

PARENTS' RESPONSES TO RELATIONAL BULLYING IN NEW ZEALAND

BY

TEGAN ELIZABETH BROWN

A thesis

submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Victoria University of Wellington

2020

Abstract

Relational bullying is a significant and widespread issue that is experienced by many young people in New Zealand. To implement effective and consistent prevention and intervention strategies, it is crucial to understand the perspectives of everyone involved. However, there is currently limited research on parents' perspectives of relational bullying. While research in the field of bullying prevention is increasingly focused on the perspectives and responsibility of multiple parties, a significant gap in the literature remains: the perspectives of the parents of children who are involved as perpetrators of bullying, as well as those parents of children who are both bullies as well as victims. The present doctoral research yielded findings describing parents' responses to their child's involvement in relational bullying, including those involved in bullying perpetration. This project was comprised of three studies focussing specifically on relational bullying. The first study examined parents' responses to hypothetical scenarios depicting their child perpetrating or experiencing exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation. The second study asked parent participants to reflect on any actual experience they had with supporting their child as a victim or perpetrator of relational bullying. In the third study, participants reflected on their own experiences with relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence, considering the continued impact on their current lives and on their parenting. Data collection was via one anonymous, online survey. These qualitative responses were analysed thematically to produce both individual study findings and overarching themes that reflected the participants' perspectives. The responses revealed that parents respond to the three distinct forms of relational bullying (exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation) in different ways, with some forms of relational bullying viewed as less serious than others. In addition, the findings provide insight into how parents supported their child when they were involved in relational bullying perpetration. Parents responding to their child's involvement in the perpetration of relational bullying often took action, assisted their child to make amends, and continued to monitor their child's progress. When parent participants considered their own experiences of relational bullying, they identified being deeply impacted by the bullying at the time it happened, and they explained that it continued to have an ongoing impact on their current lives and on their parenting behaviour with their own children. The findings from the project overall illustrate the need for a cultural shift in the attitudes towards bullying that permeate the New Zealand context.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisory team: Professor Vanessa Green, Doctor Chris Bowden, and Professor Paul Jose. Vanessa, thank you for encouraging me throughout this entire process – since way back during my Master’s degree. You have been a mentor to me and have led me through the peaks and troughs of postgraduate study with unwavering belief. Chris, your influence started before you might realise. When I was an undergraduate student, your passion for helping others in their toughest times was a catalyst for me to start on this path; your long chats were what I needed to finish the journey. Paul, I am immensely grateful for your expertise during the inception and completion stages of this thesis. Thank you.

I would like to thank my participants and acknowledge the emotions and experiences they have shared with me. We have never met, but I am forever indebted to you for taking the time to share these insights with me. Your voices are the true contribution to the field.

I would like to acknowledge my institution, Victoria University of Wellington, for financing my doctoral journey. The opportunity to dedicate so much time to an intellectual pursuit is a luxury that I would not have had otherwise. I am particularly grateful to the office colleagues I have met along the way: Athena, Hannah, Annie, Laura, and Bharathi. I’m so glad to have had you alongside me through it all.

This thesis could not have happened without the support and encouragement of my family. To my parents, Chris and Jeannette, you instilled in me a lifelong love of learning and the opportunity and means to take that love and run with it. To my sister, Tiffany, thank you for the almost daily phone calls – they were therapeutic and distracting in the very best way. To Matt, thank you for continuing to have my back.

To my friends outside of academia (a special six in particular), you have made this entire process bearable. Your unwavering support and reassurance in all aspects of life has been incredible. We are so lucky to have each other.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my daughter. You have given me the drive and determination to become the best possible version of myself. This thesis is for you.

List of tables

Table 1 Example of organisation of codes and categories into a theme	78
Table 2 Themes and categories found in the thematic analysis of research findings from Study One.....	86
Table 3 Themes and categories found in the thematic analysis of research findings from Study Two.....	132
Table 4 Themes and categories found in the thematic analysis of research findings from Study Three.....	163
Table 5 Parents' views of different types of relational bullying	180
Table 6 Parent and child bullying status	202

List of figures

Figure 1 Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory.....	27
Figure 2 An expanded social-ecological framework of bullying among youth.....	29
Figure 3 A parent-centred interpretation of Swearer and Espelage’s (2004) social-ecological model.....	30
Figure 4 Participant demographic data for the programme of research.....	73
Figure 5 The multidimensional model of parents’ perspectives on relational bullying.....	191

Definitions

- Board of Trustees** “Every state and state-integrated school and kura in New Zealand has a board of trustees. The board of trustees is a crown entity – that is an organisation that is part of the New Zealand public sector. They are responsible for the school or kura’s performance and ensuring that all legal requirements are met.” (New Zealand School Trustees Association, n.d.)
- Bullying** Bullying has been defined, most notably, by Dan Olweus, as having the following characteristics: it involves an intent to harm, it is based on an abuse or imbalance of power, and it is repeated over time (Olweus, 1993).
- Bully-victim** A child involved in bullying as both a victim and as a bully. Sometimes called provocative victims or aggressive victims (Smith, 2004).
- Mana¹** “Prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma - mana is a supernatural force in a person, place or object. Mana goes hand in hand with tapu, one affecting the other. The more prestigious the event, person or object, the more it is surrounded by tapu and mana. Mana is the enduring, indestructible power of the atua and is inherited at birth, the more senior the descent, the greater the mana.” (www.maoridictionary.com)

¹ Māori definitions retrieved from www.maoridictionary.co.nz

Mihimihi¹	A speech of greeting, tribute. “The focus of mihimihi is on the living and peaceful interrelationships.” (www.maoridictionary.com)
Parents	In the current studies, parents also included some other forms of primary caregivers. For example, a grandparent who was a primary caregiver of the child they discussed.
Relational Bullying	The purposeful manipulation or damage of another person’s peer relationships or social standing (Crick, 1996). These actions must be intentional, repeated over time, and based on an abuse or imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993). An imbalance of power may include differences in confidence, social support, popularity among peers, or being outnumbered (Smith, 2014). Examples of relational bullying include social exclusion, spreading malicious rumours or gossip, social manipulation, or withholding friendship (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Relational bullying can occur both with and without the use of technology.
Tamaiti¹	A boy child.
Tamariki¹	Children.
Whānau¹	Extended family, family group.
Whare¹	House, building, residence, dwelling.

List of Appendices

Appendix A Questionnaire Study One

Appendix B Questionnaire Study Two

Appendix C Questionnaire Study Three

Appendix D End of Survey Questions

Appendix E Content of Webpage

Appendix F Participant Information Sheet

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	3
List of tables.....	4
List of figures.....	5
Definitions.....	6
List of Appendices.....	8
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO RELATIONAL BULLYING.....	12
Bullying.....	12
Relational Bullying.....	16
The New Zealand Context.....	20
Parents and Bullying.....	23
Chapter Summary.....	24
Outline of the Thesis.....	24
CHAPTER TWO: RELATIONAL BULLYING IN ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS: A LITERATURE REVIEW.....	26
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory.....	26
The Social-Ecological Framework.....	28
A Parent-Centred Model.....	30
Rationale for a Parent-Centred Perspective of Bullying.....	31
Review of Literature Underpinning the Programme of Research.....	32
Summary of the Literature.....	52
Aims of the Programme of Research.....	52
Research Questions.....	53
Chapter Summary.....	54
CHAPTER THREE: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY.....	56
Research Design.....	56

Questionnaire Development	60
Pilot Testing of the Questionnaire	69
Participant Recruitment	69
Ethical Considerations.....	71
Participants	72
Data Analysis.....	74
Validity and Reliability	78
Chapter Summary	84
CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY ONE	85
Findings	85
Chapter Summary	128
CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY TWO	131
Findings	131
Chapter Summary	160
CHAPTER SIX: STUDY THREE.....	162
Findings	162
Chapter Summary	174
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	176
Summary of Findings – Study One	176
Summary of Findings – Study Two.....	180
Summary of Findings – Study Three.....	184
Overarching Findings from the Programme of Research	186
Implications: Practical and Theoretical Contributions	193
Limitations and Directions for Future Research.....	199
Concluding Statement.....	204
References.....	206
Appendix A: Questionnaire Study One	229

Appendix B: Questionnaire Study Two	234
Appendix C: Questionnaire Study Three	237
Appendix D: End of Survey Questions.....	240
Appendix E: Content of Webpage	242
Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet	244

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO RELATIONAL BULLYING

Bullying

Defining Bullying

Bullying has been defined, most notably by Dan Olweus, as having the following characteristics: it involves an intent to harm, it is based on an abuse or imbalance of power, and it is repeated over time (Olweus, 1993). Olweus (1993) argues that a single specific incident of harassment could be defined as bullying, but it typically occurs over time between the same individuals. Olweus distinguished bullying from “occasional nonserious negative actions that are directed against one student at one time and against another on a different occasion” (p. 9). Despite the widespread use of the Olweus definition since its inception, recent research suggests that researchers may define bullying differently from people who have experienced bullying. For instance, Vaillancourt et al. (2008) found that when children and young people were asked to provide a definition of bullying, they rarely included any of the three criteria of intent, repetition, and power imbalance. The implication of this finding is that students will report more or less bullying depending on how bullying is defined in the study. In the Vaillancourt et al. (2008) study, students who were provided with the researcher-based definition reported less bullying than those who defined bullying in their own terms. Furthermore, when not provided with a researcher-based definition of bullying, boys reported more frequent bullying perpetration. With regard to parents’ definitions of bullying, Harcourt et al. (2014), in a systematic review of qualitative literature, revealed that parents’ definitions of bullying vary, and there exists a perception of bullying as a ‘normal’ life experience.

