Analysing the Factors that Influence Primary School Children to Bully Others

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Curtin University or Technology

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CONTRIBUTORS

Chief Investigators   Ms Sharyn Burns
Associate Professor Bruce Maycock
Mr Graham Brown
Ms Stacey Waters

Associate Investigator: Professor Donna Cross

Research Assistants: Ms Lynda Fielder
Ms Heidi Sumich

Schools   Canning Vale PS
Currambine PS
East Wanneroo PS
Edney PS
Hillary's PS
Kardinya PS
Merriwa PS
Mindarie PS
Noranda PS
North Woodvale PS
Ocean Reef PS
Quinns Rocks PS
Sorrento PS
Swan View PS
Willandra PS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This qualitative study collected data from 51 Year 7 students who participated in the Friendly Schools Friendly Families (FSFF) Project. The majority of these students (n = 46) had self-reported to bully others regularly or occasionally on the student questionnaire implemented as part of the FSFF (Project) at baseline. Additional students who reported no bullying behaviour at baseline were included in the sample to reduce the likelihood of stigmatization. The 46 students who reported to bully others included in this study represented 10.6% of the Year 6 cohort who reported to bully regularly or occasionally at baseline (n = 434). Data was collected from the Year 7 students from high, moderate and low intervention groups the end of the two-year whole school intervention. There were no significant differences in frequency of bullying or key variables of happiness at school and playtime, friendship and talking to their parents between the children who participated in the study compared to those who did not from the self-report bully cohort. Similarly there was no significant difference between gender of those who participated and those who did not participate in the study from the self-report bully cohort. Although more boys participated (n = 29; 63%) than girls (n = 17; 37%), this reflected data from the self-report bully cohort. There was however a significant difference in intervention level with more students from the moderate intervention participating in the study.

The in-depth one-on-one interview aimed to identify friendship patterns, factors that influence the initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying and school factors that may influence bullying behaviours. Data were analysed using the main constructs of symbolic interaction.

Friendships patterns and the influence of friends were found to be intrinsic to the study and were a strong factor in the initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying. Almost all students reported good friendship circles. Some students who had positively changed their bullying behaviour discussed the need to move away from friends who were a bad influence on them.

Some clear themes emerged from the qualitative study that explained the initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying. These included:

Individual factors

- Friendship-related issues
- Feelings of power
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Empathy towards the person being bullied.

Factors associated with the person being bullied

- To get back at someone – who may have bullied them
- Because the child/children annoy them – this may be literally with the child saying or doing something or it may be due to the child/children's physical appearance, intellectual abilities or social skills.

Punishment was also discussed as a reason for ceasing bullying behaviour among those who self-reported to bully occasionally and those who had positively changed their bullying behaviour.

The findings suggest that a combination of several or all of these themes is most likely for the initiation and maintenance of bullying. The study found that children seek to justify their bullying behaviour by externalizing the responsibility to the victim. Some children regret their behaviour, which creates cognitive dissonance and provides potential for change. For some of these children this may also reflect a change in self-identity. Those who are most likely to change their behaviour are those who have also developed a sense of empathy for the person being bullied. This is consistent with taking the role of others, which is intrinsic to the development of self. The study found that those who had positively changed their behaviour demonstrated higher-level skills and were more likely to take the role of others.

However, for some children bullying is initiated and maintained, as the social benefits are perceived as being too important to relinquish. For these children social benefits often

revolve around the perception that the bully is considered powerful, tough, cool, and is part of the 'popular group.' These children showed little concern for the child or children they discussed bullying and although punishment was inconvenient it was not an effective deterrent. More research focusing on social cognitive development to determine if this is truly a lack of empathy or more a case of balanced decision making will be undertaken by this research group. It may be that these children are able to empathise however chose not to because of the perceived social benefits of the behaviour.

Previous studies have also found school factors to be important in the prevention and cessation of bullying. This study found that most students from all intervention groups enjoyed school and felt safe at school. The study found good evidence of effective implementation of the FSFF Project intervention. Students from all interventions indicated that schools addressed bullying in the classroom and implemented policies and procedures to deal with incidences of bullying. However, students from the high and moderate intervention were more likely to provide unprompted examples of specific strategies of the FSFF Project especially talking with teachers and parents. The majority of students felt these strategies were important, useful and fun. However the some of the classroom activities were not seen to be as relevant for students who reported to bully regularly throughout the study. It was evident for students from all intervention groups that parental expectations and the role of parents is significant for these children. This was true for those who self-reported to bully occasionally and regularly.

These results suggest that universal whole school interventions are important and relevant and should be continued. In particular teacher attitudes and use of the Method of Shared Concern are especially important. Parental engagement is also important for this age group who value their parents expectations. Involvement of the whole school is especially important given the identified social benefits derived from bystander involvement. Indicated or early intervention programs need to be developed to address issues such as empathy, provocation and social benefits of bullying for the small hard to reach group of children who regularly bully others.

This study has found the potential to gather rich, meaningful qualitative data from 12 year olds children to be considerable. The use of this in addition to the quantitative data provides considerable opportunity to strengthen the understanding of factors that influence children to bully others.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Prevalence of bullying

It is now recognised that bullying is common in schools in Australia [1] and other developed countries [2-14]. While there is significant research in the area of bullying, it is still a relatively new field and there are some inconsistencies and gaps in the current body of knowledge. The findings of studies vary considerably and this may be due to a range of factors including different methods of data collection, study design, the definition of bullying, frequency of bullying, cultural differences and attitudes.

Australian studies have found that about 8% of boys and 4% of girls repeatedly (on a weekly basis) bully others and about one in six children are bullied regularly (at least once a week) [15, 16]. The proportion of students bullying others (and being bullied) occasionally is considerably larger [17]. One Australian study found 29.1% of boys and 23.3% of girls reported bullying others 'sometimes or more often'. Similarly, 51.2% of boys and 34.0% of girls reported being bullied 'sometimes or more often [17].

Baseline data for the Friendly Schools Project found 14% (n = 274) of year 4 students (aged approximately 8-9 years) to have bullied others sometime during the last term at school. Of these, 2.1% reported bullying others about once a week or more often, 0.7% reported bullying every few weeks while 11.2% reported bulling others only once or twice during the term. The study also found 40.9% (n = 802) of students in this age group had been bullied sometime during the last term at school. Of these, 12.3% had been bullied weekly or more often, 4% every few weeks and 24.6% reported being bullied once or twice during the term. When these data were analysed in more detail, 4.9% (n = 97) of the sample bullied others once or twice during the last term and 9.0% (n = 177) were both bullied and bullied others one or more times during the last term [18]. Similarly, other studies have found significant proportion of students report both being bullied and bullying others and these children are at particular risk of mental health problems [10, 19, 20].

It is generally considered that bullying behaviour is most likely to begin during the middle primary school years and decrease with age. There is however a notable increase in reports of bullying during the first year of secondary school [15].

While much of the research suggests that bullying is generally considered to be more prevalent among boys [21-25] it is evident that girls display different types of aggressive behaviours and are likely to be underrepresented in bullying prevalence data. Girls are more likely to participate in indirect bullying in comparison to boys who favour physical bullying [25-28].

Some of the discrepancies in the research may also be attributed to the different classifications of bullying. It is recognised that classification that relies solely on categorising children as bullies or victims is simplistic and not useful for investigating the nature of bullying and developing interventions. It is important to identify the nature of the bullying behaviour [29]. Traditionally researchers have distinguished between direct and indirect bullying [30, 31]. Others use the terms physical and psychological bullying. In many cases the different forms of bullying occur together [1].

1.2   Effects of bullying

Children who bully others are predisposed to a range of public health and social problems [32-35] including a greater predisposition to aggressive behaviours and future deviance[9, 36-38]. Also they are more likely to experience conduct related problems and disorders [39, 40], present with depression and suicidal ideation [13, 41-47], to feel unhappy at school , to dislike school, to receive less social support from parents and teachers [48], experience greater negative health effects [49], and to participate in delinquent behaviour [38, 44, 50-52]. Some studies have found boys who bully to suffer relatively poor mental health while girls do not. It is thought this may be due to different motivations and types of bullying [53]. Children who bully are more likely to become adult bullies, to have children who bully [30, 54] and to become involved in a range of criminal activities as they get older [9, 30] including violence, specifically domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and hate

crimes [22, 30, 37]. This puts considerable strain on both the public health system, the justice system, families and the community [55, 56].

1.3   Characteristics of children who bully others

While there is agreement about many of these problems there is some disparity in the findings in the literature. Studies have found bullies to be physically strong [22, 57, 58], active and assertive, easily provoked, to enjoy and have a positive attitude toward aggression [59, 60], to be very confident [57, 61] and to be taller than their victims [62, 63]. They have also been found to have an aggressive personality, weak inhibitions against aggression and a strong need to dominate [22, 30, 33, 62, 64]. While some researchers have suggested that children who bully have a relatively good self concept and self esteem [65, 66] some have found bullies to be anxious and insecure [22, 67]. Other research suggests that bullies have significantly lower self esteem than their peers who are not involved with bullying behaviours [32], and suffer more commonly from headaches and bedwetting [13]. In addition, some studies have found bullies to be of average popularity, actively manipulating their social environment by surrounding themselves with individuals who support their behaviour or behave in a similar manner [51] [64]. Others found them to be as unpopular as victims [42, 68] or more unpopular than victims [58].

1.4   Why children bully others

The literature offers many explanations as to why some children bully others however, as with many other mental health problems, there are still considerable gaps in this knowledge [69]. The complexity of these problems suggests many factors should be considered [70]. In addition to individual factors such as impulsively and aggressive behaviour there are a variety of other possible causative factors associated with children who bully others. Family relationships are significant in determining bullying behaviours [15, 66, 69, 71-78] however it is still unclear as to whether families and parents in particular constitute causative agents. Other possible causative agents include the school community and the resultant school ethos [17] and the nature of relationships with other children with some studies identifying active and passive peer involvment as a reinforcer of bullying behaviour

[6, 79-81]. Teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward bullying behaviour have also been found to play a role in contributing to the problem [45, 82]. One recent study in Australia found students who repeatedly engaged in bullying behaviour negatively perceived the capacity of teachers to resolve conflict fairly. This perception was found to progressively increase from the age of 10 to 14 years with approximately 40% of students aged 14 years, actively against or unsure about collaborating with teachers to stop bullying. [82].

1.5   School-based interventions

Worldwide a range of interventions have been developed to address bullying in schools [2, 33, 82-89]. While some have demonstrated some success [33] others have actually reported an increase in some bullying behaviours [2, 90]. The majority have reported no significant changes or varied effects (e.g. decrease in bullying in some age groups but not others) [91]. The link between psychosocial and other health complaints among bullies and victims resulting from bullying and behaviour is well documented in the literature [13, 35, 44, 45, 92]. However, while positive strategies for individual victim support are in place in many schools, there is little or no such support for the bully, rather negative consequences such as parental use of harsh discipline which is positively associated with more bullying and increased aggressive behaviour [13, 93]. This study provides important information on the potential iatrogenic effects of a universal bullying prevention program on higher risk students who bully others.

The evidence suggests that the level of project implementation is likely to play a significant role in determining the success of the program. One Norwegian study found an increase of 24% among boys (aged 8 to 16 years) in reported bullying of others three years post intervention. Girls reported increases of 14% for bullying others. However the findings indicated that those schools that implemented the program most thoroughly tended to get better results. These findings were particularly evident for primary schools [68].

There is little discussion in the literature about the specific effects of universal and selective whole school interventions on higher risk students who bully others. To enable

the effective development of universal and selective interventions that affect these children it is important to ensure factors that may influence behaviour change are clearly understood.

1.6   Qualitative research

While many studies have interviewed children to establish prevalence of bullying behaviours there has been little qualitative research to identify factors that contribute to behaviour change. One Australian study used a series of focus groups to investigate bullying behaviours among secondary school students however, these students were not considered to be higher risk [94]. The impact of friendship quality on bullying behaviour was investigated in a US study using a series of interviews and laboratory sessions. The results of this study revealed that aggressive boys and their friends engage in more rule breaking behaviour than non-aggressive boys and their friends, however, only African American boys and their friends were studied [95]. Another recent US study collected interview data from a nationally representative sample to identify the individual, community and family factors associated with violent behaviour among adolescents. Victimisation was the strongest finding associated with juvenile violence. This study however, used a computer assisted survey technique to collect qualitative data from a random sample rather than 'at risk' adolescents [96].

In addition to contributing to the research about bullying prevention, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge about conducting qualitative research, in particular in-depth one-on-one interviews with primary school children.

 2.0   OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to develop a theoretical understanding of factors that are likely to influence students who bully others, to help to positively change their bullying behaviours.

The specific **strategy objectives** were to:
- Conduct a series of one-on-one open ended interviews with a purposive sample of year 7 students who identified as bullying others in the quantitative data collected by the Friendly Schools, Friendly Families Project
- Identify characteristics of the sample of year 7 students who bully others
- Identify factors which may influence positive bullying behaviour change among year 7 students who bully others
- Identify specific components of the whole school bullying prevention program that positively influence year 7 students who bully to positively consider changing their behaviour
- Develop a theoretical understanding of factors influencing behaviour change among upper primary school age children who bully others
- Disseminate findings via presentations, reports and journal publications to school communities and other relevant professionals
- Provide recommendations for future research in the area of school bullying prevention programs

(These objectives relate specifically to this qualitative study. Quantitative data has been used to support these findings and will be included, where appropriate in relevant reports)

3.0   METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

This study has used quantitative data collected from the whole year 6 cohort of the Friendly Schools Friendly Families (FSFF) Project to inform the development of the qualitative instrument, to select students for the in-depth one-on-one interviews and to make comparisons with the quantitative and qualitative study. It is not the purpose of this study to report on the quantitative study however some discussion will include data from the FSFF whole year 6 cohort and the year 6 self-report bully cohort. A brief summary of the quantitative study is provided to set the context of this qualitative study.

3.2   QUANTITATIVE STUDY

3.2.1   Research Design

This study has collected qualitative and quantitative data from the whole year 6/7 cohort of students involved in the FSFF Project. A subsequent cohort of year 6 students who self-report to bully others (self-report bully cohort) was created. This report will only describe baseline data apart from the 'student profiles' which includes frequency of bullying collected at baseline, post 1 and post 2. This cohort of children was involved in a three year randomised control intervention trial as part of the FSFF Project. The data collection and intervention schedules relevant to this study are summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Data collection and intervention schedules

Treatment Group	Year 6			Year 7		Year 7	Year 8
	Baseline Students Teachers March 2002	Intervention 2002	Post test 1 Students Teachers Nov 2002	Intervention 2003	Post test 2 Students Teachers Oct-Nov 2003	Qualitative interviews Students Oct-Nov 2003	Post 3 Students Nov 2004
High intervention	O_1	X_1	O_2	X_2	O_3	O_4	O_5
Moderate intervention	O_1	X_1	O_2	X_2	O_3	O_4	O_5
Low intervention	O_1	X_1	O_2	X_2	O_3	O_4	O_5

3.2.2   The Intervention

Although not part of this study a brief summary of the intervention is necessary to provide the reader with relevant background information. The intervention includes the development and implementation of a whole school bullying prevention intervention for high, moderate and low intervention groups. The intervention design was based on the findings from other studies, the Successful Principles for the Prevention, Reduction and Management of Bullying in Schools [97] and the findings of the Friendly Schools Project [18].

The intervention was designed to assess changes between varying levels of intervention and support, for example although all levels of intervention received a whole school manual, the manuals varied according to the criteria established for each condition [98]. A summary of the intervention is described in Table 3.2. The intervention is described in more detail elsewhere [98].

Table 3.2   Friendly Schools Friendly Families Intervention Summary

	High Intervention	**Moderate Intervention**	**Low Intervention**
Whole School Manual	√	√	√
Baseline data collection report to schools	√	√	√
Learning activities	√	√	
Newsletter items	√	√	
Project team training	√	√	
Whole-school training	√	√	
Project coordinator file	√	√	
Follow-up project team training	√		
Assembly items	√		
Family communication & activity sheets	√		
Parent presentation	√		
Capacity building strategies	√		

3.2.3 Quantitative Sample

Data was collected from a cohort of approximately 1253 Year 6 students and their teachers (n = 55) from 20 Western Australian metropolitan government primary schools involved in the Friendly Schools Friendly Families (FSFF) Project at baseline (April/May 2002). These students were followed and data was collected at post 1 (October/November 2002) and post 2 (October/November 2003). Subsequent data was collected from year 8 students involved in the study in November 2004 (post 3).

3.2.4 Recruitment

The quantitative data analysed as part of this study was collected from the cohort of Year 6/7 students participating in the Friendly Schools Friendly Families (FSFF) Project. Schools were initially selected from the Department of Education's 2001 school database. All primary government schools with students from Kindergarten to Year 7 in Cannington, Fremantle, Joondalup, Perth and Swan Education Districts were initially selected. To ensure the best possible power for the FSFF Project only schools with 50 or more students in each of Years 2, 4 and 6 during 2001 were included. All schools who participated in the Friendly Schools Project in 2000 and 2001 (n=14 control, n=15 intervention) were excluded. Fifty one schools were eligible for selection.

Schools that met the selection criteria were stratified according to total population size and socioeconomic status (SES). The 1991 Census Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage was used to stratify schools according to socioeconomic status with the postcode of each school being used as a proxy measure. Schools from medium SES were deliberately over selected to reflect the demographics of Perth. Schools were also classified as small or large. Six selection strata were created to reflect socioeconomic status and size of school. Twenty one schools were randomly selected from each strata to participate in the High (n = 7), Moderate (n = 7) or Low (n = 7) intervention groups.

The principal of each randomly selected school was contacted by telephone by the Project Director and invited to take part in the level of intervention to which it had been randomly assigned. Further information was also posted to the principal. Of the original schools randomly selected the Management Committee excluded six, as they were involved in other research projects that were potential confounders to the FSFF study. Five schools declined to participate. Other schools within the same strata replaced these schools. Twenty schools were recruited for the study (Table 3.3) [98].

Table 3.3   Stratified Random Sampling Procedure

	High Intervention		Moderate Intervention		Low Intervention		Total
	Size		Size		Size		
Socioeconomic Group	<451	>452	<451	>452	<451	>452	
High	1	1	1	1	1	1	**6**
Medium	2	1	2	1	2	1	**9**
Low	1	1	1	0	1	1	**5**
Total	**4**	**3**	**4**	**2**	**4**	**3**	**20**

3.2.5   Instrument development

The quantitative data described in this study was collected as part of the FSFF Project. Questionnaires were administered at baseline, post 1, post 2 and post 3. Most items developed for the questionnaire were based on those used in the Friendly Schools Project [18]. Some items were based on other instruments used to measure bullying-related issues in primary schools [99, 100]. A scale of attitudes towards bullying [67], a scale of perceived peer social support [101, 102], and a scale of social competency were included [103]. A psychological measure, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire [104] which measures emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, prosocial behaviour and a total difficulties score was also used. All items were structured to enable comparison with other bullying-related studies [98]. Specific details about the instrument development, testing and administration will be described elsewhere and are beyond the scope of this study.

3.3   QUALITATIVE STUDY

3.3.1   Selecting the self-report bully cohort

The sample for this study was generated from the Year 6/7 cohort of the FSFF Project. Data was collected from students in May 2002 (baseline), November 2002 (post 1) when they were in Year 6 and in October/November 2003 (post 2) when they were in Year 7. The baseline questionnaire was completed by 1257 (99.1%) year 6 students involved in the FSFF Project for whom parental consent had been granted. Parental consent was not given for 32 students to participate in the study. While the whole cohort of Year 6/7 students is not a focus of this study it is necessary to make reference to this group when describing the self-report bully cohort. For the purpose of this report this cohort will be described as the whole Year 6 cohort. Comparisons will be made with this sample at baseline to determine if there are significant differences between the **self-report bully cohort** and the **whole Year 6 cohort**. In addition comparisons will be made to compare those children who self-report to bully regularly, occasionally and not at all.

Discussion of the quantitative results is necessary to describe the cohort and to establish if the students involved in the qualitative study are similar to the students in the self-report bully cohort. For the purpose of this report data analysis has provided direction for the development of the qualitative questionnaire. Apart from providing a brief profile of the students involved including frequency of bullying at baseline, post 1 and post 2, this study will only describe baseline data.

Students who self-report to bully others at baseline comprise the bullying cohort used for this qualitative study. This cohort will be referred to as the **self-report bully cohort**. Bullying classification has been based on student self-report. Teacher report of student bullying behaviour has also been collected by the Principal Investigator but it is beyond the scope of this qualitative study to include this analysis.

Several questions were used to determine student bullying behaviour. Students were directly asked how often they bullied other students during this term (baseline) or in the last school term (post 1 and post 2). They were provided with a range of options including 'almost every day', 'most days', 'every few weeks', 'only once or twice' and 'did not bully' anyone. Of the 1248 responses to this question 434 (34.8%) students in the whole year 6 cohort indicated some bullying behaviour. The majority of these students (n = 358; 82.5%) indicated that they bullied once or twice during the last term. Table 3.4 provides a summary of the responses of students when asked if they bullied others during the last school term.

Table 3.4   Student self-report bullying behaviour during the last school term (whole year 6 cohort)

	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Almost every day	8	0.6
Most days	12	1.0
Once a week	24	1.9
Every few weeks	32	2.6
Once or twice	358	28.7
Did not bully anyone	814	65.2
Total	1248	100

Due to the small numbers for some responses variables were collapses to regular (almost every day, most days, about once a week, every few weeks), occasional (once or twice) and never (not at all). This classification of frequency is consistent with other studies [105]. The small sample size, especially of regular bullies is a limitation of this study. It is however a reflection on the behaviour which is fortunately only practiced regularly among a small proportion of young people.

There has been considerable discussion regarding an appropriate 'cut-off' point for estimating the prevalence of bullying others. It has been suggested that the reasons for the disparity of prevalence data in the literature may be due to a variety of factors. One of the reasons for variations may be due to the different thresholds or criteria for differentiating bullies from non-bullies [105]. It is suggested that to maximise the likelihood of a true

representation of prevalence students are provided with a definition of bullying prior to completing the questions. Response alternatives should be quite specific and need to refer to a specific time period, for example, 'in the last term'. Students should be asked a global question, for example, 'This term, how often did you, on your own or in a group, bully another student or students? This question can be supported by the use of more specific question about how often particular types of bullying take place [9, 105]. These recommendations were all adhered to in the development of questions for the FSFF questionnaires. Solberg and Olweus (2003) have explored the traditional cut-off point of '2 or 3 times a month' with 'once or twice' and 'once a week'. When comparing aggressive and prosocial behaviours the mean differences between students who reported to bully '2 or 3 times a month' and 'once or twice a week' or more were smaller than for the other groups (no bullying and 'once or twice' and '2 or 3 times a month' and 'once or twice') however there were significant differences among all groups [105]. This suggests that there is merit in investigating differences between those who bully regularly and those who report to do so only occasionally.

