Contextual Influences on the Perception of Bullying Behaviours for Youth in New Zealand

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Abstract

Bullying has gained a lot of attention in the public and academic spheres over the past two decades (Carrera, DePalma, & Lameiras, 2011; Monks et al., 2009) and is considered to be a very serious international issue (Due et al., 2005; Mullis, Martin, Foy, & Arora, 2012). There is extensive research based on the experiences of bullying, which has examined prevalence rates (Green, Harcourt, Mattioni, & Prior, 2013), distinctions between different types of bullying (Rivers & Smith, 1994; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005) as well as the short and long term impacts (Coggan, Bennett, Hooper, & Dickinson, 2003). Through this, a strong research based understanding of bullying has been developed and a consistent definition established (Canty, Stubbe, Steers, & Collings, 2014; Carroll-Lind, 2009). However, previous research has primarily focused on the experiences of bullying, and few studies have examined how bullying is understood from the perspectives of young people. The present study aimed to bridge this gap by exploring young people's understanding of bullying behaviour in New Zealand. Twenty participants completed a short questionnaire and structured interview, where they discussed four hypothetical scenarios, each describing a different type of bullying in a different setting. Results demonstrated that young people maintain a much broader conception of bullying than what is currently defined by academia. The academic criteria of intention to harm, repetition and an imbalance of power were not central to young people's definitions of bullying. Rather, factors such as, the reaction of the victim, how public the behaviour was and the role of friendship were more instrumental in shaping young people's bullying perceptions and definitions. Furthermore, it was found that the perceived relationship between bullies, victims and bystanders as well as gender differences, also influenced participants' understanding of bullying behaviours. These findings yield important implications for the development and efficacy of intervention programs. Limitations and avenues of future research are also discussed.

Contextual Influences on the Perception of Bullying Behaviours for Youth in New Zealand

Prevalence and Impacts

"It is a fundamental democratic right for a child to feel safe in school, and be spared the oppression and repeated, intentional humiliation implied by bullying"

(Olweus, 1995, p.198)

As illustrated by Olweus' quote, bullying is a detrimental phenomenon that has been an international issue for decades. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1991) asserts that it is a fundamental human right that children should be ensured a healthy development and good quality of life, protected against all forms of discrimination and abuse. Unfortunately, this goal is being compromised by the increased prevalence of bullying and victimization in societies worldwide. Research has demonstrated that bullying transcends national and cultural boundaries (Due et al., 2005), bullying being commonly experienced by young people around the world (de Frutos, 2013).

The recent Trends in International Mathematic and Science Study (TIMSS) reported that New Zealand has one of the highest rates of school bullying worldwide[1] (Mullis et al., 2012). In line with these findings, a report examining prevalence rates of bullying in New Zealand revealed that 94% of the 1,236 principals and teachers surveyed indicated that bullying occurred in their school (Green et al., 2013). In particular, 70% and 67% of participants reported relational bullying and verbal bullying, respectively, to be a problem in New Zealand schools. Based on these depressing statistics, it is imperative that bullying research is conducted in order to understand bullying behaviours, thus allowing targeted preventative measures to be developed.

[1] 30 countries were surveyed in the TIMSS.

Types of Bullying

A common distinction made when describing different types of bullying is to classify behaviour into direct (overt) or indirect (covert) forms (van der Wal, de Wit, & Hirasing, 2003). One form of direct bullying may be considered to be physical acts, e.g., kicking, pushing, and hitting. This type is the most easily recognized and obvious form of bullying (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Verbal bullying is another direct form of bullying, involving repeated derogatory remarks and name-calling to hurt or humiliate the victim (Olweus, 1993). Verbal interactions happen quickly, making it difficult to identify and intervene (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005) and occur more frequently than physical bullying. For example, using microphones and hidden cameras, Tapper and Boulton (2005) observed that children aged 7 – 11 years old demonstrated twice as many acts of direct verbal aggression than physical acts.

In contrast, indirect forms of bullying are covert, are not always carried out in front of the victim, and often include or can occur via a third party (Rivers & Smith, 1994). Relational bullying can be classified as indirect through acts such as spreading rumours and social exclusion (Stassen Berger, 2007). The negative impacts of relational bullying are similar to those of physical bullying, with victims reporting just as many dysfunctional attitudes and detrimental effects (Dukes, Stein, & Zane, 2009). Thus, it is important to not only focus on the obvious forms of bullying but also on the more subtle forms as these can be equally insidious and harmful to young people.

Due to the rapid development of technology over the last decade, there has been exponential growth in the use of electronic and web-based mediums as a form of entertainment, information sharing and social interaction (Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009). Despite the majority of internet interactions being considered as positive or neutral experiences, recent research has focused on the risks of the internet and the possibility of abusive and harmful interactions (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2008). There has been an increase in awareness and research surrounding a different form of bullying: cyberbullying, which uses electronic means (for example through texting or postings or messages sent over the internet) to inflict harm on others (Slonje, Smith, & Frisén, 2013). Specifically, cyberbullying has been defined as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Smith et al., 2008, p.376).

Recent reviews have suggested that adolescence is the peak age period in which individuals engage in not only traditional forms of bullying but also in cyberbullying (Slonje et al., 2013; Tokunaga, 2010). According to Tokunaga (2010), 20 to 40% of young people have experienced cyberbullying at least once. The prevalence and significance of cyberbullying as a distinct form of bullying has been demonstrated consistently (Slonje et al., 2013; Tokunaga, 2010) and should be considered as equally, if not more, pervasive and detrimental as traditional forms of bullying (Mishna et al., 2009). Mishna and colleagues (2009) used a grounded theory approach to investigate cyberbullying from the perspectives of young people. Participants reported cyberbullying as the worst and most serious form of bullying due to the perceived anonymity of the perpetrator. Moreover, the anonymity was also seen to increase the distress of the victim and acted as a barrier against seeking help due to the perceived lack of evidence as to the identify of bully.

The present study aimed to extend this research by, not only investigating young people's perceptions of cyberbullying, but also examining their understanding of the other major forms of bullying, including physical, exclusion and verbal bullying. A main objective of this study was to compare and contrast young people's discussion about each of these types of bullying in order to highlight any salient similarities or differences. Participants' construction of each type of bullying was then compared with previous academic literature that focused on the experiences of bullying, to ascertain whether these two types of understanding correlate.

Impacts of Bullying

Bullying is a serious social problem that impacts not only those directly involved, but on a larger scale, affects schools, families and societies (Salmivalli, 1999). Research demonstrates that young people's peer relations affect both concurrent and subsequent development (Parker & Asher, 1987). Thus, young people who experience negative relations through bullying (those who bully, witness bullying, or are victims of bullying) are not only at risk of psychosocial maladjustment and developmental difficulties during adolescence but also have the potential to experience long term, sometimes fatal consequences (Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Stassen Berger, 2007; Wolke, Copeland, Angold, & Costello, 2013). Furthermore, adolescents who are consistently bullied have been shown to experience poor health outcomes as well as a range of psychological

difficulties, including anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation (Coggan et al., 2003).

Hawker and Boulton (2000) conducted a meta-analytic review of peer victimization and bullying studies and found depression to be the most strongly associated outcome of peer victimization. Loneliness, low self-esteem, as well as general and social anxiety were also shown to be higher in victims when compared with non-victims. Research has reported that victims of verbal bullying experience increased levels of anger, embarrassment and unhappiness (Dukes et al., 2009). Victimization from cyberbullying has also been consistently associated with serious negative outcomes such as: sadness, fear and anxiety, which in turn, creates an inability to concentrate leading to academic deficits (Beran & Li, 2005; Smith et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010).

Yet, it is not just victims of bullying who experience adverse effects; bullies are also at high risk of maladjustment and long-term negative outcomes. That is, bullies show increased likelihood of psychological problems (van der Wal et al., 2003) and are at higher risk of delinquent behaviour and accruing criminal convictions in adulthood when compared to other children (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011). In fact, Ttofi and colleagues (2011; 2012) demonstrated that school bullying was a unique predictive risk factor for later offending, increasing the likelihood of violence in later life by two thirds. Additionally, it is not just those directly involved that experience negative consequences. According to Nishina and Juvonen (2005), individuals who witnessed instances of peer harassment and bullying reported increased levels of anxiety.

Furthermore, it should be recognized that individuals can be both victims and bullies; these are not mutually exclusive categories. These individuals, known as 'bully-victims', appear to suffer most. Haynie, Eitel, Saylor, Yu, and Simons-Morton (2001) conducted a group comparison of the psychosocial and behavioural outcomes for victims, bullies and bully-victims, revealing a consistent pattern of group differences. For every variable except depressive symptoms, the bully-victims had the worst scores, followed by the bullies, then the victims, with the non-involved comparison group showing the most favourable outcomes. Bully-victims reported less self-control, social competence, school bonding and parental support, as well as increased behavioural misconduct, deviance acceptance and negative influence on peers. Similarly, Salmivalli and Nieminen (2002) assert that bully-victims show increased levels of depression, are more harshly

victimized, and are least likely to experience parental support, peer friendships, or academic success.

These findings highlight just how pervasive and insidious bullying can be. Bullying behaviours have been shown to be expressed by young people in virtually all schools despite contextual and geographical differences (Espelage & Swearer, 2003). In sum, both the short and long term effects of bullying can be harmful, extending from physical scars to long term depression and anxiety to criminal convictions (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Past research has focused on the experiences of young people in order to report such findings, yet what about young people's *understanding of bullying?* Do young people's perceptions of the severity of these behaviours align with their experiences and reported outcomes? Do young people consider possible gender differences when discussing bully behaviours? The present study investigated whether New Zealand youth perceive bullying to be as detrimental and insidious as reported in the literature. If young people are unaware of the adverse effects of bullying, this lack of awareness could have serious implications for how New Zealand as a society confronts bullying. Therefore, it was deemed valuable in the present study to examine young people's social constructions and understandings of bullying in order to build upon and expand the existing literature of bullying experiences.

Important Areas of Bullying Research

Bullying is a really significant issue that, despite extensive research, continues to be a pervasive problem experienced by young people worldwide (Due et al., 2005), but especially in New Zealand (Carroll-Lind, Chapman, & Raskauskas, 2011; Mullis et al., 2012). Researchers are well versed with bullying experiences, the impacts and outcomes, but there is very limited knowledge regarding bullying from young people's own perspective, their understanding and what bullying means to them. The following sections outline important areas of bullying research and highlight the overarching gap in research. That is, the general lack of research that is informed by young people and take into account their insight and knowledge.

Issues of Defining Bullying

Due to the increase in media attention on bullying in the last decade, it may be falsely considered as a relatively new phenomenon that has arisen out of the 21st century (Carrera et al., 2011). However, bullying has been the subject of scientific study since the term 'mobbing' was introduced to research in the 1970s by Heinemann (1972, as cited in Olweus, 1993), in the context of racial discrimination (Olweus, 1979; 1995; 1999). According to Olweus (1993; 1999), often regarded as the forefather of bullying research, the term 'mobbing' has been used in social psychology and by the general public to refer to a large group of people joined in a common activity, often involved in harassment. Yet, mobbing is also used to describe one individual harassing another and therefore, mobbing and bullying can be considered as synonymous. However, Olweus (1979; 1999) was concerned that the use of the term mobbing may lead to an overemphasis on temporary and situationally influenced factors, whereas bullying and aggression are relatively stable over time and therefore a better description of such behaviours.

Olweus (1993) broadly defines bullying as "when he or she (a student) is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions, on the part of one or more other students" (p. 9). He further describes 'negative actions' to include intentional acts such as inflicting injury or discomfort, through either verbal or physical means. Alternatively, Smith and Sharp (1994) define bullying as a "systematic abuse of power" (p. 2). Yet, the same three components remain: repetition, harm, and an imbalance of power between the bullying and the victim. According to a review by Stassen Berger (2007), academic definitions of bullying have significantly improved in consistency, with these three elements of bullying now accepted by researchers worldwide (Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2008). Recent research now commonly defines bullying as: intentional acts of aggression that are repeated or occur over time and are characterised by a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008a). Namely, the imbalance of power does not necessarily depend on physical strength, but may also include social or psychological strength (Raskauskas, Gregory, Harvey, Rifshana, & Evans, 2010).

According to Olweus (1993), bullying is a subtype of the larger category of aggressive behaviour, yet it is important to clearly distinguish between these two related but separate constructs. Similar to bullying, aggression can be defined as behaviour intended to inflict harm or discomfort on another individual (Carroll-Lind, 2009), but the two constructs differ on the dimensions of repetitiveness and power imbalance. Namely, bullying is defined as an aggressive act with specific characteristics such as repetitiveness

and an asymmetric power imbalance (Olweus, 1999). Yet unlike bullying, aggression can involve conflicts between parties of equal mental and physical strength (Roland & Idsøe, 2001). Thus, there are numerous aggressive behaviours that would not be defined as bullying. However, all bullying acts would be subsumed under the larger category of aggression.

Furthermore, there are two types of aggressive behaviour that relate to bullying; reactive aggression and proactive aggression (Roland & Idsøe, 2001). Two main components distinguish between these types of aggression, namely the social occurrence that induces the behaviour and the emotions experienced by the aggressor. An aversive event has to occur prior to an aggressive behaviour in order for aggression to be considered reactive. In contrast, in proactive aggression, the aggressive behaviour is considered to be an instrument to achieve an outcome the aggressive individual desires (Roland & Idsøe, 2001). In this way, the emotions experienced by the aggressor would also differ: anger or frustration for reactive aggression, and pleasure or satisfaction in proactive aggression.

Several researchers consider the majority of bullying behaviour to be a proactive form of aggression (Olweus, 1993; Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999), yet there is little empirical research that has targeted this question of whether bullying should be classified within either reactive or proactive aggression (Roland & Idsøe, 2001). On this point, Roland and Idsøe examined how reactive and proactive aggression related to bullying and victimization in a sample of young people. Their results demonstrated that age was an important moderating factor on the relationships between proactive and reactive aggression with bullying. That is, both types of aggression were strongly related for younger participants (aged 10 years old) to bullying and being bullied. As predicted, proactive aggression was found to be a better predictor of bullying than being bullied. This finding also held for the older, 13 year old participants, where proactive aggression was still strongly associated with levels of bullying but reactive aggression was only weakly associated. Thus, Roland and Idsøe (2001) provide empirical evidence that bullying behaviour is more closely related to proactive aggression than reactive aggression, especially with increases in age.

Olweus (1999) also discussed the distinctions between aggression, bullying and violence. He classified violence as an aggressive behaviour whereby the perpetrator uses the physical force of their body or an object to cause physical harm to another individual. Thus, aggression can be consider the overarching category, with bullying and violence as

subcategories of aggression. Furthermore, violence and bullying may also overlap, given that bullying can be carried out using physical means (Olweus, 1999). Yet, both of these lower order constructs are still considered to be separate as bullying can be non-violent (using insults, or excluding) and violence is not always bullying (for example, a drunken brawl).

Another distinction that needs to be made is between bullying and play-fighting, otherwise known as rough-and-tumble play (R&T) (Pellegrini, 1995). R&T is similar to aggressive fighting (Smith & Lewis, 1985), but unlike aggression and bullying, R&T usually does not result in any physical or psychological harm of young people (Reed, Brown, & Roth, 2000). It can be distinguished from aggression by facial expression (for example, smiling as opposed to a frown) and vocalisation (laughing in comparison to yelling) and may be observed as, jumping, chasing and wrestling, which is likely to be reciprocated by those involved (Pellegrini, 1995; Reed et al., 2000). R&T has been consistently found to be more common in males than females (Smith & Lewis, 1985) and serves to communicate the desire for connection and friendship (Reed et al., 2000).