Types of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms, and it is most often divided into three types: physical, verbal, and social/relational, with the addition of ‘cyber’ for bullying that uses digital technologies (Bullying Free NZ, n.d.). The definitions of these types of bullying are generally consistent with the Olweus (1993) definition that defines bullying as characterised by intent to harm, an abuse or imbalance of power, and repetition. Physical bullying is regarded as physical aggression towards others, for example, hitting or pushing, or damaging someone’s belongings. Verbal bullying can include teasing or humiliating someone. Social/relational bullying can include gossiping, spreading rumours, manipulation, and exclusion. These acts

would also need to meet the criteria for the general definition of bullying. For instance, cyberbullying is commonly defined as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Smith & Slonje, 2010, p. 249). Cyberbullying can include the use of cell phones, picture/video clip sharing, intimidation, harassment, embarrassment, or exclusion through the use of technology. It should be noted that relational forms of bullying could be conducted using technology, so some instances of cyberbullying may also be relational in nature.

Roles in Bullying

In addition to the typical bully and victim roles, there is another group of children termed ‘bully-victims’. Smith (2004) explained that bully-victims, sometimes called provocative victims or aggressive victims, are children who are involved in bullying both as a bully and as a victim. Some research expands on these roles to include other peers that may be present during bullying. For example, Salmivalli et al. (1996) and Sutton and Smith (1999) have explored the ‘group process’ of bullying which expands on the bully and victim roles to include reinforcers, assistants, defenders, and outsiders. Salmivalli et al. (1997) explain that assistants may not engage in bullying behaviour directly, but they do assist the bully, whereas reinforcers provide the bully with positive feedback during the bullying incident. Defenders, however, support the victim by taking their side, while outsiders stay uninvolved and essentially silently approve of the bullying. There is some stability to these roles; in a study of the stability of victimisation and bullying from childhood through to adolescence, Mayes et al. (2017) found that 30% of the childhood bullies were still bullies in their adolescence. In addition, 26% of the childhood victims were still victims in their adolescence, eight years later.

Prevalence of Bullying

Bullying is a significant and widespread issue affecting young people and their families worldwide and locally. An international study, known as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) report, placed New Zealand third highest out of 57 participating countries for bullying prevalence for school students in the mathematics report (Mullis et al., 2016a) and second-highest in the science report (Mullis et al., 2016b). The prevalence of bullying varies widely in the literature. Juvonen and Graham (2014) estimate

that 20–25% of young people are bullies, victims, or bully-victims. Recent meta-analyses and systematic reviews have provided some clarity around this data. A meta-analysis of 80 studies, yielded a mean prevalence rate of 35% for traditional bullying involvement and 15% for cyber bullying involvement (Modecki et al., 2014). In Australia, the prevalence at any time in the child or adolescent’s life for traditional bullying victimisation was 25% and perpetration was 12%, while for those who had experienced bullying in the past 12-months prevalence of victimisation was 15% and bullying perpetration was 5% (Jadambaa et al., 2019). Smith (2016) has acknowledged that part of the reason prevalence rates vary so widely is because the measures used to estimate prevalence vary so widely too. There are inconsistencies in the definition, frequency, and time span being referred to throughout the literature (Smith, 2016).

Cross et al. (2014) explored the prevalence of what they termed ‘covert bullying’ in Australia. The behaviours included in this prevalence study were wide-ranging, many of which could be classed as relational bullying, such as whispering, excluding, blackmailing, spreading rumours, and stealing friends. However, they also included cyberbullying and any behaviours that were ‘out of sight’ of adults. The researchers found that 27% of Year 4 to Year 9 Australian students were bullied frequently (overtly or covertly). Meanwhile, 16% reported frequent covert victimisation. The researchers identified that ‘hurtful teasing’ was the most common bullying behaviour experienced by students, followed by ‘having hurtful lies told about them’. In terms of perpetration, 9% of students reported that they generally bullied others ‘every few weeks or more often’. A gender difference was found, with 11% of boys and only 7% of girls reporting they bullied others frequently. However, when it came to covert bullying, Cross et al. (2014) suggest that girls were more likely than boys to bully in these ‘out of sight’ ways.

Outcomes of Bullying

For *victims*, numerous effects of bullying have been noted, and they include severe symptomology such as increased depression (Hawker & Bouton, 2000), suicidal ideation (Turner et al., 2013), and loneliness and low self-esteem (Schäfer et al., 2004). The adverse outcomes from childhood bullying can persist through victims’ lifetimes. Carlisle and Rofes (2007) identify “significant and lasting” (p. 16) effects for adults who experienced school bullying in their childhoods. The persistent effects include difficulties in relationships, anxiety, and shame.

In addition to significant mental health effects for victims, there is also an economic cost of victimisation: Brimblecombe et al. (2018) found that victims of childhood bullying were less likely to be employed and less wealthy when compared to participants who had not been bullied during childhood. Arseneault (2018) concluded that the impact of childhood bullying on its victims is so significant – on mental health, physical health, and socioeconomic outcomes – that it should be considered alongside other forms of childhood abuse.

For *perpetrators*, evidence exists to suggest that bullies have a higher rate of engagement in further adverse behaviours such as substance abuse and delinquency (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). The literature is mixed in that there are also contradictory findings that suggest that bullying another person may not necessarily be maladaptive for the bully. Instead of maladaptive outcomes, some children who bully may experience an increase in social status because of their behaviour (Smith, 2014). Other studies suggest that, while it may not necessarily increase their social status, some bullies can still maintain a high social status among their peers even while they bully them (van der Ploeg et al., 2019). van der Ploeg et al. (2019) propose that this can happen because they do not continually bully the same victim – they distribute their aggressive actions toward a variety of targets.

In addition to victims and bullies, *bully-victims* are a distinct group and have unique outcomes compared to those who are only bullies or only victims. Bully-victims are at the highest risk of self-harm and suicide ideation, plans, and attempts (Ford et al., 2017). Haynie et al. (2001) identified that bully-victims showed the worst outcomes on measures of psychosocial functioning when compared to both only-bullies and only-victims. These outcomes included more depressive symptoms, poorer school functioning, lower self-control, and higher rates of problem behaviour. Moreover, Kowalski and Limber (2013) identified cyberbullying bully-victims as having the poorest outcomes regarding health, physical, psychological health, and academic performance measures when compared to victims only, bullies only, and uninvolved students.

For *everyone* involved, Ford et al. (2017) found that adolescents involved in bullying had significantly higher rates of depression and anxiety for all roles within bullying, and all types of bullying. Because of the enduring impact of bullying for everyone involved, they have been described as “fellow sufferers in many aspects” (Meland et al., 2010, p. 366). Meland et al. (2010) identified that bullies and their victims had similar emotional and psychosomatic concerns, a lack of self-confidence, and pessimism when compared to their uninvolved peers. In addition, both victims and bullies reported having problems with their

teachers, school, and family. With regard to enjoyment of friendships, bullies reported that they enjoyed their friendships the same as, or more, than their uninvolved peers. For victims, their peer relations suffered more the more involved in bullying they became. Moreover, peer support from their class as a whole diminishes as they got more involved in bullying, not just for bullies, but for victims and bully-victims too (Meland et al., 2010).

There are also impacts on the children who only *witness* bullying. Janson et al. (2009) found significant levels of distress and traumatic reactions among college students who had been bystanders to bullying during their childhood and adolescence. Gini and Pozzoli (2009) go on to assert that, given how widespread bullying is and how serious the outcomes are for *everyone* involved, bullying should be considered “a significant international health issue” (p. 1059).

Relational Bullying

Types of Relational Bullying

Relational bullying is defined as the purposeful manipulation or damage of another person’s peer relationships or social standing (Crick, 1996). These actions must be intentional, repeated over time, and based on an abuse or imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993). An imbalance of power may include differences in confidence, social support, popularity among peers, or being outnumbered (Smith, 2014). Examples of relational bullying include social exclusion, spreading malicious rumours or gossip, social manipulation, or withholding friendship (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). Aspects of this phenomenon have been explored in parallel fields such as ostracism (e.g. Williams, 1997) and manipulation (e.g., Abell et al., 2016) which indicates that these behaviours can, and have, been separated out within research. However, these behaviours have not yet been divided and contrasted within one study to draw comparisons between the three unique behaviours which are usually combined under the overarching term relational bullying. The current programme of research addresses this gap in Study One by separating out relational bullying into exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation as distinct behaviours.

