carie.Buchanan@usask.ca), or Dr. Patti McDougall by phone (966-8900) or e-mail (Patti.McDougall@usask.ca).

How can you find out about the findings from this study? Results will be presented in a report. Parents/guardians and adolescents can contact the researchers and request a copy of the report.

Thank you for your consideration.

We would greatly appreciate your help with recruiting other adolescents in Grades 7 through 12 to participate in this research study. If you know parents of adolescents in this age group who you believe may be interested in this study, please pass along one of the included consent form packages to these parents.

Please keep this letter for your own records. Your son or daughter will be given \$10 in appreciation for their time spent participating in this study. He or she will still get the \$10 even if they decide to stop answering questions in the interview.

Examining Adolescents' Peer Experiences in School

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS FORM TO CARIE BUCHANAN VIA BY PHONING CARIE AT 230-0423 TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PICK-UP OR USE THE ENCLOSED SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE WITH PREPAID POSTAGE.

I consent to my daughter/son being interviewed. YES NO **Check appropriate box.**

Child's Name: _____

Grade: _____

Signed by: _____
Signature **Parent's/Guardian's name printed**

Date: _____

Appendix V

Student Assent for Study 3



My name is Carie Buchanan and I am a student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. I am inviting adolescents to take part in a research study entitled *Examining Adolescents' Peer Experiences in School*. This project is being supervised by Dr. Patti McDougall, a professor in the Department of Psychology at St. Thomas More College. Please carefully read this form and feel free to ask me questions at any time or contact us if you have any questions and/concerns after doing the surveys.

Purpose and procedure: This study is about adolescents' experiences and the use of different forms of sexual and non-sexual victimization among students at school (for example, calling someone a name, pushing someone, getting someone in trouble with their friends, starting sexual rumours about someone). If you participate you will be participating in a 20-30 minute interview. If you are interested and your parents consent to this interview, I will interview you within your home or over the phone (whatever works best for you). The purpose of these interviews will be to gain an understanding of how high school students describe other students who use and experience different forms of peer victimization (for example, provide descriptions of how students cause harm to each other, why certain students do this, and why certain students are targeted, think about how the media portrays what goes on in school and what is witnessed at school).

When we put everyone's answers together, the information we get in this project is going to be a big help for researchers, educators, parents, and adolescents to better understand sexual and non-sexual forms of victimization at school. It's also possible that we might learn something that will help us design better programs to help adolescents who experience different forms of victimization from peers at school. This present study is a doctoral dissertation project so combined results will be presented at the University of Saskatchewan and possibly reported in academic journals and conference presentations.

Potential benefits: There are no individual benefits to you for participating in this study although we do think that young people like to voice their opinions on these kinds of issues. It is also possible that better programs may benefit students like you. This study is not part of your education, it is an optional activity.

Potential risks: We do not think there are any risks involved in taking part. You will questions about victimization you see in your school and comparing this to what you see in the media. Although talking about victimization may involve negative thoughts and feelings, it is our experience that adolescents do not suffer negative consequences from participating. It is possible that you may experience some discomfort or distress in responding to certain questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. Carie Buchanan will answer any questions or concerns you may have about the interview. If you experience negative emotions in being interviewed you may contact the Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868, www.kidshelpphone.ca).

Storage of information collected: The names and contact information provided by participants interested in being interviewed will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University until interviews are arranged then this information will be destroyed. The information provided by you and other participants will be transcribed and entered into an electronic data file. The rules at the University tell us that information we collect has to be safely stored in a room at the University of Saskatchewan for a minimum of five years. Only Carie Buchanan and Dr. Patti McDougall will have access to stored data. All information will be

destroyed when it is no longer needed (that is, paper shredded and recordings deleted). None of the information collected from participants can be used to identify any one individual. Specifically, all of the participants' answers are combined and reported as a whole.

Confidentiality: The information participants give us will be kept confidential (private) and what you tell us in the interview will be typed out and your name will not be stored with your typed interview. All the answers we get in the interviews will be combined with other students' answers.

Right to withdraw: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can stop taking part in the study at any time. You can answer only the questions that you are comfortable with. The information that is shared will be held in strict confidence and only discussed amongst the researchers. If you decide to stop taking part in the study at any time, no one will be upset or angry with you for not participating or withdrawing from the study. If you stop taking part in the study before you are finished we can destroy your recorded interview at that time if you wish. However, after the interviews are transcribed and fake names given to each interview, we won't be able to pull out your transcribed interview and destroy it because we will no longer be able to know which transcribed interview was yours.

Questions: You can ask Carie Buchanan questions about the study at anytime before or during the study. You can also contact Carie Buchanan after the study by phone (966-8078) or e-mail

(Carie.Buchanan@usask.ca). You may also contact her supervisor, Dr. Patti McDougall (966-8900; Patti.McDougall@usask.ca). This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on July 7th, 2010. Any questions and/or concerns regarding participants' rights may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

Follow-up: The grouped data will be analyzed and results will be presented in a report. You and your parents/guardians can contact the researchers and request a copy of the report.

Please keep this letter for you own records and the signed consent form to Carie Buchanan by calling 230-0423 to arrange for a pick-up or by using the enclosed self-addressed envelope with prepaid postage. You will be given \$10 in appreciation for your time in participating in this study. You may still have the \$10 even if you decide to stop answering questions.

I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been offered to me for my records.

Name of Participant (Please print)

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Contact information for being interviewed:

Phone number: _____ E-mail address: _____

Mailing address is:

(apt number/street)

(city, province)

(postal code)

Appendix W

Organizational Framework for Coding Interviews

1. What makes students well-liked at school?

- (a) how does this look for guys (ss and os peers)
- (b) how does this look for girls (ss and os peers)

** Is there any mention of gender conformity within the context of what it takes to be liked?

2. What makes students not well liked (or rejected) in school?

- (a) how does this look for guys (ss and os peers)
- (b) how does this look for girls (ss and os peers)

** Is there any mention of gender non-conformity within the context of what leads to being disliked?

3. What is the nature of harm between peers in school?

- (a) What does “harm” look like? (What proportion of interviewees spontaneously bring up SPV when you ask about “harm”? What types of SPV get mentioned?)
- (b) Why does “harm” take place – in general as well as specifically within the context of SPV? (What explanations are given for these behaviours/actions?)
- (c) Are there age differences?
- (d) Are there school context differences? (elementary/high school)
- (e) Are there sex differences?
 - I. What happens to females versus males
 - II. What happens within same-sex contexts
 - III. What happens within other-sex contexts

4. Who gets targeted – in terms of peer victimization and why

- (a) profile of boys
- (b) profile of girls

** Is there any mention of gender non-conformity or status in the types of things that come up

5. What does/doesn't bother students about peer victimization in general and sexual peer victimization in particular?

6. Applicability of stereotypes

- (a) Is it true in your school that the people who perpetrate victimization are popular (% of yes and % of no for is it true) – any information about how this looks?
- (b) Is it true in your school that the people who get victimized are unpopular (% of yes and % of no for it is true) – any information about how this look?

7. How do the interviews (do the interviews) relate the context of peer groups to peer victimization? What do students say about peer culture? Are there any signs (in the interviews) that PV or SPV take place to reinforce groups norms (e.g., gender role expectations)?

8. At a “meta” level – is there any evidence to suggest that there are patterns of differences in terms of the thoughts of girls and boys? (You can’t make a huge big deal about this (given 12 participants) – but you could speak about it as being exploratory – especially if some pattern emerges for you as being notable).