However, R&T has also been shown as a function to display dominance, especially with older children nearing puberty (Pellegrini, 1995). Researchers have identified two components of R&T that serve different functions, namely chasing (R&T/Chase) and being physically rough (R&T/Rough), both of which serve as a perfect opportunity to exploit the playful undertones and at the same time assert physical dominance over other individuals. Pellegrini (1995) conducted a two year longtitudinal study to investigate the role that the two components of R&T in adolescents' dominance status. Results supported the distinctiveness of the two factors and showed that, as expected, R&T/Rough related to dominance whereas R&T/Chase did not. Findings demonstrated that levels of R&T/Rough declined over the second year, implying that participants used it as a means to establish dominance over their peers and once established, such frequent displays of behaviour were no longer needed. Furthermore, R&T/Rough predicted peer-nominated ratings of toughness as well as teachers' ratings of aggressiveness, where tough males frequently chose less tough individuals with which to engage in R&T/Rough. Thus, it is apparent that R&T is used for different functions at different stages of male development. It seems that aspects R&T, aggression, and bullying may show increased overlap with increases in age. During adolescence especially, R&T/Rough begins to resemble some features of bullying behaviour with the assertions of dominance and power (Pellegrini, 1995).

Therefore, it not surprising that it can often be hard to distinguish between physical bullying and good-natured play fighting or aggressive fighting (Stassen Berger, 2007). In particular, teachers have demonstrated a lack of knowledge and consensus around identifying these behaviours (Reed et al., 2000). Therein lies a significant problem, namely despite much agreement and similarity in most academic definitions of bullying, R&T and different types of aggression, this knowledge has not been adequately conveyed to other groups in society, such as young people, parents, teachers, and schools. As a result, there are discrepancies and confusion among these groups regarding the distinctions between bullying, aggression and play fighting, as well as differences in the definition of these behaviours.

For example, teachers often play a very influential role when it comes to understanding and disciplining bullying. But according to Lee (2006), the majority of primary school teachers find it difficult to craft definitions of bullying, displaying uncertainty and inconsistency. Results found that some teachers perceived bullying to be a repetitive behaviour, whilst others thought one-off instances would classify. Teachers definitions have also been shown to be influenced by contextual factors (Craig, Henderson, & Murphy, 2000). That is, in general teachers labeled physical interactions as bullying more often than verbal interactions. However, when bystanders witnessed the verbal interaction, the teachers perceived the interaction as more serious, which in turn increased the teachers' likelihood to label verbal interactions as bullying. These findings not only highlight teachers' individual differences in bullying definitions, but also inconsistencies between teachers' and academic definitions of bullying; suggesting that perhaps bullying definitions found in scientific literature may not adequately represent teachers' views. This distinction is important because teachers are extremely influential in shaping students' understanding and learning. Thus, if there are disparities between researchers' and teachers' definitions of bullying, this gap will not only inhibit a beneficial mutual understanding of a serious issue, but will also provide students with inconsistent knowledge, which could ultimately add to the problem.

For instance, there are already differences between teachers' definitions of bullying and young people's definitions. Specifically, Boulton (1997) asserted that teachers describe bullying more broadly, encompassing more behaviours (for example, laughing at someone's misfortune or leaving someone out) than their pupils and academic definitions. This finding was supported by Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt, and Lemme (2006) who found that students were three times as likely to restrict their

definitions of bullying to focus predominantly on direct bullying, physical or verbal, than their teachers. Interestingly, Naylor and colleagues also showed that only 9% of their student sample included the element of repeated behaviour in their definition of bullying. From these findings it is apparent that young people's definitions already differ from their teachers, yet do young people's definitions show consistency as a group?

Research has reported developmental changes in young people's definitions of bullying. Boulton, Trueman, and Flemington (2002) investigated whether the sex and age of pupils influenced the way in which they defined bullying. Results showed no significant age or gender differences, yet it was found that pupils did not completely share academic views about what should be classified as bullying. Whilst most participants described hitting, punching, name-calling, threatening and coercion as bullying, only a small minority considered social exclusion as a form of bullying. This finding stands in direct opposition to research by Olweus (1993; 1995) and Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Kaukiainen (1992) who view exclusion as an exemplar of indirect bullying.

In contrast, Smith and colleagues (2002) did reveal age differences in bullying definitions. It was hypothesized that younger children may use the term bullying to include fighting (between equally matched peers) as well as an array of other negative behaviours. Their results showed that, as expected, 8 year old participants did not clearly distinguish between different forms of aggression or between physical violence and physical bullying, unlike the 14 year old participants. Naylor and colleagues (2006) also illustrated differences in definition according to age. That is, the older 14 year old students focused on imbalances of power, whereas the participants aged 11 years emphasized exclusion as the main component of bullying. These findings are important as they further demonstrate just how varied definitions can be, yet also show similarities in the development of understanding bullying behaviour, changing from a perhaps more simple child's perspective to an increasingly complex topic understood by adolescents.

The issue of defining bullying in a consistent manner across different groups in society should be better acknowledged. As research illustrates, there are significant differences in how bullying is defined between different societal groups, as well as disparities between which are considered to be the most essential elements of bullying. These differences only add to the uncertainty surrounding the related yet distinct concepts of aggression, violence and R&T. Researchers may have the means for accurately identifying and discerning the expression of these different types of behaviours, but it seems that young people and teachers do not. Although academic definitions of bullying

are instrumental for conducting effective research and developing intervention programs, there is also substantial value in understanding how different groups in society view and define bullying. Furthermore, understanding how young people view bullying should arguably inform academic definitions, as the behaviour is most frequently experienced by young people (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Green et al., 2013; Monks et al., 2009). Gaining such knowledge is important because by understanding how the definition of bullying differs between different types of people, more effective interventions can be developed to target the most important elements for particular groups (Boulton et al., 2002).

It is for this reason that the present study addressed the issue of bullying definition by asking participants what bullying means to them and the reasons behind these evaluations. Previous research has already demonstrated that young people are likely to have differing definitions of bullying from academia (Naylor et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2002). However, most studies present participants with *a priori* definition of bullying or ask them to respond to a questionnaire listing various bullying behaviours, which restricts their responses and may not represent their actual understanding or definition (Canty et al., 2014). Thus, the present study used mixed methods and open-ended questions to clarify how young people define bullying in New Zealand, which components of bullying are most important to them, and whether their perceptions are consistent with academic definitions.

Cognition and Aggression in Relation to Bullying

A complex and difficult question that we should consider is what causes individuals to bully? What are the factors that dictate whether an individual is a bully, victim, both, or neither? The answers to these questions help in efforts to prevent bullying and in developing effective evidence-based intervention programs.

In order to answer these questions, research has examined the mechanisms behind patterns of aggressive behaviour in children, as this has been found to be an important predictor of adult aggression (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Investigating these mechanisms could give insight into specific cognitive styles that may be involved in social interactions marked by aggression and bullying.

Various theories of aggression maintain that cognition has a fundamental role in the stability and regulation of aggressive behaviour in both children and adolescents, regardless of situation and time (Bandura, 1989; Crick & Dodge, 1996; Huesmann &

Guerra, 1997). These theories specifically focus on the influence that information-processing skills have on the maintenance of aggression. Crick and Dodge (1994) proposed a social information-processing model of children's social adjustment. Their model asserts that in social situations children's behavioural responses are based on a variety of internal and external cues, which are processed and interpreted to form a mental representation. This interpretation is a product of multiple independent processes, ranging from long-term memory, inferences about the perspectives of others to the assessment of whether a goal in a previous situation was achieved. The child then identifies a desired outcome and the appropriate response based on previous knowledge and immediate social cues. The social skills deficit model asserts that biases or deficits in one or more of the different stages of processing can result in children's aggression, and in turn, bullying behaviour. These processing styles account for chronic aggressive behaviours through an individual's tendency to respond in a consistent manner. Therefore, according to Crick and Dodge (1994; 1999), bullying is a product of a child's inaccurate and flawed interpretation of social cues and low social competence.

Similar to Crick and Dodge's (1994) emphasis on the role of latent mental structures, Huesmann (1988) asserts that such mechanisms are linked to self-regulatory beliefs. These mechanisms enable individuals to reduce information processing, simplifying reality and providing individuals short cuts on which to base their behaviour (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). It is argued that the consistency of these mental structures control aggressive behaviour through constant retrieval and rehearsal, thus in turn increasing the stability of aggressive responses. Normative beliefs in particular, for example, an individual's cognitive standard for the acceptability or unacceptability of a behaviour, has been shown to influence an individual's actions by providing guidelines for the appropriate or inappropriate social behaviours in a given situation. Normative beliefs also affect an individual's emotional reaction to others' behaviours (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Therefore, if an individual's normative belief regards aggression as acceptable and appropriate, it is likely that the individual will behave in a way that corresponds with those beliefs. Huesmann and Guerra (1997) identified that children's approval of aggression increased with age, which in turn was positively correlated with increases in aggressive behaviour. Furthermore, individual differences in normative beliefs and behaviour in younger children predicted subsequent differences in beliefs and in turn behaviour in older children. Thus, Huesmann and Guerra (1997) assert that

bullying behaviours are influenced by internal mechanisms developed and maintained in individuals from childhood.

In contrast, Sutton, Smith, and Swettenham (1999) argue that bullies do not necessarily have deficits or biases in their interpretations and subsequent behavioural responses to a situation, rather they are more likely to have well developed social cognitive skills and competence, which facilitates their manipulation and dominance of their victims. Thus, bullying, fuelled by adaptive motivation, is seen as an appropriate way of achieving a socially desirable outcome. Sutton et al. (1999) propose that Crick and Dodge (1994) underestimate the complexities of the situations in which bullies act. Given the social context in which bullying commonly occurs (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), and the more subtle forms of bullying, the authors assert that bullies perceive social interactions accurately, with sophisticated social cognition skills and use these sources of information to their advantage. Sutton et al. (1999) use theory of mind to argue that bullies accurately attribute intentions, beliefs and desires to themselves and others in order to predict and understand behaviour and carry out effective bullying behaviour.

Sutton et al. (1999) contend that if Crick and Dodge's (1994) model was accurate, bullies should demonstrate low levels of theory of mind and social cognition due to their supposed deficits in perceiving social cues. Yet Sutton et al. (1999) hypothesized the opposite: bullies should show higher levels of social cognition than victims as they use these skills to their advantage. Their empirical results supported their hypothesis, i.e., bullies scored significantly higher than victims in social cognition, implying that possessing superior theory of mind and social cognition can work to the bully's advantage.

Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) critique both conflicting perspectives by proposing that bullying behaviour is not only influenced by social cognition but also by emotions and emotional processes as well as moral values, both of which Sutton et al. (1999) and Crick and Dodge (1994) overlook. Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) maintain that bullying behaviours arise primarily from a moral and emotional asymmetry. Namely, some bullies may lack the understanding to empathize with the victims' suffering. Consequently, when bullies themselves are the targets of aggressive behaviour, their moral intentions align with their peers. Yet, when their needs oppose others, bullies will initiate aggressive acts to achieve their desired outcome. Arsenio and Lemerise (2001) suggest that in order to understand bullying behaviour, rather than focusing on the bullies' levels of social

information processing, research should focus on the types of values that guide bullies' behaviour.

In line with this perspective, Gini (2006) examined the cognitive and moral emotional understanding of aggressive behaviours. Using cognitive stories to assess the mental states, intentions and beliefs, it was hypothesized that the bully group would perform better than or equal to other participants. Emotion stories were used to assess participants' ability to understand emotional states and moral emotions such as guilt and shame, and it was predicted that bullies would perform worse than non-aggressive participants. Similar to Sutton et al.'s (1999) findings, participants displayed no cognitive deficits in understanding intentions and desired, nor did they display difficulties in moral cognition, like as was hypothesized. Gini (2006) identifies that although these results do not support previous research on moral development in aggressive children, the study assessed participants' cognitive ability to process moral information rather than emotional or empathetic understanding of others. Thus, Gini (2006) asserts that what bullies may actually lack is an ability to empathize and understand the emotional consequences that their actions have on others. This is an important distinction to make and needs further research.

Bullying as a Group Process

In recent years, research has shifted away from merely viewing bullying as a product of individual differences between just two people. Instead, it has been recognized that bullying often takes place in a social environment, i.e., people are aware of bullying, they may experience it and they may also witness it happen to others (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Bullying is becoming increasingly regarded as a collective phenomenon, supported and maintained by a permissive social environment (Salmivalli, 2010).

Influence of Bystanders

Bullying in schools occurs in the presence of onlookers an estimated 85% of the time (Pepler & Craig, 1995). This fact is important as the behaviours of bystanders can have an extremely influential effect on the actors (Thornberg, Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, Jungert, & Vanegas 2012). The presence of peers has been positively associated with the persistence of bullying in schools, with bystanders most likely intervening in a

way that reinforces bullying behaviour (Karna, Voeten, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2010; Menesini, Codecasa, Benelli, & Cowie, 2003). Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Ostermann, and Kaukiainen (1996) conducted the first empirical study to investigate the social nature of bullying, examining how bystanders react to witnessing bullying behaviour. Results supported the idea that bullying is seen as a group activity, with the majority of participants defined by one of the following categories: victim, bully, reinforcer, assistant, defender, and outsider. Unsurprisingly, results illustrated that participants were aware of their role and the part they played, yet participants tended to underestimate their contribution to aggressive behaviour and overestimate their contribution to pro-social behaviour (Salmivalli et al., 1996).

Yet why do some onlookers choose to help the victim whilst others support and encourage the bully? Age, gender and the effect of social pressure are commonly discussed predictor variables of bystander reactions (Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Research has consistently demonstrated that intervening to help the victim decreases with age, with younger children more likely to show pro-social and empathetic behaviour towards the victim than their older peers (Menesini et al., 2003; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Gender differences in bystander roles have also been demonstrated. Namely, encouraging and assisting the bully (reinforcer and assistant roles) seems to be more typical of males, whereas females most commonly help the victim or remained uninvolved (defender and outsider roles) (O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996).

Discrepancies between individual attitudes and group attitudes also affect how bystanders react to bullying. If an individual behaves in a particular way, it does not necessarily mean that their personal beliefs correspond with their behaviour. For example, when considered within the context of bullying, the discrepancy between attitudes surrounding bullying and the subsequent behaviour of individuals becomes evident and an intriguing contradiction arises (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). According to Salmivalli (2010), the belief that bullying is wrong is universal amongst students. However, the majority of students do not express this disapproval to their bullying peers, nor are they likely to intervene or support the victim. It would appear that group norms and peer pressure regulate bullying-related behaviours, making it harder to act in accordance with personal beliefs, instead individuals act in a socially conforming manner. Salmivalli and Voeten (2004) used both individual and group level attitudes to predict students' behaviour in bullying situations. As expected, results showed that although the effect

remained modest, participants' personal attitudes corresponded to participant role behaviours. That is, defending victims and remaining uninvolved from the situation were associated with moral disapproval and anti-bullying attitudes, whereas supporting and assisting the bully was related to pro-bullying attitudes.

Attitudes towards the victim and self-efficacy can also determine bystander behaviour (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Researchers demonstrated that a bystander's belief in their social self-efficacy to defend the victim and stop aggression was positively correlated with defending behaviour and negatively associated with passive behaviour (Barchia & Bussey, 2011). If an individual does not believe their intervention would be successful or make a difference to the outcome, it is not surprising that these individuals are not motivated to help. Additionally, the strength of the relationship between the bystander and/or victim can significantly influence their behaviour. It logically follows that bystanders are less likely to act in defense of the victim if their relationship is stronger with the bully (Oh & Hazler, 2009).