Relational Bullying and Aggression

The field of relational bullying overlaps with a number of other fields of research, with a variety of terms used, including relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), peer victimisation, social aggression (Galen & Underwood, 1997), covert bullying (Loeber &

Schmaling, 1985), indirect aggression (Björkvist et al., 1992) and ostracism (Williams, 1997). Overall, there is evidence to suggest that this form of bullying and aggression can differ from other forms of bullying with regard to who is involved and the personal characteristics of the interactants. For example, with preschool children, in contrast to physical aggression, relational aggression has been linked with advanced language development (Bonica et al., 2003). Among youth, relational aggression has been linked to high status among peers (Cillessen & Rose, 2005). Similarly, the perpetrators of relational bullying have also been said to be skilled at manipulating social situations to determine the outcome they desire (Smith, 2014).

It is possible that the terms ‘relational bullying’ and ‘relational aggression’ have been used to refer to the same phenomenon. Researchers define relational aggression broadly as including “behaviors that are intended to significantly damage another child’s friendships or feelings of inclusion by the peer group” (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, p. 711). Bauman and Del Rio (2006) clarify the difference between relational aggression and relational bullying: “relational aggression becomes relational bullying when it is repeated and directed toward a victim with less power” (p. 220).

It is difficult to identify and measure the prevalence of relational bullying because children have different ideas about what is and is not relational bullying. Children’s self-reported definitions of bullying rarely included all three criteria of intent, repetition, and power imbalance (Vaillancourt, 2008). In practice, this could result in discrepancies between what is being reported as bullying and what actually constitutes bullying. To circumvent this issue, it has been suggested that research should endeavour to use specific examples of the behaviours that they are seeking to investigate (Arora, 1996). Therefore, to investigate relational bullying, rather than relational aggression, researchers should provide an example that meets the criteria of intent, power imbalance, and repetition. The current study sought to study relational bullying and has provided participants with scenarios that meet the definition of three forms of relational bullying to meet these criteria and distinguish it from mere acts of aggression (Study One). Then, participants were provided with clear definitions of relational bullying to elicit appropriate responses that meet this definition (Studies Two and Three).

Prevalence of Relational Bullying

A study in the United States of a sample of 7,182 students in grades 6-10, showed 13% were identified as perpetrators of physical bullying, 37% as perpetrators of verbal bullying, 8% as

perpetrators of cyberbullying, and 27% as perpetrators of relational bullying (Wang et al. 2009). They also found 13% of the sample were identified as victims of physical bullying, 36% as victims of verbal bullying, 10% as victims of cyberbullying, and 41% as victims of relational bullying. Wang et al. (2009) found that among those individuals who were involved in relational bullying, 19% were only perpetrators, 48% were only victims, and 33% were bully-victims.

Friendships and Relational Bullying

Relational bullying can occur, not only between peers, but among friends (Mishna et al., 2008). There is some evidence that the children that engage in relational bullying can have high social status and advanced social skills. Björkqvist et al. (2000) found that social intelligence is related strongly to indirect aggression. In addition, these children may be perceived as popular among their peers (Andreou, 2006).

Mishna et al. (2008) explored bullying within friendships, including relational bullying, verbal bullying, and some physical bullying. The findings of this study highlighted the complexities of bullying between perceived friends. The researchers found that, after experiencing bullying within their friendship, some children intended to or had already stopped being friends with the bully. However, these children still appeared distressed about their experience. For other children that had maintained the friendship, some wanted to stop being friends, but they did not know how to go about doing this. These children identified a fear of fallout from doing so, or a general confusion about how to end the friendship (Mishna et al., 2008). There was another group of children in this study that had no desire to end the friendship with the bully, despite being bullied and knowing that this behaviour was indeed bullying. Moreover, some children were confused and conflicted about whether they had experienced bullying, or if their friends were just having fun. Overall, the researchers describe turmoil that children who are bullied within their friendships go through (Mishna et al., 2008).

Mishna et al. (2008) showed that bullying within friendships is prevalent and may even be just as common as bullying by non-friends. Wójcik and Flak (2019) described this type of bullying as a frenemy:

Someone who acts as bullied student's friend outside school but becomes an active/passive supporter of bully or a disengaged onlooker at school. He or she does not try to help the victim and denies being in a friendly relationship (p. 16).

Gender Differences in Relational Bullying

Relational forms of bullying and aggression are often portrayed as a form of bullying primarily experienced by, and perpetrated by, females. While some studies have noted gender differences in the involvement of relational bullying (e.g., Wang et al., 2009), other studies, focused on relational *aggression*, have found similar rates of relational aggression between girls and boys. For instance, Lansford et al. (2012) found no significant effect of gender on relational aggression. Voulgaridou and Kokkinos (2015) conducted a review of the empirical and theoretical research and concluded that relational aggression was not primarily a female form of aggression, as there was an absence of meaningful gender difference between males and females.

Impact of Relational Bullying

Outcomes Compared to Other Types of Bullying. Researchers have found differences between the outcomes of relational bullying when compared to other forms of bullying, however the outcomes differ across studies. Compared to other forms of bullying, some research suggests an association between relational victimisation and suicide attempts (Barzilay et al. 2017) or suicide ideation (Brunstein-Klomek et al., 2019). Overall, the chronicity of the experience is an important factor, as being a chronic victim of any type of bullying was linked to an increased likelihood for later depression compared to those uninvolved or who experienced sporadic relational bullying (Brunstein-Klomek et al., 2019).

Outcomes of Relational Bullying. Both victims and bullies can face significant adverse outcomes from relational bullying. For example, Baldry (2004) asserts that relational, or indirect, victimisation is the strongest predictor of several negative outcomes, such as withdrawal, anxiety, and depression. In addition, relational bullies are also at-risk of experiencing withdrawal, anxiety, and depression (Baldry, 2004). That is, both victims and bullies in relational bullying are at risk of serious mental health-related consequences. The adverse effects for bullies in relational bullying is particularly interesting when considering some research has found this does not hold true for bullies in direct *physical* bullying. That is, perpetration of direct (physical or verbal) bullying was not a predictor for poor mental health

outcomes in this study (Baldry, 2004). For bully-victims in relational bullying, they had the lowest self-esteem, most problem behaviour, and worst school attitudes when compared to uninvolved children, relational bullies, and relational victims (Dukes et al., 2009).

The New Zealand Context

Prevalence

In addition to the TIMSS report that placed New Zealand second-highest out of 47 countries for bullying prevalence for school students (Mullis et al., 2016b), the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA] (OECD, 2017) report yielded similar findings. That is, in PISA 2015, New Zealand was second highest in students' reports of exposure to bullying. Most recently, the PISA 2018 report found some forms of bullying perpetration rates are even higher than in PISA 2015 (Jang-Jones & McGregor, 2019).

The New Zealand Education Review Office (2019a; 2019b) has found that 39% of students said they had been bullied at their current school. Students most commonly reported experiencing non-physical forms of negative behaviour or bullying, with the four most common being 'called names, put down, or teased', 'left out or ignored by other students', 'lies or bad stories spread', and 'made to do something I didn't want to do' (ERO, 2019a). It should be noted that most of these behaviours are well-aligned with the definition of relational bullying. That is, exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation comprised three of the four most common forms of bullying, with the most common form being verbal bullying. Even for students who said that they had *not* been bullied, many still reported experiencing 'negative behaviours' happening to them once or twice a month. With this in mind, the actual rates of bullying experienced by children and young people in New Zealand could be much higher than reported.

Intervention

Regarding intervention in bullying, ERO (2019a) found that most students (83%) had learned at school what to do when they experienced or witnessed bullying. That is, 83% of students overall had learned at school what to do when they experienced or witnessed bullying. For primary school children, this was 89% of students, and for secondary school students, this was 76%. However, when students applied what they had learned, this did not always resolve the bullying. Of the students who applied what they had learnt about addressing bullying, only 36% reported that the bullying had actually stopped. The remaining students said the

bullying stopped for a while and then began again, while others said the bullying continued. For some students, the bullying got worse after they applied the strategies that they had learned. To improve these outcomes, ERO urged leaders and teachers in schools to ensure they take appropriate action when bullying is reported to them and, crucially, to continue monitoring the situation over time.

School Responses

ERO also released a report that was focused on the school's position and response to bullying. Citing data from the TIMSS and PISA reports (as previously outlined in this chapter), ERO (2019b) describes New Zealand as having "one of the highest rates of bullying among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries" (ERO, 2019b, p. 6). In an effort to reduce and respond effectively to bullying, New Zealand schools, overseen by Boards of Trustees (BoT), can choose to implement strategies how they see fit, but some direction is provided by guidelines and resources published by the Bullying Prevention Advisory Group (BPAG). BPAG is a collaboration of organisations, across sectors, including education, justice, social services, internet safety, and human rights groups (Bullying Prevention Advisory Group, n.d.). BPAG developed the 'Bullying-Free NZ School Framework' to guide schools in their prevention and response to bullying.

The ERO (2019b) report evaluated the extent to which schools were implementing the kinds of policies and processes provided in this framework. They found that, while most schools have some understanding and implementation of aspects of the Bullying Free NZ School Framework, bullying rates in New Zealand have remained "intolerably high" (p. 23). The schools that were working well towards a bullying-free environment had consistency in their school-wide approach to tackle bullying, and they supported this effort with internal evaluations to monitor their effectiveness. Schools that needed to make significant improvements in their approach needed up-to-date policies and procedures and for these to then be followed consistently. ERO also suggest schools need to engage in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of their policies for students.