Students were also asked to indicate if, during the last term, they had participated in a variety of behaviours (Table 3.5). Students were asked "this term, how often have you, on your own or in a group, done these things to another student or students" and asked to circle either 'lots of times', 'a few times' or 'never'. These behaviours have been widely identified as bullying behaviours and were adapted from the Peer Relations Questionnaire [99, 100]. For the whole year 6 cohort the self-reported behaviours that were most often reported lots of times and sometimes at baseline were verbal bullying behaviours including 'calling students mean and hurtful names' (n = 290; 23.3%); 'making fun and teasing others' (n = 243; 19.5%); and by 'ignoring and leaving students out' (n = 223; 17.9%). Physically hurting someone by 'hitting, kicking and punching' was reported by 12.2 % (n = 152) of respondents.

Table 3.5 Students self reported frequency of bullying and specific bullying behaviours at baseline (whole year 6 cohort)

	Lots of times n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Never n (%)	Total	P value	Pearson's Correlation
I made fun of and teased another student or students in a hurtful way						
Regular	8 (10.5)	47 (61.8)	21 (27.6)	76		
Occasional	3 (0.8)	132 (37.2)	220 (62.0)	355		
Never	1 (0.1)	51 (6.3)	756 (93.6)	808		
Total	12 (1)	230 (18.6)	997 (80.5)	1239	0.000	0.502
I called another student or students mean and hurtful names						
Regular	17 (22.4)	43 (56.6)	16 (21.1)	76		
Occasional	4 (1.1)	148 (41.6)	204 (57.3)	356		
Never	2 (0.2)	76 (9.4)	729 (90.3)	807		
Total	23 (1.9)	267 (21.5)	949 (76.6)	1239	0.000	0.535
I ignored another student or students, didn't let them join in, or left them out of things on purpose						
Regular	12 (15.8)	26 (34.2)	38 (50.0)	76		
Occasional	5 (1.4)	100 (28.2)	250 (70.4)	355		
Never	4 (0.5)	76 (9.4)	730 (90.1)	810		
Total	21 (1.7)	202 (16.3)	1018 (82)	1241	0.000	0.353
I hit, kicked or pushed another student or students around						
Regular	14 (18.7)	28 (37.3)	33 (44)	75		
Occasional	3 (0.8)	70 (19.6)	284 (79.6)	357		
Never	1 (0.1)	36 (4.5)	769 (95.4)	806		
Total	18 (1.4)	134 (19.8)	1086 (87.7)	1238	0.000	0.475
I told lies or spread nasty stories about another student or students and tried to make other students not like them						
Regular	8 (10.5)	13 (17.12)	55 (72.4)	76		
Occasional	1 (0.3)	38 (10.6)	318 (89.1)	357		
Never	4 (0.5)	22 (2.7)	784 (96.8)	810		
Total	13 (1)	73 (5.9)	1157 (93.1)	1243	0.000	0.289
I took money or other things away from another student or students						
Regular	3 (4)	7 (9.3)	65 (86.7)	75		
Occasional	3 (0.8)	7 (2)	346 (97.2)	356		
Never	1 (0.1)	5 (0.6)	803 (99.3)	809		
Total	7 (0.6)	19 (1.5)	1214 (97.9)	1240	0.000	0.235
I made another student of students afraid they would get hurt						
Regular	10 (13.2)	24 (31.6)	42 (55.3)	76		
Occasional	3 (0.8)	36 (10.1)	316 (89)	355		
Never	3 (0.4)	23 (2.8)	782 (96.8)	808		
Total	16 (1.3)	83 (6.7)	1140 (92)	1239	0.000	0.422
I broke someone's things deliberately						

Regular	6 (8)	7 (9.3)	62 (82.7)	75		
Occasional	1 (0.3)	14 (3.9)	341 (95.8)	356		
Never	1 (0.1)	9 (1.1)	798 (98.8)	808		
Total	8 (0.6)	30 (2.4)	1201 (96.9)	1239	0.000	0.300
I bullied another student or students at school in another way						
Regular	8 (12.9)	6 (9.7)	48 (77.4)	62		
Occasional	4 (1.2)	25 (7.8)	293 (91)	322		
Never	2 (0.3)	12 (1.6)	718 (98.1)	732		
Total	12 (1.3)	43 (3.9)	1059 (94.9)	1116	0.000	0.333

* p value measures the level of significance between frequency of self-reported bullying and each bullying behaviour
** Person Correlation was conducted to determine the correlation between the question how often did you bully (*last term (term 1), how often did you, on your own or in a group, bully another student or students?*) and each of the nine bullying behaviours

There was a significant difference between all nine bullying behaviours and self-reported frequency of bullying others (p = 0.000) with students who self-report to bully others regularly being more likely to indicate that they participated in a bullying behaviour 'lots of times' or 'sometimes' than those who self-reported to bully others occasionally or not at all. Students who self-reported to bully occasionally were more likely to participate in the all of the nine bullying behaviours either 'lots of times' or 'sometimes' compared to students who self-reported to bully occasionally. The data from this question was used to help develop questions for the interview guide.

The fair to poor levels of correlation between the nine bullying behaviours and the frequency of bullying [106] may also reflect the social desirability of the behaviours. It is evident from the data that only a very small proportion of students reported to participate in these behaviours 'lots of times' while they were more likely to admit to doing so 'sometimes.' Further analyses will be conducted to include teacher report. In addition, correlations will be conducted at post 1, post 2 and post 3. A better understanding of bullying, and maturation, may influence these correlations. These analyses are however beyond the scope of this project.

As illustrated in Table 3.5 some students who self-reported to have not bullied another student during the last term have indicated that they have participated in one or more of the nine bullying behaviours. These students may have indicated this for a range of reasons. They may have not self-reported bullying behaviour directly due to the socially undesirable nature of the behaviour. They may not have associated these behaviours with bullying, or the behaviours may not have been undertaken in a bullying context, for example, a fight between two students of equal strength, although students were provided with a definition of bullying in the questionnaire. Despite this there were only ten students who indicated that they had not bullied others and who indicated they had participated in one or more bullying behaviour 'lots of times.' For the purpose of the qualitative study these students were added to the self-report bully cohort at baseline. Some of these students reported 'lots of times' for more than one behaviour. Students who self-reported to never bully others, and who indicated that they participated in a specific bullying behaviour 'sometimes' were not included in the self-report bully cohort (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Self-report bully cohort

How often do you bully	N	%
Regularly	76	17.1
Occasionally	358	80.6
Never*	10	2.3
Total	**444**	**100**

*responded not at all to the question have you ever bullied but responded lots of times to one or more of the nine bullying behaviours

3.3.2   Direct and Indirect Bullying

Two dependent variables to measure how often students self-reported to bully others directly and indirectly were created. These behaviours are described above in Table 3.5. Direct bullying behaviours included 'made fun of and teased another student or students in a hurtful way', 'called another student or students mean and hurtful names', 'hit, kicked or pushed another student or students around', 'took money or other things away from another student or students', 'made another student or students afraid they would

get hurt' and 'broke someone's things deliberately'. Indirect bullying behaviours included 'ignored another student or students, didn't let them join in, or left them out of things on purpose' and 'told lies or spread nasty stories about another student or students and tried to make other students not like them.' Respondents were asked if they had done these things 'lots of times', 'a few times' or 'never.' This question was adapted from the Peer Relations Questionnaire [99, 100].

Those students who had participated in one or more of the six direct bullying behaviours 'lots of times' and 'a few times' were considered frequent and occasional direct bullies respectively. The same classification was used for indirect bullies. A score was developed for the two variables with students scoring 0-6 for direct bullying and 0-2 for indirect. A score of 1 or more was used to classify students as a direct or indirect bully.

Of the students who responded to these questions only a small proportion of the whole year 6 cohort reported to directly (n = 34; 2.8%) and indirectly (n = 27; 2.2%) bully others frequently. A greater proportion of students reported to directly (n = 427; 34.8%) and indirectly (n = 245; 19.7%) bully others occasionally.

3.3.3 Qualitative sample

School sample

Active consent was sought from 18 of the 20 metropolitan government primary schools involved in the FSFF Project. One school was eliminated, as they were known to be not very cooperative. Another school was eliminated as the Year 7 students had moved off the primary school campus to a Community College. While these students were accessed for the quantitative questionnaire it was felt it may be confusing for the staff at the Community College if they were also approached for this study.

Of the 18 schools from whom active consent was sought one school was unable to participate due to high levels of staff stress and illness (the coordinator didn't want to place extra burden on the staff) and one school was actively involved in the current

industrial dispute and was unable to commit at the time of recruitment. One school failed to respond to the numerous telephone and facsimile messages sent by the Project Coordinator and hence was not able to be recruited in the timeframe. Fifteen schools were recruited to participate in the study.

The Project Director telephoned school FSFF coordinators. A standardised information sheet was provided to the Director so she was able to provide all schools the same information. The Director was also involved as a Principal Investigator on the Starter Grant, which provided funding for this phase of the study.

The coordinators were then faxed a letter to the Principal describing the Project. Attached to the fax was a consent form for the Principal to complete and a copy of the parent letter and consent form (Appendix 1).

Once consent was received the Coordinators were provided letters to be posted to individual student's parents (Appendix 1). The Coordinators were asked to address the stamped envelope. Due to Department of Education confidentiality issues schools cannot release addresses of students. It was anticipated that by posting the letters more would reach the parents (as opposed to sending the letter home with the child). Parents were supplied with a reply paid envelope in which to return their consent form directly to the University.

It was intended that all schools be sent the letters to return during the third term of the school holidays. However due to a number of factors including an current industrial dispute (teachers in dispute over salary increases), sports carnivals (school and inter school athletics carnivals) and other school activities securing the consent of the principal took longer than anticipated. Twelve of the 16 schools received the letters to post before the end of Term 3. The other three schools provided consent by the end of Term 3. The letters for these schools were posted to the schools so they could be mailed at the beginning of term 3.

Once students had been recruited FSFF Coordinators were faxed details of the interview process and a possible date for the interviews (Appendix 2). They were provided the opportunity to select alternative dates and times. Once the date was confirmed Coordinators were posted a list of the students being interviewed.

Student sample

A purposive random sample of children who bully others were recruited from the self-report bully cohort. In addition, to reduce the likelihood of stigmatisation, additional students who reported no involvement in bullying behaviour (being bullied or bullying others) at baseline from the whole year 6 cohort were also randomly selected from each school. Sampling was conducted using baseline data only.

The selected students had participated in almost two years of the FSFF Project intervention prior to the qualitative data collection. Qualitative data was collected in November/December 2004 at the conclusion of the intervention and after the post 2 data collection so the interview process did not influence the quantitative data. The Year 7 cohort was selected as it is recognised that bullying is more prevalent among middle to upper primary school children than in secondary school. There is however, a notable increase in reported bullying when children begin secondary school [15]. Given that the children were interviewed close to the end of their final year of primary school it was anticipated that this data will be useful for guiding programs for both primary and secondary school children and adolescents. It would be expected that this cohort will be aware of bullying behaviours and have developed opinions about these behaviours. In addition it is likely that by targeting the oldest group of children involved in the intervention the most reliable results will be collected [107].

From these students the sample was purposively and randomly selected to ensure an appropriate mix from each condition. The FSFF study has three intervention groups

(high, moderate and low). Students were purposively and randomly selected from each school.

Qualitative research methods suggest that the specific number of participants will be determined and driven by the analysis of data, with sampling continuing until theoretical saturation is reached [108-111]. However, given the organisational structure of the school setting and the timeframe available for the qualitative data collection it was necessary to organise interviews in advance.

Active consent was obtained from students, parents and the school principal for all students participating in the research. The school principal and parents returned a signed consent form (Appendix 1). Students were asked for their consent at the beginning of the interview and were given the option of withdrawing from the interview at any time.

At the conclusion of the interview students were given a letter to take home to parents. The letter thanked parents for allowing their child to participate in the study and also asked for a contact address should their child be required for a further interview. Parents were provided a reply paid envelope in which to return the contact details (Appendix 3). This information was collected so additional data could be collected at a later date. Of the 51 students interviewed contact addresses were collected for 37 (72.5%).

3.3.5   Procedure

A qualitative interview guide was developed using the literature and the baseline quantitative data to inform the content and structure (Appendix 4). This interview guide was tested with a convenience sample of 12-year-old children prior to administration. Consistent with theory development and purposive sampling the interview questions were modified slightly as more targeted data were required [112, 113].

The analysis and findings of the quantitative study, and the international and national literature, directed the qualitative research to enable the development of an appropriate

interview guide to analyse factors, which may influence positive behaviour change among children who bully others.

Characteristics of children who bully others and factors which may influence positive bullying behaviour were investigated using the analytical framework and methodological process of Symbolic Interaction [109, 114]. Social cognitive theory supported this analysis. Data was collected via in-depth open-ended interviews. Specifically the interview aimed to identify:

- Friendship patterns and behaviours with friends;
- Factors that influence initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying behaviours; and
- School factors such as individual feelings of happiness at school, liking school and feelings of safety at school and perceived level of project implementation.

In addition, comparative observations were made by the researcher as to the physical size of each child. In further analyses these data will be triangulated with the quantitative data collected at baseline, post 1, post 2 and post 3 from students and teachers. This is however beyond the scope of this study.

3.3.6 Method of data collection and management

One-on-one interviews were conducted with the sub-sample of year 7 students who self-report bully others. Consistent with good qualitative research practice all interviews were conducted by the same person. The interviewer was the Principal Investigator of this study and was an experienced school teacher with expertise in education and health promotion. This enhanced researcher and theoretical sensitivity, and reduced interviewer bias [107].

Interviews were recorded and fully transcribed from the audio recording. Interviews were conducted on the school premises at a time that is convenient to the school staff and student. All interviews were conducted in a private room such as the interview room or medical room. All participants were presented with two child's movie tickets in

appreciation of their involvement. Students were not told about the gift until the conclusion of the interview.

As is consistent with other qualitative studies focusing on bullying behaviour the interview commenced by providing a short vignette which was used to begin discussion [94]. Questions for the interviews were developed by the applicant and were reviewed by an expert panel comprising representatives from the education, health promotion, psychology and sociology fields.

The data was coded and placed in categories that emerged from the data and those derived from the literature. Data management of full transcripts and other relevant text was facilitated by the NUD.IST software package QSR N5.

3.3.7   Data analysis and theory development

The data was analysed using two perspectives. Social cognitive theory and symbolic interaction provides the analytical and theoretical frameworks. Social cognitive theory offers explanatory power regarding the relationship between the individual and the environment (reciprocal determinism) and the role of self-efficacy, observation of others and the expectation of others on behaviour [115, 116]. Symbolic interaction offers a complementary theoretical framework with additional constructs such as the effect of labeling and the development and understanding of deviance, and the development of self which are highly relevant to bullying [110, 117]. Symbolic interaction has been used to investigate a wide range of deviant behaviour including violence, crime and delinquency [117-119]. Symbolic interaction also offers substantial theoretical depth in understanding and explaining the interaction between the environment, society and the individual and the development of the individual's self [109, 114, 120, 121]. In particular the development of new self-image which is important if the children in this study have changed their self identity from that of being a bully to being a non-bully [121-127]. Finally, symbolic interaction requires the researcher to understand the phenomena under study from the participant's point of view (65, 66).

During the analytical process transcribe data were coded for common themes relating to the present objectives, however consistent with a grounded theory approach other categories and codes emerged from the data [108, 111, 127].

4.0   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

The one-one interviews collected considerable data about children who bully others. It was beyond the scope of this study to report all findings. Other data will be analysed and described in peer reviewed publications and in subsequent research. For the purpose of this report the following data will be described.

- Friendship patterns and behaviours with friends;
- Factors that influence initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying behaviours; and
- School factors, such as school connectedness and the effect of the intervention.

A student profile of each student interviewed can be found in Appendix 5. This profile provides a discussion of the school intervention level for the FSFF project, school size and school socio-economic status in addition to student height and academic ability and their self-reported frequency of bullying and being bullied. In the discussion of the qualitative results the level of intervention and students self-reported bully others and being bullied is described at baseline, post 1 and post 2. Only changes in self-reported behaviour are described therefore if students report to bully occasionally at baseline and post 1 then not at all at post 2 this will be represented by 'occasional – no bully.' If students report to bully regularly, occasionally and not at all at baseline, post 1 and post 2 respectively this will be described as 'regular – occasional – no bully'.

Before analyzing the qualitative data it was important to establish if the students who participated in the interviews were similar or different to the students from the whole year 6 cohort and the self-report bully cohort. As active consent was sought from parents there was a possibility that some interesting subjects may be excluded from the study. An analysis of these findings precedes the discussion of the qualitative findings.

4.2 Similarities between the students involved in the qualitative study and the whole year 6 and self-report bully cohort at baseline

To determine if the students who participated in the qualitative study were similar to the self-report bully cohort and the whole year 6 cohort a variety of analyses were conducted to identify differences in key independent variables including happiness at school, friendships and parent communication.

4.2.1 Interview involvement

Of those students at the 15 schools that agreed to become involved in the study 17.9% (n = 58) of students self-reported to bully regularly at baseline compared to 14.9% (n = 18) of students from the five schools who declined to participate in the study. Similarly 78.9% (n = 255) students from the self-report bully cohort from schools participating in the qualitative study self-reported to bully occasionally compared to 85.1% (n = 103) of students from non participating schools (Table 4.1). There were no significant differences between frequency of bullying and schools that were involved in the qualitative study among the whole year 6 cohort (χ^2 = 4.050; df = 2; p = 0.132). Similarly there was no significant difference between regular and occasional self-report bullying behaviours among the schools who selected to participate in the study and those who did not from the self-report bully cohort (χ^2 = 4.651; df = 2; p = 0.098).

Table 4.1   School response to participation in the study and frequency of self-reported bullying (whole year 6 cohort)

Frequency of bullying	Positive school response N (%)	School not involved in interviews N (%)	Total
Regular	58 (76.3)	18 (23.7)	76
Occasional	251 (71.1)	102 (28.9)	353
Never	616 (76.6)	188 (23.4)	804
Total	925 (75)	308 (25)	1233

There was a significant difference between self-reported bullying behaviour at baseline and those who participated in the qualitative study among the whole Year 6 cohort (χ^2 = 228.107; df = 6; p = 0.000) (Table 4.2). This was to be expected as the study focus was on those who self-reported to bully others. There was however no significant difference between level of bullying at baseline among those students who participated in the qualitative study compared to those who did not participate among the self-report bully cohort (χ^2 = 6.921; df = 6; p = 0.328).

Table 4.2   Interview response to participation in the study and frequency of self-reported bullying (whole year 6 cohort)

Frequency of bullying	Interview Responses				
	Positive consent received	Negative consent received	No consent returned	Student not selected for study *	Total
Regular	11 (14.5)	4 (5.3)	19 (25)	42 (55.3)	76
Occasional	35 (9.9)	9 (2.5)	79 (22.4)	230 (65.2)	353
Never	6 (0.7)	4 (0.5)	26 (3.2)	769 (95.5)	805
Total	52 (4.2)	17 (1.4)	124 (10)	1041 (84.4)	1234

* Students from the five schools who did not participate in the study included

Consent forms were posted directly to parents (because of confidentiality issues schools were provided with stamped envelopes with the child's name and were asked to post these to parents). Of the 193 consent forms 69 (35.7%) parents responded. Of these 52 (26.7%) provided positive consent. Students were purposively then randomly selected. All students who self-reported to bully others regularly at baseline were selected. Students who reported to bully occasionally were then randomly selected. Additional consents were mailed to a random sample of students who reported no bullying behaviour (either bullying others or being bullied) from each school. These students were included in the study to reduce the likelihood that students in the class would recognise why specific students had been selected. A further six parents provided positive consent for their child to participate in the study. These students were included in the qualitative sample as they provided valuable data. In addition, two of these students reported some bullying behaviour during the interview.

Of the 52 students for who consent was gained 51 were interviewed. One student was not able to be interviewed due to repeated absences – on two arranged visits he was not available and An alternative time was unable to be scheduled.

4.2.2   Self-reported being bullied

Bullying research highlights specific differences between students who bully others, students who are bullied and students who are bullied and who bully others (often referred to as bully-victims)[32, 128]. Given this it was important to consider if the students involved in the qualitative study had reported to be bullied. Of the 46 students who self-reported to bully others either regularly or occasionally 13 (28.9%) and 15 (33.3%) reported to have been bullied regularly and occasionally respectively. There was no significant difference between self-reported being bullied among those students who participated in the qualitative study compared to those who did not participate from the self-report bully cohort (χ^2 = 6.966; df = 6; p = 0.324) or from the whole Year 6 cohort at baseline (χ^2 = 7.882; df = 6; p = 0.247). For the purpose of this qualitative study students were determined to have been bullied regularly if they responded 'almost every day', most days', about once a week' or every few weeks' to the question "This term, how often did another student of students bully you?" Students were considered to have been bullied occasionally if they responded 'only once or twice' and never if they responded 'I was not bullied this term'. The use of just one question to establish frequency of being bullied is a limitation of this study.

4.2.3   Gender

While many studies have indicated that boys are more likely to bully others than girls [63{Craig, 2003 #460, 129] this is thought to be due to the way bullying is defined [130]. Studies that have analysed differences between direct and indirect bullying have found boys are more likely to use direct bullying behaviours while girls are more likely to use indirect behaviours [130, 131 {Ahmad, 1994 #55]. To determine the qualitative study had a representative sample of girls and boys' analysis was conducted. There was no significant difference between gender among those students who participated in the

qualitative study compared to those who did not participate among the self-report bully cohort (χ^2 = 3.603; df = 3; p = 0.308). Although more boys (n = 29; 63%) were interviewed compared to girls (n = 17; 37%) from the self-report bully cohort, boys comprised 58.7% of this cohort . Of the six students who reported no bullying behaviour three were boys and three were girls.

Of the 1254 students from the whole Year 6 cohort who responded to this question 51% (n = 640) were boys and 49% (n = 614) girls. Of the students who self-reported to bully others boys (n = 57; 75%) were more likely to report to bully regularly than girls (n = 19; 25%). Self-report of occasional bullying was not as different with 54.9% (n = 196) of boys and 45.1% (n = 161) of girls reporting this frequency of bullying.

4.2.4   Intervention level

There was, however a significant difference between intervention level and participation in the study (χ^2 = 25.725; df = 6; p = 0.000) among the whole year 6 cohort with more students interviewed from the moderate intervention (41.3%) (Table 4.3). All of the six moderate intervention schools from the FSFF Project participated in the qualitative study compared to five of the seven high intervention schools and four of the seven low intervention schools.

Interestingly at baseline students from the whole year 6 cohort in the high intervention group were more likely to self-report to bully others regularly (48.7%) compared to those from the moderate (32.9%) and low intervention groups (18.4%). Those from the high intervention group were also slightly more likely to report to bully others occasionally (35.8%) than those from the moderate (32.1%) and low (32.1%) intervention groups.