Thornberg and colleagues (2012) used qualitative methodology to further bystander research by investigating the motives reported by children as to whether they would choose to intervene and their reasons for doing so. According to the conceptual framework developed, this decision depends on how the bystanders perceive the situation, social context and their own agency. Perception of harm, emotional reactions of the bystander, intervention self-efficacy and social and moral evaluations were the key themes identified in their framework. If the bystander perceived the bullying situation to be harmful to the victim, this increased their motivation to intervene, whereas if there was no perceived harm there was little motivation to help. Furthermore, the emotional reaction invoked in the bystander by the situation determined how he or she would respond. For instance, if the bystander experienced empathy for the victim, he or she were more inclined to act, if he or she feared their own victimisation, this concern would prevent them from getting involved for fear of the consequences. Moreover, consistent with previous findings (Oh & Hazler, 2009), Thornberg and colleagues (2012) demonstrated that friendship with either the bully or the victim was found to influence bystander support.

Through bystander research, it is apparent that bullying is a dynamic and interpersonal process affecting more individuals than just the bully and victim. Hence, in order to gain an accurate understanding of the mechanisms surrounding bullying behaviours, it is important for the current study to consider the social nature of bullying

within the group and the fact that the perceptions of bystanders are just as salient as those of the victim and bully. According to Rigby and Johnson (2006), over 90% of their participants indicated awareness that bullying occurs in the presence of witnesses. Thus, the present study sought to ascertain whether New Zealand youth also display the same awareness of bullying as a group phenomenon. Specifically, the present study aimed to establish whether young people's reasons for intervening or not are consistent with the explanations illustrated by previous research. How do young people discuss the effect of bystanders' presence and behaviour? Do young people's understandings reflect their experiences? What are the salient motivations for and restraints against bystander intervention? Are these reasons consistent with research?

The Effects of Setting on Bullying Behaviour

Initial bullying research focused on bullying behaviours of the individual, however recently research has expanded to account for contextual information (Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, & Franzoni, 2008). Despite this broader view, most bullying research focuses on bullying in two particular settings, in school (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Green et al., 2013; Olweus, 1993) or over the internet (Mishna et al., 2009; Slonje et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2008). Yet, Flook and Fuligni (2008) demonstrated that young people's social environments are intrinsically linked; 'spill over' effects of negative events in one setting can influence experiences in other settings. Family and school experiences have been shown to reciprocally predict adolescents' functioning across different contexts. For example, if a young person experiences negative events at school, these may have an negative impact on their interactions at home and vice versa (Lehman & Repetti, 2007). Specifically, family stress has been found to predict problems in attendance and learning in school, effects still present two days later. Problems in school were then shown to increase family stress, thus creating a negative spillover loop present across time and setting (Flook & Fuligni, 2008).

Additionally, Monks and colleagues (2009) conducted a review to compare the nature of bullying, how it is exhibited, and how it is experienced across a number of different settings, for example: in schools, between siblings, in children's care homes, in prisons and in the workplace. Findings illustrated that bullying occurs in a variety of different contexts during childhood, adolescence and adulthood, yet the way in which it

is manifested varied across settings, gender and age groups. Children were found to display more direct and physical forms of bullying, whereas adults and adolescents were more indirect and displayed more 'socially acceptable' behaviours that were harder to discern as bullying by bystanders. Consistent with previous research (de Frutos, 2013; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005), Monks and colleagues (2009) also demonstrated sex differences in the types of bullying used. Females tended to use relational bullying, especially in children and adolescents, whereas males were more direct through physical and verbal methods.

There seems to be differences in the ways bullying is experienced across settings, yet these settings are not entirely independent of each other; experiences in one setting are connected to and can influence future experiences in a different environment (Flook & Fuligni, 2008; Monks et al., 2009). However, there is little research that looks beyond the impact of bullying to compare whether individuals' perceptions of bullying correlate with their experiences and whether perceptions of bullying vary across different environments.

The present study aimed to fill this gap by comparing young people's understanding of bullying behaviours across different settings. Do individuals' opinions about bullying behaviour in one environment remain consistent when the same behaviour is considered in a different setting? Moreover, do young people believe the context in which bullying occurs to play an important role in the understanding of bullying?

Gender Differences in Bullying

The role of gender differences in bullying also needs to be considered. Although research has shown that the frequency of bullying is approximately equal between males and females (de Frutos, 2013); there are gender differences in the frequency of specific types of bullying (Lehman, 2014). It has been long established that males participate in physical interactions, such as play fighting, significantly more often than females (Pellegrini, 1995; Reed et al., 2000; Smith & Lewis, 1985), and the same can be applied to acts of physical aggression and bullying (de Frutos, 2013; Erdur-Baker, 2010; Smith et al., 2002). In contrast, females most often partake in relational bullying, convincing their peers to exclude certain individuals from the group or activities (Smokowski and Kopasz, 2005). Thus, it would seem that gender differences may be based on the distinction of direct and indirect bullying, with males displaying a tendency towards direct forms and females towards indirect forms of bullying (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992). With regards to gender differences in cyberbullying results are not consistent, Slonje et al.

(2013) have suggested that girls participate more in cyberbullying, whereas other research found that boys are more likely to be cyberbullies (Erdur-Baker, 2010; Li, 2006). According to Smith and colleagues (2008), this lack of consistency may be explained by the differences in methods of data collection and sampling.

Moreover, van der Wal et al. (2003) considered that males and females may also be affected by bullying differently. Interestingly, results showed the impact of depression was higher for both males and females for indirect bullying than direct bullying. However, direct bullying was found to correlate with a significant increase in depression and suicidal ideation in females but not males. This difference could be accounted for by males' perception that physical interaction is acceptable behaviour (Huesmann, Guerra, Zelli, & Miller, 1992; van der Wal et al., 2003). It is important to discuss gender differences in bullying behaviours and recognize that male and females have different experiences with bullying and as a result may be affected by it differently. The present study sought to ascertain whether young people themselves are aware of these differences and consequently, if these differences change their perceptions of bullying behaviours.

The Goals of the Present Study

As discussed, there is considerable research examining the effects and implications of bullying experienced by young people. Although it is necessary and important to identify the effects of bullying, the majority of previous research has failed to investigate bullying from the viewpoint of young people themselves. Young people attach meaning and understanding to their experiences through how they are impacted by these experiences. Therefore, it should not be assumed that young people's understanding of constructs, such as bullying, are shared by adults or researchers (Carroll-Lind, Chapman, & Raskauskas, 2011). In fact, a disparity has arisen between academic definitions of bullying and how young people define and understand the issue. It is only through trying to gain insight into young people's own understanding of bullying that research can properly confront the problem in a way that is meaningful and salient to them, thus the present study aimed to close this gap.

Therefore, the overall objective of this research was to focus on young people's understanding of bullying behaviours rather than their experiences. The present study

posed a series of research questions. **Firstly**, which behaviours are considered acceptable and which constitute bullying according to young people? Are participants' quantitative responses consistent with their qualitative responses? **Secondly**, are there differences in how young people perceive different types of bullying; are some types considered to be more serious and harmful than others? What are the factors that influence these potential differences? **Thirdly**, what are young people's definitions of bullying? What components of bullying are most important to them? **Fourthly**, how do external factors, such as setting, social roles and gender, influence young people's perceptions? **Finally**, are all these findings consistent with academic definitions and assertions about the nature of bullying behaviours?

In the present study the primary researcher used mixed methods to extend the analysis of young people's understandings and provide further insight into the links between setting, bystander effects and gender differences. The study assessed how young people perceive and interpret the interactions of people in a bullying scenario. The participants were given four descriptions of possible bullying scenarios in four different settings and were asked to fill out a short questionnaire and partake in a short discussion for each scenario. The participants' responses to the scenarios provided insight into how they understood bullying behaviours as well as yielded important knowledge about the social environment and the prevalent discourses of victimisation in New Zealand.

Methodology

Research Design

The lack of previous research examining young people's perceptions of bullying behaviours across different contexts in New Zealand indicates that the initial investigation into this avenue of bullying research should be qualitative and exploratory in nature. Qualitative methodology provides an in-depth, holistic insight into the data and allows the researcher richer understandings of the underlying mechanisms and processes embedded in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through this method of inquiry, the researcher was able to gain both an insider's and outsider's perspective into the young New Zealanders' thought processes and understanding of bullying behaviours, and was able to examine these within the context of each individual's unique reflection and perception of the bullying scenarios.

In addition to the rich descriptive data collected through qualitative methods, quantitative methods were also used, extending the study further, allowing for a linkage between both types of data. With the aid of supervisors, the primary researcher developed a short questionnaire that was completed for each scenario. Although exploratory in nature, the use of an exact interview schedule in conjunction with the questionnaire gave the study structure and allowed analyses to be deliberate and specific in order to best answer the research objectives.

Positioning of the Researcher

As a young, 23-year old Pakeha female, the researcher's background and experience played a key role in how the interviews and interactions with participants were conducted, as well as how the data that was interpreted. The present study recognized that the setting in which the interview took place and the tone of the interaction between the participant and researcher could shape the participants' understanding of the scenarios and their subsequent responses (Creswell, 2008). Despite an initial power differential (due to the apparent age difference and role differences) and slight awkwardness between researcher and participant, a rapport was easily established due to the shared experiences of being a young person, the relatively small age gap and the assumption that the researcher had recently left high school. These facts helped place participants at ease and allowed them to speak more freely, which facilitated a more in-depth discussion.

Furthermore, the researcher considered the level of priming that participants experienced. Priming occurs when a word or idea is presented prior (accidentally or on purpose) to the assessment, this increases the level of thought regarding the word or idea, which in turn facilitates its accessibility and increases the likelihood of the individual to draw upon the word or idea during the assessment (Brown, 1979). Therefore, when participants were invited to take part in the research, participants were not told that the scenarios described bullying behaviours. Instead, participants were informed that they would be discussing possible everyday situations, for example,

> *"You are being asked to take part in a research study that will allow young people to explain what is acceptable social behaviour from their own point of view. The interview will last for approximately one hour. During the interview you will be given four scenarios about possible everyday social interactions. You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire for each scenario, this*

will ask you about the motivations of the characters in the scenario. Then you will have a discussion with the researcher about each scenario."

Thus, participants' opinions and responses were not instantly dictated by societal discourses of bullying. Moreover, it was acknowledged that a participant's response is merely one individual's opinion based on their upbringing and experiences and does not represent every young person's opinion (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It was also considered that decisions made by the researcher directly impacted the way in which the research was collected, recorded and analysed. This fact is not necessarily a limitation of the research, yet an observation that the researcher was not a detached, impartial observer.

Development of the Interview Schedule, Scenarios and Questionnaire

Development of the Interview Schedule

Ideally qualitative research should facilitate the emergence of a maximum number of relevant and important themes, rather than be directed by what the researcher's perspective deems to be important (Creswell, 2008). However, the research does need to be constrained by certain limits; otherwise the breadth of information could yield an overwhelming number of themes and lose its depth (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To restrict the scope of the data collected, a structured interview schedule was developed by the primary researcher in collaboration with her supervisors based on the academic objectives of the study (see Appendix A). The interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions that allowed the interview to take a conversational, informal tone, facilitating the participant's ease with the researcher. Furthermore, this format allowed for flexibility and expansion on the participant's ideas, yet also reduced the likelihood of leading questions (Miles & Hubermann, 1994).

The first section of the interview schedule included six questions that were asked after each of the four scenarios. The first two questions in the interview schedule were designed to reflect the questions in the quantitative questionnaire. For example, the first question in the questionnaire asked participants to rate the acceptability of the bully's behaviour, and the first interview question asked, "Why do you view this behaviour as acceptable/not acceptable?" Additionally, the third question in the questionnaire asked participants to rate which character was responsible for the interaction, whilst the second interview question asked, "Why do you think (perpetrator and victim)_____ behaved in

that way?" Thus, the first two interview questions allowed participants to explain their quantitative responses. This format gave the researcher greater insight into the reasons behind participants' ratings and showed how participants understood the scenarios.

The remaining questions in the interview schedule explored participants' perceptions further. The third question regarded being a bystander and asked participants, "If you saw this, what do you think you would do? Why?" and the fourth question asked, "Would you consider this situation to be bullying? Why/Why not?" The researcher purposely asked participants whether they would consider the scenario to be bullying *after* asking whether they would intervene or not. The reason for this was to prevent the idea of bullying from influencing participants to assess their behaviour in a more socially desirable way. The fifth question asked participants to consider the scenario in a different physical setting, "if this situation happened in a different environment (for example at school), would this change your opinion about whether it is/is not bullying?"

The final question asked for all four scenarios examined participants' perceptions of gender differences, "if this situation happened with (the opposite sex)_____, would that change your opinion about anything? Why/why not?" However, this question was not included in the original interview schedule. It was later added after the second interview as both the first and second participants voluntarily discussed this variable. Therefore, it was apparent to the researcher that gender differences were a point of interest for young people, which should not be overlooked in the present study. The second section of the interview schedule included two questions, namely, "In your own words, can you describe what you think bullying is?" and "What do you think it would take to reduce bullying?" These two questions were only asked once, at the end of the interview when all discussions pertaining to the scenarios were concluded. In this way, participants were made to think more broadly about the issue of bullying, outside the constraints of the four scenarios. All interviews were conducted by the primary researcher and ranged from 20 minutes to an hour and a half, resulting in approximately 20 hours of recorded information in total.

Development of the Scenarios

The four scenarios were deliberately developed to each describe one different type of bullying. Therefore, participants were presented with a scenario for each of the four

major types of bullying: physical, verbal, exclusion and cyberbullying (Rivers & Smith, 1994; Slonje et al., 2013; van der Wal et al., 2003). As well as differing on the type of bullying, the four scenarios were also placed in different physical settings. That is, each type of bullying was only situated in one of the four environments. The verbal bullying scenario was illustrated in a school environment:

> *"Sam/Susie arrives at school on a mufti day dressed in all black. When Stephen/Steph and Elliot/Ellie see Sam/Susie, they laugh and ask Sam/Susie why he/she always dresses like a creepy goth. Throughout the day, whenever Sam/Susie sees Stephen/Steph and Elliot/Ellie they roll their eyes at him/her, laugh and make loud remarks in front of other students."*

The physical scenario was set in the social environment of a party:

> *"George/Georgia is having a good time at a party with his/her friends until he/she sees that Harry/Harriet has arrived. From then on, whenever Harry/Harriet walks past the group of people that George/Georgia is talking to, Harry/Harriet pinches George/Georgia in the back. Each time Harry/Harriet does this, he/she pinches a little bit harder. This continues throughout the night until the party ends."*

The exclusion scenario was based on the extra-curricular activity of a soccer team:

> *"Every week after the team's soccer game, the players always organise to hang out later in the afternoon to relax and discuss the match. James/Jess never gets invited. When he/she tries to include him/herself and asks where they're meeting, the other players always make an excuse for him/her not to come."*

Finally, cyberbullying was described on Facebook:

> *"When Ben/Bella logs onto Facebook after school, he/she receives notifications of new messages in his/her inbox. These messages consist of mean and hurtful comments from some of his/her Facebook friends, for example "Nobody sits next to you because you're a loser". The messages continue to be sent even if Ben/Bella doesn't reply to them."*

Each environment was chosen based on previous evidence that it was a realistic and common bullying environment experienced by young people (Mishna et al., 2009; Monks et al., 2009; Olweus, 1995). For the sake of brevity and to allow for greater discussion with the participants, the scenarios were kept as short as possible. No outcome or resolution was illustrated in the scenarios, and this excluded part of the story facilitated

discussion concerning what a positive or negative outcome may look like according to the participants. The order in which the scenarios were presented to the participants was randomized to control for response bias. The gender of the characters in the scenarios was changed to match the (visible) gender of the specific participant, thus there were two sets of scenarios: one with female characters and one with male characters. This matching allowed for extra discussion regarding the perceptions of gender differences and prevented the data from pertaining to only one gender.