With regard to involving families and whānau, the ERO (2019b) report found many schools were only engaging with families *reactively*, when serious bullying incidents occurred. ERO suggested that a more effective approach is one where families are involved *proactively* to develop a shared understanding of bullying and prevention and intervention strategies – before incidents occur. Moreover, in their concluding remarks, ERO

identified some other contributing factors for the high rates of bullying that lie beyond the control of schools, including New Zealand's high rates of family violence and workplace bullying. ERO argued that to effect real change, this society-wide issue needs a society-wide solution. ERO raises an extremely important issue here; family and domestic violence in New Zealand is a problem. OECD data indicates that New Zealand has the highest prevalence of intimate partner violence among OECD countries (OECD, 2013). Workplace bullying is also a problem in New Zealand. In a study of 36 New Zealand organisations across the education, health, hospitality, and travel sectors, 18% of respondents experienced workplace bullying (O'Driscoll et al., 2011).

In addition to family violence and workplace bullying, New Zealand also has extremely high rates of youth suicide. A 2017 UNICEF Office of Research report, comparing to 37 OECD and EU countries, found that New Zealand has some of the highest suicide rates of adolescents aged 15–19 per 100,000 population in the developed world (UNICEF Office of Research, 2017). As well as the broader societal issues that may contribute to New Zealand's bullying problem, ERO recognised that parental attitudes may also be a contributing factor. The report concluded that “many of the most salient drivers of bullying may be beyond schools' direct control, related to parental attitudes, and broader societal issues” (ERO, 2019b, p. 7). The current study aims to explore parental attitudes, perspectives and responses to bullying adding to existing understanding of their importance.

Societal Beliefs

Balanovic et al. (2018) looked at societal beliefs of the general public regarding bullying in New Zealand. The researchers utilised comments that people had left on online media articles to draw conclusions about beliefs towards bullying in New Zealand. They concluded that these beliefs include a perception that victims are weak, bullies are evil, and that bullying can be a normal and acceptable behaviour. Sims-Schouten and Edwards (2016) discuss the issue of a ‘man up and get on with it’ perspective of bullying. That is, they assert it is not reasonable or possible for victims to ‘man up and get over it’ because victims may lack the resources or power to deal with their victimisation. A lack of power, or at least having less power than the bully, is a key criterion in defining bullying (Olweus, 1993). Therefore, we cannot assume that victims *do* have the power to manage the situation successfully and suggesting otherwise is unrealistic and unhelpful.

Parents and Bullying

The Role of Parents in Response to Bullying

Parents are an important factor in the fight against bullying for many reasons. One concerning finding from a systematic review of parents' perspectives on bullying is that some parents held the perception that bullying is a normal experience and they had a propensity to blame the victim (Harcourt et al., 2014). While many children do not tell adults about being bullied (Atlas & Pepler, 1998), when they do tell, parents are often the ones children talk to. Disclosing bullying to parents came second only to telling their friends (Smith & Shu, 2000). Similarly, ERO (2019a) found that students were most likely (69%) to speak to their parents about being bullied. However, Mishna (2004) asserts that children may stop telling adults about their experiences of victimisation if their concerns are not validated and heard. Considering this, it is crucial to understand what parents do next when they find out about bullying.

Parent Participants in the Current Programme of Research

The current programme of research explores what parents think and do when their child is a victim or bully of relational bullying. It aims to address key gaps in the literature through its unique exploration of:

- Relational bullying
- Three key behaviours within this umbrella term (exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation)
- Both victimisation and perpetration of relational bullying, including being a bully-victim
- Both hypothetical responses and lived experience
- Parents' own experiences of childhood relational bullying, including how this may impact their responses to their children.

With the important role of parents in mind, the current programme of research explored parents' perspectives in three distinct studies. Using hypothetical scenarios, the first study sought to find out what parents thought about three different forms of relational bullying, regardless of whether their child had experienced bullying or not. The second study asked parents to reflect on their actual experience of supporting their child through relational

bullying perpetration and/or victimisation. The third study looked at parents' own childhood experiences of relational bullying involvement, what their parents did to support them, and how these childhood experiences might shape their choices if their own children were involved in bullying.

Chapter Summary

Relational bullying has outcomes that are just as serious as other forms of bullying. However, the harm and negative effects are often dismissed by those who could help, or minimalised as just friendship problems or 'girl bullying' when this is just not the case (Harachi et al., 1999; Bauman & Del Rio, 2006). When children experience bullying in New Zealand, parents are the most likely people children disclose to (ERO, 2019a). Yet, there is a lack of information about how parents respond to this and how their own experience of relational bullying may impact their responses. To address these research gaps, the current study focused on relational bullying and explored how parents view and respond to bullying. Relational bullying was split into three distinct but equally concerning behaviours to see if there were differences in how parents respond to different behaviours (i.e., exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation). This is the first study to gather parents' perspectives on these distinct forms of relational bullying, particularly when including bullies. The current study will be positioned in the New Zealand context to explore the perspectives of parents in a country which has some of the worst rates of bullying in the developed world (e.g., Mullis et al., 2016a, 2016b).

Outline of the Thesis

In this thesis, I explore what parents think about relational bullying, and what they do when their child is involved in this form of bullying. This thesis is presented as follows. Chapter One has introduced the issue of bullying and outlined its significance. It has also established the importance of conducting this research in the New Zealand context. Chapter Two positions the issue of bullying within the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and the adaptation of this framework for bullying, the social-ecological framework (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). Within this chapter, I propose a revised model to position the parent as the focus of the current research. I then explore the existing literature around bullying and identify ways in which parents have been included in this field to date. In Chapter Three I outline the methodological approach of this programme of research. I critique and defend the use of a 'generic approach' to qualitative research. Within this chapter I explore the use of

online surveys, anonymous participation, use of hypothetical scenarios, and emphasise the strengths of thematic analysis that have underpinned this research. Chapters Four, Five, and Six present the findings of the three studies. Chapter Four explores how parents responded to hypothetical scenarios of their child's involvement in three distinct forms of relational bullying, as a victim and as a bully. Chapter Five reports the findings on the experience of parents whose children have actually been involved in relational bullying, either as a victim, bully, or bully-victim. Chapter Six reports the findings of the participants' own childhood experiences of relational bullying. This chapter shows how their parents responded to the bullying. All three of the findings chapters are built around my interpretation and analysis of the participants' experiences, using the participant's voice to support my findings.

Finally, chapter seven combines and integrates the findings from all three studies. In this chapter I propose a tentative model that helps advance understanding of the factors that shape parents' perceptions of relational bullying. The model has implications for reducing bullying in New Zealand at the cultural and community levels, and the implications for policy and practice are discussed. Chapter Seven also includes a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the current research and suggests ways in which future research can add to the research in this area, both to address these limitations and to further explore the emergent findings.

CHAPTER TWO: RELATIONAL BULLYING IN ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

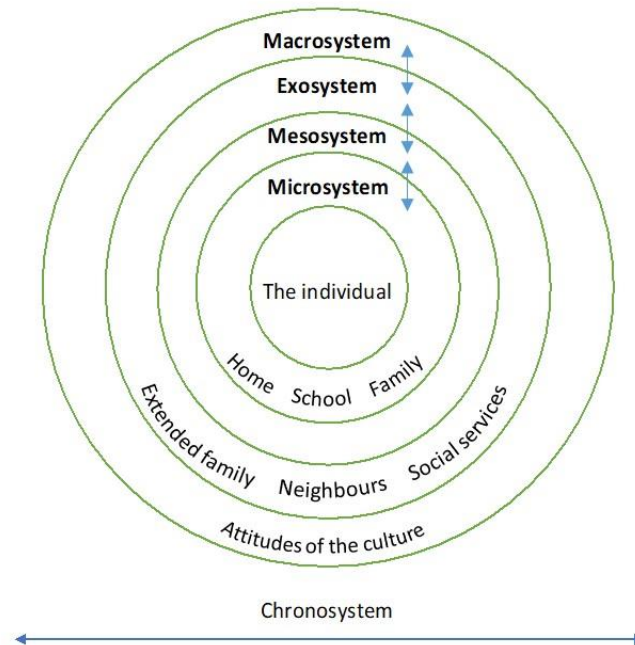
The aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature around relational bullying including relevant theory and research. I will first describe the *ecological systems theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) that has informed this research and then explore the adaptation of this theory for bullying, namely the *social-ecological framework* (Swearer & Espelage, 2004). I will then propose a revised social-ecological model that positions the parent at the centre. Following this, I will provide an overview of the literature that underpins this research, build the case for parent-participants, outline key findings in the existing literature, and build towards aims and rationale of the programme of research.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

The ecological systems theory was developed by Bronfenbrenner (1977) to illustrate the bi-directional relationships between a developing person and the environments in which they develop. This theory includes the individual, their immediate settings, and their larger social contexts. Essentially, the individual develops within this system of relationships and each system is represented by a level of the model. The four main systems in the model are: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem [see figure 1].