Table 4.3   **Participation in the qualitative study and level of intervention in the FSFF project**

Intervention level	Interview Responses				Total
	Positive consent received	**Negative consent received**	**No consent returned**	**Student not selected for study ****	
High	14 (3.2)	7 (1.6)	38 (8.7)	380 (86.6)	439
Moderate	22 (6.8)	7 (2.2)	49 (15.1)	247 (76)	325
Low	16 (3.4%)	3 (0.6%)	37 (7.8%)	419 (88.2%)	475
Total	52 (4.2%)	17 (1.4%)	124 (10%)	1046 (84.4%)	1239

4.2.5   Happiness at school

To determine happiness at school students were asked to respond to two questions. Both questions asked students to look at five pictures of happy and sad faces and circle the number under the face that best represents how they feel at school and at playtime. Students were given the options of 'very happy', 'happy', 'okay', 'sad' and 'very sad' for both questions. Due to small numbers for some of the responses the question was recoded to represent happy ('very happy' and 'happy'), okay and sad ('sad' and 'very sad'). There were no significant differences between the level of interview selection and degree of happiness/sadness at school among the self-report bully cohort ($\chi^2 = 2.074$; df = 6; p = 0.913) with the majority of students included in this cohort responding that they feel happy at school most of the time (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4   **Participation in the qualitative study and happiness at school at baseline (self-report bully cohort)**

Happiness at school	Interview Responses				Total
	Positive consent received N(%)	**Negative consent received**	**No consent returned**	**Student not selected for study ****	
Happy	31 (11.3)	10 (3.6)	61 (22.2)	173 (62.9)	275
Okay	14 (9.3)	3 (2)	38 (25.2)	96 (63.6)	151

Sad	1 (9.1)	-	3 (27.3)	7 (63.6)	11
Total	46 (10.5)	13 (3)	102 (23.3)	276 (63.2)	437

There was however a significant difference between frequency of bullying and how students felt at school among the whole year 6 cohort with students who reported not to bully to be more likely to be happy (75%) compared to those who reported to bully occasionally (66.2) and regularly (50.7) (Table 4.5). Despite these differences there was only a very small proportion of children in the whole year 6 cohort who felt sad at school (n = 33; 2.7%).

Table 4.5   **How students feel at school at baseline by level of self-report bullying (whole year 6 cohort)**

	Happy (n;%)	**Okay**	**Sad**	**Total**	P value
Regular	38 (50.7)	34 (45.3)	3 (4)	75	
Occasional	233 (66.2)	113 (32.1)	6 (1.7)	352	
Never	609 (75)	179 (22)	24 (3)	812	
Total	880 (71)	326 (26.3)	33 (2.7)	1239	0.000

Of the 1239 students from the whole year 6 cohort who answered the question about feeling happy at playtime and if they had bullied others the majority (1071; 86.4%) felt happy at school during playtimes, 144 (11.6%) felt okay and 24 (1.9%) felt sad.. There was no significant difference between how students feel at school and level of bullying behaviour among the whole year 6 cohort at baseline (χ^2 = 4.044; df = 4; p = 0.400). Similarly, there were no significant differences between the level of interview selection and degree of happiness/sadness at play time among the self-report bully cohort (χ^2 = 4.322; df = 6; p = 0.633) (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6   **Participation in the qualitative study and happiness at playtime at baseline (self-report bully cohort)**

	Interview Responses				
Happiness at school	**Positive consent received N (%)**	**Negative consent received**	**No consent returned**	**Student not selected for study ****	**Total**
Happy	37 (10.1)	12 (3.3)	88 (24)	229 (62.6)	366
Okay	8 (12.9)	1 91.6)	14 (22.6)	39 (62.9)	62
Sad	1 (11.1)	-	-	8 (88.9)	9
Total	46 (10.5)	13 (3)	102 (23.3)	276 (63.2)	437

A question included as part of the social and emotional health scale also provides information on students general happiness. It is however beyond the scope of this study to describe the findings of this question. Further research will include analysis of the social and emotional health scales and comparison to the qualitative data.

4.2.6   Friendships

To determine changes in friendship patterns at school students were asked a questions about the number of friends they have in Year 6. They were also asked a series of questions as part of a peer support scale. The Peer Support Scale will be discussed and compared to the qualitative discussion of friendships. The first question asked students 'how many good friends (that you see and talk to most days) do you have in Year 6?' They were asked to respond with 'I have no good friends in Year 6', I have one good friend in Year 6', 'I have two or three good friends in Year 6' and 'I have many good friends in Year 6'. The majority of students in the whole year 6 cohort reported having either many good friends (73.1%) or two to three good friends (21.5%). These data are described in more detail in section 4.3.

Using the self-report bully cohort there were no significant differences between the level of interview selection and number of good friends ($\chi^2 = 3.689$; df = 6; p = 0.931). Only one of the students 46 students interviewed from the self-report bully cohort reported that they had no good friends, 1 to have 1 good friends, 12 to have 2 or 3 good friends and 31 reported to have many good friends.

4.2.7   Talking to parents about bullying

As active consent was required for this study it was important to establish if the students who were selected from the self-report bully cohort were more likely to have discussed bullying with their parents, or another adult with whom they lived, than those who did not participate, especially those who were invited to participate but gave negative consent or failed to respond. Students were asked "has an adult you live with (e.g. Mum or Dad),

ever talked to you about bullying". They were given the options of yes, no or unsure. There were no significant differences between the level of interview selection and if students had talked to an adult they lived with about bullying ($\chi^2 = 2.123$; df = 6; p = 0.908). Of the 46 students interviewed from the self-report bully cohort 28 (60.9%) responded yes, 8 (17.4%) no and 10 (21.7%) unsure to this question.

Although there were no significant differences between frequency of bullying and if students had talked to an adult they lived with about bullying ($\chi^2 = 11.782$; df = 4; p = 0.019) among the whole year 6 cohort, students who reported to bully others regularly were less likely (50.7%) to respond that they had talked to their parents about bullying compared to those who reported to bully occasionally (65.4%) and not at all (64.4%). There were no significant differences between frequency of bullying others and which adult students talked to most about bullying ($\chi^2 = 14.991$; df = 8; p = 0.059) from the whole year 6 cohort. The majority of students from this cohort reported to talk to their mother or step mother the most (58.8%) compared to father or step father (15.1%), no one (15.7%0, other family members (2%) or someone else (8.4%).

There was a significant difference between gender and whether an adult had talked to them about bullying for the whole year 6 cohort ($\chi^2 = 14.991$; df = 8; p = 0.059) with girls being more likely to respond positively (67.8%) compared to boys (60.2%). There was also a significant difference among gender and which adult they talked to most about bullying ($\chi^2 = 45.760$; df = 4; p = 0.000) with girls being more likely to talk to their mother/stepmother (68.8% compared to boys 49.6%) and boys being more likely to talk to their father/stepfather (20.2% compared to girls 10.2%). Boys were also more likely to indicate that they didn't talk to anyone about bullying (21.9%) compared to girls (9.4%).

4.3   FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIP PATTERNS

4.3.1   Introduction

It is well recognised that the peer group and friendships form an important part of a young person's life. Good connectedness to friends is a protective factor for a range of mental health problems [69]. The bullying literature has provided evidence that good friendships can be protective against being bullied [132]. Aggressive behaviour at school is more likely if friends are also aggressive {Bagwell, 2004 #474 {Simons-Morton, 2004 #383}. There is some debate over the number of friends and the size of the friendship group that is important when considering the likelihood of being bullied and this may differ between genders [25] however there is little doubt that friendships are a significant factor when considering bullying behaviour.

This study was interested in investigating the influence of friends for those students who bully. The number of good friends students had and the influence of these friends were considered. The qualitative data indicated that friends were a significant influence on the initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying behaviours. The influence may be positive or negative. These results are described in more detail in Section **. This section will provide a brief discussion of the friends and friendship patterns of the students in the study.

4.3.2   Quantitative Data

To determine changes in friendship patterns at school students were asked a question about the number of friends they have in Year 6. They were also asked a series of questions as part of a peer support scale (see section 4.2.6).

The majority of students in the whole year 6 cohort reported having either many good friends (73.1%) or two to three good friends (21.5%) (Table 4.7). There was no significant difference between the frequency of bullying and number of good friends among the whole Year 6 cohort at baseline ($\chi^2 = 7.227$; df = 6; p = 0.300). This data suggests that almost all of the cohort have a good circle of friends. Only 15 (1.2%) and 53 (4.3%) students indicated they had no or only one good friend respectively.

Table 4.7 Number of good friends and frequency of self report bullying others at baseline (whole Year 6 cohort)

	No good friends	1 good friend	2 or 3 good friends	Many good friends	Total	P value
Regular	-	2 (2.7)	17 (22.7)	56 (74.7)	75	
Occasional	6 (1.7)	18 (5)	62 (17.4)	271 (75.9)	357	
Never	9 (1.1)	33 (4.1)	188 (23.2)	582 (71.7)	812	
Total	15 (1.2)	53 (4.3)	267 (21.5)	909 (73.1)	1244	0.300

The question used to measure peer support was adapted from the Perceptions of Peer Support Scale [133]. Students were asked the question "are there students in your class who would:" and were provided a list of thirteen statements (Table 4.8). Students were asked to circle either 'lots of the time', 'sometimes' or 'never.' There was a significant difference for frequency of bullying and having someone who would choose you on your team with regular bullies being more likely (59.2%) to select lots of times compared to occasional (48.6%) and never (39.6%) bullies. Regular bullies were also more likely to have someone share things with them lots of times (61.3%) compared to occasional (42.2%) and never (50.1%) bullies. Although there was no significant difference for most items and frequency of bullying students who self-reported to bully others regularly were slightly more likely to report positive actions 'lots of times' compared to occasional and never bullies suggesting that these children have good levels of peer support.

Table 4.8 Perceptions of Peer Support at baseline by frequency of self-report bullying (whole year 6 cohort)

	Lots of times n(%)	Sometimes	Never	Total	P value
Choose you on their team					
Regular	45 (59.2)	24 (31.6)	7 (9.2)	76	
Occasional	174 (48.6)	163 (45.5)	21 (5.9)	358	
Never	319 (39.6)	406 (50.4)	80 (9.9)	805	
Total	538 (43.4)	593 (47.9)	108 (8.7)	1239	0.001
Tell you you're good at doing things					
Regular	42 (56.0)	28 (37.3)	5 (6.7)	75	
Occasional	153 (42.7)	187 (52.2)	18 (5.0)	358	
Never	366 (45.4)	379 (47.0)	61 (7.6)	806	
Total	561 (45.3)	594 (47.9)	84 (6.8)	1239	.089
Explain the rules of a game					
Regular	46 (61.3)	23 (30.7)	6 (8.0)	75	
Occasional	181 (50.6)	157 (43.9)	20 (5.6)	358	
Never	497 (61.6)	255 (31.6)	55 (6.8)	807	
Total	724 (58.4)	435 (35.1)	81 (6.5)	1240	.002
Invite you to play at their home					
Regular	46 (60.5)	27 (35.5)	3 (3.9)	76	
Occasional	192 (53.9)	136 (38.2)	28 (7.9)	356	
Never	431 (53.5)	308 (38.3)	66 (8.2)	805	
Total	669 (54.1)	471 (38.1)	97 (7.8)	1237	.668
Share things with you					
Regular	46 (61.3)	26 (34.7)	3 (4.0)	75	
Occasional	151 (42.2)	163 (45.5)	44 (12.3)	358	
Never	405 (50.1)	310 (38.4)	93 (11.5)	808	
Total	602 (48.5)	499 (40.2)	140 (11.3)	1241	.009
Help you if you hurt yourself					
Regular	57 (75.0)	10 (13.2)	9 (11.8)	76	
Occasional	233 (66.0)	102 (28.9)	18 (5.1)	353	
Never	564 (69.6)	198 (24.4)	48 (5.9)	810	
Total	854 (68.9)	310 (25.0)	75 (6.1)	1239	.016
Miss you if you weren't at school					
Regular	24 (32.0)	35 (46.7)	16 (21.3)	75	
Occasional	121 (33.9)	155 (43.4)	81 (22.7)	357	
Never	278 (34.6)	364 (45.3)	161 (20.0)	803	
Total	423 (34.3)	554 (44.9)	258 (20.9)	1235	.870
Make you feel better					
Regular	39 (51.3)	28 (36.8)	9 (11.8)	76	
Occasional	180 (50.4)	146 (40.9)	31 (8.7)	357	
Never	431 (53.9)	293 (36.6)	76 (9.5)	800	
Total	650 (52.7)	467 (37.9)	116 (9.4)	1233	.647
Pick you for a partner					

Regular	53 (69.7)	18 (23.7)	5 (6.6)	76	
Occasional	230 (64.4)	116 (32.5)	11 (3.1)	357	
Never	532 (66.0)	224 (27.8)	50 (6.2)	806	
Total	815 (65.8)	358 (28.9)	66 (5.3)	1239	.103
Help you if students are being mean to you					
Regular	44 (58.7)	24 (32.0)	7 (9.3)	75	
Occasional	212 (59.4)	127 (35.6)	18 (5.0)	357	
Never	475 (59.1)	276 (34.3)	53 (6.6)	804	
Total	731 (59.1)	427 (34.5)	78 (6.3)	1236	.669
Tell you you're their friend					
Regular	48 (63.2)	22 (28.9)	6 (7.9)	76	
Occasional	233 (65.1)	106 (29.6)	19 (5.3)	358	
Never	549 (68.2)	204 (25.3)	52 (6.5)	805	
Total	830 (67.0)	332 (26.8)	77 (6.2)	1239	.516
Ask you to play when you are alone					
Regular	46 (60.5)	22 (28.9)	8 (10.5)	76	
Occasional	211 (59.3)	122 (34.3)	23 (6.5)	356	
Never	495 (61.5)	250 (31.1)	60 (7.5)	805	
Total	752 (60.8)	394 (31.9)	91 (7.4)	1237	.618
Tell you secrets					
Regular	39 (51.3)	27 (35.5)	10 (13.2)	76	
Occasional	175 (49.0)	132 (37.0)	50 (14.0)	357	
Never	354 (43.8)	321 (39.7)	133 (16.5)	808	
Total	568 (45.8)	480 (38.7)	193 (15.6)	1241	.411

* p value – level of significance for each of the statements and frequency of self-reported bully other

4.3.3   Qualitative findings

As is consistent with the quantitative data the majority of students interviewed indicated that they had several or many good friends at school and that they made friends easily. These students generally reported good levels of peer support. The majority mainly had friends of the same sex although many also indicated that they had some male and female friends. Most indicated that they had lots of good friends, some gave an approximate number, for example, "about 20". Others gave more precise responses: "Umm I'm friends with most people in the class but I've got six really good friends" (Sienna, low intervention, no bully, no – regular bullied). Only one student indicated that he had no friends at school or outside school.

Some students who had also been bullied regularly suggested that they didn't make friends easily. However these students did have some good friends. For example, when asked if she made friends easily Rachael (moderate intervention, occasional - no bully, regular bullied) responded "not really .. cos I get bullied at this school and umm I'm not allowed to be their friends and that." When asked about her friends Rachael commented "umm I've got at least three good friends and the rest are just friends." During the interview Rachael indicated that she had bullied others who were being nasty to her good friends. It appeared that her group of three friends provided good support for each other but were all likely to be bullied. Similarly James (high intervention, occasional – regular bully, no bullied) also suggested he didn't make friends easily because "don't try" however he when talking about his friends he did comment "good friends, I've only got like four or something."

Only a few students like Luke (moderate intervention, occasional – no - regular bully, regular bullied) indicated that they didn't have many friends: "um and like what good proper friends like best friends .. I only really have like about one."

Similarly Callum (moderate intervention, occasional – no – occasional bully, regularly bullied) responded "umm I've got one best friend that's a girl and I've got a few people like I like to talk to that are boys … they're actually all year 6's .. so I haven't met any year 7's that are my friend yet." Callum had been at the school for four years.

While some students like Callum discussed issues associated with having friends younger than him, others like William (low intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, regular – occasional bullied) who was a tall mature student indicated that most of his friends were already at high school. William didn't have a lot of close friends at school mainly because the thought they were a bit immature. His social activities with his high school friends included hanging out in the neighborhood and "causing trouble". William was reluctant to discuss specific details of what type of trouble they got into although

later in the interview he indicated the police had attended one incident of fighting he had been involved in out of school.

Robbie (moderate intervention, no – regular bully, regular bullied) indicated that he had no friends at school or outside school. When asked why he thought he didn't make friends easily Robbie responded: "well every time new kids come to class I try to help them but they say get lost dork and those kinds of things." When asked how that made him feel he responded: 'angry, disruptive."

When asked what they liked to do with their friends students provided a variety of common responses including playing sport, going to the beach, going shopping, to the movies, to each other's houses and riding bikes. Almost all students provided examples of activities that would be expected of a 12 year old child however some like Alex (low intervention, regular bully, regular - no bullied) when asked what the best thing he did with his friends responded "I usually just roam the streets and like yeah .."

The majority of students indicated that they made friends easily and had lots of friends. Girls were more likely to list the names of specific friends while boys suggested they had lots of good friends. Most students described enjoying a variety of normal activities with their friends. Some students did however discuss only having a few friends. These students had all self-reported to be bullied regularly at baseline. There were no differences in student's discussion of friendship between the three intervention groups.

Friends influence

The influence of friends on initiating, maintaining and ceasing bullying behaviour will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.4. There was however other data that emerged that focused on the influence of friends.

Some students indicated that friends were a bad influence on them and their friends got them into trouble. Several students mentioned changing friendship groups because they

had realized that if they stayed with that group they would continue to get into trouble. Alex provides an example of recognizing that his friends were a bad influence on him: "Umm maybe change my friends so I make better friends so I don't get in trouble with my other friends and stuff .. so I can make new friends that won't be in the wrong or do anything to ruin our friendship" (Alex, low intervention, regular bully, regular – no bullied).

Anthony (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) provides another example of the negative influence friends can have:

"… And you just learn your lesson because I had to get a note home and that was when I was hanging out with Kurt my other friend and ever since I've stopped hanging out with him I've noticed that I haven't got in trouble like a lot … I've hardly got in trouble because I'm hanging out with my other friend who makes me feel good about who I am and like how I do things and everything."

When questioned as to whether hanging out with Kurt had got him into trouble Anthony responded with:

"I don't really know but I think like he influenced me to do stuff and now that like I saw him at the shops one day and he was there and he was with this other friend and I though if I was with him that day that would be me squishing hot chips on people's car windows. And I thought oh if I was with him then I wouldn't have got Prefect. I wouldn't have done all those things I have done now and I'd be squishing chips on car windows and I wouldn't have that bond with Mum and Dad and my other friends." Although Anthony had reported to only bully occasionally at baseline his comments during the interview indicated that he may have bullied more regularly in the past. This discussion reflects a significant shift in how Anthony views his old friend and how these feelings have altered his self-perception.

Adam (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional – no bullied) indicated that he had changed his group of friends because they were always being stupid. The members of

this group were also mean to each other. They didn't do much except sit around at recess and lunch time. His new group of friends played basketball during breaks at school. He talked about his group of friends who he no longer hung out with: "That groups all split up, you see when they're together they're bad and when they're apart they're really good friends, its just when they're put themselves together. And I like this Damien person like one of my best friends, when he's around them he turns on me". When Adam was asked why Damien was nasty to him in front of the other kids in the group he felt Damien behaved this way to make himself look good in front of the others.

As is consistent with the quantitative data, the majority of students had a number of good friends. It was evident however that for some students their friends were a bad influence. Some students, especially those who had positively changed their bullying behaviour recognised that they were more likely to get into trouble by staying with these friends. Some had made an effort to change their group of friends. Children who discussed changing groups were from all three intervention groups.

4.4 The interaction of factors that influence children who bully others to initiate, maintain and cease this behaviour

4.4.1 Background

The literature has identified a range of factors that may influence children to bully others however there are some discrepancies in these data. Some of these discrepancies may be attributed to different ways of defining and classifying bullying behaviour. As described earlier these factors may be attributed to the following areas:

- Individual characteristics, for example, self concept, empathy (pro-bully/anti-victim), popularity, size, academic achievement, assertiveness, social competence, confidence;
- Aggressiveness;
- School factors (discussed in section 4.5);

- Peer support, for example, close friends, relationships with school peers, social activities with friends;

- Family support, for example communication with parent/caregiver, family attitudes towards bullying; and

- Other problem behaviours, for example, alcohol and other drug use, trouble with the police.

As with other mental health issues there is a complex interaction of factors that may influence children to initiate, maintain and cease bullying [69].

4.4.2   Findings from the Quantitative Study at Baseline

There were several questions that related to the factors that may influence children to initiate, maintain and cease bullying in the quantitative study. Descriptive analysis has been conducted for these questions at baseline. More detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this project and will be described elsewhere.

Students were asked a series of questions that relate to what they thought would happen if they bullied another student or students. This question is useful for examining the self concept of students who self-report to bully others and to develop an understanding of their attitudes towards bullying others. This question was adapted from an attitude to bullying question developed by Rigby [17]. Rigby measured both the likelihood of the outcome as perceived by students and the extent to which students found the outcomes to be personally desirable. Outcomes differed considerably in their perceived desirability and the extent to which students though they were likely. For example, in Rigby's study, approximately 65% of students saw bullying as a means of "making other students scared of you", however the importance of achieving this was low. In comparison few students (approximately 10%) felt bullying 'made you feel good about yourself' however this outcome received the highest average weighting for personal importance (Rigby 1997). Table 4.9 describes the findings for the whole year 6 cohort at baseline.