Development of the Questionnaire

A short questionnaire was also developed by the researchers to allow for mixed method comparisons involving quantitative data (Appendix B). The questionnaire consisted of four questions and was completed by participants after each scenario. The first question asked participants to assess the acceptability of the perpetrator's behaviour, "Stephen and Elliot's behaviour is _____" on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from '1 = not acceptable' to '5 = acceptable'. The second question assessed the frequency of behaviour, for example, "How often does stuff like this happen?" Participants responded to this question on a 5-point Likert scale from '1 = never' to '5 = a lot'. The third and fourth questions asked participants to make attributions about the characters in the scenarios. Question three assessed who was responsible for initiating the interaction, "This situation happened because of _____". Whereas question four assessed the hurtfulness of the scenario, "This situation was hurtful for _____". Both questions used a 4-point Likert scale: (victim's name) e.g., 'Susie', (bully's name) e.g., 'Stephen & Elliot', 'both', or 'neither'.

Participants

Participants were recruited from local Wellington high schools and community youth groups, such as Youthline. Advertisements were also placed in a central Wellington medical practice and additional participants were sourced through word of mouth and snowballing effects. Participants were required to be between the ages of 14 to 17 years old, needed to be willing to answer a short questionnaire and discuss hypothetical scenarios based upon possible daily events and interactions in a one on one interview. In order to gain a diverse set of opinions and experiences, participants were sought from

different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, age and gender were the only demographic information recorded for analysis.

No concrete target was set for sample size, the researcher aimed to recruit approximately 30 participants. However, recruitment was halted early due to the researcher's decision that theme saturation had been reached, that is, where further interviews were unlikely to yield any novel information (Creswell, 2008). A balance in the gender of the participants was required as this was important for the analysis of potential gender differences. Thus, the total number of participants in the study was 20: 10 females and 10 males. The study was approved by the School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee under delegated authority of Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee.

Procedure

Each interview was conducted in a location that suited the participant. The researcher gave the participant the opportunity to decide the location, whether it was in the private environment of their home or in a public setting such as a café or library. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Wellington Central Library as it provided a warm, quiet environment that was convenient for both the participant and researcher. All participants were required to provide signed consent before the commencement of the interview, and participants under the age of 16 years were also required to provide signed consent from a parent or guardian. Participants were assured that their responses would be completely confidential, and that any quotes used in the final write-up would be under a pseudonym. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher briefly explained to the participant the format of the interview. Specifically, participants were asked to read the first scenario and immediately complete the corresponding questionnaire displayed on the same page. The researcher then asked participants a series of open-ended questions regarding the scenario, dictated by the interview schedule. After participants had answered all the questions to their own satisfaction, the next scenario and questionnaire were given to the participants. This process was repeated for all four scenarios; the interview schedule and questionnaire remained the same for each scenario. Once discussion of the fourth scenario was concluded, the researcher asked participants two final questions pertaining to bullying in general.

After the interviews were completed, the researcher thanked the participants and gave them a $20 movie voucher as a gesture of appreciation for their time and participation. Participants were also given a debriefing sheet, which explained the research in greater depth and provided local support groups should the participants require further information or guidance.

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded using the researcher's iPhone and were transcribed verbatim using the Internet software Otranscribe. The transcriptions were then entered into version 10.1 of QSR NVivo. In order to gain a broad understanding of the data, the primary researcher read transcripts as a whole whilst making notes of possible themes and ideas. Doing so is an important step as it involves making sense of the text and enables the researcher to reflect on the overall meaning and gain a deeper understanding of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2008).

Coding of the data was conducted in three distinct steps. The first step organized the qualitative data based on the interview questions (questions one and three) that corresponded to the quantitative ratings. That is, a code for each of the four quantitative questions (acceptability, frequency, responsibility and hurtfulness) was created and all the information pertaining to each specific question across participants was categorized under the same code.

The second step then organized the qualitative data by scenario. Thus, a code for each of the four scenarios was created, under which all text concerning that particular scenario was categorized. The first two steps were fundamental, as this later allowed for matrix coding queries to be run using the scenarios or interview questions as the basis of the query. Moreover, coding the data in this manner enabled the researcher to easily compare whether the participant's answers to the interview questions were consistent with the quantitative data from the questionnaire, an important research objective for the study.

The third step of analysis organized the remaining qualitative data according to the corresponding interview questions and identified any themes within each question. An inductive approach of Thematic Analysis was used to identify emergent themes within each question. This approach is important because as a structured, yet exploratory study, participants' views on bullying behaviours were not already known. Therefore the study

was driven by the data, rather than by a pre-existing conceptual framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is based on the identification, organization and analysis of patterned responses or themes in the data. Thus, the primary researcher created a more detailed sub-coding structure within each broad code per question. This method was based on the emergence of unexpected themes from the data, which were not explicitly questioned or probed for during the interviews. This approach was selected as it allows for a rich and in-depth account of complex data, focusing on common ideas found throughout the data, rather than individual responses. In this way, the identified themes are strongly tied to the data itself, allowing for a more accurate depiction of the prevalent discourses (Miles & Hubermann, 1994).

The final stage consisted of interpreting and attaching meaning to the data. This step was achieved through searching for patterns, regularities and irregularities in the data (Creswell, 2008). The researcher used an application of the NVivo software, known as a 'matrix-coding query', to gain further insight into patterns in the qualitative data. Matrix-coding queries display cross-tabulations of how the data is coded. They can be used to compare what different demographic groups said about the same issue or theme and can also be used to compare attitudes. The researcher used this application to probe specific themes in more detail, and examined differing patterns in the data based on scenario, interview question and the gender of the participants. This method enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the finer elements in the data. Moreover, previous literature relevant to the emergent themes was also used to inform and aid the final interpretation.

A number of measures were undertaken to ensure the validity of the analysis. All codes were checked and double checked to make sure the same process of coding had been applied to all the interviews. The organization and grouping of data was also checked and double-checked to ensure that all data were categorized appropriately for the code and subsequent theme.

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were entered in SPSS and used for descriptive analyses pooled across scenario and interview question to compare with the qualitative data.

Results

The present study used mixed methodology, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection to best understand the social construction of bullying behaviours by New Zealand youth. Due to the breadth and quantity of data, the results are organized in the following fashion.

Section one examines the findings that pertain to the questionnaire, with each question in the questionnaire examined separately. Descriptive analyses were used to illustrate the averages and frequencies of participants' responses to each question, which were then compared to the qualitative data. As discussed in the methods section, the first two interview questions were used to expand on and give further insight into the quantitative data. Therefore, the primary aim of this section was to identify whether quantitative ratings of the scenarios (for acceptability, frequency, responsibility and hurtfulness) collected in the questionnaire were consistent with the qualitative descriptions captured in the interview.

Section two presents findings relating to each scenario individually, reporting distinct findings specific to each scenario. Here, participants' perceptions regarding different types of bullying are reported and discussed. Finally, section three addresses participants' definitions of bullying, as well as results pertaining to the interview questions regarding bystanders, the influence of setting and gender differences. The results from these questions yielded extra insight into what young people consider important when explaining and understanding of bullying situations.

Section One: Analysis by Questionnaire

Acceptability

The first question in the questionnaire completed by participants after reading each scenario asked how acceptable the bully's behaviour was. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale, where '1 = not acceptable' to '5 = acceptable'. Table 1 illustrates the number of participants to answer each category per scenario. The overall mean of acceptability averaged across scenario was low (M = 1.3, SD = .31) with low range (min = 1 to max = 2.25). As demonstrated in Table 1, none of the participant's deemed the bully's behaviour to be at all acceptable in any of the situations (4 and 5 on the Likert scale). The cyber-bullying scenario, in particular, was considered the least acceptable with 95% of participants circling 'not acceptable'. Notably, although the physical

scenario was also considered not acceptable by half of the participants, it was considered to be the most acceptable in comparison to the other scenarios, with 40% of participants responding 'somewhat not acceptable' and 10% considering the scenario to be neutral (mid-point '3' on the 5-point Likert scale). This difference has interesting implications, which will be further discussed in later sections.

Table 1.

Ratings of acceptability of the bully's behaviour according to scenario.

Rating	**Scenario**			
	Verbal	Physical	Exclusion	Cyberbullying
Not Acceptable (1)	16 (80%)	10 (50%)	15 (75%)	19 (95%)
Somewhat Not Acceptable (2)	3 (15%)	8 (40%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)
Neutral (3)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	0

The responses to the qualitative question regarding acceptability were pooled across the scenarios, and indicated that the majority of participants' responses supported their acceptability ratings in the questionnaire. Participants were direct about their opinion of the behaviors' acceptability, elaborating with little prompting their reasons for why the behaviour was not acceptable. As shown in Table 2, the explanations were categorized into five themes, referenced in approximately equal amounts by both male and female participants: hurtful, bullying, judgment, exclusion and unprovoked. The most prevalent theme regarding acceptability was that the behaviour described was considered to be hurtful to the victim, and thus unacceptable. This theme is illustrated succinctly by Anne[2], *"Yeah it's not (acceptable), cause it's making Bella feel really bad about herself and it's not acceptable to do that".* According to 17 out of the 20 participants, if the scenario was hurtful or made someone feel bad about themselves then the action was immediately classified as not acceptable. Furthermore, 'being rude' was also often used in conjunction with hurtfulness and added to the unacceptability of the behaviour. For example, Hope stated, *"Because you don't really say rude things to people because it's hurtful to them and it'd make them sad and feel unwanted."*

[2] Pseudonyms were used for confidentiality purposes.

The second theme explaining the unacceptability of the behaviour was an outright declaration of bullying. Participants often defined the situation as bullying without being asked, and used this label as a justification for why the behaviour was not acceptable. This response was demonstrated by Anton, *"yep, because I guess he's technically bullying him because he's making him feel uncomfortable and he's also hurting him. So it's like, quite a lot of aspects of bullying and I don't like that."* This view was elaborated by Jake implying that bullying is never acceptable, *"bullying's not acceptable to any extent, it just shouldn't happen at all."*

The immediate classification of bullying was also used in association with the other themes of hurtfulness, judgment and the behaviour being unprovoked. For example, Amber gave two reasons for why she regarded the behaviour as unacceptable. Firstly, she considered it to be bullying and secondly she condemned judging someone by their appearance, *"because it's a form of bullying and they shouldn't be judging someone by what they wear."* Additionally, Bella combined the theme of bullying with the idea of lack of provocation, *"because it's bullying and that's not acceptable because from the situation, from what's been given it doesn't seem like it's Georgia's fault at all. Like she's done nothing to provoke it."*

Table 2.

Matrix-coding query for the number of participants to reference each sub theme of unacceptability.

Participants	Sub Themes of Unacceptability				
	Hurtful	Bullying	Judgment	Exclusion	Unprovoked
Male	8	6	5	4	4
Female	9	6	5	5	2
Total	17	12	10	9	6

These findings suggest that New Zealand youth demonstrate a strong consensus about whether they find an action or behaviour to be acceptable or not. Furthermore, participants were able to articulate the reasons for their opinion and their decision

remained consistent across questionnaire and interview. All of the behaviours illustrated in the four scenarios were firmly considered to be unacceptable, indicating young people do not condone bullying behaviours.

Frequency

The second question examined how often participants thought each of the scenarios occurred in real life. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = never" to "5 = a lot". Participants' rating of frequency for each scenario is shown in Table 3. The mean for frequency averaged across all four scenarios was near 'neutral' (M = 3.2, SD = .64), indicating that participants' thought the scenarios occur between 'often' and 'sometimes'. Cyberbullying was considered to be the most frequent, with 60% of participants indicating it happened 'a lot' or 'often'.

Table 3.

Ratings of the frequency for each scenario.

Rating	Scenario			
	Verbal	Physical	Exclusion	Cyberbullying
Sometimes (2)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)
Neutral (3)	9 (45%)	9 (45%)	8 (40%)	5 (25%)
Often (4)	4 (20%)	7 (35%)	5 (25%)	7 (35%)
A Lot (5)	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)

Although participants were not specifically asked during the interview how common they considered the scenarios to be, they repeatedly discussed frequency without being prompted. These spontaneous qualitative responses were coded as 'often' and 'not

often', which reflected participants' classifications. Table 4 displays a matrix-coding query run for the number of participants who discussed the frequency of each scenario.

Table 4.

Matrix-coding query for number of participants to reference frequency according to scenario

Frequency	Scenario			
	Verbal	Physical	Exclusion	Cyberbullying
Often	4	1	9	3
Not Often	2	4	1	1
Total	6	5	10	4

When comparing the quantitative responses to the questionnaire in Table 3, with the qualitative interview responses in Table 4, there are differences in participants' perceived frequency of the scenarios. Participants were more varied in their quantitative responses than they were in their verbal discussions of frequency. That is, 9 out of the 20 (45%) participants considered exclusion to occur often according to qualitative data, whereas only 35% of participants considered it to happen often based on questionnaire responses. Additionally, verbal and exclusion bullying were equally considered the least likely to occur according to questionnaire responses, with 65% of participants answering either 'sometimes' or 'neutral', whereas physical bullying was considered the least likely according to participants interview responses. Therefore, unlike the acceptability of the scenarios, participants were not as consistent in their responses across both the questionnaire and interview.

Furthermore, even the qualitative responses showed variance between participants. For example, in Anne's opinion, exclusion occurs more frequently than physical bullying, *"I think it could be actually because you get a lot of groups and friends and so excluding would probably happen a lot more than pinching someone. I'd say that probably happens quite a lot."*

On the other hand, Luca suggested that verbal bullying occurs extremely regularly as individuals often do not plan what they say, rather it is spontaneous and not thought

through, *"yeah I would say this sort of thing would happen on a more than a daily basis really. That sort of stuff is inevitable, especially when you have people who aren't fully mature and are spouting out whatever they want to say."*

From these findings it is evident that young people's opinions regarding the frequency of bullying behaviours are more varied and less consistent as a group than their perceptions of acceptability. In this way, it seems that young people maintain a strong understanding that bullying behaviours are not acceptable and are able to articulate their reasons with ease. Yet, when it comes to determining the frequency of bullying behaviours, young people are uncertain, displaying individual differences in opinion that lacks consensus.

These differences are unsurprising, as this type of judgment is based on an individual's past experiences and knowledge (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Therefore, it logically follows that individuals would differentially rate the frequency of bullying behaviours. Those who have experienced or witnessed bullying in their own lives would naturally be more inclined to rate the occurrence of these behaviours as more frequent than individuals who have never experienced bullying in any form. These findings highlight that an individual's understanding often stems from their experiences and knowledge (Carroll-Lind et al., 2011), consequently differences between individuals' understanding often reflect differences in experience.

Responsibility

The third question asked participants who they thought was responsible for provoking the situation. They responded on a 4-choice scale of the victim, the bully, both or neither. As displayed in Table 5, when pooled across the four scenarios, the majority of participants (75%) indicated that it was the bully's responsibility for creating the situation. Furthermore, none of the participants circled the victim as solely responsible for any of the scenarios. In total, 21% of participants considered both the bully and the victim to be responsible, whereas 4% considered 'neither' as appropriate.