Figure 1

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory



Note. Adapted from Feldman (2014).

With the person positioned in the centre of this model, the next closest system that is shown is that of the microsystem. A *microsystem* is the relationship between the individual and their immediate environments (e.g., home, school, or work). Bronfenbrenner (1977) identifies that these settings need to be places where the person has a defined role, such as child, parent, or employee. The *mesosystem* is the interaction between microsystems. For example, for a child, this would include the interactions between family, friends, and school. Next, is the exosystem. The *exosystem* includes the settings that do not directly include the individual, but nevertheless impact their immediate settings. Bronfenbrenner (1997) explains that the settings in the exosystem can influence or determine what happens in the person's microsystem and indirectly impact upon the developing person. Examples of the exosystem include the neighbourhood, media, government agencies, local facilities, and some wider social networks. Berk (2013) provides a clear example of a child's exosystem including their parents' workplaces. If a workplace offers flexible hours and has good sick leave policies for employees with children, this can directly impact on that child's home setting in their microsystem.

The last of the four original systems, the *macrosystem*, refers to the broad customs, laws, and values of the culture or sub-culture that influence the individual's development and socialisation. While some aspects of the macrosystem are explicit, such as laws, others are more implicit, such as the expected behaviour in a given society. The macrosystem can include political systems, education and legal systems, the economic climate, and these can influence how the individual's other systems (microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem) operate. While quite removed from the individual, these forces can be influential in tangible ways. For example laws, values, and customs are often reflected in settings and institutions, such as the appearance and expectations within a child's classroom, which are relatively stable throughout a given society (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

A more recent addition to the ecological systems theory is the *chronosystem*. Bronfenbrenner (1992) proposed that the chronosystem be added to his original ecological systems theory to take into account change and consistency in both the individual and the environment over time. Bronfenbrenner (1992) explained that experiences impacting the chronosystem can derive from external influences, such as starting school, or from within the individual, such as going through puberty or experiencing a severe illness. Overall, the key feature of events in the chronosystem is that they must change the existing relationship between the individual and the environment. Furthermore, these events may then bring about developmental change in the individual. The chronosystem can include historical events in wider society, but it can also include significant life events for one person (Lau & Ng, 2014) such as parents' divorce (Espelage et al., 2013).

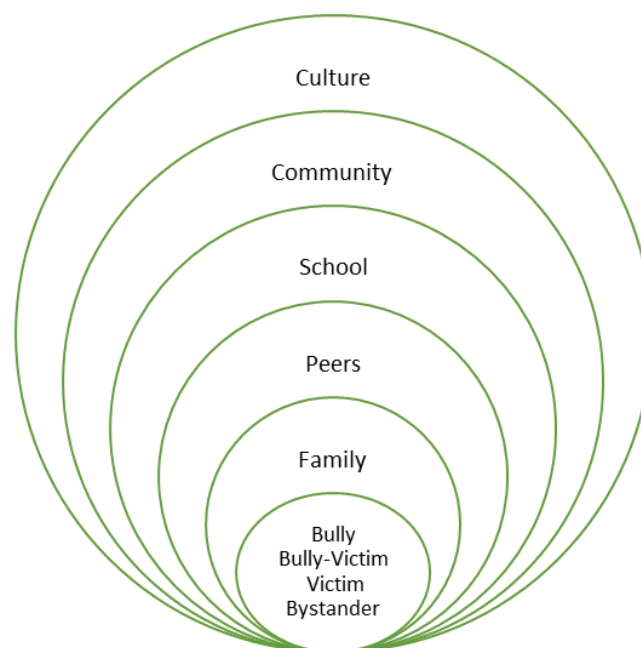
The Social-Ecological Framework

Since the development of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, this theory has been utilised extensively, in many fields, to show how multiple dimensions impact, and are impacted upon, by one person. Bronfenbrenner (1977) emphasised that his original ecological systems theory could be used with any individual at the centre. Researchers have used Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory to show the different influences on bullying, namely Swearer and Espelage's (2004) *social-ecological framework*. Swearer and Espelage (2004) suggest that bullying and victimisation must be understood across the contexts of the individual, the family, peers, the school, and the wider community which may all establish and maintain bullying behaviours. Their 2004 social-ecological model was refined in 2011 to separate out 'school and peers' as two separate systems [see figure 2].

Underpinning the current study, this framework was chosen for its ability to understand the many complex and interacting influences that can perpetuate and maintain bullying behaviour across all levels, from the individual to wider society. Conversely, just as they may perpetuate and maintain bullying behaviour, it is the interaction between these systems that can blunt and suppress bullying too; the systems can both enhance or reduce bullying and victimisation. Another strength of this model is the ability to recognise influences on an individual over time, or over the course of their life. Considering the parent-participants of the current research, this an important benefit as they may be carrying with them prior influential experiences.

Figure 2

An expanded social-ecological framework of bullying among youth



Note. Adapted from Swearer and Espelage (2011).

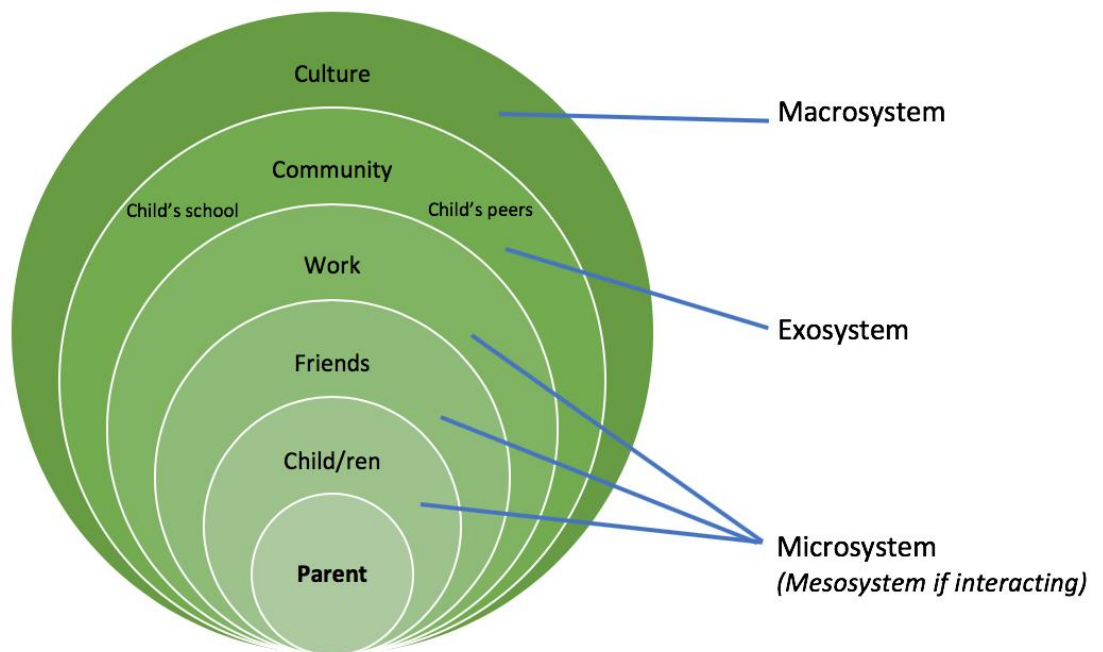
Most representations of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory have placed the child at the centre of the framework. Some studies have included the teacher at the centre of this perspective (e.g., Cross & Hong, 2012), however, there is a paucity of research that has focused on parents’ experiences, perspectives, and responses to relational bullying in their children.

A Parent-Centred Model

Proposed here is a restructuring of the Swearer and Espelage (2004) model and which connects to the systems identified by Bronfenbrenner (1977). It has the parent at the centre [see figure 3]. Next, their child, the parent's friends, and their workplace would be different settings in the microsystem, and any interactions between these forces would be in the mesosystem. The exosystem would involve their child's school, their child's peers, and the community. The macrosystem would involve their child's school, their child's peers, and the community. The macrosystem would involve the overarching culture and values of the society in which they live.

Figure 3

A parent-centred interpretation of Swearer and Espelage's (2004) social-ecological model



In addition to the systems shown in this model, parents are also impacted by their past experiences. This influence can be understood using the concept of a *chronosystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). In a bullying context, the chronosystem has been described as representing the influence of time on the behaviour as well as on the context where the behaviour occurs (Barboza et al., 2009). This can occur at the societal level, such as a change in attitudes to bullying over time. Alternatively, this change may occur at an individual level.

Barboza et al. (2009) use the example of how a new child at school may initially be involved in bullying, either as a victim or perpetrator, but the behaviours may lessen over time as social connections grow.

Rationale for a Parent-Centred Perspective of Bullying

There are several reasons for adapting the ecological theory and placing parents at the centre and focusing on their perspectives, lived experiences, and responses. First, by positioning the parent in the centre of the model, the emphasis is placed on how the parents' interactions and environment may impact on their systems, and how these systems may also impact on the parent. These interactions are important to understand or prioritise because they will likely influence their involvement in the prevention and intervention of any bullying their child is involved in.

Secondly, there is a lack of research that includes the perspectives of parents whose children have bullied others. Previous research has focused almost exclusively on the victim's parent's responses (e.g., Harcourt et al., 2015) and has ignored the parents of the bully or bully-victim. The views and responses of these parents are missing from the research literature.