Table 4.9 Students perceptions of what would happen if they bullied another student or students by level of self-report bullying (whole Year 6 cohort)

	Yes	Maybe	No	Total	P value
Other students would be scared of me					
Regular	25 (33.3)	34 (45.3)	16 (21.3)	75	
Occasional	64 (18.0)	186 (52.2)	106 (29.8)	356	
Never	193 (24.0)	373 (46.5)	237 (29.5)	803	
Total	282 (22.9)	593 (48.1)	359 (29.1)	1234	.023
Other students would like me					
Regular	15 (20.0)	33 (44.0)	27 (36.0)	75	
Occasional	33 (9.2)	95 (26.6)	229 (64.1)	357	
Never	73 (9.1)	169 (21.2)	557 (69.7)	799	
Total	121 (9.8)	297 (24.1)	813 (66.0)	1231	.000
My parents would find out and talk to me					
Regular	36 (48.0)	25 (33.3)	14 (18.7)	75	
Occasional	201 (56.3)	107 (30.0)	49 (13.7)	357	
Never	530 (65.9)	178 (22.1)	96 (11.9)	804	
Total	767 (62.1)	310 (25.1)	159 (12.9)	1236	.002
I would feel bad about myself					
Regular	13 (17.3)	35 (46.7)	27 (36.0)	75	
Occasional	221 (62.3)	89 (25.1)	45 (12.7)	355	
Never	580 (72.4)	131 (16.4)	90 (11.2)	801	
Total	814 (66.1)	255 (20.7)	162 (13.2)	1231	.000
Other students would think I was tough					
Regular	25 (33.3)	33 (44.0)	17 (22.7)	75	
Occasional	71 (19.9)	149 (41.7)	137 (38.4)	357	
Never	169 (21.2)	305 (38.2)	325 (40.7)	799	
Total	265 (21.5)	487 (39.6)	479 (38.9)	1231	.015
I would get into trouble					
Regular	36 (47.4)	29 (38.2)	11 (14.5)	76	
Occasional	240 (67.8)	91 (25.7)	23 (6.5)	354	
Never	605 (75.6)	138 (17.3)	57 (7.1)	800	
Total	881 (71.6)	258 (21.0)	91 (7.4)	1230	.000
I would feel bad for student I bullied					
Regular	17 (22.4)	26 (34.2)	33 (43.4)	76	
Occasional	199 (56.1)	113 (31.8)	43 (12.1)	355	
Never	576 (72.1)	147 (18.4)	76 (9.5)	799	
Total	792 (64.4)	286 (23.3)	152 (12.4)	1230	.000
Other students would not want to be my friend					
Regular	19 (25.0)	26 (34.2)	31 (40.8)	76	
Occasional	150 (42.1)	142 (39.9)	64 (18.0)	356	
Never	450 (56.1)	246 (30.7)	106 (13.2)	802	
Total	619 (50.2)	414 (33.5)	201 (16.3)	1234	.000
My parents would be unhappy with me					
Regular	31 (40.8)	32 (42.1)	13 (17.1)	76	

Occasional	244 (69.1)	81 (22.9)	28 (7.9)	353	
Never	648 (81.0)	100 (12.5)	52 (6.5)	800	
Total	923 (75.1)	213 (17.3)	93 (7.6)	1229	.000
I would feel good about myself					
Regular	15 (19.7)	28 (36.8)	33 (43.4)	76	
Occasional	13 (3.7)	60 (17.0)	280 (79.3)	353	
Never	23 (2.9)	66 (8.2)	712 (88.9)	801	
Total	51 (4.1)	154 (12.5)	1025 (83.3)	1230	.000
Other students wouldn't bully me					
Regular	24 (31.6)	27 (35.5)	25 (32.9)	76	
Occasional	61 (17.1)	195 (54.8)	100 (28.1)	356	
Never	178 (22.3)	403 (50.4)	218 (27.3)	799	
Total	263 (21.4)	625 (50.8)	343 (27.9)	1231	0.014

* p value – significance of frequency of bullying with each behaviour

A bullying expectation score based on the work of Rigby (1997) was developed for this question. There was a significant difference between levels of bullying others and the bullying expectations score for the whole Year 6 cohort at baseline ($\chi^2 = 227.449$; df = 44; p = 0.000). Students who self-reported to bully regularly were more likely to score lower positive scores as compared to those who reported not to bully at all (ANOVA p = 0.000 f = 6.634). There was also a significant difference between regular and occasional self-report bullies for the bullying expectations score for the self report bully cohort ($\chi^2 = 100.358$; df = 21; p = 0.000) with those who reported to bully regularly having lower positive scores. There was a significant difference between the prospective attitudes towards bullying between genders ($\chi^2 = 52.388$; df = 21; p = 0.000). Girls were significantly more likely to report positive scores.

To measure student's empathy towards others a question adapted from the Pro-Victim Scale developed by Rigby and Slee (1991) was used. Table 4.10 describes the whole year 6 cohort's attitudes towards bullying at baseline by self-reported frequency of bullying behaviour.

Table 4.10 Attitudes towards bullying at baseline by frequency of self-report bullying at baseline (whole year 6 cohort)

	Agree n(%)	Not sure	Disagree	Total	P value
Picked on deserve					
Regular	16(21.3)	16 (21.3)	43 (57.3)	75	
Occasional	21 (5.9)	70 (19.7)	265 (74.4)	356	
Never	33 (4.1)	147 (18.1)	630 (77.8)	810	
Total	70 (5.6)	233 (18.8)	938 (75.6)	1241	0.000
Bully is a coward					
Regular	36 (48.0%)	21 (28.0%)	18 (24.0%)	75	
Occasional	238 (66.7)	75 (21.0)	44 (12.3)	357	
Never	586 (72.4)	148 (18.3)	75 (9.3)	809	
Total	860 (69.3)	244 (19.7)	137 (11.0)	1241	0.000
Angry when picked on					
Regular	33 (44.6)	24 (32.4)	17 (23.0%)	74	
Occasional	239 (66.9)	88 (24.6)	30 (8.4)	357	
Never	575 (71.5)	172 (21.4)	57 (7.1)	804	
Total	847 (68.6)	284 (23.0)	104 (8.4)	1235	0.000
Should tell when bullied					
Regular	56 (74.7)	6 (8.0)	13 (17.3)	75	
Occasional	302 (84.8)	26 (7.3)	28 (7.9)	356	
Never	710 (88.1)	58 (7.2)	38 (4.7)	806	
Total	1068 (86.3)	90 (7.3)	79 (6.4)	1237	0.000
Funny when upset					
Regular	15 (20)	8 (10.7)	52 (69.3)	75	
Occasional	26 (7.3)	34 (9.6)	296 (83.1)	356	
Never	58 (7.2)	50 (6.2)	698 (86.6)	806	
Total	99 (8.0)	92 (7.4)	1046 (84.6)	1237	0.000
Pick on weaker					
Regular	56 (74.7)	11 (14.7)	8 (10.7)	75	
Occasional	285 (79.8)	43 (12.0)	29 (8.1)	357	
Never	686 (85.1)	75 99.3)	45 (5.6)	806	
Total	1027 (83.0)	129 (10.4)	82 (6.6)	1238	0.060
Like students who stand up for themselves					
Regular	62 (82.7)	8 (10.7)	5 (6.7)	75	
Occasional	305 (85.4)	39 (10.9)	13 (3.6)	357	
Never	644 (79.7)	130 (16.1)	34 (4.2)	808	
Total	1011 (81.5)	177 (14.3)	52 (4.2)	1240	0.102
Not pick on those weaker					
Regular	54 (72)	10 (13.3)	11 (14.7)	75	
Occasional	285 (79.8)	43 912.0)	29 (8.1)	357	
Never	657 (81.2)	102 (12.6)	50 (6.2)	809	
Total	996 (80.3)	155 (12.5)	90 (7.3)	1241	0.085
Like it when someone sticks up for bullied					
Regular	52 (69.3)	13 (17.3)	10 913.3)	75	
Occasional	316 988.5)	32 (9.0)	9 (2.5)	357	

Never	718 (88.8)	65 (8.0)	26 (3.2)	809	
Total	1086 987.5)	110 (8.9)	45 (3.6)	1241	0.000
Feel uncomfortable watching bulling					
Regular	32 (42.7)	25 (33.3)	18 (24.0)	75	
Occasional	254 (70.9)	75 (20.9)	29 (8.1)	358	
Never	613 (75.8)	145 917.9)	51 (6.3)	809	
Total	899 (72.4)	245 919.7)	98 (7.9)	1242	0.000

A pro-victim score was developed with scores ranging from 10 (pro victim) to 30 (anti victim). There was a significant difference between level of bullying and the Pro-victim score with students who reported to bully regularly being less likely to report a positive pro-victim score and more likely to report a negative score than students who reported to bully occasionally or not at all ($\chi^2 = 49.448$; df = 17; p = 0.000).

In their scale Rigby and Slee (1991) developed 20 scale items. The reliability of the scale was assessed by coefficient alpha as 0.78 (based on n = 667). From these items further analysis was conducted to establish three factors. Twelve of the items were included in these factors:

Factor 1: Rejection of weak children

Factor 2: Approval of bullying

Factor 3: Support for victims [67].

The Friendly Schools Friendly Families instrument did not include items from the 'Rejection of weak children' factor. This included: I wouldn't be friends with kids who let themselves be pushed around; kids who are weak are just asking for trouble; kids should not complain about being bullied; soft kids make me sick and nobody likes a wimp [67]. Interestingly similar responses were made by some students in the qualitative study as reasons to bully others.

Using Rigby and Slee's findings and based on their factors the following three factors have were developed:

Factor 1: Approval of bullying

Students who get picked on all the time usually deserve it

A person who bullies is really a coward

It's funny to see students get upset when they are teased.

There was a significant difference between level of bullying behaviour and the approval of bullying score among the whole Year 6 cohort. Students who reported to bully regularly were less likely to score positively and more like to score negatively on this score than those who reported to bully occasionally and not at all ($\chi^2 = 71.113$; df = 12; p = 0.000).

Factor 2: Support for victims

It makes me angry when someone is picked on

I like students who can stand up for themselves

You should not pick on someone who is weaker than you

I like it when someone sticks up for students who are bullied

I feel uncomfortable when I watch someone being bullied.

There was a significant difference between level of bullying behaviour and the support for victims score among the whole Year 6 cohort. Students who reported to bully regularly were less likely to score positively and more like to score negatively on this score than those who reported to bully occasionally and not at all ($\chi^2 = 81.713$; df = 20; p = 0.000).

Factor 3: Telling someone about bullying.

Students should tell anyone if they are being bullied

Students who pick on someone weaker should be told off

There was a significant difference between level of bullying behaviour and the telling about bullying score among the whole Year 6 cohort. Students who reported to bully regularly were less likely to score positively and more like to score negatively on this

score than those who reported to bully occasionally and not at all ($\chi^2 = 36.018$; df = 8; p = 0.000).

4.4.3   Qualitative study findings

Initiating, maintaining and ceasing bullying behaviour (third person)

To develop a better understanding of the factors that influence children to initiate, maintain and cease bullying behaviour a range of questions were asked. Students were initially provided with a gender specific bullying scenario and asked to respond to a range of questions in the third person. Given bullying is a socially undesirable behaviour it was appropriate to ask students about initiation, maintenance and ceasing bullying behaviour in both third person and first person. This has been used successfully with another Australian study [25]. The following scenario was used with boys. Girls were given the same scenario except the males were replaced with females. In the female scenario Holly replaced Tony as the person being bullied and Suzie replaced Sam as the person doing the bullying. The scenario developed was gender specific as the literature suggests that research estimates that boys are most likely to bully boys [1, 134]. While some studies have found girls report to be bullied mostly by boys [1, 13, 134] this is not always the case [94]. It is suggested that girls and boys have different reasons for bullying others. Boys are more likely to bully others for reasons of power and dominance compared to girls who seek a sense of affirmation and affiliation [25, 94].

"Tony is in year 7 and has a close group of friends. However, one Monday morning things seemed to change. His group of friends seemed unfriendly and abrupt. He tries to catch the eye of his friend Sam but Sam avoids his gaze.
At recess time he joins his friends late and arrives just in time to hear one of his friends saying something nasty about him.
Later that day the class is playing basketball in Phys Ed (physical education). While the teacher isn't looking Tony's 'friend' Sam hits him in the arm causing a huge bruise."

Justification of behaviour

When boys were asked what might make Sam hurt Tony responses almost exclusively revolved around friendships and the thought that Tony may have done something to upset Sam. There was no implication in the scenario that Tony had done anything to upset Sam.

For example, Luke, Justin and Ronan all indicated that friends may be influencing Sam's behaviour. Justin also reinforces a common theme that Tony had done something to deserve being bullied.

"Umm maybe that he's just got like even though they're best friends they might like he might want to find some new friends and like those friends might want don't like him want him not to be friends with Tony" (Luke, moderate intervention, occasional – no – regular bully, bullied regularly).

" um I'm not sure, depending on what was going on probably um Tony may have done something to him just beforehand. Or maybe Sam had just been influenced by his peers of he's seen something on TV or maybe they'd had a fight or something before or um maybe other things were happening with other students and he just wanted to be away from them for a while (Justin, moderate intervention, regular – occasional - no bully, occasional bullied).

Ronan (high intervention, occasional – no bully, no bullied) suggested that "Sam might have got pushed into not liking him (Tony)." When this response was explored in more detail Ronan suggested this may have been done by "some of his other friends that don't like Tony"

When girls were asked this question the students also attributed blame to Holly indicating that she may have done something to annoy or hurt Susie's feelings. This was consistent for girls who reported to bully others regularly and occasionally. This response was also common for the three control girls who had self-reported no bullying behaviour. Emily

(moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) provides an example of this.

"Umm maybe Holly said something behind her back knowing that Susie doesn't like something and done that thing that she doesn't like .. maybe they've just got fed up with being friends and Susie decided to be mean and didn't want to be friends with her anymore and started to avoid her."

One of the constructs used in symbolic interaction is the concept of definition of the situation. This may explain the justification of the bullying described by the students. Children will respond not so much to the words or actions but how they define these objects in their situation (Charon 2001). This may explain why students generally did not consider it to be unusual that friends would bully each other and behave in this manner. The students, in their analysis of the situation had determined that Tony/Holly had done something to deserve the bullying.

Perceived benefits of bullying

When asked what they thought Sam/Susie would get out of bullying Tony/Holly students generally felt that they would either get nothing out of it or it would make them feel better or more powerful. It may also help them get into a new group of friends. Carlton (high intervention, occasional bully, no bullied) suggested Sam would do this "To show him who is boss."

Although many students initially indicated that Sam/Susie would not really get anything out of bullying Tony/Holly when this response was explored further students suggested that they may be bullying as some type of revenge or to make themselves feel better. All of these students assumed that Tony/Holly had done something to provoke the bullying.

Several students suggested that Sam/Susie probably did the bullying on the spur of the moment and that he/she may regret his behaviour later. This was supported throughout the interview by several students who discussed their inability to control their anger.

These students were also more likely to suggest that they didn't really think about what they were doing when they bullied another person. Justin's (moderate intervention, regular – occasional - no bully, occasional bullied) comments support this:
"just because he was in the moment and he didn't know what he was doing, he figured this is the best thing to do right now and this was um he didn't even think about it that he might regret it later". When asked if he thought children who bullied others often did not think their behaviours through Justin confirmed that he thought this did happen quite a lot.

Friends influence

Involvement with friends was also a common theme of this question with several students suggesting that Sam may want to become part of another group of friends and that his bullying Tony may have helped him 'get in with this group.' For example, Tony (moderate intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional bullied) responded "umm a better friendship with another person or something". Some students like Mark (high intervention, occasional bully, no – occasional bullied) also inferred that Sam may be "under pressure because he wants to be friends with other people."

The use of case examples provides some interesting thoughts into how children may view bullying. In particular the justification of the act and the potential benefits provides a better understanding of why children bully others. To explore these concepts further students were asked **why some kids bully other kids.** Five key interrelated themes emerged from this data. These themes were collapsed to describe issues associated with the individual and issues associated with the person who was being bullied. Individual factors focused largely on actions that may get them into the group they would like to be in. Factors associated with the child being bullied focused on forcing the person being bullied into the role of the loser and the bully justifying his/her actions. These included:
Individual factors

- Friendship-related issues – no get into a cool group, or because existing friends influenced them, social benefits of belonging

- Feelings of power
- To get attention.

Factors associated with the person being bullied

- To get back at someone – who may have bullied them
- Because the child/children annoy them – this may be literally with the child saying or doing something or it may be due to the child/children's physical appearance, intellectual abilities or social skills.

Some students suggested that kids bully because it makes them look cool and so may help them get into a cool or popular group. The change of group of friendships follows a similar theme as discussed when considering what Sam/Susie might get out of bullying. It was also suggested that children may also bully others to get attention, usually from other kids however one student also suggested they may want to get attention from teachers and other grown ups. It was also inferred that kids may bully others to make themselves feel more powerful, for example, "umm to make themselves feel better, bigger and more powerful over them" (Olivia, moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no - regular bullied) and "because they're lonely, because they believe they're more powerful. They have like the great power over everyone" (Justin, moderate intervention, regular – occasional – no bully, occasional bullied). These comments suggest that bullying may be a compensation for being lonely and to try to prove to others that they are powerful and someone to be taken notice of.

Luke (moderate intervention, occasional – no - regular bully, regularly bullied) also suggested that some kids may bully to be part of a gang, to feel cool or tough: "maybe for the enjoyment of the bullyer (sic) .. just to make them feel hyped up and makes them feel cool .. and also maybe to feel part of a gang like if you want to be like sort of be in a cool group you so bully other kids then a gang says oh welcome in .. because your tough and that (Luke, moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, bullied regularly). This suggests that children may bully others as a sense of belonging and to gain respect.

Campbell (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional bullied) responded to this question with: "because it makes them look cool in front of other friends". When asked why he thought they kept doing it once they had started he responded with: "because if they're like getting lots of friends they might want more and they reckon that they're heaps strong and stuff".

Home or external factors of influence

A few students responded to this question by indicating that something else may be happening in the bully's life. Thomas (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no bullied) suggested that it may be because life at home was unsettled: "Cos things are happening at home .. the parents might be just got divorced or could get beaten up". Thomas also suggested that kids may bully others because they are sad. Pete's (moderate intervention, no bully, no – occasional bullied) response was " or they um they've got something wrong with their lives and you try to make them like try and feel like take their minds off it."

Being bullied

Several students indicated that kids bully others because other kids bully them. These responses are not surprising given the numbers of students in the study who had been bullied by others either regularly or occasionally. This is summarized by Gia (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) "because some people bully them and they wanna like be tough." When asked why these kids keep bullying others Gia responded with "cos they think its cool."

Some students suggested that kids may bully other kids because they are not as smart, looked different, or wore glasses or braces. For example, during this discussion Jamie (moderate intervention, occasional – no – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) talked about one of her friends who regularly bullies other kids because she gets teased about being fat. Her friend then bullies other kids to make her feel better.

These themes were supported by a question later in the interview which asked students if some kids were more likely to get bullied than others. Responses to this question included physical differences such as weight, colour, ethnicity and wearing braces. In addition students who were very smart ('geeks') or did not do well at school were also likely to get bullied more than others. Students also suggested that kids who didn't have many friends and those who were 'annoying' were most likely to get bullied. Students described some kids who didn't have many friends as 'trying too hard' and being annoying.

Provocation

The majority of students inferred that kids bullied others because they deserved it. This was summarized by (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional - no bullied): "…. There's not much bullying that isn't uncalled for here so usually the kids they ask for it …" When asked what sort of things they do to ask for it Adam responded with: "oh they swear at em and say bad things about em … so its not hurting them they just don't like it .. if they're saying its serious they don't like it. I was skateboarding here at school and I skateboard part this little kid called Joe .. I didn't even do anything and he said 'woodpushers' are gay, which means skateboarders are gay .. I felt like going up and sortin' him out but I couldn't cos yeah I just didn't wanna get in trouble .. and yeah he asks for it – no one likes him at this school."

Students also responded that kids bully other kids because they "just don't like each other" (Pete, moderate intervention, no bully, no – occasional bullied). Hannah (high intervention, regular - occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) suggested that kids bully other kids "because they either just don't like them or the kid has annoyed them in someway or they've heard something."

It was widely agreed that students bully others to stand up for themselves. This response was especially common among students who had also been bullied either regularly or occasionally. Callum summarizes this thought: "to stand up for themselves, they might

have been bullied by other kids so that might make them feel better" (Callum, moderate intervention, occasional – no - occasional bully, regular bullied).

Hayden (low intervention, occasional – no bully, regular bullied) describes the complex role of being a bully. In doing this children need to juggle perceived perceptions and the perceived risks. Again this links to the theory of defining the act. In doing this individuals define their goal, which may be to bully in order to satisfy an impulse or problem in the social situation. Hayden comments that kids bully others for "umm attention, releasing built up aggression, umm uh what else .. just because they feel like it .. yeah I reckon that's the three main things".

Empathy and taking the role of others

When the students were asked if they thought these kids enjoyed bullying others almost all students suggested that these kids would enjoy bullying others. Emily (moderate intervention, occasional – regular - occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) provides an example of this :"Maybe someone that's really popular or something they enjoy all the attention that everyone's giving from doing that."

Some students did however suggest that although these kids may enjoy the thought of being more powerful or 'cooler' than the children they bullied they felt they may have some feelings of guilt about the event later. Adam's response to this question was: "they probably think its funny … but after they wouldn't they'd just forget about it" (Adam, high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional - no bullied).

Similarly Anthony (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) felt that " they might get a joke out of it but if they keep on doing it they start feeling that's when I think they start feeling bad and so they start feeling more angrier and everything".

Other students suggested that these kids liked bullying others because it made them feel tough and 'cool' or reinforced their sense of belonging to a group of friends which reinforces earlier themes and discussions. For example, "cause they feel tough and they're making people feel bad about themselves" (Jarrad, moderate intervention, regular – occasional - regular bully, occasional – no bullied).

The theme of children annoying bullies was also evident in this discussion. As Tony (moderate intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional bullied) suggests "Honest it's like it depends if this other person's like really getting on their nerves so then they start putting them down and then they probably like doing it."

Maintaining behaviour

When asked why they thought these kids kept on bullying others the theme of influence of friends continued to emerge: " I think it's maybe because of a habit or because maybe because once they start they're friends will come along and they will keep them going and then they may want to stop but their friends will keep on" (Justin, moderate intervention, regular – occasional - no bully, occasional bullied).

Students were asked why kids kept on bullying. The majority of students reinforced the reasons given for starting the bullying suggesting that they kept doing it because it was funny, they got attention from other kids, makes them look cool and made them feel tough. Some students also suggested that these kids kept on bullying others because of friendship patterns or groups. As Gary (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) suggested "cos like they can get more and more friends". Similarly Campbell (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional bullied) suggested "because it makes them look cool in front of other kids .. if they're like getting lots of friends they might want more and they reckon that they're heaps strong and stuff" (Campbell, moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional bullied).

It was also suggested that some kids kept bullying others because the person being bullied did not do anything about the bullying: "um 'cause sometimes the person doesn't do anything about it and they think of yeah this is really easy and they think if they don't like that person they keep putting them down sometimes it makes them feel good" (Tony, moderate intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional bullied).

These data have allowed a subjective analysis of the effect of the intervention on students who report to bully others. Students from high and moderate intervention schools generally provided more insightful responses. It is likely that these students have greater awareness of bullying and strategies for dealing with bullying behaviours. Some students (mainly from the high and moderate intervention groups) provided some socially desirable responses yet later in the interview reverted to discuss actual behaviours. This could demonstrate an increased awareness of appropriate responses. It may also describe a change in self. Some of these students described a positive change in behaviours in the quantitative questionnaire. Further, during the interview, some also discussed how they bullied in the past but didn't do so now.