The cyberbullying scenario displayed the highest consensus among participants, with 17 participants indicating that the bully was responsible for the situation. This finding is consistent with the acceptability question, where cyberbullying was also shown to be the most unacceptable scenario. Considering that participants discussed the lack of provocation as an explanation for its unacceptability, it is not surprising that participants

responded similarly to the present question. This idea was also supported during the interviews, for example, Mike illustrated this combination succinctly, *"Like bullying's not acceptable and all that. It's just being like really rude to him without really reason. It's like just unnecessary."*

Table 5.

Table of frequencies for which role was deemed responsible for the situation per scenario.

Rating	**Scenario**				
	Verbal	Physical	Exclusion	Cyberbullying	Total
Bully	14 (70%)	14 (70%)	15 (75%)	17 (85%)	60 (75%)
Both	4(20%)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	3 (15%)	17 (21.2%)
Neither	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	0	0	3 (3.75%)

The exclusion and physical scenarios displayed the highest frequencies for alleging that both the victim and bully were equally responsible, with 25% of participants responding in this way. This result was also consistent with the qualitative data. For example, Anton believed that exclusion happens for a reason, most likely because of what the individual has done previously. Therefore, because the bully was thought to have been provoked, the victim should also be responsible, *"I guess a lot of the reason that people get excluded is because of what they do so they really shouldn't take a lot of it personally because most of it is their fault."*

Similarly, for the physical scenario, participants also assumed that the victim had done something prior to the interaction, provoking the action, and consequently both parties were judged to be equally responsible. As demonstrated by Martin, *"George could've done something terrible, like there could be something a lot worse that George has done to Harry to provoke him."*

In summary, if participants could not deduce any reasonable explanation for the bullying, they were more inclined to label the bully as solely responsible. However, for the physical and exclusion scenarios, responsibility for the situation appeared to be strongly associated with supposed provocation. Despite no indication of provocation in the scenarios, some participants were more likely to assume that the behaviour in the

exclusion and physical scenarios, in particular, were a result of the victim's previous behaviour, and consequently they identified both the bully and the victim as responsible. It is notable that this reasoning is based upon an assumption that any aggressive act seen in isolation is probably in fact embedded in a continuous history of back-and-forth aggression among the parties. Furthermore, the reason that participants perceived provocation to be a more salient factor in the physical and exclusion scenario could be linked to acceptability. If participants' judged the victim to have provoked the bully in the physical and exclusion scenarios, and thus be equally responsible, this could account for why these two scenarios were also viewed as the most acceptable. This implies that provocation has an important influence on young people's perceptions and judgments of bullying behaviours.

Hurtfulness

The fourth question asked participants to rate the hurtfulness of the action in the scenario, whether it was most hurtful for the victim, bully, both, or neither. As shown in Table 6, none of the participants rated any of the scenarios to be hurtful solely for the bully. Only one participant considered the behaviour to be hurtful for neither; this was in regards to the physical scenario.

Table 6.

Table of frequencies for deemed hurtfulness of the situation according to scenario.

Rating	Scenario				
	Verbal	Physical	Exclusion	Cyberbullying	Total
Victim	19 (95%)	17 (85%)	18 (90%)	20 (100%)	74 (92.5%)
Both	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0	5 (6.25%)
Neither	0	1 (5%)	0	0	1 (1.25%)

In total, 92.5% of participants rated the scenarios to be solely hurtful for the victim. This is an overwhelming majority, ranging from 85% for the physical scenario to 100% for the cyberbullying scenario. Despite the majority of participants (85%) indicating that the physical scenario was solely hurtful for the victim, this scenario stimulated more response variance than the other scenarios. This finding was also reflected in the

qualitative data, in that it was evident that participants viewed physical acts as less harmful than the verbal and cyberbullying scenarios. For example, Jake stated, *"Well I mean, again it doesn't show how George reacts to it. I mean the other one (the verbal scenario), he didn't- it was more teasing, more bullying than- more a personal attack. Rather than, what seems to me to be play fighting"*

This perspective could be explained by the use of 'pinching' as a form of physical bullying in the scenario. This may not be considered as serious as other behaviours such as punching or kicking and therefore influenced participants to view the scenario as less serious than they otherwise would. For example, Hamish demonstrated the perceived lack of seriousness, *"cause it's possibly not that much of a bother, it's just a pinch. And it only happens for about a second or something."* Furthermore, Mike elaborated on this idea by illustrating that the behaviour could be viewed as a joke, *"Well I mean, it's just like a pinch. Like it's nothing too incredibly hurtful or anything but you still wouldn't do it and it could just be kinda like banter or something."* This minimisation of aggression as 'play' is an important theme, which will be discussed in later sections.

In contrast, participants displayed a 100% consensus that cyberbullying was solely hurtful for the victim. This consensus was also apparent throughout the qualitative data, for example, Jake stated, *"that's a very personal attack to them. It's singling them out, not in public, but it's making them feel really rubbish about themselves. Especially in the instance of- that can be very hurtful."* Moreover, Heather considered the hurtfulness of cyberbullying to be worse than other scenarios because the bully does it purely for fun,

> *"Because it's just so mean, nobody's getting anything out of it. The other situation (exclusion), people were I guess doing it because they don't exactly feel like they can have as much fun with that person but these people are just doing it for fun, if you know what I mean."*

In conclusion, based on the quantitative data, cyberbullying was reported to be the most unacceptable, the most frequent, solely due to the bully, and the most hurtful. These findings are largely consistent with qualitative responses that identified the lack of provocation and the harmful effects as being the main explanations for participants' questionnaire responses. Conversely, the behaviour in the physical scenario was considered the most acceptable and displayed the highest variation in responses for responsibility and hurtfulness; again, these findings were supported by the qualitative data. The perceived frequency of bullying was the only line of question that did not

produce consistency between quantitative and qualitative data. This result is not surprising as it is based on the subjective individual experiences of the participants who may or may not have witnessed bullying behaviours. This idea was also not explicitly asked during the interview and therefore not all participants provided their opinion. Given the interesting distinctions between the scenarios and types of bullying touched on in this section, the following section will examine data pertaining to each scenario in greater detail.

Section Two: Analysis by Scenario

This section separated the results according to scenario. During data analysis, codes were created for each of the four scenarios, where all data concerning to each scenario was included. Thus, any distinct differences in the way participants perceived the four scenarios were examined, and any findings specific to a particular scenario were discussed.

Verbal

As demonstrated in Table 1, 80% of the participants rated the scenario describing verbal bullying as not acceptable. However, as displayed in Table 7, when participants discussed the reasons for why verbal bullying was unacceptable, the majority of participants stated that the fact that the victim was being judged for their expression and choice of clothing was unacceptable, rather than focusing on the verbal name-calling and insult.

Table 7.

Matrix-coding query for the number of participant references for each sub theme of unacceptability according to scenario.

Scenarios	Sub Themes of Unacceptability				
	Hurtful	Bullying	Judgment	Exclusion	Unprovoked
Verbal	8	6	10	0	1
Physical	9	3	0	0	4
Exclusion	8	2	2	9	1

Cyberbullying	11	6	2	0	2

For example, when asked why he deemed it unacceptable Anton stated,

> *"well, he shouldn't really be judging him because that's what he wants to wear. Yes so, yeah I think it's wrong to judge people on what they want to wear and kind of, mufti clothes kind of represent you know kinda who you are. It's not acceptable to make fun of that. Yeah."*

Here, Anton focused on the judgment and lack of freedom for expression, rather than the fact that verbally insulting someone can be hurtful and that in itself is wrong. Sarah, however, discussed the theme of judgment and discrimination within the context of hurtfulness, acknowledging that judgment precedes hurt. That is, through judgment someone can get hurt, which in turn is not acceptable.

> *"what people wear is a way people express themselves and if someone wants to wear black they can. I don't think Steph and Ellie have any right to say that it isn't ok to do that. I think Susie would be pretty hurt at the end of the day, she might realise that they're not exactly real friends if they keep doing that. No I just don't think that's acceptable. It's not like the norm, it's not like there's a norm to dress or anything, especially cause it's mufti day. I think Susie should be able to wear anything without anyone else telling her off or annoying her about it."*

Similarly, Anne used discrimination instead of judgment to illustrate the hurtfulness and unacceptability of the scenario, "*yeah I would cause they're discriminating against Susie and they're putting her down. And that won't make Susie feel good at all, so I would say that's bullying."*

The theme of judgment was only central in the verbal scenario. This is not surprising as the scenario described verbal bullying on the basis that the victim's choice of clothing differed from the norm, triggering judgment from the bullies. It is important to highlight that participants acknowledged this and used it as a factor for determining whether the scenario described bullying.

From these findings, it would appear that the concept of judgment and discrimination is instrumental in young people's understanding of verbal bullying. It could be argued that this is just a function and limitation of the way the scenario was written. However, as demonstrated by participants, such as Anne and Sarah, these

findings suggest that according to young people, a lot of verbal bullying is preceded by and a result of judgment. This could have serious implications for how verbal bullying is presented and discussed in intervention programmes.

Physical

Overall findings suggest that physical bullying was perceived by participants to be less hurtful and more likely to be a joke than the other three types of bullying. Yet, even if was not necessarily viewed as a joke, participants still considered physical bullying, as defined by the scenario, to be the least hurtful. For example, Anna stated *"that was more not acceptable (verbal scenario) because it was like to her face and they were rolling their eyes at her and I would say that's more, that shows more that you don't like someone or like you are like it's a negative thing to than pinching someone in the back."* From this quote it is apparent that Anna did not think that physical pain is greater than emotional pain. She viewed verbal bullying as something that would affect a person's self-confidence, and the outcomes of this action were worse than being physically hurt.

Furthermore, when asked to give possible reasons for the behaviour, participants' reasons for physical bullying were more varied than other scenarios, suggesting that it could have been a joke or that the bully was provoked. Interestingly, participants also proposed that the bully could be acting out of jealousy or simply seeking attention, neither of which were reasons discussed in other scenarios; for example, Isabella said, *"to be annoying, might not like the people they're talking to or wanting to get attention. I would say most likely wanting to get attention from the group or from Georgia, she might want to be her friend or something."*

This idea that physical bullying could be perceived as a joke or good-natured 'banter' is consistent with previous research regarding physical bullying (Pellegrini, 1995; Reed et al., 2000; Stassen Berger, 2007). Stassen Berger (2007) asserts that physical bullying is often viewed as good-natured teasing and play fighting, especially among males. It is because of this attribution that physical bullying can be hard to discern and discipline sometimes, as 'it was only a joke' has become such a common excuse of the behaviour.

Exclusion

The exclusion scenario describing relational bullying did not have as many distinguishing findings compared to the other scenarios. However, it was still consistently considered to be a form of bullying, which could be hurtful and isolating for the victim. Interestingly, participants believed that if the victim was given a reason for their exclusion, rather than just being ignored, this legitimized the bully's behaviour. Mike illustrated this idea well,

> *"It's bullying someone without telling them why but it's fine to exclude someone as long as you tell them why…If they've done something wrong/provoked the exclusion then people shouldn't be obligated to include just because they're in a team or whatever."*

Jake extended this idea even further by describing how exclusion could be viewed as a positive action, *"When someone is a part of something they should be included. Yet excluding may not necessarily be a bad thing; it could be for the best if they don't get along."* Anton also agreed with this idea and elaborated further that exclusion may even be in the best interest of the victim,

> *"making up excuses from the exclusion is both a good and bad thing. Good because they are trying to prevent the individual from being hurt, therefore that shows that they're not necessarily excluding him to hurt him. Yet they're still lying, which is not good."*

Similar to the physical scenario, although participants' viewed and discussed exclusion as a form of bullying, they clearly perceived it as less serious and harmful than two other types of bullying: verbal and cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying

As discussed in the previous section, participants viewed cyberbullying as the overall worst, most severe scenario. Anna succinctly described how cyberbullying is commonly viewed as gutless and an easy form of bullying,

> *"I guess like everyone cyber bullies you know. Like, sends a rude message to someone or cause like often I think people say stuff over the internet that they wouldn't say in person, so they'll message it because they think they're too scared to face it in person so they wouldn't actually say it in person but because they can now say it online they will, because they can hide kind of."*

Participants view cyberbullying as cowardly because the bully 'hides behind the screen' reducing the chance of consequence or repercussion, for example Amber stated,

> "*it's a form of social like um what's the word.. cyberbullying. And it's like that's something that's these days is quite common unfortunately because of the Internet and then people feel as if they can't say something to someone in person so they'll go and say it online".*

Bella also described this idea,

> *"But when it's over the Internet, they're behind a screen, it's the most cowardly way. If you're not going to like somebody that's fine, but if you're going to tell them from behind a screen, that's like wow you big kid you. It's just pathetic really. And how easy it is to do, you know about ask.fm? It's like people do that anonymously and they've said hurtful comments and I guess it's so easy to do that to people, really really hurt them. Yeah just behind a screen."*

Furthermore, participants often viewed cyberbullying to be more harmful to the victim than other forms of bullying. This perception is because the hurtful comments follow the victim outside of school, making it harder to get away from. Additionally, the victim is often alone when they read the messages, which enhances feelings of isolation and loneliness. As Sarah explained,

> *"if you're on Facebook, you're normally alone online. If you're alone you tend to think about a lot of things. Bella probably gets more of an impact on seeing this online alone than listening to people say that to her while there are a lot of people around. If there's a lot of people around, there's bound to be at least one person to tell them to stop or asks if she's alright. If she's alone there's no one to do that for her. She just sees the messages and thinks about whether it's true. It would be hurtful."*

The finding that cyberbullying was perceived as the worst type of bullying is consistent with previous cyberbullying research. Mishna and colleagues (2009) also conducted a qualitative study, which investigated young peoples' perspectives of cyberbullying. Similar to the present study's findings, participants discussed the effects of anonymity in cyberbullying. According to their participants, online anonymity enabled bullies to freely act in aggressive and hurtful ways that they may not otherwise do in the 'face-to-face world'. This is an important finding as it illustrates that young people's perceptions of cyberbullying can be consistent across different samples and methods of collecting data, adding to the validity of the research. This result also has significant

implications for the severity and effects of cyberbullying. If youth consistently agree that cyberbullying is the most detrimental yet easiest form of bullying to perform, more needs to be done to reduce the effects of this insidious behaviour.

In summary, analysing the four scenarios separately has revealed interesting findings, demonstrating crucial points of difference for how young people understand and talk about the different types of bullying. In answer to the second research objective, findings from the present study have demonstrated that young people do perceive the types of bullying differently. Participants undoubtedly considered cyberbullying to be the worst and most harmful form of bullying, a finding that has been consistently supported by previous research (Dooley, Pyżalski, & Cross, 2009; Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012; Tokunaga, 2010). Verbal bullying was considered the second most hurtful, with exclusion and physical bullying considered less serious. Specifically, physical bullying was often not even considered bullying, rather as a joke or banter.

Aside from comparing cyberbullying with traditional bullying, there is little research that examines how young people perceive the severity of different forms of bullying. This is an important area of bullying research that needs further exploration as this is the most accurate means of informing peers, parents, teachers, researchers and ideally intervention programmes where help is most needed (Sticca & Perren, 2013).

Section Three: Influential Factors

Section three includes findings that relate to the rest of the interview schedule. Results regarding participants' definitions of bullying are discussed first. Although participants were not asked about their definition of bullying until the end of the interview, this was a major objective of the study; therefore it seems appropriate that results about young people's definitions should be discussed first. The remaining findings are then presented in the order that they were asked according to the interview schedule: the influence of bystanders, the influence of setting and gender differences, respectively.