Third, previous studies have not focused on what shapes parents' views and responses over time. Research that explores how events and parents' previous experiences shape their responses are missing from the research. Utilising an ecological framework will allow research to explore how parents' previous bullying experiences are still impacting them, or how they have overcome the experience in time; this direction will be a focus of Study Three. By positioning the parent at the centre of this model, their experiences of bullying involvement throughout their lifetime can be acknowledged.

Fourth, bullying prevention strategies need to be informed by an understanding of parents and guardians who are often responsible for intervention and providing support. To effectively reduce and prevent any form of bullying, Olweus (1993) has recommended that intervention and prevention strategies take a multi-systemic approach that involves families, schools and the wider community working together. In order to effectively involve multiple parties in the intervention and prevention of bullying, there must first be a mutual understanding of the issue and a willingness and ability to understand the multiple perspectives involved. In a systematic review of the effectiveness of school anti-bullying programmes, Ttofi and Farrington (2011) identified parental involvement as one of the "most important elements of a program that were related to a decrease in bullying" (p. 43). For

relational bullying specifically, ecological approaches enable input from, and communication between, all settings (including the previously underrepresented parents of bullies), to effectively inform practice and prevention.

Review of Literature Underpinning the Programme of Research

To frame the context of the three studies, this literature review will explore the existing research by following the structure of the proposed parent-centred model. This will be organised beginning with culture and moving down through the model to build the case for the importance of parent participants. Throughout this review, research methodologies will be highlighted where they are relevant to or have informed the current programme of research.

Bullying and Culture

This section will explore two key ideas. First, I will review the literature on bullying across different cultures and the impact of individualist and collectivist values on bullying. Second, I will explore what is often referred to as a ‘bullying culture’. That is, the ways bullying is reflected in the values of the New Zealand context.

Bullying in Different Cultures. A number of factors influence bullying and people’s responses to it. Culture is one important factor that shapes what people think about what is and is not socially and culturally acceptable behaviour, including social and cultural norms (Maccoby, 2007). People are socialised by parents, teachers, and other agents of socialisation from birth and given messages about what is socially acceptable behaviour (Maccoby, 2007). There are many different cultures, and some of these have different values that emphasise different views about autonomy, independence, social ties and responsibilities. Some cultures promote individualism, while others promote collectivism.

Individualism and collectivism essentially describe if people within a given society are driven to prioritise their own individual needs (individualism), or if they prioritise the needs of the group (collectivism). In an individualistic society, there is a preference for people to look after themselves, their immediate families, and strive towards individual success and wellbeing. For a collectivist society, more emphasis is placed on group ties and wellbeing for the group as a whole (Hofstede, 1983, as cited in Bergeron & Schneider, 2005). These constructs have been used to explain differences in aggression and victimisation across cultures (Strohmeier et al., 2016). One example of this, Bergeron and Schneider (2005) conducted a review of 36 studies and concluded that cultures that are typically collectivist

showed lower levels of aggression than individualistic cultures. However, Strohmeier et al. (2016) assert that inconsistent results in the research present the idea that grouping cultures at such a surface, whole-country level may not be representative of the many other ways in which these countries can vary. As such, the following section will aim to capture the New Zealand culture, beyond its individualistic tendencies, to illustrate the many ways in which bullying has been developed and maintained.

Bullying in New Zealand Culture. New Zealand has long been recognised as having a bullying culture and a somewhat ‘harden up’ attitude towards victims (Balanovic et al., 2018). Recent reports have criticised New Zealand’s attitude to bullying, with the Race Relations Commissioner identifying that New Zealand has built up an “unnatural tolerance” for bullying (Foon, 2019). Local media and anecdotal reports are mounting – claiming that pervasive bullying is happening in schools, communities, and workplaces.

One promising development in New Zealand is the 2015 Harmful Digital Communications Act. This Act has made it illegal to post online or send messages that deliberately cause emotional distress to a victim. (Ministry of Justice, 2020). It also aims to target online bullies that incite their victims to commit suicide; it is now illegal to incite suicide regardless of if a suicide attempt is made, and is punishable by up to three years imprisonment (Ministry of Justice, 2020). While the new Act is a significant step forward, it is only intended to be used in the most serious cyberbullying incidents, and does not address the underlying culture of bullying that permeates the New Zealand context.

Tall Poppy Syndrome. Tall Poppy Syndrome is a local term used in New Zealand and Australia to describe the propensity for New Zealanders to excessively critique or be hostile towards high achievers. It includes the view that ‘cutting down to size’ of the tall poppy is useful (Mouly & Sankaran, 2000). Tall Poppy Syndrome has been described as being ingrained in the culture of New Zealand (Kirkwood, 2007), and is reported to be experienced by over half of Kirkwood’s (2007) entrepreneurial participants. Participants reported they often hid their success, did not disclose their business ownership, and were discreet with their wealth. Tall Poppy Syndrome is not exclusively experienced by entrepreneurs but is also experienced by high achievers in the workplace (Holmes et al., 2017). This phenomenon will be explored in the section below, *bullying in the wider community*.

Attitudes Towards Bullying. As identified in the introduction, there is a discourse around bullying in New Zealand that depicts victims as weak, bullies as evil, and positions bullying as a normal and acceptable behaviour (Balanovic et al., 2018). However, Balanovic et al. (2018) have urged the importance of recognising that these are the particularly troubling

views that emerged from their research of online media comments, and they do not necessarily reflect the view of New Zealanders as a whole. Moreover, Balanovic et al. (2018) noted that some of these points of view were critiqued in the public forum by others who recognised that a whole-culture shift was needed to move blame from the individual, to recognising that they are part of a wider issue. Despite this push back against bullying, the facts remain: New Zealand has high rates of: bullying (Mullis et al., 2016a, 2016b), family violence (OECD, 2013), poverty (Child Poverty Action Group, 2016), and has the worst rate of youth suicide (UNICEF Office of Research, 2017). It is promising that there is some evidence that the New Zealand public do not condone bullying and do stand up to this behaviour – at least online – however the perspectives New Zealanders’ hold towards the more covert relational bullying remain unknown.

Attitudes Towards Relational Bullying. Very little is known about the attitudes towards relational bullying in New Zealand. However it is expected that these would be similar to the views surrounding bullying in general – that it is an expected and normal behaviour (Balanovic et al., 2018). We do know that relational bullying and similar negative behaviours are some of the most commonly reported types of bullying by New Zealand students. ERO (2019a) identified that being ‘called names, put down, or teased’, ‘left out or ignored by other students’, ‘lies or bad stories spread’, and ‘made to do something I didn’t want to do’ were the four most common reported negative behaviours by students.

The studies reported in this thesis will delve deep into the ways in which parents position three distinct forms of relational bullying. By including the three behaviours of exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation separately (in Study 1), it brings to light the ways in which these different forms of relational bullying are perceived and experienced within the New Zealand cultural context whereby some behaviours may be perceived to be even more normalised than others.

While some studies have included participants’ perspectives on relational bullying in comparison to other forms of bullying (e.g., Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Bell & Willis, 2016) and others have looked at ostracism and manipulation as individual behaviours (e.g., Abell et al., 2016; Williams, 1997), it is believed that this is the first study to draw comparisons between parents’ perceptions of three unique behaviours which are usually combined under the overarching umbrella term of relational bullying. For a society that has lax attitudes about overt and easily-defined forms of bullying, it is expected that by including a range of more covert and often overlooked bullying behaviours, that these normalising attitudes may be even more prevalent.

Bullying in the Wider Community

Bullying occurs in many areas of the New Zealand community, including the workplace. O'Driscoll et al. (2011) identified 18% of their respondents as having been bullied at work over the previous six months. The researchers identify that this fact suggests that workplace bullying in New Zealand may be more prevalent than in other countries. The impact of bullying on these workers was significant. They reported reduced wellbeing and increased levels of strain. Moreover, being bullied at work was negatively associated with perceived job performance and overall attitudes towards work. These findings are consistent with Bentley et al.'s (2012) study which found that employees in New Zealand that had experienced bullying had higher levels of stress, took more time off work, and had intentions to leave their workplace. Bullied employees had lower rates of emotional wellbeing, less support from their colleagues and supervisors, and lower self-rated performance. Overall, workplace bullying in New Zealand is a significant issue impacting almost one in five workers (O'Driscoll et al., 2011). Workplace bullying can be viewed a whole-community problem, rooted in cultural values and behaviours, but it can also be an individual experience at the microsystem level. The negative outcomes of bullying on an individual are present at work, and the ecological systems theory would suggest that the flow-on effects of this stress would be far-reaching, impacting both the employee's home life and the wider family, and may also impact how they respond to their children's experiences of bullying.