There are many uses of the term self in philosophy and social science. From the perspective of a symbolic interactionist 'self is an object of the actors own actions.' In this interpretation the individual acts towards others; he or she also acts towards himself or herself. The individual as a social object uses self. As it is a social object the environment influences self. It is constantly changing for the individual as it continues to be defined and redefined in social interaction. Hence it becomes a process as opposed to a stable entity. This explains the changing status from bully to no bully and also from no bully to bully. It also helps to understand random bullying which may be influenced by a specific factor on a specific day [114].

Charon [114] suggests that how an individual views him or herself, how they define themselves and how they act towards themselves throughout life are highly dependent on social interactions they encounter every day. This helps understand the factors that may

influence someone to bully. Using this theory the self is not what a psychologist would define as 'personality' nor is it a true transcendental authentic person. It is rather a continuously changing object, that may vary in different situations and that is influenced by the social interaction that takes place on a continuing basis with other people. The influence of family, friends and school and the activities and interactions that occur in these environments are all significant and help develop a person's sense of self.

The ability to view self objectively, to get outside one's self and to take the perspective of another is especially important. Mead suggests that the ability to take the role of others is how self emerges [114].

Ceasing behaviour

It is particularly important to consider what might encourage children who bully others to cease their bullying behaviour. Students were asked 'what might make kids who like bullying others stop'. A number of themes emerged from the data including:

- the influence of friends in both positive and negative situations;
- forms of punishment;
- the person doing the bullying also being bullied; and
- ignoring the person or people doing the bullying.

Several students suggested that there was nothing that would really change someone from bullying other children. The findings suggest that these students are more likely to also have friends who bully and that they perceive the social benefits of bullying to be significant. It is important that school and community based interventions work to address this issue.

Friends influence

Similar to previous discussion (section 4.4.3) the influence of friends emerged as a common theme. Friends were seen to be a major influence in the likelihood of a student stopping bullying others. If their friends were supportive of the bullying behaviour these

children were unlikely to stop however many students suggested that friends may not be supportive and this would encourage children to stop bullying others. Having a strong friendship circle was seen to be important for stopping bullying behaviour. Campbell suggests that friends play an important role in ceasing this behaviour.

"um like if their other friends, like if their friends come up to them and go oh its like enough that what you're doin' to him and stop it else you won't have any friends" (Campbell, moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasionally bullied).

If however students had friends who were also bullying others and who did not want to stop this could prove difficult. Luke (moderate intervention, occasional – no - regular bully, regular bullied) suggested that it would seem strange if someone who was bullying others a lot suddenly stopped:

"I'm sort of saying if you bully a kid for like three weeks straight like everyday then you stop it you look a bit weird .. cos you've been going for so long .. and then you just stop". Luke also suggested that these kids might 'lose face' with their friends if they suddenly stopped bullying others. The reference to bullying for 'three weeks straight' and the need to remain consistent with the behaviour suggests that for children the presentation of self is important as is the concept of role consistency. Luke's statement seems to imply the consistency of interaction is important for self-identity. The loss of face may relate to a potential loss of social status. The reference to losing face may also support the preservation of self, that is, once the child has established himself as a bully, in this particular group, he needs to maintain the behaviour. These comments and the need for recognition are also consistent with Goffman's approach to the study of social interaction, referred to as dramaturgical metaphor. This metaphor suggests when people interact with others they not only perform but are an audience for their performances as well [114]. Luke's comments infer that a person is likely to bully for an audience. In addition, there may be a symbiotic relationship between the bully and the person being bullied which may encourage maintenance of the behaviour. For example if a child is regularly bullying and ceases this behaviour what is his/her new relationship with the person being bullied?

Similarly Justin (moderate intervention, regular – occasional - no bully, occasional bullied) reinforces this feeling "I think it maybe because of a habit or because maybe once they start their friends will come along and they will keep them going and then they may want to stop but their friends keep on".

Punishment

Students also suggested that punishment in the form of detention, suspension or grounding may make students consider changing their bullying behaviour. Almost all of these students felt that punishment was likely to be more effective when it came from their parents although they acknowledged that as the bullying was likely to happen at school teachers needed to enforce some type of punishment and contact parents. When this was discussed in more detail it was evident that most of these students felt that it was not so much the punishment from parents rather the feeling that parents were likely to be upset or disappointed in them. One student did, however indicate that it would be worse getting into trouble with parents as opposed to teachers as "parents can hit you".

Retaliation

Several students suggested that if a bully was also bullied this may make him or her think about her behaviour and encourage cessation. These students had all been bullied, at least occasionally. Hannah (high intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) summarizes this feeling: "um you know if it happened to them then they'd know what it feels like to bully other people and they might not do it anymore". Interestingly although Hannah reported a reduction in self-reported bullying others she still reported to bully occasionally.

Attention seeking

A few students suggested that ignoring the person and not giving them any attention doing the bullying might make them stop this behaviour. Emily (moderate intervention, occasional – regular - occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) responded with " for

other kids not to cheer it on .. or stand around just walk away like everyone just walked away they'd know that no ones enjoying what they're doing. And they would slowly not do it". These actions would consequently work to remove any social benefits derived from the bullying. Goffman suggests that we intend our acts for others and that these acts represent something about us [114]. This supports feelings of the children that if the social reinforces, that is the audience, are removed those bullying others are unlikely to benefit from the act. These findings support the focus on bystanders by the FSFF Project and reinforce the need for universal bullying prevention programs.

Several students suggested that it would be very difficult to stop some children from bullying others. For example, Hayden (low intervention, occasional – no bully, regular bullied), when discussing the person who was bullying showed considerable empathy in his comments "well I don't actually think you can stop him bullying people because I mean like he's got the worst life .. I mean like he smokes, he hangs around with teenagers he like takes drugs and stuff .. and he's only my age .. and like he says that his mum and his dad like hit him all the time …"

Initiating, maintaining and ceasing bullying behaviour (first person)
After discussing how they felt about the issues discussed in the scenario students were asked if they had ever though about doing any of these things to other kids. They were also asked if they had ever participated in a number of bullying behaviours. These responses were discussed and expanded on to provide a more complete understanding of what may motivate a young person to initiate, maintain or cease bullying behaviour. The themes that emerged from this data were very similar to those from the third person data.

When asked if they had ever said anything nasty to someone at school or hit or kicked the majority of students indicated that they had. This question led from the scenario discussing bullying and a discussion of bullying behaviours. Students were initially asked if they had done, or thought about doing, anything like Sam/Susie had done then they were asked specifically if they had said something nasty about someone or hit, kicked or

pushed someone. Once students started to talk about a bullying situation they seemed to feel comfortable disclosing the various types of behaviours and actions they used. While most students admitted that they had done at least one of these behaviours both boys and girls were more likely to have teased or said something nasty as opposed to hitting. Boys were more likely to admit to hitting someone else in a bullying situation. Some students referred to bullying incidents they had participated in the past. When the quantitative data was checked it was evident that some of these students had changed their behaviour positively during the two year period of the intervention. This reference to actions 'when they were younger' may also reflect a more socially desirable answer.

All students who admitted to bullying another student in some way inferred that they had been provoked. Provocation was subjective, for some this meant that they had been bullied first, for others it was because the child had done 'something' to annoy them. Over half of the students indicated that they had been bullied and that is why they bullied others. For some this meant responding directly to the children doing the bullying by teasing, calling names or hitting back and for others it resulted in them seeking other students to bully. These students expressed feelings of anger, sadness and a need to retaliate.

Students who had bullied occasionally, particularly those who had changed their behaviour at post 1 and post 2 were more likely to bully a friend. In most of these instances this was because the friend had done something to upset them and often involved ignoring, teasing and calling names. Boys were more likely to hit or punch their friends they were bullying although one girl reported 'slapping'. Girls were more likely to eventually make up with their friend than boys. Despite this some of the girls went through a lonely or sad period when they were estranged from their friend and friendship group.

Students who bullied regularly, and those who reported to bully occasionally but who through the interview gave the impression of bullying more regularly, were more likely to

bully children outside their friendship circle. These children were either of the same age or younger. This differed from those who reported to bully only occasionally as these children usually bullied someone else, often their friends, in their year group.

Provocation and retaliation

Similar to the third person responses students who had not been bullied by others inferred that the child or children they bullied had deserved to be bullied. These children were considered to be annoying, different, smart, to say annoying things or to not say anything. However in the eyes of the person doing the bullying these children deserved to be bullied. As Adam (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional - no bullied) suggested "there's not much bullying that isn't uncalled for here so usually kids they ask for it".

Feelings of anger were common among children who bullied others. This was true for students who had been bullied as well as those who had not. Being angry with someone and not liking them were common reasons for bullying others.

Given the proportion of students who described some incidents of being bullied the data from students who have also been bullied, either regularly or occasionally, will be discussed separately to those who did not disclose any incident of being bullied.

Children who were bullied, either regularly or occasionally described their bullying experience as a form of retaliation. For example Luke (moderate intervention, occasional – no - regular bully, regular bullied) describes the behaviour of some of the children at his school "umm they are starting to really get on my nerves what they were doing and they were getting their fingers and jabbing them in my ribs and it really does hurt and they do nipple cripples … and like they get your thumbs like that and twists them around .. and a couple of days I went home with really big bruises". Luke described several situations of provocation which had led him to bully others as well. This may explain his fluctuating responses when asked if he bullied others in the quantitative questionnaire.

Rachael (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, regular bullied) who described significant long term episodes of being bullied was driven to bully others in retaliation. She also did things to "protect her friends." She described incidents of saying something nasty to others and hitting. She was however scared when she participated in these activities as she was frightened of "what the kids might do" and also of getting into trouble from the teacher. Rachael was called a range of nasty names such as "they call me baboon, they call me coloured".

Other students also cited examples of being teased because of their physical appearance. Rong (high intervention, occasional – no - regular bully, occasional bullied) responded with "because um oh there's this guy in my class and he keeps trying to pick on me cos he has no friends and his names called James and oh he goes like um in class even though I done nothing to him, he keeps calling me names like black and all that … and sometimes I retaliate". Rong described his initial experience of 'getting back' at James. When asked how he felt after it happened he responded with "well I didn't really want to do it but once you've done it, it feels quite good because you got the other guy back for it". When asked if he would do it again Rong replied "yeah!" This provides an example of self-reward for the behaviour. Rong's comments indicated that when he asserted control over the environment he felt good.

Blake (high intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) responded that he did bully other kids when they "called me names, made fun of my family and my religion". Blake is a Jehovah's Witness.

Other students also referred to incidents where they had been bullied, or they or other groups of children had bullied others because they wore braces or were fat. Jeremy (moderate intervention, occasional – regular - occasional bully, no – regular bullied) indicated that he had bullied another child because "I hate his guts." This may reflect a change in status for Jeremy who changed both his self-reported bullying and his being

bullied. When asked if he would bully this child again Jeremy commented "umm maybe yeah I'd probably try not to but maybe." When asked what would stop him he suggested "probably self-control …. and other people (friends)." He suggested his friends would "they'd probably just tell me not to cos I listen to my friends."

Empathy and taking the role of others

The majority of students, who had also been bullied, both regularly or occasionally, regretted their bullying behaviour and indicated that they felt bad or guilty after the event. Emily (moderate intervention, occasional – regular –occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) described a situation where she had teased and been mean to others however she found her friendships suffered: " I was feeling really left out because that person had all the friends and I didn't have any yeah." Emily's situation provides another example of the significance of social reward this time in favour of the person being bullied.

Callum (moderate intervention, occasional – no - occasional bully, regular bullied) when discussing hitting someone who was younger than him said "but I didn't feel good about it .. I did it because other kids are always doing it to me ..maybe cos I hang out with kids in year 6." Prior to this Callum discussed that other possible reasons for his being bullied were his English accent and his interest in science, particularly nature. Callum was a particularly articulate young person who spent considerable time describing a detailed story he had written in class that day. He provided a good example of a student who bullied younger kids to feel that he wasn't so vulnerable himself. He did express feelings of remorse for his actions and displayed an obvious remorse for the children he had bullied.

Justin (moderate intervention, regular – occasional - no bully, occasional bullied) who like Callum had also positively changed his bullying status during the two year period of the intervention also indicated that he felt bad about the bullying. However like Pete and several other students, Justin felt he had a right to get back at him: "I wasn't feeling very good about myself although I knew what I was doing was wrong I thought he's doing it

to me I might as well just do it back to him as well." Justin's comments reflect feelings of cognitive dissonance however the need to retaliate in this situation was stronger than his feeling that bullying was wrong.

Although Pete (moderate intervention, no bully, no – regular bullied) had not reported any bullying behaviour in the quantitative study at baseline and post 1 he did discuss both bullying others and being bullied. When describing his experiences of bullying others Pete commented "um I don't feel very good but umm its like I feel kind of happy at the same time that they're getting a taste of their own medicine". This is similar to Jame's reaction and reinforces the significance of self-reward. Pete also indicated that the kids most likely to bully others were the "popular kids" who "like playing basketball, teasing people and pretending they're strong" reinforcing the perceived social benefits bullying can achieve.

Students who reported to bully only occasionally were more likely to call other kids names and tease them to 'save face' and appear 'cool'. Anthony (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) admitted to saying nasty things to other kids: "I may have said rude words back to them but that's because I'm trying to think of something to say and I don't wanna look like a dork by saying something stupid like please go away. Or being polite to them." This suggests that for some children, their retaliation is likely to be harsher than what they would like so they don't seem weak. This may also act as a protective factor against being bullied again. Comments such as these also reinforce the challenge for interventions to provide 'acceptable' responses for children to use in such situations.

Only a few students who reported to bully others in the quantitative questionnaire indicated in their interview that they had never participated in any type of bullying behaviour. These students had all self-reported occasional bullying in the questionnaire. These students tended to admit to saying something nasty to someone or teasing however it was done in fun and was either with friends or siblings. Some of these students did

however say that they had thought about bullying others however this was usually in retaliation for something another student had done to them. The reasons for not bullying for these students were always fear of getting caught by the teacher.

The majority of students indicated that the person that they bullied did something to annoy or upset them. Mark and Alex provide examples of these feelings.
"they just get in my face, I like my personal space and they call me things I've told them not to call me and say stuff that hurts me inside and just makes me feel bad .., there's this one boy and he's just called me names and I've told him not to call me this name and he's done it so many times and I just can't, I'm just sick of it .. and I'm gonna flip if he does it again" (Mark, high intervention, occasional bully, no - occasional bullied).

"oh cos like I'm quite tall, I'm not being up myself but like quite tall and solid like .. the guy who deserved to be bullied is like a little guy does really stupid things or is really getting on my nerves and trying to get to fight with me, I dunno why and after school I just like yeah .. I bashed him .. I didn't make him cry cos like I don't beat people up until like until they hurt however I just make them learn their lesson like but yeah I just walked off" (Alex, low intervention, regular bully, regular - no bullied). Although Alex is describing one situation his comments here and throughout the interview indicated that he bullied others in this way regularly. While Mark expressed some empathy for the children he bullied this was not the case for Alex.

Hayden (low intervention, occasional – no bully, regular bullied) expresses some enjoyment at 'getting back' at a kid who had bullied him and also discusses the support of his friends "yeah they (Hayden's friends) were around me then like I ran off and I stood near them and they'd just like made a big circle around me so he couldn't get to me and if anyone oh and there was like this kid and he's really stupid he's like a real retard and he like starts bullying me. I dunno why and like he's gay. I mean it he's really queer …". Hayden retaliated: "so after school he had his bike and I pushed him into a blackboy". When asked how that made him feel and if he would do it again he responded

"good .. if it was him YES I would! Cos I know he's a weakling .. an absolute weakling and he deserves it".

Children who reported to bully but were not bullied

Despite over half (62%) of the quantitative and qualitative sample reporting being bullied either occasionally or regularly at baseline there were a significant proportion of students who reported no incidents of being bullied in the quantitative study. These children also 'blamed' the person being bullied as it was perceived that they had done something wrong or done something to annoy them.

Some of these students reported involvement with the police (n = 7) either at school or out of school. While these figures are relatively low it is significant to remember that these are primary school students.

Carlton (high intervention, occasional bully, no bullied) briefly mentioned his experience with the police however he claimed he wasn't doing anything wrong "umm but yeah some guy came along from the police station and talked to me because I pushed someone gently and they didn't even fall over and like other people kick him and I get into trouble." Situations such as this suggest that the bullying behaviour may be occurring as part of a performance. Such situations require an audience for them to progress. This is consistent with the theories of social interaction which are intrinsic to the development of self [114]. Similar situations have been described earlier in this discussion and reinforce again the significance of bystanders.

Some students also discussed having an anger problem. This discussion was unprompted and was not part of the interview guide. Nathan (moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully) when discussing his bullying behaviour responded with: "so kids say stuff about your family and friends so they are picking on you and that when you get into your fights and that's when I get really angry .. my friends are trying to help me with my anger problem .. sometimes I just go berserk and punch the walls or something".

Jarrad (moderate intervention, regular – occasional – regular bully, regular - no bullied) also discussed losing his temper in the playground. Alex (low intervention, regular bully, regular - no bullied) discussed attending anger management courses, which his Mum had made him go to. His comments about the classes indicated that they didn't have any real value. For example, "It's just a place where they teach yah like to count to 10 and blah blah blah and yes it didn't help me really … so we went to McDonald's after that it's part of the thing just basically went there for that." Several students made reference to episodes of anger such as "I just get angry and that" and losing temper in the playground. These incidents were usually associated with other children annoying or provoking them.

Ceasing bullying behaviour

When asked what would make them stop their bullying behaviour many students suggested that friends influence, the provocation of the person being bullied and punishment might make them consider stopping their behaviour. Feelings of empathy for the person being bullied also increased the likelihood of the behaviour changing. As for the initiation and maintenance questions when asked this question some students reverted to answering in third person. This may be due to the social desirability of the response, or that they did not actually perceive themselves as being 'bad' bullies.

Some of the students who reported to change behaviour in the quantitative questionnaire suggested in the interview that they did this because they wanted to do better at school and wanted to be involved in some of the special events that were available to the Year 7 students such as graduation celebrations. Some students also indicated that they had grown up and realized that bullying others was not a mature thing to do. These students expressed feelings of empathy for the children being bullied. Some provided strategies as to how they could resolve issues better, for example, talking things over with the person involved.

Punishment and loss of privileges

When discussing his bullying experiences Jarrad (moderate intervention, regular – occasional- regular bully, occasional – no bullied) indicated that he had got caught and "the teacher then they rang my Mum up and that". He said he felt "really bad" and "it made me think not to do it again."

Adam (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional – no bullied) indicated that he had improved his behaviour recently which is consistent with his response to the quantitative questionnaire. For example when asked about school he responded with "yeah its pretty good cos all the other years I was pretty bad behaved... but this year's been good cos I've been well behaved and I've got good grades."

Some students indicated that they would think about stopping bullying others as it was getting them into trouble at school. For example: "..it gets me in a lot of trouble, bad grades I want to get a good job" (Robbie, moderate intervention, occasional – regular bully, regular bullied).

Provocation and retaliation
The majority of students did however suggest that if someone continued to annoy them they would still bully that child. This is reflected in the earlier discussion where even though children may feel bad about what they have done often they will still participate in the behaviour if it is to 'get back' at someone. Once the self has developed and children have established their status as a bully it may be difficult to change if provoked.

Mark (high intervention, occasional bully, no – occasional bullied) who had reflected that his behaviour had changed positively over the last few years still suggested that if other students said something nasty to him "I think I'd get physical with them." Interestingly during the interview Mark discussed a range of useful strategies including "Stop, Think and Do" which he indicated were helping him. He also had good support from his friends and was genuinely trying to positively change his behaviour. This comment reflects the strength of self and long term nature of change.

When asked what would make them stop their behaviour many students indicated that if the person who was annoying them stopped being annoying then they would be more likely to consider stopping their behaviour. For example, when James (high intervention, occasional – regular bully, no bullied) was asked if anything would make him stop bullying others he responded with "yeah if he stopped annoying me." James had been punished by his mother by being sent to his room and being banned from the Internet however this had not made him think about or stop his bullying behaviour.

Students who bullied regularly were more likely to suggest that students should retaliate if they didn't want to be bullied. For example, Paul (low intervention, occasional - regular bully, occasional – regular bullied) when asked how many kids bully in his year group indicated "ah probably most of 'em but we've also got one or two outcasts in each class and everyone picks on them at some stage." When asked what might make kids stop bullying these children Paul suggested "if they (the bullies) got caught or if those kids fought back."

Some students indicated that they had tried to ignore other children who were annoying them however this was sometimes difficult. Alex (low intervention, regular bully, regular - no bullied) explains this: "uh It tried to ignore it but they kept going and they just made me angry and angry and angrier". When asked what he would do if these kids annoyed him now he responded: "oh probably try to ignore it .. I wouldn't do anything at first but if they kept it up I would just probably yeah take my temper out". The type of provocation is likely to reflect the personality of the person being bullied. When Alex described what would make someone annoying it appeared that a child could be annoying simply because they said silly things in class or were 'dorks.' These comments reinforce that provocation isn't always direct.

Ross (low intervention, occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) indicated that he would continue to bully a child who had tormented him and his friends. Ross had previously hit

a child. When asked how he thought the child felt after he had hit him Ross replied "umm that he probably couldn't like fight me again .. because he probably wouldn't be able to hurt me or anything". It was evident that the child had not 'annoyed' Ross since however he had been annoying his friends and this was grounds to bully the child again: "he keeps calling people, umm people with different nationalities and he's been calling them things like, my friends are Aboriginal and he's been calling them a boong and everything and like he's just said he wants to smash em". Ross, like several other students, justified his bullying behaviour because the person being bullied deserved it, in this case because he had bullied someone else.

Hayden (low intervention, occasional – no bully, regular bullied) suggested that kids keep bullying because "well some people think that like the reason they bully is they're being bullied by someone else." Despite only identifying occasional bullying behaviour at baseline Hayden described a range of incidents in which he was involved in bullying others. He did however identify being bullied regularly at baseline, post 1 and post 2.

Empathy and taking the role of others
Students who self-reported to bully others occasionally and those who had positively changed their bullying behaviour were more likely to regret their behaviour when they discussed bullying and indicate that this might make them change their behaviour. These children also showed a greater level of empathy towards the person being bullied. This is consistent with the taking the role of others [114].

When talking about some of his bullying experiences Tony (moderate intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional bullied) expressed his feelings of guilt: "um the person um like um told me to stop it and I felt um guilty cos like um I don't like putting people down and so didn't do it anymore so then I realised like what that person felt". Emily (moderate intervention, occasional – regular - occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) suggested that she wouldn't bully others again because "cos you realize that they don't like it and you wouldn't like it being done to you."