Definition of bullying; Are academic definitions consistent with what New Zealand youth say?

The third objective of the present study was to ascertain whether academic definitions of bullying behaviours accurately depict what young New Zealanders consider as bullying. During the interview participants were asked to define bullying, "In your own words, can you describe what you think bullying is?" Emily perfectly identified the problem faced by researchers and the general public alike:

> *"Bullying, I feel like, yeah definitely. I feel like almost everyone goes through it, I don't know if I've met anyone who hasn't gone through or maybe they think they haven't gone through it because no one knows what to define bullying as, so yeah."*

Yet, despite the ongoing difficulties of defining bullying behaviour, participants did show a general understanding of bullying that is consistent in some respects with academic definitions. As discussed in the introduction, research categorizes bullying by four main elements: harm, intent, repetition and a power differential. All participants acknowledged that bullying had to demonstrate harm to the victim, agreeing with the first academic requirement of bullying. If the victim outwardly displayed distress, being upset or hurt, all participants classified the behaviour as bullying. For example, Isabella stated, *"I would say it's if you make someone else feel bad in anything situation. No matter whether it's a person, the media, a song, whether it's anything, if someone ends up feeling bad because of something, that's bullying."*

However, participants did not place as much emphasis on the need for intent and a difference in power. Furthermore, participants varied in their opinions of whether bullying should be repetitive or not. Half of the participants explicitly referenced repetition in their definitions; seven participants argued that bullying could be a one-off occurrence, whereas three participants thought it should be repetitive. Anne agreed that it could be a one-off, with a further reference to the importance of harm over any other element:

> *"no it can just happen once, it doesn't matter how many times it is. It's bullying if you call someone a name once, it's still going to make them feel bad about themselves even if you don't do it anymore. Yeah you could call someone a bitch just one time and they'll remember that for the rest of their life, that's bullying. It can be anything."*

Furthermore, only one participant discussed the need for a power differential between the bully and victim, none of the other participants referenced this element of bullying at all. This is particularly interesting as this component was stressed by Olweus (1993; 1995) to be central to the concept of bullying. Sarah, the only participant to discuss it, reflected Olweus' assertions,

> *"I personally don't think that's the only thing. I think could be for just one on one. If it's one on one, it's normally a fight or argument but if one's weaker than another, which most of the time means the stronger has more people than the weaker. They just use being strong as a weapon to hurt the weaker and they know that they're doing that. I think getting hurt when you're weaker than someone is bullying. If you get hurt with just one person with equal abilities, I think that's not bullying. I think that's a fight. Cause you have the ability to fight back"*

Whether operational definitions of bullying require an intent to harm is an area of contention, according to Stassen Berger (2007). However, in the present study, 14 out of the 20 participants asserted that bullying does not have to be intentional. Bella stated, *"I don't think it has to be intentional, cause again it could be subconscious and it's the actions that end up hurting people"* Here, Bella indicated that, to her, bullying is determined by whether someone gets hurt. Rose also illustrated that bullying does not have to include intention, *"I think they could bully someone else without realising it. Definitely could do that, I think lots of people don't realise they're bullying someone. Like most of my friends probably wouldn't have realised what they were doing was hurtful."*

This result is supported by previous findings where young people have not included the intention as one of their requirements for bullying (Naylor et al., 2006).Similarly, Vaillancourt and colleagues (2008) found that young people were not inclined to include the three key elements of bullying endorsed by academics. Results showed that 92% of their participants discussed negative behaviours in relation to bullying, but intentionality (1.7%), repetition (6%) and an imbalance of power (26%) were not central to the majority of young people's definitions. Likewise, it was these three elements that were most contentious to participants in the present study.

Reaction of the Victim

Rather than focusing on repetition, a power imbalance or intent to harm, participants tended to emphasise the reaction of the victim as a salient factor in defining whether a

behaviour was perceived to be bullying or not. Specifically, results showed that the reaction of the victim in the scenario did have the power to change participants' opinions about whether bullying had occurred and the severity of the action. If they considered the action to be hurtful to the victim, based on the victim's reaction, then participants considered the interaction as bullying. Furthermore, the reaction of the victim had more influence on participants' definitions than setting in which the behaviour occurred. For example, Emily explained,

> "*I think it all depends honestly how the person reacts to it. And that's what changes the scenario, not necessarily whether it's on social media or not. But obviously, I guess social media would be easier to break the person because it's more in public, everyone sees it so it's kinda like more embarrassing. And I think it would get more hurtful easily, just because the fact that everyone can see it and they're seeing that and if they add on to it then it just makes it worse.. yeah."*

In this quote Emily identified that regardless of the setting, whether the behaviour is perceived as bullying or not depends on the reaction of the victim. She used the setting of social media to describe the embarrassment of outsiders being able to see the interaction and how this could heighten the victim's pain. Jake also supported this theme, *"I think so. It's more publicly embarrassing for the individual."*

According to Sticca and Perren (2013), young people perceived publicity to be a more important and detrimental aspect of bullying than the type of bullying or setting in which the interaction occurred. The results show that public bullying was rated as far more severe than private bullying, especially for public cyberbullying (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Sticca & Perren, 2013). These results are supported by the present study, which have demonstrated that the publicity of the scenario affected participants' perceptions of how severe and harmful bullying was to the victims.

Friendship

Furthermore, when asked whether participants would consider the scenario to be bullying or not, a common response was "it depends on their relationship". The consensus among participants seemed to be that if the bully and victim were friends, then the situation would not be considered as bullying, rather it was viewed as a joke between friends, as explained by Hamish, *"if they're friends, it'd most likely just be seen as playful*

fun or whatever." He later elaborated on this point, acknowledging that friends can bully each other but the intention to harm is not as prevalent as it would be amongst strangers; thus implying that bullying between friends would not be considered as serious:

> *"Friends can bully each other at times but generally most of the time it's banter and it doesn't really mean anything because they don't really mean it in a way. They just do it just for the time being and then they stop. Whereas if people weren't friends, they would constantly do it more and more over time and that would be, I'd classify that as bullying."*

Furthermore, Bella extended this idea by implying that verbally aggressive behaviour might not necessarily be considered as bullying between friends, but the behaviour may still trigger some negative thoughts and emotions for the victim, e.g., feelings of self-doubt due to the uncertainty of the friends' reasons for laughter:

> *"it depends what the relationship is between the people. It would still be bullying, yes. But if the three of them were all friends, it would not be seen as bullying to Susie. It would be the same situation where it would be like is this- are they having a laugh, are they serious kind of thing. Because it's a hit and miss situation really, they can ask her but when they start laughing at her, you're like are they laughing because I'm different or are they laughing because they hate it and they want me to change."*

All of the participants described the concept of joking within friendships at least once during their interview. The idea that joking is an intrinsic part of friendships is supported by decades of research on the functions of humour (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003). According the Martin and colleagues (2003), humour is a multifaceted construct that can be split into four related dimensions: self-enhancing (humour to enhance a sense of self), self-defeating (to enhance relationship at the expense of self), aggressive (to enhance the self but at the expense of others) and affiliative (humour to enhance relationships). Consistent with this research, participants in the present study explained possible bullying behaviour according to the aggressive dimension. Furthermore the affiliative dimension was also discussed in the context of non-bullying behaviours.

According to Anne, the distinction between a joke and bullying can be made by whether both parties participate in the exchange. If one party is not engaging in the behaviour and does not like it, then the behaviour becomes unacceptable, *"not unless both of them know it's a joke and both of them don't mind it and they think it's a thing that they*

do. But then with this sort of situation, it doesn't seem like it. Georgia doesn't like it. I don't think it's acceptable". Hope also illustrated this point, namely that jokes have the potential to get out of hand and turn into a bullying situation, *"Maybe at the beginning like when she's just kind of joking, but when it's harder proper pinching then maybe. I don't know, that's how people act sometimes. They're kind of joking and making fun."*

In this way, participants described the aggressive dimension of humour, whereby an individual is being entertained at the expense of their peer (Martin et al., 2003). According to findings, this is where the distinction between joking behaviour and bullying behaviour becomes blurred, as Emily stated,

> *"um like I said before, it is bullying if it gets too far cause- it's really it's really hard cause like I said, there's a really thin line between joking and bullying. So I think it's like both, I think it's like a joke and bullying because jokes still hurt. Like, well they do still hurt."*

Similarly, research has demonstrated that this type of humour is linked to hostility, low self-esteem and negative emotions (Martin et al., 2003; Yip & Martin, 2006), giving support to participants' opinions that jokes can be hurtful and have a negative impact on the recipients.

Furthermore, the results highlighted the importance of whether the victim acknowledges the behaviour as a joke or not. According to participants, this was another way to distinguish between joking and bullying behaviours. For example, Anna stated, "*does Bella know it's a joke? That's how you know if it's bullying. Cause if Bella knows it's a joke and maybe she's joking back and then it's fine but in that situation, she's not joking back. I would say it's affecting her"*

In this way, it is up to the recipient of the joke to determine whether it is acceptable or not (i.e., bullying behaviour), similar to participants' emphasis on the reaction of the victim as a determining factor. Here, the idea of individual differences becomes important, as it acknowledges that each individual has different levels of tolerance. An action that would be hurtful to one person may be considered 'friendly banter' to another, thus adding to the ambiguity of defining these behaviours, both in an academic sense but also in real-world situations. For example, Emily stated,

> *"some people are more sensitive than others…But I get that everyone has a different line between the two, because everyone has different emotions and everyone's been through different things so their capacity for that kind of banter is more, is bigger than others. Yeah so I think it just depends on the*

person…like people joke around they think like oh I could take it like that's not even like mean but it actually is because the person, what they can handle is different than, to the other person."

Participants also identified that jokes are important to friendships because they allow people to acknowledge things without necessarily being hurtful. Luca raised the idea that teasing can be good for individuals as it can make light of something that may otherwise be uncomfortable when discussed in a serious manner. This idea is consistent with Martin and colleagues' (2003) affiliative dimension of humour.

"well if they're your friend then you're probably accepting them for your differences. If they're truly your friends then I think you've already gotten over their difference and when you're teasing you're just sort of pointing them out. Saying you're like that and I'm like this and I'm just going to point it out for whatever reason. I think joking is kind of important because it makes the subject, like you don't have to approach it you can just leave it and everyone's fine with it."

These findings highlight the complex nature of friendship and indicates how this ambiguity can influence whether an interaction is deemed to be bullying or not. Although there is no doubt that joking can serve as a positive means of communication in most friendships, it is also important to note that jokes can be interpreted negatively and may have a harmful effect on the recipient.

In summary, participants demonstrated a broader understanding of bullying than what is specified in the academic literature. According to participants, the most important elements of bullying are inflicting harm on the victim and the victim's reaction as well as taking into account the ambiguity of joking in friendships. Previous research was reflected in participants' understanding that bullying can occur at any age (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005; Wolke et al., 2013), and across multiple settings (Monks et al., 2009), supporting Anne's statement, *"no you get bullying all throughout life, you'll always meet people that you dislike. People that will put you down and things like that... It will affect you for a long time."* Thus from these findings, and the growing consensus among qualitative research, it is apparent that young people's definitions of bullying are not limited to the criteria dictated by researchers. According to young people, bullying does not need to be intentional, repetitive or reflect an abuse of power. This difference in the definition of bullying could have significant implications for reported prevalence rates of bullying and victimization.

The Effect of Bystanders

During the interview, participants were asked, "if you saw this, what do you think you would do?" Participants based their possible intervention most commonly on their relationship with those directly involved, as displayed in Table 8. In this way, participants felt more comfortable and confident intervening if they knew either or both of the parties involved. According to Heather, if the bystander did not know the victim or bully, he or she would be less likely to intervene because he or she could not as easily predict how either would react to their interference, *"yeah if I knew them, I guess I think if it was complete strangers it'd be harder to do something about it as well. Just because, yeah you don't know them and you don't know how they're going to react."*

Therefore, the bystander would use knowledge from their relationship with the bully or victim to gauge the possible outcomes from their intervention. If the bystander was deciding whether to intervene based solely on the information gained from the witnessed interaction, without any prior knowledge of the dispositions of either party, how would the bystander accurately perceive what was actually happening? Furthermore, if the bystander did intervene, it could potentially make the situation even worse or the bystander could make a fool out of him- or herself, especially if the interaction was actually just a joke or ritual re-enacted between friends, as described by Martin,

> *"I mean if you don't know the people then it's harder to judge what's actually happening, whether it's really bad or actually just banter between people who know each other. If I was just walking down the street and saw this happening, I probably wouldn't do anything because what if I had it wrong, I would make a fool of myself. What if it was just the way that they greet each other?"*

Table 8.

Number of references per scenario regarding participants' reason for intervention if they were bystanders

Scenario	Reasons for Intervention or Not		
	Depends on Relationship	If Severity Increased	No Intervention

Verbal	16	5	2
Physical	5	11	2
Exclusion	4	1	5
Cyberbullying	9	1	0

The second reason for intervention was that participants would intervene if the behaviour continued and increased in severity, thereby increasing the likelihood of harming the victim. Rose used this reason to strengthen the likelihood of intervention even if she did not know either the victim or the bully,

> *"If it was someone I knew, if I knew the victim or if I knew the bully then I'd probably would but to be honest I don't know. If I could see the person was clearly upset by their mocking or if it continued lots then maybe. But if it was something I just saw in passing and the person didn't look all that offended and was still pretty sure about themselves then I'd just leave it. Because I wouldn't want to intervene where I didn't know either people…The only circumstance where I'd intervene if I didn't know either of them would be if I could tell that the person really wasn't- was really upset or if it was just on going and they were just being really horrible about it. Maybe I suppose I could also tell a teacher what I was seeing and not necessarily personally intervene, mention it to the dean or something"*

The idea of that the increased severity of hurtfulness triggers bystander intervention was particularly salient when discussing the physical scenario. This is not surprising given that most participants viewed the behaviours in this scenario as joking or banter, therefore it would make sense for them not to want to intervene. However, participants asserted that if they perceived the situation to get worse or continue for an inappropriate length of time, they would be more inclined to intervene. This was demonstrated by Hamish, *"not really unless it turns into something worse, like punching or something"*. Anna agreed that she would be more likely to do something if she saw the action happen countless times, "*I'd probably would ask Harriet why like after I saw it heaps and heaps"*.

When discussing why participants' would not intervene if they witnessed the four scenarios first hand, aside from the uncertainties that would arise if they did not know the individuals involved, the chief reason given was that participants did not think their intervention would make any difference to the outcome of the scenario.

This explanation can be broken down into two components. Firstly, participants' identified that they did not feel like they were in a position to question the interaction. And secondly, that even if they did question or intervene, their intervention would hold

no power and therefore would not change the outcome. The first point was explained succinctly by Bella, *"I would like to say something but it wouldn't be my place to"*, implying that from her position as an outsider, she did not think she has any right to interfere in the matters of other people. Luca illustrated the second component when discussing what would happen if he did intervene, *"they'll just consider you really strange and not take your advice"*.