While bullying occurs in many areas of a community, such as schools and workplaces, this is not to say that this behaviour is perceived the same way by all of those individuals within the community. Lee et al. (2011) utilised a lifespan perspective to assess the perceptions of bullying-like phenomena in South Korea. That is, they conducted focus groups with people from preschool-age, right through to adults (including stay-at-home mothers and workplace employees). The 10 – 15-year age group and workplace employees more often attributed bullying to a victim's problem, citing a lack of social skills. Interestingly, the stay-at-home mothers were found to have the most negative attitude towards bullying behaviour but did not attribute blame to the bully or victim, instead they recognised that the wider environment and educational settings had some influence. Overall, this international study shows that, while bullying may be pervasive in many areas of the community, the perceptions of this behaviour and ideas about who is at fault, differ based on age and the context in which the participant is reflecting on this behaviour from (e.g., school,

workplace, or home). In sum, it appears bullying is present in many areas of the wider community, but can be perceived differently by those individuals within and between each community setting.

Bullying in the School Context

Governance of Schools in New Zealand. Fuelling the bullying issue in New Zealand is a lack of a centralised approach to bullying prevention and intervention. That is, there are no requirements for schools to have consistent and evidence-based bullying prevention – in fact, they are not even required to have a bullying policy at all. The entire country of New Zealand is overseen by one governing body, rather than also being governed by regional or state governments. Schools, however, are self-governed and overseen by an elected Board of Trustees. A Board of Trustees can include parents, but trustees may also be from the wider community. With regard to bullying, this situation means that schools adopt bullying policies as they see fit, while some do not adopt them at all (Slee et al., 2016). However, the National Administrative Guidelines (NAGs) do require each Board of Trustees to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students (Ministry of Education, 2019). Some further direction towards specific bullying prevention is provided by guidelines and resources published by the Bullying Prevention Advisory Group with their ‘Bullying-Free NZ School Framework’ to guide schools in their prevention and response to bullying. With unclear requirements of schools, parents may have inconsistent and wide-ranging experiences with their child’s school on bullying matters. Indeed, in New Zealand primary schools, Harcourt et al. (2015) found that most responses parents received from the school about their child’s victimisation were *not* positive and active responses. Instead, many parents found that the school did not believe the reports of bullying, parents’ concerns were not taken seriously, and schools would abdicate responsibility; some schools even made excuses for the bully’s behaviour.

Teacher Attitudes to Bullying. It is important to consider the perspectives of the teaching staff because they are in a position to act as ‘first responders’ to incidents of bullying. However, international research shows that teachers are less likely to intervene in any form of bullying when they see this as a normative behaviour (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). Studies also show that *relational* bullying is consistently rated by teachers as less serious than physical bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Bell & Willis, 2016). Bauman and Del Rio (2006) assessed how preservice teachers responded to hypothetical scenarios

involving three different forms of bullying: physical, verbal, and relational. The participants rated relational bullying as the least serious of the three forms of bullying. Moreover, they felt less empathetic towards the victims of relational bullying and were less likely to intervene. Bauman and Del Rio (2006) go on to assert that, when different types of bullying are responded to differently, it is inadvertently encouraging the subtler behaviours which might escape disciplinary action.

Bauman and Del Rio (2006) contextualise their findings alongside Yoon and Kerber's (2003) sample of practicing teachers to show how these attitudes may change as teachers' exposure to bullying increases. Compared to the practicing teachers, the preservice teachers generally rated bullying as more serious, felt more empathy towards victims, and were more likely to intervene than the practicing teachers. This scenario is indicative of changing attitudes between in-training and in-practice teaching. Interestingly, Bauman and Del Rio (2006) consider that one of the reasons relational bullying is less likely to be acted upon by teachers is *because* of how pervasive it is; the practicing teachers may feel that if every incident was acted upon, they would not have time to do anything else. De Luca et al. (2019) concur that teachers are less likely to intervene in covert forms of bullying, like relational bullying, and this may be because the behaviour is not understood to be bullying. The teacher perspective, and its impact on a parent-centred model is important to consider for a few reasons. Firstly, teachers are in a position to intervene in bullying (De Luca et al., 2019) and this may, or may not, involve the parents too. Secondly, the parent-teacher relationship should be collaborative, mutually respectful, and communicative (Bull et al., 2008). Lastly, this section has identified that teachers see relational bullying a less serious than other forms of bullying and that they are less likely to intervene. Because teachers are less likely to intervene, it may be that parents are left to intervene alone in these bullying situations. Conversely, this insight into the perception of relational bullying as less serious than other forms of bullying could indicate a perspective held by the general public, one which may be shared by parents.

The Children Involved in Bullying

Children are Involved in Bullying in Different Ways. Bullying at school is often referred to as a group process (Salmivalli, 2010). This observation means that it goes beyond interaction between the bully and the victim, and instead involves the class or peer group as a whole. The group process of bullying classifies children in the wider peer-group into roles of:

bully, assistant of the bully, reinforcer of the bully, victim, defender of the victim, and the outsiders (Salmivalli et al., 1996). It must be noted, though, that remaining uninvolved in the bullying situation can also enable the bullying behaviour to occur. Salmivalli (2010) explained that these smaller acts of reinforcing or assisting, carried out by non-bullying children, can still contribute harm to the victim.

There has been a recent push for ‘outsider’ children, also called passive bystanders, to instead become ‘upstanders’ where they stand up for victims of bullying. Weissbourd and Jones (2012), while acknowledging this approach is important, claim that it does not address the wider societal social norms that are fuelling the bullying behaviour in the first place. Moreover, they assert that, although these ‘upstanders’ are doing something heroic by going against the tide with their intervention in bullying situations, it is the tide itself that needs to change. This is an important perspective to acknowledge in the ecological context as it supports the need for change at many levels, throughout the systems, in order to be effective.

Victims. Considering the social context in which bullying occurs, it is important to recognise that some children and young people are more at-risk of bullying than others. Namely, it is the children that are perceived as different from their peers that are likely to be bullied. Hong and Espelage (2012), after reviewing the research, identify that ethnic minorities, students with learning or developmental disabilities, health problems, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, and children from low-income families are more at-risk for experiencing victimisation than those that are not in these groups. Another group that has been identified as being more at-risk for bullying victimisation is gifted students (Peterson & Ray, 2006). In other words, children who do not conform to the average or the norm are often targets of bullying.

Bullies. Conversely, studies have also linked gifted students to being perpetrators of bullying behaviour too (Peterson & Ray, 2006; Woods & Wolke, 2004). Bullies have been described as subtle and indirect experts at manipulation in social settings (Sutton et al., 1999). The children who engage in relational bullying perpetration may be perceived as popular among their peers (Andreou, 2006). Furthermore, relational aggression can be accentuated by advanced social skills. This type of bullying is distinct from other, more overt or physical, forms of bullying, which are more likely to be characterised by a lack of social skills (Andreou, 2006). When children and young people are able to manipulate others with their social power to attain their own goals, to the detriment of others, this behaviour can become relational bullying (Sutton & Keough, 2000).

Different forms of bullying can serve different social functions. As such, the perpetrator for different forms of bullying will possess skills, status, and behaviours that their peers do not, and that enable them to meet these particular functions (Peeters et al., 2010). Peeters et al. (2010) most closely linked relational bullying with what they described as high social status bullies. These bullies are popular, socially intelligent, and can utilise their power to gain dominance. These bullies use their high social status and acts of relational aggression to meet their social dominance goals. Furthermore, it is their centralised position within the group that allows them to acquire even more power and influence and they can do this by persuading their peers to exclude the victim. This strategy is particularly relevant to support the focus of the current studies on relational bullying; the children involved in this form of bullying are not your 'typical' bullies and may not fit the stereotypical view of who a bully is and how the bullying is done.

Bully-Victims. Less is known about the characteristics of bully-victims of relational bullying, however research indicates that their outcomes may be poorer than children who are relational victims only (Dukes et al., 2009). Dukes et al. (2009) found that, compared to uninvolved children, relational bullies, and relational victims, the relational bully-victims had the lowest self-esteem, most problem behaviour, and worst school attitudes. This pattern of findings is consistent with bully-victims experiencing poorer outcomes than other involved children in other forms of bullying (Haynie et al., 2001).

The Parents of Children Involved in Bullying

The Parent-Child Relationship. Much of the research about parents and bullying involves inferences about the quality of the parent-child relationship for parents of victims, bullies, and bully-victims. Bowers et al. (1994) identified family patterns of children aged 8-11 years that bullied, were victims of bullying, or were both a bully and a victim. The findings suggested that children who bully experience low cohesion with their families, while bully-victims were more likely to perceive their parents as having poor parental management skills.

A more recent study, focusing on the child's perspective, also suggests that children who bully others perceive their families in negative ways regarding aspects of communication, responsiveness, and overall functioning (Önder & Yurtal, 2008). It should be noted that these findings are based on the child's perception of their family dynamic, as opposed to including parent data or utilising outside observers. However, Stevens et al.

(2002) used multiple reports from the same family to assess discrepancies between parent and child reports of bullying. Their study on the relationship between family members and the children's role in bullying (Stevens et al., 2002) found that children presented fewer positive views of their family than their parents did. The authors suggested that these results could be impacted by parents' desire to provide socially desirable responses. With this issue in mind, data collection in the present programme of research was anonymous in attempt to avoid any social desirability bias.