Pete (moderate intervention, no bully, no – regular bullied, however described significant incidents of bullying others) suggested that kids who bully others may understand how others were feeling if they were bullied, however he also suggested that this would probably not be enough to stop their behaviour completely:

"if they were put in someone else's position and my position and I went into their position and they felt like I felt like or someone else felt just for one day, they'd understand …. But it wouldn't stop them 'cause they just they've got no feelings for other people." The types of children Pete was referring to were likely to have little empathy towards those who are being bullied.

Friendships

Justin (moderate intervention, regular – occasional - no bully, occasional bullied) when discussing one of his experiences indicated that his Mum had talked to him about the situation and this had made him think about what he was doing. Justin was bullying as a form of retaliation. He decided to make friends with the friends of the child doing the bullying, "and I just made really good friends with, cos I was being teased a lot by three people so I made friends with two people who were really just following the first person and then he just realized oh I've been a real idiot, I haven't really been very nice to you".

Parents responses

Some children suggested that having their parents find out and punish them made them think about their behaviour. However others suggested that while it wasn't good if their parents found out because they would not be allowed to go over to their friends place the punishment didn't really change their behaviour. Children who reported to bully occasionally were more likely to be concerned about their parents finding out about their behaviour as compared to those who bullied regularly.

Strategies for controlling anger

Mark (high intervention, occasional bully, no – occasional bullied) indicated that when he felt angry or violent he needed to stop and think: "when I was in year 4 I learnt this thing

"Stop, Think, Do" … and recently in year 7 I just thought about that and I went and written out lines to Mrs Smith and I said I've got to "Stop, Think, Do' and she loved me writing that … so I get that in my head and think its not worth it .. cos if I get into trouble one more time there goes my lunchtime maybe my graduate breakfast and stuff like that and that's just stuff I can't risk."

"its just like that like "Stop, Think, Do" cos I was just when I thought someone was a bully I was annoying them and stuff and I'd always get in trouble for it and I thought that I wasn't doing anything wrong because they're bullies and I should bully them back .. and that's why I was getting into trouble but when I got into year 6 and 7 because I was the same age as the year 7's I thought I was all "hot stuff" and that's when I was getting into trouble" (Mark).

During the interview Alex (low intervention, regular bully, regular – no bullied) indicated that he had bullied quite a lot in the past. He had also been sent to 'anger management classes' as "I couldn't control my temper and just took it out on quite a few people". However he suggested that now "I don't bully much anymore". When asked why he had stopped bullying he suggested that "probably cos I've got suspended quite a few times in like it's really boring just sitting here all day and yep." Despite these comments Alex did discuss quite a few recent incident of bullying others and indicate that he bullied regularly on the quantitative questionnaire. The inconsistency of these answers may be attributed to the social desirability of the responses. It may also be that the inconsistency in how children perceive events is attributed to their perception at that point of time. This may be due to emerging self or it may simply be that if they are not bullying at that time they do not consider themselves to be a bully. The interview data suggests that a person can be classified as a bully over a relatively short time period such as "three weeks." The perception of time for children this age warrants further investigation.

Police involvement

Seven students made mention of the police as a reason for ceasing bullying behaviour. Two students did not have personal experience however they had seen situations out of school where the police were called into break up fights among school-aged children. One student who had been bullying others had the police visit him at school. Two students talked about family involvement with the police for violence. Two boys had personally been involved with the police for fights out of school. Robbie (Robbie, moderate intervention, occasional – regular bully, regular bullied) suggested that if he continued to bully and be violent he may get a police record. All of these students had had some involvement with the police. Robbie had been involved in a fight with other children out of school where the police attended.

Factors that may make children think about stopping bullying

When asked what would be a useful message to make others think about stopping bullying Nathan (moderate intervention) responded "I would just say don't do bullying cause when you get older you might go to prison or something like that or it might get out of hand, someone might die." Nathan had previously discussed violence in his family.

When considering the factors that may make students who bully others think about changing their behaviours issues such as effective punishment, the influence of friends and concern about what parents may think were important. Perceived provocation from the person being bullied was also common. This reflected a common need to justify the behaviour and attribute blame on the victim. Students who had positively changed their bulling behaviour, and some who self-reported reported to bully occasionally at baseline, demonstrated an ability to take the role of others and these students reflected a sense of empathy for students they had bullied in the past. Students who bullied regularly and did not positively change their behaviour showed no feelings of empathy for those who they bullied. Labeling also resulted in some power differentials. This was described more by students who had also been bullied regularly. These students described power

differentials and were unable to alter the image that had been imposed on them by the bully and in some cases by their peers at school.

4.4.4   Discussion - Initiation, maintaining and ceasing bullying

The qualitative study found similar themes emerging for the initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying when students discussed these issues in both third and first person. The findings from the quantitative study also support these findings. When students were asked what would happen if they bullied another student or students, those who self reported to bully others regularly were significantly more likely to think other students would be scared of them, that other students would like them, that other students would think they were tough, would feel good about self and other students wouldn't bully them compared to those who reported to bully occasionally and not at all. Similarly students who reported to bully regularly were also significantly less likely to think that their parents would find out and talk to them, to feel bad about themselves, they would get into trouble, feel bad for the person being bullied, other students would not want to be their friend and that their parents would be unhappy with them.

Similarly the quantitative study found students who reported to bully regularly were significantly less likely to report positive pro-victim scores for approval of bullying, and support for victims. They were also less likely to tell someone about bullying incidents.

The themes that emerged from the qualitative study that supported the initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying included:

Individual factors
- Friendship-related issues – to get into a cool group, or because existing friends influenced them, social benefits of belonging
- Feelings of power
- To get attention
- Empathy towards the person being bullied

Factors associated with the person being bullied

- To get back at someone – who may have bullied them
- Because the child/children annoy them – this may be literally with the child saying or doing something or it may be due to the child/children's physical appearance, intellectual abilities or social skills.

In addition, students also suggested that punishment was a reason for ceasing bullying behaviour.

Individual factors

Friendship-related issues

As is consistent with the quantitative data the majority of students interviewed indicated that they had several or many good friends at school and that they made friends easily. The majority mainly had friends of the same sex although many also indicated that they had some male and female friends. Most students described enjoying a variety of normal activities with their friends; however a few did talk about being in gangs who 'roamed the streets'. Some students did however discuss only having a few friends. These students had all self-reported to be bullied regularly at baseline. There was no difference in student's discussion of number of friends between the three intervention groups.

While it is generally felt that having many good friends is a protective factor for bullying and many other mental health issues [69] some studies have found that it is not the size of the peer group but the characteristics of the friends within the groups that predicts bullying [79]. The qualitative findings strongly suggest that friends played an important role in positively and negatively influencing bullying behaviour. Some students who had positively changed their behaviour discussed moving friendship groups because they had decided that they didn't want to get into trouble any more. Children who discussed changing groups were from all three intervention groups.

Most students in the study indicated that they had a good circle of friends. This was consistent with the quantitative data. The literature suggests some gender differences for friendships. In one study boys who were identified as bullies were found to interact in the largest groups. While this could be interpreted as popularity it is also possible that some bullies may coerce or intimidate other children into being with them [79]. This was evident in the qualitative discussion with several students indicating that they, or other children, bullied to become part of a specific group. This may also reflect a feeling that they need to prove themselves or change their identity. Both boys and girls from the qualitative study expressed these feelings. Several students mentioned being part of a group who participated in some anti-social behaviour. While beyond the scope of this study further research to investigate the association between bullying and gangs would be useful.

The differences between genders have been explained by a number of theories. Early socialization is considered to be important in the development of different friendship styles among young children. Studies have found that boys are more likely to play in larger social groups while girls tend to play in smaller, hence more intimate groups. Boys are more likely to view dominance as an important aspect of relationships while girls tend to stress intimacy and other affective aspects in relationships. While girls maintain very strong relationships between close friends and others they are also make fewer new friends than boys. Girls are also more likely to experience conflict in their relationships [25]. In the qualitative study girls were more likely to list the names of specific friends while boys suggested they had lots of good friends.

In addition it has been found that girls usually mature faster than boys and hence they may develop more sophisticated aggression strategies before boys do. Developmental theory supports the use of indirect aggression for both males and females during later adolescence and into adulthood [25]. The implications of these findings for schools are significant. The overt nature of indirect aggression often means it may be missed by teachers. In addition, girls may not view social exclusion as being a form of bullying.

Often girls will deny social exclusion is occurring and insist they are maintaining their own friendship groups. However reports from parents indicate that considerable psychological harm that can result when a girl is ostracized from one group and prevented from joining another [25]. In the qualitative study girls were more likely to describe bullying situations that involved their friendship group. As in Owens' [25] study girls were often rejected from their circle of friends and while many eventually made up with their friends this was a difficult time for them.

Feelings of power

The findings of the qualitative study suggest that power is an important factor in initiating, maintaining and ceasing bullying behaviour. Students discussed that they and others bully other because it makes them feel tough, 'cool' and powerful. Students who had been bullied also described their feelings of dominance over other children when they bullied that made them feel better about themselves. Other research has found that boys are more likely to seek power and dominance compared to girls who need a sense of affirmation and affiliation [25, 94]. This is consistent with the findings of this study which found boys to describe more dominating forms of bullying while girls were more likely to discuss bullying issues associated with belonging to their friendship groups.

A sense of power may also be linked to aggression and anger. This study found a number of students, all boys, to identify that they have a problem with controlling their anger and temper. One student indicated that his friends were helping him with his anger problem while another talked about attending anger management classes.

Other research has found peer bullying to be a reliably identifiable sub-type of student's aggressive behaviour [36]. Boys who bullied others have been found to have an aggressive personality, weak inhibitions against aggression and a strong need to dominate [22, 30, 33, 64]. Male bullies have been found to have a favourable attitude towards aggression, obtained pleasure from bullying and recruited other boys to participate in bullying acts. These studies concluded that typical bullies either had unusually low levels

of anxiety and insecurity, or were roughly average and that they were relatively tough, strong and confident [33]. Although these boys were somewhat below average in popularity they did not have low self esteem. On the contrary they had a relatively positive view of themselves [22]. This study found the majority of students, both male and female, to be confident and seemingly popular students. A number of students were school prefects and hence had an office of responsibility in the school. The only students who did not appear to be confident and popular were a small number who had also been bullied regularly. Students who reported to bully regularly and had not positively changed their behaviour were more likely to discuss aggressive tendencies and to show little remorse for the children they bullied. These students usually justified their behaviour by suggesting the person being bullied deserved the behaviour.

Some research suggests that aggressive behaviour is associated with a lack of social skills. However while it is evident that generally aggressive children and adolescents are more likely to be rejected while non-aggressive children are likely to be socially popular there are some discrepancies in these findings. Some anti-social children and adolescents may develop friendship networks that include positive features including support, compliments, laughter and mutual enjoyment [135]. The majority of children interviewed in this study exhibited good social skills and appeared to have a good circle of friends. The exceptions were a few students who had also been bullied regularly. Almost all children who bullied others reported that they had friends who bullied hence it is likely that children with similar attributes are friends. Similarly children who reported to have been bullied were more likely to discuss incidents where their friends were also bullied. Given that some children reported to bully others to 'get into the popular group' it is likely that many children who bully have a desirable social status among their peers.

One study found that when normally non-aggressive children resorted to aggressive behaviour they were more likely to fight or argue as compared with aggressive adolescents who were more likely to bully [135]. This may explain some of the different types of behaviours described by students in this study. Students who reported to bully

occasionally were more likely to describe fights and arguments with friends. Those who reported to bully regularly were more likely to discuss more vindictive incidents of bullying.

In addition it has been found that girls usually mature faster than boys and hence they may develop more sophisticated aggression strategies before boys do. Developmental theory supports the use of indirect aggression for both males and females during later adolescence and into adulthood [25].

These findings may explain some of the differences in types of bullying, especially between occasional and regular bullies. Those who reported to bully others occasionally were more likely to discuss bullying situations that were more like fights and arguments with friends while regular bullies were more likely to talk about more vindictive bullying episodes. However in contrast to these findings the children did not talk about planning these episodes rather that it was often a spur of the moment action. Several students who had positively changed their bullying behaviour discussed strategies such as 'Stop, Think, Do' to help them control their anger.

The use of power is also consistent with one of the central concepts in the symbolic interactionist perspective: taking the role of others. This is an important development in the emergence of self. In taking the role of others the child is able to see other children's perspectives, manipulate and gain for their own interests without concern for them [114]. This suggests that the child correctly assess the other child and applys the appropriate strategy to gain dominance. This may also help explain different approaches such as the domineering actions of boys and the affirmation and affiliation used by girls. If these children are able to take the role of the other they will manipulate accordingly.

These data along with Pakaslahti & Keltikangas-Jarvinen's [135] findings dispel the myth that aggressive children lack social skills. It is however likely that they have well developed manipulative skills. This association would be worthy of further research.

Attention seeking

The qualitative study found that some children who bullied others did so for the attention of peers. The sense of belonging to a specific group, or because they had few friends and thought that bullying may make them seem powerful and 'cool' were common perceptions.

The importance of peer acceptance should not be underestimated. Friendship and connectedness with peers and school are considered key protective factors for bullying and a range of mental health problems [69]. It is well established that low peer acceptance during childhood is associated with a range of later psychosocial adjustment problems. Studies have found that what children do in social situations may be linked to peers' views of them. Generally low accepted children have been found to engage in more aggressive and disruptive behaviour whereas high accepted children are more likely to participate in prosocial activities and group games [79]. This was evident in some of the discussions where students suggested that other students bullied others to get attention and to try to make friends. These children were perceived to have few friends. Only a few of the students interviewed indicated that they had no or a few friends and these children exhibited signs of attention seeking in their discussion.

Students in the qualitative study were more likely to discuss the attention seeking behaviour of others. When considering Boulton's (1999) findings it is likely that some children may be perceived as bullying others because of their poor social skills. From the findings of the qualitative research it is likely that the children who bully others for attention are also those who are bullied regularly. These children may also be seeking to develop their sense of self. How an individual views him or herself, how they define themselves and how they act towards themselves throughout life are highly dependent on social interactions they encounter every day [114]. These children are likely to have been influenced by other children ignoring, teasing or hitting them. They are likely to have low feelings of self-worth and have reacted to these social interactions by retaliating.

Australian research suggests that although the majority of children are opposed to bullying and tend to be supportive of victims there is a tendency to despise victims of bullies and a general admiration for school bullies. Girls tended to be more supportive of victims compared to boys [67]. An English study using the same instrument found the majority of children were opposed bullying and wished to see victims protected. Despite this these children place little importance on the feelings of the victim. The author suggests this may be due to a high level of fear. Respondents generally accept the poor treatment of weak children who are in some way perceived as undesirable [136]. This study also found almost all children to suggest that children are scared of those who bully others and this was one of the key reasons for not confronting the behaviour.

Empathy

The ability to sympathize with another person, to see the other person's feelings, ideas, perspective and problems and to understand objectively what he or she is feeling is a key concept of taking the role of others intrinsic to the development of self. At a more complex level some people may also be able to empathise with the other person, feeling the concerns, the problems and emotions of others [114].

Children who bully others have been found to have a low empathy with children who were bullied and do not feel guilty about their bullying behaviours [33]. This is reflected in the quantitative findings at baseline where students who bullied regularly were significantly less likely (22.4%) to feel bad for the student they bullied compared to occasional (42.1%) and never (72.1%) bullies at baseline. In addition these students were significantly less likely to have high pro-victim scores for the approval of bullying and the support for victims' scores.

The qualitative study found that children who showed signs of empathy were more likely to have positively changed their bullying behaviour. These children discussed feelings of regret for their behaviour and most importantly indicated remorse when they considered

how the person being bullied must feel. Empathy for others was one of the most important factors when considering ceasing bullying behaviour.

Factors associated with the person being bullied

To get back at someone

When discussing the scenario all students regardless of frequency of bullying suggested that Tony/Holly must have done something to provoke Sam/Susie. As discussed the scenario and related questions did not suggest this. While not all agreed with the behaviour of Sam/Susie the comments made by the children suggest this is likely to be a common reaction to bullying and it may be a way of justifying the bullying behaviour.

The students interviewed indicated that the characteristics of the child being bullied influenced their bullying him/her. Some researchers suggest it is important to encourage victimized children to respond to bullying in ways that aggressors do not find reinforcing. However it is also recognised that peer cognitions about disliked classmates are resistant to change, even when the disliked child improves his or her behaviour [137]. Some students in the qualitative study suggested that they just disliked the children they were bullying. In addition, some suggested a strategy such as 'ignoring' someone was not a realistic thing to do. Consequently it is important to also implement interventions to alter peers' perceptions of victimised children [137]. It is a challenge for interventions to provide students with the skills to respond to aggressors assertively.

In a qualitative study of adolescent girls' indirect aggressive behaviours the girls felt the victims tended to bring the wrath of others on themselves. This may be because the victim had done something to annoy or aggravate, had been indiscreet in some way or had started the conflict. Teachers were more likely to suggest that the victims lacked social skills or came from a home background that did not model constructive conflict resolution. Both girls and teachers indicated that some girls were more vulnerable to being bullied. Those girls likely to be vulnerable were those who had few or no friends,

were new to the school, were unassertive and were perhaps a little different, or 'geeky' [94]. This was strongly supported in the qualitative study with almost all students suggesting that the person being bullied had done something to deserve it. A variety of reasons including physical and social characteristic were considered valid reasons for bullying to occur.

From a symbolic interaction perspective the ability to view self objectively, to get outside ones self and to take the perspective of another is especially important. Mead suggests that the ability to take the role of others is how self emerges [114]. Considering this theory it is important if a child were to cease bullying he/she would need to develop sympathy and empathy for the person being bullied. That is they would need to see things from the others point of view, understand that perspective and respect the person and become more tolerant [114].

While much of the research has treated bullying and being bullied as separate entities some suggest that bullies and victims engage in a special dynamic and interactive relationship [10]. This was evident in this study with some students who bully others describing almost a symbiotic relationship with the person being bullied.

Because the child/children are annoying
Another key theme that emerged when discussing initiation, maintaining and ceasing bullying behaviour was that the child or children annoyed the person who bullied. This annoyance may be literally with the child saying or doing something or it may be due to the child/children's physical appearance, intellectual abilities or social skills. This links closely with feelings of empathy discussed earlier however it may also reflect a need for the child doing the bullying to attribute the blame elsewhere. It is likely that children who bully others have little empathy or concern for those who are being bullied [114] and this inference that these children are annoying may be a form of justification for their behaviour.

Punishment

When discussing ceasing bullying children considered punishment to be an important factor when considering ceasing bullying behaviour. Children were more likely to be concerned about their parents finding out about their bullying behaviour than teachers although it was recognised that teachers needed to intervene as most of the bullying occurred at school. Children who self-reported to bully occasionally, or those who changed their bullying behaviour were more likely to consider being in trouble at school effective in changing their bullying behaviours. Almost all students indicated that their school had some type of policy and procedure to address bullying. As is consistent with school health promotion theory policy is a key factor in improving the school ethos [88, 138, 139].

Several (n = 7) students made mention of the police in connection with bullying and violence. These children had personally had contact with the police or an older sibling had had contact. These children did express concern that anger and violence may result in trouble with the police. This is consistent with research which suggests students identified by peers as bullies by age eight are six times more likely to have been convicted of a crime by the age of 24 years and five times more likely to have serious criminal records by age 30 as compared to students not identified as bullies [9]. Further, children who display aggressive behaviours at age 8 were more likely than their lesser and non-aggressive peers to have been involved in criminal convictions, to have traffic violation infringements (including drink driving) and to have displayed more aggression toward both their spouse and children by age 30. They were more likely to severely physically punish their children. The children of aggressive adults displayed aggressive behaviours remarkably similar to that of their parents when they were the same age [74].

The links to family aggression is consistent with the findings of the qualitative study with several students mentioning episodes of violence in the family. One child described moving from another state to live with his father because of his step-father's domestic violence and another referred to physical fights in his household. Others described older

siblings being involved in fights. These findings support the need for interventions to target parents, however for parents who are already demonstrating signs of violence indicated prevention and early intervention programs are likely to be more appropriate than universal programs.

4.5 SCHOOL FACTORS

4.5.1 The influence of school factors

It is widely recognised that positive school connectedness is a significant indicator of good mental [69, 88] and physical health [138, 140, 141]. Ensuring positive school environment and ethos is a key component of a range of health promoting school models [88, 138-140].

There is a range of factors that are likely to contribute to the experience children have at school. For the purpose of this study they have been divided into individual, school organisation and project implementation.

1. Individual factors – perception of school, academic achievement, friendships, relationships with teachers
2. School organisation – school policies and procedures, levels of bullying, teacher reactions to bullying
3. Project implementation – talking to teachers and parents, students perception of the project implementation.

4.5.2 Findings from the qualitative study

To explore the influence of school factors on children who bully others students were asked a range of questions about their personal perceptions of school, how they felt at school and their friendships at school. Questions were also asked about their school organisation relevant to bullying others, for example, how teachers responded to incidents of bullying and the punishment for bullying. Their perceived levels of bullying

and if this had changed recently were also explored. Students were asked if they talked about bullying in class and at home. These questions were also designed to provide an indication of the perception of level of implementation of the FSFF Project among those involved in the qualitative research.

Individual factors

When asked if they liked school almost all students indicated that they did. Several students responded with comments like 'sometimes' and 'most of the time'. When this question and reasons for not liking school, and not wanting to come to school were explored in more detail some students identified specific reasons for not wanting to come to school. The majority of these students gave examples that could be relevant for all school children such as because it was too hot (perhaps reflecting the time of year the interviews were conducted), or because they were tired or not feeling well. For example, "um no only when it is hot – I just don't like sitting in stuffy rooms" Emily (moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied).

Three key themes emerged from the data that summarised if students liked school. These included:

- Students who liked school
- Students who were in trouble a lot at school
- Students who disliked school because they were bullied.

Reasons for not liking school

Some students did not like coming to school on days when they had tests and others commented that they disliked specific classes. Interestingly the classes usually cited were language classes. Different languages were offered at the study schools however this theme was consistent. This seemed to be directly related to the teacher who was often a specialist teacher and his/her facilitation of the class. Students who disliked the classes suggested the classes were boring. Alex's (low intervention, regular bully, regular – no

bullied) comments summarised this feeling, "we've got German and the teacher's a real, yeah I won't finish the sentence."

Some children like Campbell (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional bullied) responded that sometimes he didn't like coming to school "um not cause of like bullying or anything just cause um the teachers sometimes you just don't feel like getting in trouble and stuff" while Gary (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) stated "its okay but sometimes it gets boring." A few students indicated that they didn't like coming to school if they had been in a fight or argument. For example Sophie (high intervention) responded "sometimes like if I had a fight I don't want to go to school the next day." Similarly Nathan (moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) commented, "just because there is going to be another fight, or just more school work."

For some students school had improved due to better relationships with teachers or because they were better behaved and not getting into as much trouble. Adam (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional – no bullied) provides a good example of this. "Yeah, yeah its (school) pretty good because all the other years I was pretty bad behaved … but this year's good cos I've been well behaved and got good grades." When asked what had made him change this year Michael suggested it was because his parents had said he couldn't go to the local high school with his friends if his grades and behaviour didn't improve during Year 7.