Therefore, it is apparent that participants' attitudes regarding a lack of self-efficacy are likely to determine bystander behaviour. These findings support previous research, implying that if an individual doesn't believe their intervention would be successful or make a difference to the outcome of the situation, they would be unlikely to intervene (Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). As an example, Martin positioned himself as the outsider with little power to influence the outcome. Yet he extended this idea by illustrating that he would still refrain from intervening despite knowing that intervening would be the right thing to do,

> *"yeah it's hard to say. If I knew the person, I probably would say something. Or at least take notice, I wouldn't just pretend nothing's happening. It's tough to intervene in something that's not really your business. It's not really my business even though it really is the right thing to do."*

This idea reflects academic assertions that despite young people's knowledge that bullying is wrong and should be acted upon, often young people still do not intervene despite their personal beliefs (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Salmivalli, 2010). This is because intervening in a bullying situation may go against social norms or would not be considered socially desirable behaviour by the peer group. So instead of doing what they know to be right, young people are more likely behave in accordance with social expectations to prevent themselves from being viewed undesirably by the group. Emily also emphasized this point,

> *"No I wouldn't. Like I know that sounds really bad cause it's like bystander. Like even when I see it now I just don't do anything about it cause to me it's, not because it's just a joke it's just because I don't want to be a part of it. Like, I don't want to like fire them up by adding another joke or you're just being like a kind of buzz kill if you like stop it."*

Thus, assertions made by previous research that group norms and peer pressure regulate bullying-related behaviours, making it harder to act in accordance with personal

beliefs (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), are consistent with young peoples' own rationales for their lack of intervention.

It is also important to note that the factors influencing bystander intervention were consistent across gender. Both male and female participants' perceptions of bystander behaviour were determined by peer relationships and the perceived level of hurtfulness of the action for the victim. Yet as displayed in Table 9, female participants were more likely to intervene as a bystander for all three categories when compared with male participants. Additionally male participants more frequently stated that they would not intervene at all when compared with female participants. Although the differences are not large, they show a consistent trend with previous research, which has demonstrated that it is more typical of females to intervene and aid the victim whilst males tend to assist or encourage the bullying (O'Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996). For example, Hamish stated he would *"maybe laugh to myself and continue on walking or I would just walk past doing nothing."* This action would not be considered actively assisting the bully, but could certainly be viewed as encouraging the behaviour, especially if the bully were to see his laughter. Furthermore, Marc described that he would act in accordance with his peer group and "*probably just go with the flow and not let him (join in with the group)"* This could arguably be considered as a 'reinforcer' behaviour, through allowing the continued exclusion and bullying of one individual.

Table 9.

Number of references per gender regarding who participants' would intervene with if they were bystanders

Gender	Intervention Towards			
	Externally	Bully	Victim	No Action
Male	9	11	2	8
Female	12	14	8	6
Total	21	25	10	14

Part of the fourth research objective of the present study was to ascertain whether understandings of bullying differ dependent on where the person situates him- or herself and their behaviour. From these findings, it is apparent that perceptions do differ

according to where an individual positions him- or herself. Focusing specifically on bystander perceptions, the findings once again illustrate the importance of peer relationships when it comes to understanding these behaviours. If the individuals know each other, they are likely to use previous knowledge gained from their relationship, which not only influences their perceptions of the interaction but also helps them maneuver and understand the nuances present with each instance of bullying. For example, as highlighted by the participants, it is clear that if a bystander has a close relationship with either victim or bully, this knowledge aids in the bystander's ability to accurately predict the possible outcomes of situation, which in turn increases the likelihood of bystander intervention. Conversely, if the bystander does not know the individuals directly involved, it is difficult for the bystander to confidently make attributions about the behaviours and therefore, unless in extreme cases, will be less likely to intervene as they do not feel they are in a position of power to do so.

Furthermore, the present study has shown that young people's understandings of bystanders in bullying situations are consistent with previous research examining bullying as a group process (Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Salmivalli, 2010). Thus, it is apparent that young people also view bullying as a group process and are aware of the reciprocal influence that bystanders have on a bullying situation. That is, participants acknowledged that bullying would be more hurtful and embarrassing for victims when in the presence of bystanders (as discussed in the previous section) yet they also recognised bystanders play an important role in the occurrence of bullying through their possible intervention.

Influence of Setting

Another part of the fourth research objective was to determine whether the environment in which bullying occurred influenced how participants perceived the behaviour. According to the interview schedule, participants were asked "if this situation happened in a different environment (for example at school) would this change your opinion about whether it is/is not bullying? Why?" In response to this question, 17 out of the 20 participants identified that the setting in which the behaviour occurred did not influence whether they considered the behaviour to be bullying or not. As discussed by Anton, "*yeah I think no matter the setting or like the gender, I think yeah it's bullying no*

matter what. Like I said before, it's kind of making them feel quite uncomfortable and stuff. So yeah, it's definitely bullying under any scenario, it is bullying."

Anne also indicated this point-of-view, *"yeah I'd say it was bullying anywhere it happened, it doesn't really matter who it is or where it is."* This quote illustrated that not only did the environment not influence her opinion, the influence of social positioning, such as who the bully is, also did not matter. According to Jake, it is completely black and white, regardless of the setting, "*Bullying is never ok, never"* Additionally, participants' who did not classify the behaviours as bullying were also not influenced by a change in setting. For example, Amber asserted, *"probably would still think it was the same kind of scenario. Like they're just mucking around."*

In summary, according to our participants, the setting in which bullying occurs does not much influence the categorisation of bullying. Other factors, such as the reaction of the victim or publicity of the action, hold a stronger influence on the perceived hurtfulness of the interaction. These factors may vary across settings, in which case young people's perceptions may also vary, but it is not the setting itself that seems to dictate perceptions of bullying.

Gender Differences

The final question that was asked for each scenario regarded participants' perceptions of gender differences in bullying, *"If this situation happened with [the opposite sex than presented in the scenario]_____, would that change your opinion about anything? Why/Why not?"* Findings showed that in general, participants believed that bullying behaviours in general are about equal across genders. For example Sarah stated that,

> *"I don't think so. I don't think it would make a difference, I think it would just be the same. No matter if it's a girl or a boy, it's going to still annoy that person. And the person being annoying could be a girl or a boy. Yeah I don't think there'd be much difference".*

Yet, nearly every participant made the distinction that the frequency of certain types of bullying differed according to gender. Regardless of their own gender, participants agreed that the frequency of verbal and physical bullying differed significantly between genders. Participants believed physical bullying to be more indicative of male behaviour, as discussed by Anna,

"probably cause it's like physical. I think boys are more physical…like you're literally like pinching someone so I would say guys would more often like punch a guy, or something you know. I would say guys would probably do something like this rather than the eye rolling."

In contrast, verbal bullying was considered the most common form for females. Participants viewed females as naturally more spiteful and intentional in their bullying and used this as an explanation for the gender differential, Anne "*I think girls are more into verbal bullying, they're more bitchy and talking behind backs and gossipy and stuff."* Participants' views are consistent with previous research, Scheithauer, Hayer, Petermann and Jugert (2006) reported that significantly more boys were physically bullied than girls, whereas female students tend to bully through gossip and verbal interactions (Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001; Lehman, 2014).

Furthermore, although participants considered boys to be more physical, they did not believe that all of the physical behaviour occurred with the same intention of causing harm. Rather, participants were more likely to consider physical behaviour as play fighting and joking around. Participants noted the apparent difficulty differentiating between joke and intentionally harmful behaviour, as explained by Bella,

"it kind of depends because some guys are very rough in general, like that's just the way that they act around their mates. So it's hard to draw that line between whether it's a joke or whether it's bullying. But I think it would still be the same for the person getting pinched or pushed etc. They'd find it difficult to distinguish between bullying and having a laugh because it's like are they overreacting or are they not. And then sometimes people get carried away. But then that's the kind of thing that some people do."

These results support previous research that has shown males' tendency to partake in play fighting and R&T (Pellegrini, 1995), which can be extremely difficult to distinguish from bullying and displays of aggression (Reed et al., 2000; Smith & Lewis, 1985). Furthermore, participants implied that this ambiguity makes it harder for males to speak out against physical bullying as they might be seen to be over-reacting. For example, Rose stated,

"no, I don't think so. I think just from a lot of boys I know, they wouldn't show it as much. I mean I can imagine the other boy- it would be easier to cover up as a playful thing because they're boys but I think it's still bullying even if it's harder to tell that he doesn't like it."

Martin also agreed with this idea, asserting that males are pressured to depict an image of strength, especially when concerning physical behaviour, *"I would say with boys. It gets dismissed really, as being this tiny little thing, like man up. You don't really think much more of it, it's just a pinch."*

Thus, it is apparent that masculinity stereotypes surrounding bullying prevent males from being able to speak out about their problems, for fear of being labeled a 'wimp' or a 'pussy', Henry illustrated this effectively, "*cause then you'd get shut down from other guys like 'ah you're such a pussy'".* According to participants, masculinity discourses dictate how boys should look. It is now common and expected that boys go to the gym in order to achieve a muscular and strong 'masculine' appearance.

Interestingly, female participants emphasized the adverse effects that stereotyping males could have, whilst male participants, although they acknowledged the stereotypes, did not explicitly discuss the issues that could arise from this. For example, Emily discussed,

> *"yes and I don't know, people who are small- the guys who are built smaller, they can't really change that but they still like make fun of the person for that or like they make fun of like how much that person can lift at the gym or whatever. And it's like ridiculous. And I think, like I know that like girls have like self body issues but like so do guys nowadays especially. Like I feel like, we're on the same level now with the whole body image, the way we see ourselves. It used to be like oh only girls see themselves in a bad way when they look in the mirror but like guys do as well. Yeah because there's this whole standard of what guys are supposed to look like and when they can't reach that because of their body shape, like how it's just normally like then it's kind of I don't know. They kind of get put down for that."*

This perception is also supported by previous literature; the social status of being an athlete in schools has been closely tied to popularity and perceptions of masculinity (Morris, 2008). According to Lehman (2014), being an athlete reduced male students' inclinations for reporting bullying victimization. This fact suggests that whilst Emily's opinion was accurate, in order to minimize bullying, males must appear physically strong and masculine otherwise they run the risk of victimization.

Participants also drew on prevalent gender discourses to explain how bullying affects males and females differently. Discourses were used as explanations for common behaviours and reactions to bullying, for example Isabella stated, *"I don't think there are*

gender differences, I just think the way that boys and girls take it is very different. Same with ages, the way you take it when you're older or younger is very different."

Whilst most participants relied on stereotypes to explain gender differences in bullying behaviour, participants did recognise that these were stereotypes and should not be applied all the time. Both male and female participants acknowledged that stereotypes are only generalisations and that individual differences are paramount. For example, Anne explained,

> *"I think they'd see it the same way. I think it's less gender and more individual this sort of thing. I mean like, not all girls are sensitive and some are tougher than others and it's the same with guys. Some guys are really sensitive and some are not, they wouldn't even care. I think it depends on the person and less on whether they're a boy or a girl".*

It is also important to note that the cyber-bullying and exclusion scenarios did not provoke such a differentiation in male and female bullying behaviour. In general, participants perceived these forms of bullying to be equal in frequency and unacceptability, regardless of gender. For example, with regards to exclusion, Rose stated, *"no definitely not, I think it does happen a lot with boys as well. They're excluded cause they're different, same thing as with girls really. If they don't fit the status quo."*

Similarly, Anne discussed the lack of gender differences in the frequency of cyberbullying, not just on Facebook but on other websites too.

> *"um no, this happens to everyone all the time. I don't think it matters what gender you are. I've seen this happen on Facebook and just upon the Internet, like ask.fm. You get talks at school about it all the time. About how cyber bullying is really common and has lead to suicide and things like that. You hear a lot about it and I think it happens a lot no matter where you are really, it's something you can't get away from if you have access to the Internet"*

In conclusion, it is evident that gender differences in bullying behaviours are apparent and important to young people. Furthermore, their perceptions are consistent and reflect previous research (Lehman, 2014; Pellegrini, 1995; Reed et al., 2000; Scheithauer et al., 2006). These findings demonstrate that young people understand the complexities and nuances that surround bullying. Although participants used discourses and stereotypes to explain their reasoning, they acknowledged the consequences of relying on these generalisations to inform future understandings. In particular, participants emphasised the difficulties that young males are now facing, with stereotypes

making it harder for them to seek help against bullying for fear of being negatively labelled by their peers.

As illustrated perfectly by Anton, everyone is different and bullying harms people in different ways, but regardless of this, bullying is simply not acceptable.

> *"About this whole thing, most of this stuff here doesn't matter. I guess like same gender, same age, different settings, different scenarios, they kind of take it around the same. They take it the same, it hurts equally. Yeah pretty much, everyone kind of has something that hurts them a bit more. Everyone's different."*

Summary of Major Results

The overall objective of the present study was to examine young people's perception and construction of different types of bullying behaviours across various settings. The present study sought to gain further depth and insight into which behaviours were considered acceptable and which constitute bullying, according to young people. Results showed that none of the behaviours described in the four scenarios were considered acceptable by participants, with the majority considering all four scenarios to depict bullying. Unacceptable behaviours and behaviours considered to be bullying were positively associated. That is, any behaviour described as bullying was also always described as unacceptable, implying that young people do not condone bullying behaviours.

The second objective of the present study was to determine whether there were differences in how young people perceive different types of bullying. Naturally, there was variation in how unacceptable each scenario was rated; the cyberbullying and verbal scenarios were consistently considered to be the most unacceptable, detrimental and severe. Anonymity and isolation were participants' main reasons for viewing cyberbullying as the worst. Participants associated the verbal scenario with judgment and discrimination, indicating it as the most personal and second most harmful form of bullying. The exclusion scenario was generally considered to be bullying, yet did not produce any other findings specific to exclusion. In contrast, the physical scenario was overall considered the most acceptable scenario, however it also stimulated the most variation in participants' opinions. Whilst some participants viewed the described behaviour as unacceptable and bullying, others perceived the scenario to describe little

more than a joking, playful interaction between friends; this was especially true when the characters in the scenario were male.

The third research objective questioned whether young people's definitions are consistent with academic definitions. Results showed that while participants displayed a consensus regarding the infliction of harm as a criterion of bullying, other academic criteria for the definitions of bullying was not as consistently included in participants' definitions. While the present study supported other qualitative research voicing young people's perspectives, participants' definitions did not strongly support academic definitions of bullying. Intentionality, repetition and power were not perceived as components fundamental to the concept of bullying. Thus, it is evident that young people have a broader, more inclusive understanding of what behaviours constitute bullying.

The fourth objective was to ascertain how external factors, such as social role, setting and gender influenced young people's understanding. When considering young people's perceptions of bystander effects, the role of relationships was also shown to be important. Relationships between the bully and victim, and/or between bystanders influenced the perception of how serious the situation was, whether participants saw the interaction as a joke as well as influencing whether the participants' believed they would intervene. Thus, it is apparent that the idea of bullying as an interpersonal concept is central to young people's understanding.

Participants' decision to regard a behaviour as bullying or not was determined by the reaction of the victim, how public the behaviour was and the role of friendship. The physical setting did not appear to hold as much influence as these other factors. For example, results demonstrated that the reaction of the victim and whether the behaviour occurred in a public setting notably influenced how harmful the interaction was and whether the behaviour was considered bullying. That is, if the victim's reaction became more severe in a particular setting, or if the action was more hurtful or embarrassing for the victim due to the presence of bystanders, then this changed how participants viewed the behaviour. Therefore, rather than the setting being the most important element, the participants' judgment of the situation was based primarily on how the victim interprets the behaviour.

The final salient factor that influenced participants' perceptions was the importance of gender differences. There were distinct differences in how participants talked about bullying across genders. The majority of participants used robust societal discourses of normal male and female behaviour to explain bullying and attribute certain types of

bullying as more common to each gender. Girls were discussed as more likely to partake in verbal bullying, whereas males were considered more likely to be involved in physical bullying. Results showed that males were thought be able to shrug off insults and therefore would be less outwardly effected by bullying than girls. If they didn't shrug it off and view it as 'banter' then they ran the risk of being labeled a 'wimp' and were not seen to uphold the strong masculine stereotype. The findings presented by this research have important implications and applications for future research and intervention programs, these will be discussed in the following section.