Some students indicated that their teacher targeted them. Given these students self-reported to bully others it is probable that they were in trouble more than the average student. These students however perceive that they are picked on so they may not recognise or be willing to recognise their behaviour problems. This may be attributed to their development of self. These children may not be able to assume the perspectives of others.

Most students who suggested that teachers "picked on them" did recognise that their behaviour was the reason for the attention of teachers. For example when William (low intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, regular – occasional bullied) was asked about his feelings for primary school he responded, "it will be good to get out of this place". When asked why he suggested that some of the teachers "gave him a hard time". He did however acknowledge that this was because he got into fights and also mucked around in class. This was also supported by Alex (regular bully, no – occasional bullied): "Oh most times I talk but I find that, she picks on the people who have been naughty in the past and yeah, yeah, lets all the good people off with yeah basically."

Justin (moderate intervention, regular – occasional - no bully, occasional bullied) expressed considerable maturity in how he dealt with a situation where he felt the teacher was being unfair: "I felt as though he (teacher) was um like picking on me and just like targeting me until I actually talked to him and said I think you're targeting me, I think you're targeting me, I think you're almost bullying me and he said oh I'm sorry I'm just trying to like get you to do like proper jobs, proper everything that you need to be doing …He was, yeah things like that, he was um, I, if anything went wrong it would be my fault … no one else's, always mine." After this discussion the situation was resolved: "Um he actually stopped and I realised he was actually a pretty funny guy."

Of the students who self-reported to bully others at baseline in the quantitative study approximately 62% also reported being bullied either regularly or occasionally. This was also reflected in the cohort of students who were interviewed. When students who indicated that they may not like school were questioned further several indicated that the main reason for not liking school was due to being bullied. Rachael (moderate intervention, occasional - no bully, regular bullied) provides an example of this: "I don't want to come to school because I get teased a lot and I don't wanna go back to my class either cos there's a girl that teases me all the time."

As previously discussed there were a variety of responses from students who were bullied regularly supporting reasons for not liking school on some occasions. Students who genuinely didn't like school were those who were often in trouble and those who were bullied regularly. It is important to recognise that the majority of the students interviewed liked school. Similarly findings from the quantitative data indicate that the majority of students are happy at school and in the playground.

Favourite subject

All students were able to identify a favourite subject when asked. These varied and included spelling, math, handwriting, art, sport, music, English, science, computer, drama, society and environment, library, technology, however the most popular subjects were math n = 15; 29%), physical education (n = 14; 27.5%) and art (n = 12; 23.5%). Some students identified more than one 'favourite' subject. Most of the students who liked physical education discussed being involved in sports teams outside school. Some, like Adam (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional – no bullied) who would have liked to play in a team outside school cited economic reasons for not being involved: "But umm I just we didn't have the money to do it at the time cause that was when the bills were coming around." Almost all students indicated that they liked their favourite subject because they were good at it however Laura (high intervention, occasional – regular bully) commented, "Art because even though my work can be really horrible no one cares."

Academic achievement

Students were asked how they thought they went (academically) at school. Almost all students indicated that they did "pretty good", "good" or okay at school. There were no differences between those who self-reported to bully regularly or occasionally, or between intervention groups. Two students made comments about their behaviour, for example, Mark (high intervention, occasional bully, no – occasional bullied) commented, "I've got to watch out with my behaviour cos I'm not the brightest person. Only Robbie

suggested he did poorly commenting "probably one out of ten – say one" with one being the worst.

Scared to come to school

Findings from the quantitative questionnaire found the majority of students from the self-report bully cohort to feel safe at school. Not surprisingly, those students who self-reported to be bullied regularly were less likely to indicate that they felt safe at school all of the time.

Almost all (n = 43) of the children who were interviewed unequivocally indicated that they were not scared to come to school. Of these fours cited reasons such as bad behaviour, being in fights and not completing their homework. The remaining four students indicated that they were scared to come to school because they were afraid of being bullied. Pete (moderate intervention, no bully, no – regular bullied) discussed incidents of bullying that happened in a previous school but indicated that things were better here. Subsequent discussions with Pete determined that his current school had a very proactive and successful response to bullying. Of the five students interviewed from this moderate intervention school all described a positive school ethos and the school response to bullying. Some described how teachers sat down and talked with children who bullied and those who were bullied to attempt to resolve the situation.

School Organisation

Punishment for bullying at school

Students were asked what would happen at their school if someone got caught bullying. Almost all children indicated that if some one was caught bullying at their school they would get punished in some way. Punishment varied between schools but it usually involved some type of warning (e.g. getting a coloured slip), time out (e.g. missing out on play time etc), sitting on the bench or in some cases suspension. Some students mentioned getting a letter sent home to parents or the Principal requesting parents to

come into the school to meet with him/her. Warnings were used in many schools with children getting three warnings before getting a detention or suspension. These warnings were for any type of bad behaviour. Forms of punishment did not vary between high, moderate and low intervention schools. Several children indicated unprompted that teachers talked to the children who bullied others (and those being bullied).

Kailah (low intervention, occasional – no – occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) indicated that here school had a peer mediator group who consisted of kids in their year who "help people when they're having trouble." The teachers selected these children. Gia (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional – no – occasional bullied) indicated that students who bullied others "umm umm they like have to write a letter to say sorry and stuff."

As mentioned when discussing motivators to cease bullying behaviour the majority of children felt that punishment was a good deterrent for themselves and other students to cease their bullying behaviour. For example Tony (moderate intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional bullied) discussed what would happen if someone was caught bullying at his school:

"Umm we have like a bench system, like we have to sit down on the bench and if you umm get the like we have a point system if you get like on the path you get two points or if you start a fight you or if you hit someone when a teacher's there or something like that you get three points and you have to .. your parent's get a ring and you have to sit on the bench for like the whole week or something. Get suspension and yeah …". When asked if he thought the system worked Tony responded "Yeah …umm because kids like to get away with stuff like you know get in trouble they feel bad, cos they don't like getting in trouble you know like missing out on recess or lunch or whatever." For some students, especially occasional bullies this was certainly a deterrent to bullying however for regular bullies while this was seen as an inconvenience it did not necessarily stop them from bullying others. Some students who showed positive changes in their behaviour did

however indicate that getting in trouble at school and at home was one of the things that had made them think about their behaviour.

This feeling is summarized by Anthony (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) "the teacher usually just tells them to stop it and they stop it and they'll get into trouble if they do it again. And then if they do it again they usually come up to the office and ah have to talk to like the principal or they'll just get their parents called and the parent's say "I'll come and take them", I think it works um but it doesn't stop it completely. Its not completely fool proof .. yeah it could work some kids are just like almost too out of reach to get to so keep going."

Similarly, Adam (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional – no bullied) when talking about detention commented "Oh it really sucks .. I had to sit out there (points to playground). Cos if you're on C Block – see I was a C Block kid they put you in A block with all the little kids .. and you just sit there .. it's really boring." When asked if he thought the detention was a good thing he responded "Yeah it's a good thing for the teachers but not good for the students."

Some students felt that punishments for bullying others should be more severe at their school. For example when asked what would happen at his school Joshua (moderate intervention, occasional - no bully, no – occasional bullied) responded with "nothing they'd (teachers) probably talk to you." He suggested that this would not really be useful. When asked what he thought would be useful he suggested: "Telling their parents and giving them suspension for a couple of days cos they shouldn't be doing that anymore." Despite these comments most students from all levels of intervention felt their school did recognise and address bullying.

Contacting parents was generally seen to be a good strategy and one that really made children think about their bullying behaviour. However a few children indicated that some parents (third person) may not care, so in this case, this type of punishment may not

be effective. These comments were made in the third person and hence were not referring to individual students parents. Rong (high intervention, occasional – no – regular bully, occasional bullied) also discussed punishments for different types of bullying and indicated that some students may not take notes home to parents hence in some cases it was necessary to send notes home that needed to be signed and returned.

"Well it depends on what type it is. It's like cause um what if it was only light like calling names or um yeah then they would get this like letter and ah it goes home to their parents and their parents read it and that's it. Yeah but like the child can scrunch it up and throw it away on the way home. Yeah but if it's like really harsh like beating someone up or kicking them somethin' like that then you'd get a resolution sheet and um that's where you um have to write what you did what you shouldn't of all that what happened. And um you have to bring it home to your parents and they have to sign it and write on it and you have to bring it back and if you don't bring it back then they'll probably call home to your parents, to Mum and Dad."

Some students indicated that students didn't get caught much because most of the bullying happened when the teacher wasn't around.

While several students indicated that it was useful to go and tell a teacher if someone was being bullied some indicated that this wasn't a good idea as it was likely to make the bullying worse. For example Paul (low intervention, occasional – regular bully, occasional – regular bullied) suggested that students wouldn't tell a teacher if they were getting bullied "Because they're scared that they'd get bullied even more." Students who bullied occasionally, or who had shown positive changes in their behaviour were more likely to tell a teacher. In addition, those from moderate and high intervention schools were more likely to discuss telling a teacher about bullying. This may be an effect of the intervention this was one of the outcomes of the program.

Students generally suggested that their school did consider bullying to be serious. This was highlighted by Alex (low intervention, regular bully, regular – no bullied) when

discussing what happened to kids who bully at his school "Yeah. They're really strict on bullying."

Only one student (Jeremy, moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, no – regular bullied) commented that when he was bullied the he told the teachers "yep but nothing happened." This was despite having his parents contact the school about the bullying. However the other three students interviewed from this school felt the teachers at the school responded to bullying appropriately. This was highlighted by Brad (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no bullied) "oh they'd probably be in a lot of trouble and um be in trouble for a fair while until the teachers and parents had it all sorted out."

The comments from the students about their school's response to bullying were generally positive and consistent with good practice. Only a few students indicated that punishment could be more severe or that teachers needed to take bullying more seriously. Interestingly these students were more likely to have reported to have been bullied. This warrants further investigation. From this data it was evident that schools from all interventions had recognised policies and procedures to address bullying.

Levels of bullying at school

When asked if they thought many kids at their school bullied others many students suggested that bullying in their year had decreased. Some students indicated that while there wasn't much bullying in their year there was among some of the younger groups. Some students indicated that the numbers of children in their year who bullied others had decreased in the last few years. This supports research that suggests bullying is more frequent in middle primary school [15].

Some students provided specific comments about the proportion of students who bullied at their school. These proportions were fairly high, for example, "yeah I think probably about 30% of them do. Yep." (Justin, moderate intervention, regular - occasional – no

bully, occasional bullied) and "about a third" (Hannah, high intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied). Comments such as this reflect students perceptions that some behaviours are often more prevalent than they actually are.

Many of the students who indicated that bullying had decreased cited examples which could be attributed to the effect of the intervention. For example, Olivia (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no – regular bullied) suggested that the number of kids who bullied others had gone down. When asked why she responded "umm like we've learnt more about bullying and how to stop it .. like um that some things are worse to do to people than like calling someone names is worse like physically hurting them and if that happens like tell them to stop .. or ignore them or if they keep doing it get someone to help you .. um try and like have a person with you and get them to help you stand up to them." Carlton (high intervention, occasional bully, no bullied) responded "last year they always used to because the bullying thing wasn't in."

Campbell (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional bullied) also reflected positive actions of the teachers "Yeah like it use to be pretty bad but like all like two years ago use to when they were in Year Seven but no one does it now." When asked why Campbell indicated that it was because "teachers disciplined more now."

Emily (moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) indicated that there wasn't too much bullying in Year 7 however she though bullying must be an issue as they were talking about bullying at school a lot. When asked if many kids get bullied at school she responded, "um I think so because issues have been brought up with bullying all the time like we've got like be cool and we wouldn't have that if not many people were getting bullied"

When asked why they thought levels of bullying had changed the reasons varied. Some students felt it was because everyone in their year got on better now, that there are "less unpopular people at this school" (James, moderate intervention, occasional – regular –

occasional bully, no bullied) however most students from the high and moderate intervention groups suggested it was because people were more aware of bullying. Some students expressed increased empathy towards those who had been bullied. Mark (high intervention, occasional bully, no – occasional bullied) suggested changes had occurred because "just because the people have become more aware and the teacher's are like talking about bullying and how it's wrong and stuff and the people know if they get into trouble they can get consequences."

Some students did however suggest that the levels of bullying hadn't changed at their school. For example Adam (moderate intervention, regular – no bully, occasional – no bullied) commented "umm no not really sounds like bad but I dunno I don't know about these things, we've had seminars about bullying but they don't really stop it." Interestingly Adam reported positive changes in his bullying behaviour in both the qualitative and quantitative study. When his change of behaviour was discussed Adam attributed this to changing friendship groups. He had recognised the negative influence of his circle of friends and didn't want to get into trouble any more. It may be that the intervention did have an subtle effect on him that he was not aware of.

Hannah (high intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) describes a fluctuation in levels of bullying when discussing if levels of bullying had changed recently "um a little bit down but it's coming back up again." When asked why this might be so Hannah responded "because kids don't care if they get in trouble anymore, they just don't care." When this was explored in more detail Hannah responded "um because their parents might not care that much or they know that they'll just get out of it anyway."

In discussing these changes some students reflected on changes in empathy. Anthony (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no occasional bullied) describes the behaviour of the person who bullied him "er he's changed a bit. He hasn't been teasing like me or kids .. maybe he's, I think its from the talk that the teacher gave him, and me. And he's noticed, I think he's noticed that it's hurt me like when he was saying all those

things and that's what's I think was wrong .. we just needed to talk." This comment reflects a change in empathy that appears to have been facilitated by the teacher.

While many students from intervention schools suggested that there wasn't much bullying at their school some like Paul (low intervention, occasional - regular bully, occasional – regular bullied) when asked how many kids bully in his year group indicated "ah probably most of 'em." There was a marked difference in responses as to why bullying had changed in the low compared to the high and moderate intervention schools. Students from low intervention schools gave reasons such as children growing out of bullying and the person doing the bullying going to another school while those from high and moderate intervention groups described changes in empathy, increased awareness and positive action by teachers.

Feelings of others from the school community towards those who are doing the bullying

The importance of the school ethos in preventing bullying from occurring should not be underestimated. It is widely recognised that positive school ethos can offer a protective effect. To establish a perception of how other children in the class and teachers felt about children who bully others, students were initially asked a series of questions relating to the scenario in which Sam/Susie bully Tony/Holly.

Feelings of other children in the class

When asked what other kids in the class might feel about what Sam/Susie was doing to Tony/Holly the majority of responses reflected the significance of the popularity of the person doing the bulling and that of the person being bullied. The majority, like Justin (moderate intervention, regular – occasional - no bully, occasional bullied) also considered friendships within the class "um if they were Sam's friends they would probably think it was, oh that's good that's what we told him to do. But others would

think he's being an idiot, just think he's being very stupid". These feelings were common for both girls and boys and for occasional and regular bullies:

"Umm depending if they liked Holly, if they didn't like Holly they would feel that Susie was doing a right thing even if she wasn't. Yep but the people that liked Holly would go along with Holly .. they would be feeling angry with Susie" (Emily, moderate intervention, occasional – regular bully, occasional bullied).

Alternately if Holly was popular then the other kids would not like Susie as is reflected by Sienna's (low intervention, no bullying behaviour) statement: "umm they most people probably wouldn't like her anymore because she has done that to someone they probably like as well".

Similarly James (high intervention, occasional – regular bully, no bullied) commented, "if it was a popular person who was getting bullied they'd think the person bullying is an idiot but if he's not popular they'd think it was funny probably."

Most students indicated that while not all the kids in the class would agree with this behaviour Sam/Susie's friends would. For example Blake (high intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) commented, "most would think he was mean, not good, but his friends would think he was cool and tough." Comments such as this indicate the development of recognition of generalized other versus reference groups.

Some discussions also reflected a changing attitude, for example, Mark (high intervention, occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) responded with: "umm some of the kids, Sam's friends, I reckon they'd think that he's a hero because he punched someone but then they'd sort of all get the drift that Tony didn't really deserve being punched … then they'd see the true side of Sam"

Some students suggested that kids in the class would think that Sam/Susie was being mean, nasty and a bad person. Further, different personalities in the class may view the behaviour differently. For example Taylor (low intervention, regular – no bully, no bullied) suggested that the tougher kids would think she was 'brave' but the shy kids "might think oh she's just mean and like she's horrible and all that so they probably wouldn't go near her."

Although the majority of children did not indicate that there was anything unusual about Sam/Susie's behaviour towards his/her friend although some students suggested that the other kids in the class might be confused about the behaviour. Hayden (low intervention, occasional – no bully, regular bullied) did think other kids in the class would question this behaviour. His comments were "umm I think they'd be puzzled because the fact that they're meant to be best friends then like Sam's hitting him." Hayden's comment in which he suggested that Sam's friends encouraged the behaviour indicates that he was likely to have experienced a similar situation "well.. um I think they probably got him to do it because I mean like they all talking really softly like not letting him have a listen so I reckon they actually told him to like go 'just go up to him and punch him in the arm wooohhh."

Parent's feelings

Students were also asked what they thought parents would think of the bullying behaviours of Sam/Susie. Almost all students indicated that they thought Sam/Susie's parents would not be happy with the behaviour. The majority of students suggested that parents would be angry, disappointed and unhappy and that they would talk to their child, come and talk to the teacher and punish the child, usually by grounding or not letting them watch television, use the Internet or play with the playstation. The following responses made by Justin and Tony summarize the feelings of almost all children: "I think they'd feel, oh what's the word, um very low on him as though like we feel ashamed. I think they just might make him apologize to Tony for what he's done, just um ask him why have you been doing this?" (Justin, moderate intervention, regular –

occasional bully, occasional bullied). Similarly Tony (moderate intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional bullied) commented, "umm they'll tell him what an awful person he is doing that and umm like they wouldn't feel too good, they'd probably feel embarrassed about how they brung (sic) up that child."

Girls were more likely than boys to suggest that parents would "sit down and talk" to Susie/Sam. Girls from all three levels of intervention made this comment. This is consistent with the quantitative data at baseline, which found girls were more likely to talk to a parent about bullying than boys.

Some students did however acknowledge that the reaction might depend on individual parents. Adam (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional – no bullied) responded with "uh it depends on the type of people they are but if they're like nice people they'd think it was bad and he shouldn't be doing it yeah and if they're bad they'd be like encouraging him or something". Similarly Jeremy (moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, no – regular bullied) responded with "I'm not sure it depends what kind of parents they are .. if they were nice parents they'd probably be upset .. and they'd tell him off, ground him, whatever they want to do, probably go and see the teacher about it umm if they were not very sensible parents they probably couldn't care less".

During the interview some of the students described families of children who bullied and reflected that the behaviour of their parents may influence their children's behaviours. Robbie (moderate intervention, no – regular bully, regular bullied) when discussing his neighbours commented: "….. their mouth is full of swear words, they threaten people, they threaten my friends, me, my family, my cousins, someone should go and call the foster home parents .. the Dad don't do anything, the swearing comes out, he gets to play the computer game, he sits on his bum, does not clean the house, the house smells like urine and everything else in the back yard has lawn weeds and dunno what else."

Students from all three interventions responded that parents were likely to be angry and disappointed by their child's behaviour. Students from high and moderate intervention schools did however provide more insightful comments. These students were more likely to suggest that some parents may respond differently. These were seen to be parents who didn't care or who were 'bad'.

Teachers' feelings

Students were also asked what they thought teachers would think about what Sam/Susie was doing to Tony/Holly. This question was asked to develop an understanding of the students' perceptions of teachers' general attitudes to bullying. The students were also asked some specific questions pertaining to the teachers at their school.

Responses to this question focused around teachers feeling angry, disappointed and confused. Students thought teachers would be confused as Sam/Susie and Tony/Holly were supposed to be good friends and the teacher would wonder what was going on. The majority of students, from all levels of intervention, suggested that the teacher would try to sort the situation out in some way. Campbell, Emily and Mark summarise the general feelings of the students interviewed.

Campbell (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional bullied) responded with: "um he'd like be having like talks with him and saying why you doing it an' stuff and he'd be like pretty mad that he's doin' it". Similarly Emily (moderate intervention, occasional – regular - occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) responded "She'd (teacher) be angry and if that was the case at our school she would be sent to the hiding room or had something be done like talk to the Principal."

"Well teachers go and treat everyone the same so she can't just like have a go at Sam and she's just gotta be normal and say alright Sam you've done something wrong and go and see the Principal or you shouldn't act like this … but she can't treat him any different

than what she does the others, just because he's done something wrong" (Mark, high intervention, occasional bully, no – occasional bullied).

To investigate this question in greater depth students were asked what would happen at their school if kids were caught bullying others. The majority of students cited some type of punishment. As previously discussed all schools enforced some type of punishment for children who were caught bullying at school.

Teachers' response to bullying
The high and moderate intervention schools received teacher professional development to enhance knowledge and understanding of issues associated with bullying. As part of a whole school approach to bullying school staff from the high and moderate intervention groups were encouraged to use the Method of Shared Concern [142] which involves a teacher sitting down and talking to both the child being bullied and the child doing the bullying. Anthony (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) discussed a situation he had been involved in.
"But it's last year I ran from a kid because we were playing chasey and I ran and I ran into a pole and ever since then because he's been teasing me 'cos in year six at the end of the year we had a talk about it and he kept on saying I'll break your nose again and threatening me and like that. And it just wasn't very nice that's what I though and it stopped since then cos the teacher did something about it"

When asked what the teachers did about the situation Anthony responded with: "er the teacher sat us both down in the same class and er said how do you feel about it and then how he (teacher) felt about it and we ended up like not fighting like anymore .. and its been great since then we just like stay away from each other".

This action by teachers was supported by Justin (moderate intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional bullied) who when discussing an incident in which he and other student had been involved in a bullying each other indicated that he had bullied

another child to "get back at him" however he believed that the main reason for ceasing the behaviour was "losing friends". In addition, Justin responded "ah the teacher talked to him and I at the same time". When asked about the usefulness of the teacher talking to them both, Justin replied, "It was, it worked incredibly well." Justin and Anthony were from the same school. Other students from this school also described a very positive school ethos.

While students were generally aware that it was important to tell the teacher and to talk about bullying issues not all students felt that this would happen. Students who were bullied felt if they did tell the teacher the bullying behaviour would continue or may even become worse. Some students who reported no instances of being bullied also cited this as a reason that other children may not tell a teacher about the bullying. Although a few students suggested that the teachers wouldn't do anything about it the majority indicated that there was a recognised procedure for children involved in bullying at their school.

Taylor (low intervention, regular – no bully, no bullied) resolved a difficult situation by talking with the other children involved "yeah sort out the problem before you go and tell the teacher or something and if it doesn't work out go and tell the teachers".