Discussion and Conclusions

This investigation focused on whether young people consider bullying behaviours to be socially permissible, and examined which behaviours constitute bullying in young people's lives. The present study aimed to identify whether young people's definitions of bullying were consistent with the current academic definitions and where any disparities arose. Furthermore, the study also considered the contextual nature of bullying behaviours to identify the components of bullying most important to young people as well as assessing whether the physical setting, gender or the social role of individuals influenced perceptions of bullying. The present study yielded several important findings concerning New Zealand youth's understanding of bullying, which will inform future bullying research in New Zealand.

Summary of Results and Implications

Similar to previous findings (Canty et al., 2014; Duncan, 1998; Vaillancourt et al., 2008), participants' definitions of bullying behaviour were more broad and inclusive of a variety of behaviours compared to academic definitions. The elements found to be most contentious were the requirement that bullying has to be an intentional, repetitive action based on a power differential (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Olweus, 1995). Participants from the current study defined bullying as including one-off acts, with or without intent to harm, as bullying behaviour, illustrating a much more flexible and open-ended approach to

defining bullying. Furthermore, according to academic definitions of bullying, an imbalance of power between the bully and victim must be present to distinguish between bullying and mere fighting (Olweus, 1994; 1995). This criterion was not central to the young people's definitions illustrated in the present study. Findings demonstrate that young people believe bullying can occur between peers of equal mental and physical strength; an imbalance of power may be present but this is not a necessity in order for the behaviour to be considered as bullying. Thus, the present study adds to previous qualitative research (Canty et al., 2014; Mishna et al., 2009; Vaillancourt et al., 2008) that has challenged the prevailing assumption of an alignment between the academic conceptualizations of bullying and young people's definitions.

Moreover, findings from the present study suggest that young people do perceive bullying to be a collective phenomenon, involving multiple individuals within a given setting, and are influenced by an array of different factors. Participants' perceptions of bullying behaviours were heavily influenced by the role of relationships. Similar to previous research, findings demonstrated that young people also perceive bullying to be a group phenomenon (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004; Salmivalli, 2010). Participants discussed the role of relationships in bystander interventions. It is evident that young people are aware of the nuances and complexities that arise when taking into account the social context of bullying behaviours. These findings have significant implications for the application and efficacy of intervention programs.

The factors that shaped participants' perceptions of the described behaviours the most were: the reaction of the victim, how public the interaction was and the ambiguity that friendship can place on certain interactions. The physical setting in which the bullying behaviour occurred did not appear to hold as much influence over participants' perceptions as the other factors previously discussed. When asked if changing the setting would alter their opinion about the behaviour, participants asserted that their perception would only change if the physical setting influenced an increase in one of the other salient factors. For example, if the same behaviour occurred in a different setting where more bystanders were present, then participants viewed the interaction as more severe due to increased level of publicity and embarrassment of the victim. Thus, the setting itself did not appear to solely govern the decision of whether an interaction is bullying or not.

However, where context was crucial in understanding bullying behaviours was in the online setting of cyberbullying. Previous research asserts that despite the initial treatment of cyberbullying as similar to 'traditional' bullying, just in a different setting

with technology as its medium; cyberbullying arguably can be seen, in fact, to be a distinct concept in itself (Canty et al., 2014; Dooley et al., 2009; Law, Shapka, Hymel, Olson, & Waterhouse, 2012). Results from the present study demonstrate support for this interpretation. Cyberbullying was consistently found to be the worst, most hurtful form of bullying by all of the participants, not only in the present study but also in previous research (Mishna et al., 2009). Participants emphasized the negative effects that the potential anonymity of cyberbullies could have on victims. The anonymity is one distinct characteristic of technologically mediated interaction that allows bullying to occur without the physical presence of the bully or any third party, again indicating that traditional academic definitions and understanding of bullying need to re-evaluated. Thus it is suggested that academia broadens its perspective and begins to treat cyberbullying as a distinct phenomenon.

Furthermore, gender differences were also central to young people's understanding of bullying. Consistent with previous research (Jeffrey et al., 2001; Lehman, 2014; Scheithauer et al., 2006), participants discussed the types of bullying most commonly displayed by the two sexes. Namely males were perceived to partake more often in physical, more direct forms of bullying, whereas females were thought to display verbal, relational bullying more often. Although these findings support previous gendered prevalence rates of bullying, Carrera and colleagues (2011) assert that research needs to move away from the conceptualization of gender in terms of biological sex and focus on explaining how the processes of socialization produce these gendered expressions of bullying.

The present study achieved this and extended previous literature, through the participants' discussion of the effects that socialization has on male bullying in particular. Findings indicated that due to masculinity stereotypes, male bullying is more readily perceived as a joke, not something to be taken seriously. Masculinity discourses in New Zealand are strongly tied to physical strength and sport, namely rugby (McNeill & Douglas, 2011), and in order to be considered a typical 'kiwi bloke' one must portray an image of strength and power. Additionally, physical interaction is considered to be an integral part of male friendships (Pellegrini, 1995; Reed et al., 2000), therefore the idea that a physical act may also be considered as bullying does not immediately factor into some young people's understanding of what bullying means. Consequently, it is not surprising that male victims of physical bullying are prevented from speaking out and seeking help, for fear of being negatively labeled as a 'pussy' or 'wimp' and jeopardizing

their masculine image. Participants also acknowledged the possible long-term effects and implications for male mental health due to the bullying stereotypes and the difficulty of asking for help. The present study demonstrates that New Zealand youth do recognize the external influences that affect bullying behaviours. Young people assert that victims of bullying do need connections and support across different social environments, yet this is particularly hard to seek out for males.

Thus, according to young people, bullying should be considered as behaviours that harm others, whether this is physically or psychologically. How the victim reacts to bullying, how public the behaviour is and the ambiguity that friendship places on possible bullying interactions are more important factors to young people than the academic criteria of intent, repetition and a power imbalance. It is apparent that relationships and gender differences also play an important role in shaping young people's understanding of bullying behaviours. Furthermore, results showed that young people perceive cyberbullying to be the most severe and harmful form of bullying, whereas physical bullying was considered the least harmful. This finding has serious implications for male victims and will be discussed in more detail.

Limitations

While this study has a number of strengths, there are nevertheless limitations that deserve discussion. One limitation of the present study is evident; the four scenarios were short, with each scenario only describing one particular behaviour. This may have limited participants' perceptions and responses to only refer to the behaviour described. For example, the physical scenario used 'pinching' as its physical interaction. Participants may have viewed and discussed the scenario entirely differently had the scenario used 'punching' or 'hitting' instead. In this way, it could be argued that the present study failed to truly measure young people's understanding of bullying behaviours as only the behaviours deemed important by the researcher were discussed.

A second limitation of the present study was that the setting of the scenarios was not factorially crossed with type of bullying. That is, each type of bullying was not described in each of the four different scenario settings. Although participants were asked during the interview whether changing the setting would affect their perceptions, and their

responses gave some indication regarding the influence of physical setting, this finding is not as conclusive as it would have been if the study had crossed setting by bullying type.

Another limitation of this research was that the scenarios were only presented in text (mediated by language) rather than visually recorded as videos. Therefore, it is not known how the use of language influenced and distorted participants' responses and evaluations. Some participants may have had trouble understanding or misinterpreted parts of the scenarios, which would have influenced discussions in the interview. Moreover, the scenarios only operationalized gender to include bullying interactions between characters of the same gender. It is difficult to conclusively study the effect of gender on bullying when the scenarios were same-sex interactions nested within the gender of the respondent. Thus, young people's perceptions of mixed gendered bullying were not examined or compared with their perceptions of same gender bullying. To overcome this limitation the gender of the bully, victim and respondent needs to be crossed. Doing so could produce interesting findings and yield further insights into how young people integrate gender with bullying; this could be an avenue for future research.

According to Canty and colleagues (2014), most qualitative research presents descriptions and vignettes of bullying to participants, thereby imposing *a priori* conventional definitions of bullying and priming participants' responses to align with academic knowledge. As a result, any disparity between researcher and participant definitions of bullying is minimized and participants' true interpretations are lost, thus obscuring the very phenomenon that research seeks to uncover (Canty et al., 2014).

This particular limitation of qualitative research was accounted for in the present study. Although the four scenarios were developed by the researcher and thus imposed a researcher-generated paradigm, a conventional definition of bullying was never presented to participants. In fact, participants were asked to describe what bullying meant to them, using their own words, and to expand on the behaviours they had read in the scenarios. A major research question posed by the present study was to further examine whether young people's understanding and definitions of bullying were similar or distinct from academia's assertions. Thus, disparities in bullying definitions were critically analyzed and discussed rather than labeled as inaccurate and redundant like previous research (Canty et al., 2014; Vaillancourt et al., 2008).

Applications & Future Research

This study is a part of a series of studies, which aims to develop a broad understanding of the impact of bullying behaviours during adolescence and across the lifecourse. The findings from the present study will be used in conjunction with ongoing research to develop of a set of recommendations for effective, ecologically grounded prevention and intervention strategies. The current findings have made important progress into understanding how young New Zealanders comprehend bullying behaviours, which will aid in further research regarding ecological risk and protective factors for youth's engagement in these behaviours.

The present study has identified that certain behavioural components of bullying important to young people are being overlooked by research. This in turn, could have serious consequences for the interventions that use bullying research as their evidence base and may be an explanation for why the efficacy of interventions programs have been called into question (Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008b). According to Merrell et al. (2008) the minority of interventions produced minimal positive effects, whereas the majority produced no effects at all. Rather than changing behaviours, interventions were more effective for creating awareness and changing attitudes. Based on the current findings, it could be argued that interventions minimal success is due an overemphasis on components deemed important by researchers, such as an individual's intent to harm or the repetition of behaviours, and an underrepresentation of the bullying components important to young people. As demonstrated by this study, young people hold a broad understanding of what bullying is. Therefore, if interventions solely focus on behaviours outlined by academic definitions of bullying, they run the risk of being too narrow in their focus, targeting the wrong behaviours, which could be an explanation for a lack of change in behaviour.

Furthermore, according to a review by Ttofi and Farrington (2010) some interventions are effective, with decreases in bullying behaviours of up to 23%. The more intensive programs that also consider the social context of bullying, such as including parental engagement, were found to be the most effective. This finding is supports Stevens, De Bourdeaudhuij, and Van Oost's (2001) recommendations; that interventions should target parents and the family as well as young people to maximize behavioural changes in multiple environments. Consistent with this research, results from the present study have demonstrated that young people consider and are influenced by the social

nature of bullying. Therefore, it is suggested that future intervention programs should not only base their strategies on what young people define bullying to be, but also focus on the important social factors that have been shown to influence young people's perceptions and subsequent behaviour.

Specifically, the present study has highlighted the importance of gender in understanding bullying behaviours and has emphasized the difficulties that young males face. These findings, in particular, should be instrumental in targeting at risk behaviour for males and for the development of preventative strategies. Furthermore, the results indicate that young people perceive different forms of bullying with different levels of harmfulness; cyberbullying was viewed as the worst, whereas physical bullying was often viewed as just a joke. This is an important finding as it highlights potential situations where young people are suffering, yet their suffering is either going unnoticed or misinterpreted. A fundamental component of all interventions is to identify the areas most in need, raise awareness, as well as provide preventative and coping strategies (Sticca & Perren, 2013). Young people's knowledge, demonstrated in the present study, should be used to inform future initiatives and raise awareness about seemingly harmless acts (such as physical 'banter' between males) that could have prolonged significant impacts on individuals. Moreover, this could also help to reduce overall bullying behaviours as individuals become more conscientious and aware of the effects that their actions may have on others (Perren & Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012).

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the overall aim to gain an understanding of young people's perceptions of bullying behaviours and use this knowledge as a step towards ensuring that the rights of children in New Zealand are met and maintained. The study investigated whether young people define bullying behaviours consistently with the widely held definitions as well as identifying whether factors, such as the setting in which the behaviour occurs, the role of bystanders and gender differences, influenced young people's perceptions of bullying. The results showed that there are disparities between the academic and young people's definitions of bullying. Furthermore, the present study has identified that relationships and gender differences play a salient role in influencing young people's understanding of bullying behaviours. The insights gained from New

Zealand youth through this study should to be utilized to inform future research and interventions.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule

Specific questions for each scenario (asked four times)

1. Why do you view this behaviour as acceptable/not acceptable?
2. Why do you think [perpetrator AND victim]_____ behaved in that way?
3. If you saw this, what do you think you would do?
    a. Why?
4. Would you consider this situation to be bullying?
    a. Why?
5. If this situation happened in a different environment (for example at school) would this change your opinion about whether it is/is not bullying?
    a. Why?
6. If this situation happened with [the opposite sex], would that change your opinion about anything?
    a. Why/Why not?

General Questions (asked once at the end)

1. In your own words, can you describe what you think bullying is?
2. What do you think it would take to reduce bullying?

Appendix B

The four scenarios and corresponding questionnaire

Sam/Susie arrives at school on a mufti day dressed in all black. When Stephen/Steph and Elliot/Ellie see Sam/Susie, they laugh and ask Sam/Susie why he/she always dresses like a creepy goth. Throughout the day, whenever Sam/Susie sees Stephen/Steph and Elliot/Ellie they roll their eyes at him/her, laugh and make loud remarks in front of other students.

Please circle your level of agreement with these statements.

	Not Acceptable				Acceptable
Stephen/Steph and Elliot/Ellie's behaviour is	•	•	•	•	•

	Never				A Lot
How often does stuff like this happen	•	•	•	•	•

	Sam/Susie	Stephen/Steph & Elliot/Ellie	Both	Neither
This situation happened because of	•	•	•	•
This situation was hurtful for	•	•	•	•

George/Georgia is having a good time at a party with his/her friends until he/she sees that Harry/Harriet has arrived. From then on, whenever Harry/Harriet walks past the group of people that George/Georgia is talking to, Harry/Harriet pinches George/Georgia in the back. Each time Harry/Harriet does this, he/she pinches a little bit harder. This continues throughout the night until the party ends.

Please circle your level of agreement with these statements.

	Not Acceptable				Acceptable
Harry/Harriet's behaviour is	•	•	•	•	•

	Never				A Lot
How often does stuff like this happen	•	•	•	•	•

	George/Georgia	Harry/Harriet	Both	Neither
This situation happened because of	•	•	•	•
This situation was hurtful for	•	•	•	•

Every week after the team's soccer game, the players always organise to hang out later in the afternoon to relax and discuss the match. James/Jess never gets invited. When he/she tries to include him/herself and asks where they're meeting, the other players always make an excuse for him/her not to come.

Please circle your level of agreement with these statements.

	Not Acceptable				Acceptable
The other teammates' behaviour is	•	•	•	•	•

	Never				A Lot
How often does stuff like this happen	•	•	•	•	•

	James/Jess	Other Teammates	Both	Neither
This situation happened because of	•	•	•	•
This situation was hurtful for	•	•	•	•

When Ben/Bella logs onto Facebook after school, he/she receives notifications of new messages in his/her inbox. These messages consist of mean and hurtful comments from some of his/her Facebook friends, for example "Nobody sits next to you because you're a loser". The messages continue to be sent even if Ben/Bella doesn't reply to them.

Please circle your level of agreement with these statements.

	Not Acceptable				Acceptable
The Facebook friends' behaviour is	•	•	•	•	•

	Never				A Lot
How often does stuff like this happen	•	•	•	•	•

	Ben/Bella	Facebook Friends	Both	Neither
This situation happened because of	•	•	•	•
This situation was hurtful for	•	•	•	•