Students from high and moderate intervention schools discussed strategies such as the Method of Shared Concern, which are consistent with the intervention. Students from low intervention schools discussed telling a teacher about the situation however no student from a low intervention school mentioned sitting down and resolving the situation with the teacher and the child being bullied.

Project implementation
The Friendly Schools Friendly Families Project implemented a variety of strategies within the whole school community. To determine the perceived usefulness of classroom strategies children who were interviewed were asked a variety of questions.

Towards the end of the interview students were asked if they had talked about bullying at school and if so what had they done. When necessary students were prompted and asked if they had completed any activities or had any discussions in class. Almost all students from all intervention groups indicated that they had participated in some activities and discussions at school. The majority of these were in the classroom and included activities, games, discussions, scenarios and worksheets. The majority of the students thought it was useful to talk about bullying at school and most suggested that it had made them think about their behaviour. For example Olivia (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no – regular bullied) commented "like we've learnt more about bullying and how to stop it." There were only a few exceptions who felt the activities were a waste of time. About half of the students indicated that they had talked to their friends about bullying as a result of the classroom discussion. Boys were more likely to discuss bullying-related issues than girls. These behaviours may be indicative of the sample which included more boys and the nature of young male friendships which are likely to involve less serious discussions as opposed to girls. Jamie (moderate intervention, female, occasional – no – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) provides a good example of girls behaviours, "yeah sometimes, we like sit down, sometimes we just talk about everything." Some boys had also discussed bullying with their friends. For example, Jarrad (moderate intervention, regular-occasional - regular bully, occasional – no bullied) discussed his perception of the activities "how do you react to bullying in a cool way and what bullying is and yeah just stuff like that". He suggested that the activities and discussions were useful and that he had talked to his friends about bullying.

When asked what sort of things they had done at school Luke (moderate intervention, occasional – no - regular bully, regular bullied) commented:
"umm we've had like bullying campaigns like we've had Glory soccer players come along and talk to us about how bullying is and why we shouldn't do it and things like that … it was quite good because afterwards we got, we were able to get their signatures .. and that made it even better." Luke also discussed class activities and discussions about bullying "oh yes some activities like how bullying is and what you should do if you do it

and like we've actually had a umm even though they were like scene plays sort of thing we've had like kids there sort of like done to each other and the class has discussed what you should do about it."

Carlton (high intervention, occasional bully, no bullied) responded that in class they had talked "about don't fight back, just walk away and um just like go to your friends." Tamzin (moderate intervention, occasional – no –occasional bully, no bullied) commented "We've talked about what bullying is and what to do if you are bullied and we had like umm a little game a sharing game." Campbell (moderate intervention, occasional bully, occasional bullied) commented "Like you know questionnaires and like worksheets and everything like um if someone like filled out this sheet like say what would you say and everything like you know just worksheets about like what would um describe the best um situation that you've been in and think about it now how would you try to prevent it?" When these comments were discussed further all of these students indicated that the activities were useful.

Thomas (moderate intervention, occasional – no bullied, no bullied) talked about care groups where the older children do activities with the Year 1 and 2 classes and then they look after the children at school. Similarly Kailah (low intervention, occasional – no – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) described a group of year 7 children who mentored and helped other students in the school.

A few students indicated that while the activities and school-based strategies were interesting they hadn't made them or others think about stopping their bullying behaviour. These students were from all intervention groups but were most likely to be regular bullies.

In addition, some students who reported to bully regularly in the quantitative study indicated that they didn't remember doing much about bullying at school, or that the activities were not useful. When asked if his class had participated in any activities about

bullying James (high intervention, occasional – regular - occasional bully, no bullied) responded with "nah, they all just told us not to bully and stuff." When asked if they had talked about bullying at school Robbie (moderate intervention, no – regular bully, regular bullied) commented, "I think we did but I don't really want to do it."

Similarly Nathan (moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) indicated that the teacher "she gives us a worksheet and we talk about what happens if you get bullied, the ways you can be bullied, how to stop bulling" however when asked if he could remember much about the activity and discussion Nathan responded "not really, I have a short term memory" however he did suggest that "its not a waste of time cause you are learning about stuff that happens in the playground and how bad it is." When asked if the activities made him think about his behaviour he responded with "not really." These comments present some mixed messages, which may be consistent with Nathan's development of self-reflected in his fluctuating self-reported bullying behaviour. While he may not admit that the activities were useful he had remembered the key messages.

Adam (high intervention, regular – no bully, occasional – no bully) made comment that the materials were not very realistic mainly because he felt that people who were bullied deserved it, " .. sounds like bad but I dunno I don't know about these things, we've had seminars about bullying but they don't really stop it". When asked what type of things they had done in the classroom Adam responded "just situations where you do what bullying is and yeah". When asked if he thought they had been useful he responded with "not really, not to a lot of other people cause it just doesn't stop 'em and they just listen to it ….. they talk about defenseless people being bullied and that doesn't happen at this school. There's no defenseless people that don't deserve it …(the classroom materials indicate) "that the kids are weak and smaller and yeah .. they can't really help it .. yeah but that doesn't happen …. like no ones gonna go to a teacher, that would make them feel bad and they don't talk about that to their parents .. a friend they might. They might talk about how they got into a fight with this person."

It was evident from the discussions about what happens to children when they get caught bullying at school that most schools had developed formal policy and procedures to deal with bullying. This was highlighted by Emily (moderate intervention, occasional – regular - occasional bully, occasional - no bullied), "like we've got something that's called a sort of pamphlet thing .. each one of us and we have to take it home and it's like a policy we have to follow .. and we have to follow it and if you don't follow that you have to go to the hiding room."

Almost all students from low intervention schools indicated that bullying had been talked about at some time at school however the types of strategies seemed to vary between schools. For example, Paige (low intervention, occasional – no bully, occasional bullied) described the principal talking about bullying at assembly:
"yeah, like in the assembly sometimes the principal will talk about bullying and say that like to stop it or there will be consequences for it … he just says there's been quite a lot of bullying going on and I need to say that its not welcome at this school….just don't do it."

Shaun (low intervention, no bully, no – occasional bullied) indicated that his teacher asked students who had been bullied to out up their hands and tell her who had bullied them "just like Miss Jones in the music room she just asks people to put up her hand and who is (bullied) by and stuff." This strategy would not be considered best practice.

Hayden (low intervention, occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) indicated that bullying was discussed in class "well literally the whole thing if someone is being bullied what to do and everything" however he didn't always pay attention "literally I pay no attention, uh there was this really interesting book I was reading, cause I'm a book worm I love books I can read all of the Harry Potter's in like three days". He did comment that he got the general message "oh I did pay some attention I mean I got the gist of it.." however he didn't feel the activities were relevant "because it didn't work they like were

saying like some bullies used us and not to and bullies may and go can you stop bullying me and they go 'ooh look at the little wimpy boy' and that's what they actually did."

Some students from low intervention schools did however discuss teachers facilitating activities and discussions in class which they found useful. Kailah (low intervention, occasional – no bully, occasional – no bullied) responded with "well he (teacher) says like he tells everybody like different types of bullying then he tells them that it like shouldn't be going on in our school .. and follow the seven C's … cooperation, consideration, curiosity, common sense, care, commitment and courage."

At one low intervention school where all students interviewed (n = 6) indicated that they had done the Aussie Optimism program at school and they had talked about bullying during this program. The comments about Aussie Optimism were all very positive and students described some useful activities from the program.

The effects of the intervention were obvious in this discussion with students from the high and moderate intervention reporting specific intervention strategies. Further, for those who reported to bully occasionally the strategies were deemed interesting and effective. However the strategies were seen as less relevant for those who reported to bully regularly. This could be attributed to their general attitude towards school. It is also likely that for these children the role of bullying and the associated social benefits is significant. This warrants further research to determine strategies that may be appropriate for this small hard to reach group. While students from low intervention schools indicated that they did discuss bullying at school some of these strategies were clearly not best practice.

Talking to parents about bullying
It is widely recognised that truly effective school-based health promotion programs need to target parents. Parents are perhaps the most significant influence on children's health behaviours. While it is recognised that parents are very important to involve in any

school-based health promotion program, traditionally they have been the hardest group within the school community to involve [143, 144]. A key strategy of the Friendly Schools Friendly Families Project was to engage parents using a variety of strategies, most minimal intervention. Parents in the high intervention groups were sent a series of interactive information sheets which encouraged them to talk to their children about bullying. These activity sheets provided current information, tips on communicating with their child and relevant activities. As part of the qualitative study children were asked if they had talked to their parents about bullying.

When asked if they had talked about bullying with their Mum, Dad or Step Dad almost all of the students indicated that they had. Only a few said they hadn't. Alex (low intervention, regular bully, regular - no bullied) who lived with his Dad suggested this was because his Dad didn't really have the time: "no, not really, don't really have the time … he's (Dad) behind quite a few like jobs he's a cabinet maker and like he works all day and cos it's really hot these days we just sit down and I'm usually out with my friends and yep."

Parent's responses to bullying varied and while some gave their children responsible advice some encouraged their child to fight back. Some parents discussed walking away or ignoring children who bully and to tell a teacher. They also talked encouraged their child not to bully and to consider what it would be like to be "in the shoes of the person being bullied". For example, Olivia (moderate intervention, occasional - no bully, no - regular bullied) describes her parents' discussion: "like tell us if you are getting bullied umm yeah how to stop it and stuff." When asked what type of things they say to stop bullying she responded: "talking to them, ignoring them, tell them to stop or tell a teacher." Sienna (low intervention, no bully, no – occasional bullied) "umm you should never ignore a person you should always talk to them about it and stuff like that. She says she never expects us to get in a fisty fight all of us."

Parents were more likely to discuss being bullied as opposed to doing the bullying with their child, however some students who had had letters sent home to their parents indicated that this encouraged their parents to sit down and talk about the issue. This may reflect parent's perception of their child's bullying behaviour.

In some cases children reported that parents gave different responses. For example, Anthony (moderate intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) commented: "Mum and Dad have a different er point of view about bullying and what to do about it and I may listen to my Mum because that's like the closest person in my family and I always talk to her and everything." When this was explored in more detail Anthony responded "Oh Mum say she says just ignore 'em and stuff and walk away. She says don't retaliate." Similarly Blake (high intervention, occasional – no bully, no – occasional bullied) commented "yes Mum says don't get involved, if anyone tries to bully you just walk away. Dad, because he is Egyptian, says you should fight back and stand up for yourself."

Girls all indicated that they talked about bullying with their mother, or with both parents while boys were likely to talk with either their father or mother. This is consistent with the findings of the quantitative study.

Some students said their older brother or sister was more likely to talk to them about bullying however the messages they gave were not positive. For example, Nathan (moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, occasional – no bullied) indicated that his brother was the person most likely to talk to him about bullying. When asked what he talked about he commented:
"he asks me if I have been bullied and if it is really bad to stand up for yourself and if it is really bad you might as well turn it into a fight and them you can tell the teachers all the stories and not make it a lie."

Some students indicated that one or both their parents advocated for standing up for themselves. Mark (high intervention, occasional bully, no – occasional bullied) commented: "nah I've been told by my parents and they have said to me if someone hits you if they don't have any reason to hit you if you've been like tormenting them and stuff they don't have any reason to hit you, you hit them back and yeah .. but umm I would uh … I'd hit back its just that if it was a push I'd push but if it was a punch I'd punch back .. yeah and I reckon my friends would jump in …."

Similarly Rong (high intervention, occasional – no – regular bully, occasional bullied) commented "Um well my mum like um she's like she's like um if someone picks on you like more than three times and they pick on you again then um you should um beat them up straight on the spot and then I'm like oh but what if I get a resolution? And she's like oh well I'll sign it and I'll come down to the school about it, so." Rong's shifts in self-reported bullying behaviour and his discussion throughout the interview suggested he had identified some social benefits from his bullying behaviour.

Emily's (moderate intervention, occasional – regular – occasional bully, occasional - no bullied) parents encouraged her to walk away however if someone hit her first it was okay to hit back: "umm just things like you're getting bullied make it as a joke, walk away, don't take it too seriously or if someone's hitting me, I'm aright to hit them as long as they hit me first, not just to stand there and don't do anything."

Some parents had recognised the desire to retaliate if someone bullied however they encouraged their child not to hit back. For example, Tony (moderate intervention, regular – occasional bully, occasional bullied) commented "and like you know if someone hits you um its right to hit them back but don't cause you'll get in as much trouble as they will."

Paige (low intervention, occasional – no bully, occasional – regular bullied) who was from a low intervention school indicated that the questionnaire sent home for her parents

to complete triggered a discussion: "yeah when the survey came home for them to do, they just said I dunno they were just talking about not for me to do bullying or anything."

The responses of parents were generally positive although in there were some mixed messages between mothers and fathers with fathers being more likely to encourage their child to retaliate. Most parents discussed being bullied and not doing the bullying with the exception of those who had been contacted by the school about their bullying behaviour. While most students from all intervention schools indicated that they had talked to their parents about bullying others students from the high and moderate intervention schools suggested that they had had more complex discussions with their parents.

4.5.3   Discussion of school factors

As discussed the school ethos, school curricular and student and parent's connectedness to school are significant factors in preventing bulling and enhancing health behaviours [88, 138, 139].

One theory suggests there are four sets of factors that could lead to potential bullying problems. These include:

- The school setting (size, teachers, group climate);
- External characteristics of potential victims and bullies (physical handicaps, obesity, language problems, physical strength);
- Behaviour characteristics of victims and bullies (attitude to violence, aggression, self esteem, anxiety levels; and
- Socio economic background, home conditions and child rearing [10].

Some reference to the external characteristics of victims and the behaviour characteristics of victims and bullies has been made in the discussion of the initiation, maintenance and cessation of bullying. Further discussion of these factors will be made in subsequent research. Subsequent research will also investigate socio-economic background and to

some extent home conditions. It was beyond the scope of this study to analyze these factors in more detail.

This research has focused on the following factors relevant to the school:

1. Individual factors;
2. School organization: and
3. Project implementation.

Individual factors

The majority of students liked school. Students who genuinely didn't like school were those who were often in trouble and those who were bullied regularly. Similarly findings from the quantitative data indicate that the majority of students are happy at school and in the playground. All students were able to identify a favourite subject when asked with the most popular subjects being math, physical education and art. Almost all students indicated that they were not scared to come to school. The few who did say that they were scared were regularly bullied. This is consistent with the findings from the quantitative study.

School organization

A study by Rigby found that while a causal relationship has not yet been scientifically established there is strong indication that attitudes and beliefs about bullying have implications for understanding why some children persistently engage in bullying and why prevalence of bullying between schools can differ markedly [17].

A school environment such as one in which bullying is obviously accepted and is highly prevalent is likely to reinforce bullying behaviours. While there are likely to be factors external to the school that contribute to these behaviours [10] is does seem appropriate for schools to work to develop positive ethos and environment. Rigby emphasizes that the problem of bullying not only resides in the personality of the child who bullies others but also in the social context of the school. He recommended programs focus on changing the

school ethos to promote more supportive attitudes towards the victims of bullying and promoting beliefs among students that work to reduce the prevalence of bullying in schools [17]. The FSFF Project aimed to change the school ethos through a variety of strategies.

It has been suggested that bullying occurs more frequently in larger schools, in larger classes and in schools where there is no organized prevention and/or disciplinary policy of bullying [10]. Data were collected in both the qualitative and quantitative study to reflect the size of the school. This is described in the student profiles (Appendix 5) and will be analysed in more detail in subsequent research. The comments from the students about their school's response to bullying were generally positive and consistent with good practice. Only a few students indicated that punishment could be more severe or that teachers needed to take bullying more seriously. These students were more likely to have reported to have been bullied. This warrants further investigation. From this data it was evident that schools from all interventions had recognised policies and procedures to address bullying.

While about three quarters of students from all intervention groups indicated that the prevalence of bullying had gone down in their school over the last few years there was a marked difference in responses as to why bullying had changed in the low compared to the high and moderate intervention schools. Students from low intervention schools gave reasons such as children growing out of bullying and the person doing the bullying going to another school while those from high and moderate intervention groups described changes in empathy, increased awareness and positive action by teachers.

The school community and the resultant ethos of the school have been identified as possible contributing factors to bullying behaviours. The manner in which teachers' model social or anti-social behaviour in the school environment and how effectively they respond to incidences of bullying may also constitute another potential influence. As

bullying occurs more frequently in some schools than others it is likely that there are some school factors that work to increase prevalence rates in some schools [10, 17].

To explore the ethos of the school students were asked what others in the class, parents and teachers would think about what Sam/Susie had done to Tony/Holly. The comments reflected the significance of the popularity of the person doing the bulling and that of the person being bullied. If the students doing the bullying were perceived to be popular the behaviour was considered to be acceptable. The majority of students from all intervention levels suggested that teachers would be angry and disappointed at Sam/Susie.

Students from all three interventions responded that parents were likely to be angry and disappointed by their child's behaviour. The data suggests that children of this age are still influenced by parent's expectations. Students from high and moderate intervention schools did however provide more insightful comments. These students were more likely to suggest that some parents may respond differently. These were seen to be parents who didn't care or who were 'bad'.

Project implementation

Policy and procedure

While all students indicated that their school had policy and procedures for addressing bullying students from high and moderate intervention schools were more likely to provide more detailed discussion and awareness of these procedures. In addition, students from high and moderate intervention schools discussed strategies such as the Method of Shared Concern which are consistent with the intervention. Students from low intervention schools discussed telling a teacher about the situation however no student from a low intervention school mentioned sitting down and resolving the situation with the teacher and the child being bullied.

Talking to parents

While there is considerable evidence that family relationships are significant in determining bullying behaviours it is still unclear as to whether families and parents in particular constitute causative agents. Parents do have formative influences on their children's behaviour, however independent effects resulting from the children themselves also need to be considered. It may be that the levels of aggressiveness and hostility associated with children who bully may develop relatively independently of family and parental influences and result in these children making negative judgments of their family. In addition, aggressive behaviours may affect family functioning and relationships with parents [71].

It is widely recognised that parental violence and other parental mental and social problems are considered risk factors for the development of mental health problems [69]. Studies by Rigby and others investigating bullying have found negative relations with parents to contribute to children engaging in peer abuse at school [71-73].

The responses of parents were generally positive although in there were some mixed messages between mothers and fathers with fathers being more likely to encourage their child to retaliate. While most students from all intervention schools indicated that they had talked to their parents about bullying others students from the high and moderate intervention schools suggested that they had had more complex discussions with their parents.

Classroom strategies

The effects of the intervention were obvious in this discussion with students from the high and moderate intervention reporting specific intervention strategies. Further, for those who reported to bully occasionally the strategies were deemed interesting and effective. However the strategies were seen as less relevant for those who reported to bully regularly. This could be attributed to their general attitude towards school. This does however warrant further research to determine strategies that may be appropriate for

this small hard to reach group. While students from low intervention schools indicated that they did discuss bullying at school some of these strategies was not best practice.

5.0   EFFECT OF RESEARCH ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This study will form part of the PhD research for the Principal Investigator. The PhD will include qualitative and quantitative analysis of the cohort of Year 6/7 students from the FSFF Project who self-report to bully others. This will allow more in-depth analysis of these data. The qualitative data, the findings from the quantitative data collected from the cohort at baseline (Year 6), post 1 (Year 6), post 2 (Year 7) and post 3 (Year 8), in addition to teacher report data collected at baseline, post 1 and post 2 will allow for a more comprehensive analysis of students who bully others.

This Project has also provided training opportunities for a number of students at Curtin University. Four undergraduate Bachelor of Science (Health Promotion) completed part of their second year professional practice unit at the Western Australian Centre for Health Promotion Research (WACHPR) working on this Project. This work included literature searches and reviews and administrative tasks. Two students have been employed as part-time Research Assistants during the third year of their Health Promotion degree. One of these students began work as a volunteer on the Project. This has provided them the opportunity to develop research skills and has assisted both obtain employment in the health promotion field. This research has contributed to accreditation within the WACHPR's competency program.

This research has also provided the opportunity for several staff within the WACHPR to enhance their qualitative research skills.

6.0   IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH PROMOTION/ LINKING RESEARCH TO HEALTH OUTCOMES

This study has provided the unique opportunity to collect qualitative data from school children involved in an intervention study. To date there has been no published in-depth qualitative research collected from primary school aged children who bully others in Australia. The use of the main constructs of Symbolic Interaction: mind, self and society provides a unique opportunity to develop a sound understanding of factors that may influence children to positively change their bullying behaviour. Further, the opportunity to triangulate these data with quantitative data collected from students and teachers will broaden the understanding of children who bully others.

This study has provided a unique opportunity to collect innovative data from a sample of higher risk children who have been involved in a comprehensive universal health promoting schools intervention. The perspective of the children involved and the development of theory used in conjunction with the quantitative data has provided the opportunity to identify some of the key factors and barriers, which may influence behaviour change among upper primary school, aged children who bully others.

Finding from this study and the subsequent PhD research will be used to inform the development of interventions for young people who report to bully others. In addition, the findings will be relevant when developing other intervention-based programs focusing on mental health for young people. This research has assisted current and future research at the WACHPR focusing on at risk young people.

7.0   COMMUNITY BENEFITS FROM THE RESEARCH

The research conducted as part of this project has added to current knowledge about factors that may influence children who bully others to change their behaviours. In particular this research has resulted in:

- An understanding of factors that influence the initiation and maintenance of bullying others;
- An understanding of the key factors that may influence young people to cease bullying; and
- An opportunity to qualitatively analyze the effect of a two year intervention from the perspective of students who self-report to bully others.

Future benefits include:

The opportunity to triangulate data collected from students who report to bully others and teachers involved in a two year bullying intervention with qualitative data to inform the development of interventions appropriate for students who bully others.

The opportunity to analyse other data collected during the interviews which were beyond the scope of this project. This includes:

- How children who bully feel about children being bullied (further exploration of empathy);
- The development of self;
- The role of bystanders in bullying behaviours; and
- The role of family and parent interaction for children who bully others.

Where possible this data will be compared with quantitative data collected from the FSFF Year 6/7 cohort at baseline, post 1, post 2 and post 3. Publications from this data analysis will be provided to Healthway.

As contact details for many of the students interviewed have been provided by parents there is also the possibility of gathering more qualitative data from this group of children.

8.0   PUBLICATIONS AND SEMINARS

Burns S, Maycock, B 2004 Talking to Kids about Bullying. Paper presented at the 18th World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education, Melbourne, 26-23 April 2004.

9.0   FURTHER DISSEMINATION

A number of peer reviewed publications are planned from the findings of this research and the subsequent research. Copies of these will be forwarded to Healthway as they are published.

All schools involved in the qualitative study will received a short report describing the key findings.

Copies of this report will be available in the WACHPR library.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Consent forms

Appendix 2

Coordinator information

Appendix 3

Follow up recruitment

Appendix 4

Interview Guide

Appendix 5

Student profiles