Parent-Child Attachment and Bullying Behaviour. Attachment theory is an important consideration in bullying because it positions the parent-child relationship as crucial for optimal child development. Attachment of infants to a parent figure is defined by Ainsworth (1973) as “an affectional tie that one person forms to another specific person, binding them together in space and enduring over time” (cited in Smith, 2013, p. 100).

In Ainsworth's (1973) original research, a secure attachment for an infant would involve a child being at ease when their mother is present and upset when the mother left. The child would then become content again when the mother returned and the child would seek appropriate contact with the mother. It has been estimated that about two-thirds of children in North America can be categorised as securely attached (Feldman, 2014). Attachment styles that do not meet this quality are termed insecure attachments. There are three main forms of insecure attachment: avoidant, resistant, and disorganised. Children are categorised into these attachments based on parent-child interactions. For example, children who have an avoidant attachment to their caregiver do not appear as distressed when their mother leaves and do not seek contact upon her return; about 20% of 1-year-old children fall into this category (Feldman, 2014).

Research has associated this avoidant attachment style with the three categories of bullies, victims, and bully-victims. For victims, Troy and Sroufe (1987) found that children who were victimised had an avoidant attachment history. For bullies, some studies (e.g. Walden & Beran, 2010) have identified that bullies are more likely to have insecure attachments to their parents and/or caregivers. Namely, children categorised as having avoidant attachment may develop antisocial patterns and engage in bullying behaviour (Sroufe, 1993, as cited by DeKlyen & Greenburg, 2008). Similarly for bully-victims, Ireland and Power (2004) identified them as having high levels of avoidant attachment. Overall, the greater attachment security children have with parents, the less likely they are to be involved in bullying (Murphy et al., 2017). While the current programme of research does not measure attachment, this contextual information provides insight into the existing ways parents have

been included in research about their children's bullying behaviours. That is, they are mostly included as a way to attribute their children's behaviour to parenting practices. In contrast to this, Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory, Swearer and Espelage's (2004) social-ecological model, and the parent-centred model underpinning this programme of research argue that bullying must be understood across the contexts of the individual, the family, the community, and the culture which interact to establish and maintain bullying behaviours.

Parenting Styles and Bullying. As with the literature on attachment, links have also been drawn between parenting styles and children's involvement in bullying, both for victims and bullies. According to Smith (2014), there are a number of parent-child relationship aspects that can protect against a child's bullying involvement in either of these roles, such as "being authoritative, showing warmth but not too intense emotional closeness, having secure attachment relationships to children, and being involved with them and providing appropriate but not intrusive supervision" (p. 127). This description illuminates the difficult balance that, according to the literature, families must achieve in order to best prevent their child from being involved in bullying.

Parenting styles are characterised by two key dimensions: demandingness and responsiveness. Parental demandingness is about the way parents set rules and expectations for their child's behaviour, and how they communicate these expectations. Parental responsiveness is about how sensitive parents are to their child's needs, including showing concern, expressing love, and overall warmth (Arnett, 2018). Research has identified four main types of parenting styles (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). These are: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and disengaged. *Authoritative* parents are high in both demandingness and responsiveness. This is the optimal style of parenting from the Western perspective whereby parents are firm, set limits, but are emotionally supportive and loving, encouraging independence in their children (Feldman, 2014).

In contrast, an *authoritarian* parent is one that, compared to others, appears withdrawn, discontent, distrustful, controlling, and shows less warmth than other parents (Baumrind, 1971). This style of parenting is about demanding compliance from children and punishing without compromise (Arnett, 2018). They are high in demandingness but low in responsiveness. *Permissive* parents are characterised by low demandingness and high responsiveness. Discipline is rarely enacted by these parents, and they have few expectations for their children's behaviour. Although they are warm and loving towards their children, they also allow them the freedom to do what they wish. Lastly, *disengaged* parents are low in

both demandingness and responsiveness. Children have no clear limits and parents do not seem to have emotional attachments to their children, with limited concern and love shown (Arnett, 2018).

Parenting styles have been identified as being an important influence on bullying behaviour. An authoritarian parenting style has been positively linked to children's bullying behaviour (e.g. Baldry & Farrington, 2000). As well as being correlated with bullying perpetration, parenting has also been linked with victimisation. In Olweus' (1978) longitudinal study of boys, he found that an overprotective or controlling mother predicted victim status (cited in Smith, 2014). More recently, Martínez et al. (2019) supports this view, finding that adolescents with authoritarian parents scored higher on measures of both traditional and cyberbullying when compared to adolescents whose parents manifested other parenting styles. It is important to note that parenting styles are situated in broader culture, and an authoritative parenting style is not always the societal norm. Kim (2005) discuss that parents in collectivist cultures may consider high levels of control as a way of showing love and engagement in their child's life; in return, adolescents perceive this control as parental love and interest too.

Parenting Styles and Relational Bullying. For relational bullying, however, this relationship between parenting styles and bullying involvement is not necessarily the same. When we isolate relational bullying from other forms of bullying, the links between this form of behaviour and parenting styles becomes less clear. For instance, in a meta-analysis of parenting styles associated with relational aggression specifically, Kawabata et al. (2011) identified "rather small" (p. 271) effect sizes for the predicted parenting style associations. Furthermore, the authors proposed that this small effect size should:

Stimulate investigators of parenting and relational aggression to either modify some of the basic tenets of their theoretical framework, for example by emphasising the role of child or contextual factors, in explaining relational aggression, or to search for more precise and valid assessments of both parenting constructs and dimensions of relational aggression (Kawabata et al., 2011, p. 271).

While Kawabata et al. (2011) specifically refer to relational *aggression*, it is expected that similar principles apply to relational bullying. With this in mind, the current programme of research is following this path and exploring bullying with a wider, contextual lens and moving away from the view that only certain types of parents are responsible for children's

involvement in bullying. Moreover, as supported by Kawabata et al. (2011), the present study seeks to explore the contextual factors and move away from the stance that only certain parenting styles create bullies, while other styles create victims. This simplistic view is unlikely to hold true when considering the more covert nature of relational bullying due its widespread prevalence and its consistent positioning as less serious than other forms of bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Bell & Willis, 2016). The complexity of relational bullying compared to other types of bullying indicate that research needs to look beyond who is to blame, and instead position this as a whole-culture problem, particularly in the New Zealand ‘bullying culture’ context, as described earlier in this chapter. When considering Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological model, we can see that parents are but *one* influence on the child regarding aggression toward others. In sum, the current programme of research looks beyond parenting styles and attachment as *cause* for bullying involvement and has instead investigated the experiences of parents intervening in the situation and supporting their children through this difficult set of experiences regardless of the parent-child dynamic.

Parent Voice in the Literature

While the research involving parents’ perspectives and experiences of bullying is relatively limited, the evidence base has been used extensively to form assertions about these families. It is notable that these conclusions have been drawn without adequate involvement of the parents who are being labelled. For example, in a 2013 meta-analysis of studies on the association between parenting behaviour and peer victimisation, Lereya et al. (2013) included a total of 70 studies. These 70 studies yielded a sample of 208,778 children (including adult children) aged 4-25 years. Even in a study of this scale that intended to “identify how parenting styles and parent-child relationships are related to victimisation”, parents as a source of data were still underrepresented in the samples. In fact, since most of the 70 studies did *not* include parents as participants, it could be argued that this study was an analysis of children’s *perceptions* of their parents’ behaviour. While the child perspective is a crucial voice in the field, the parent perspective remains under-represented.

Parents of Victims as Research Participants.

Hypothetical Scenarios. The majority of the current bullying research that incorporates the parent perspective focuses on the child as a victim of bullying. One such study used hypothetical scenarios to assess parents’ strategic suggestions in response to a fictional depiction of their child experiencing bullying victimisation, and the subsequent

effectiveness of these strategies (Offrey & Rinaldi, 2017). Overall, parents most often encouraged their children to seek help from an adult in responses to bullying. The researchers go on to suggest that parents appear to rely on their children's teachers to intervene in bullying situations.

Another study (Bonnet et al., 2011) used hypothetical vignettes to assess parents' responses and suggested strategies to support their child through peer victimisation. Parents (57 mothers, 16 fathers) of 73 victimised children participated in the study. Telephone interviews were used to assess parental strategies in responses to five hypothetical scenarios of peer victimisation. Parents described strategies that were classed as autonomy supporting, autonomy undermining, and autonomy neutral. Autonomy supporting and neutral strategies, as employed by the children, were associated with an initial decrease in victimisation, but this protective effect was not sustained throughout the school year. These studies represent a growing body of literature using hypothetical scenarios to elicit responses from difficult-to-reach populations.

Lived Experience. While hypothetical responses can provide useful data when constraining criteria of participant requirements cannot be met, lived experiences from parents are also vital to include in the literature to illustrate the parents' perspective of this experience. One such study that includes the experiences of parents when their child was victimised conducted in-depth interviews with 20 parents whose children had experienced bullying (Sawyer et al., 2011). This qualitative study found significant variation between participants' definition and identification of bullying, and their strategies to intervene. Parents' suggestions to their child to try and overcome the bullying included: telling their child to let an adult know, retaliate against the child that bullied them, or ignore the bullying. These findings represent similar findings to those studies using hypothetical methodologies. However, enabling participants to reflect on actual experiences can provide further information and a fuller reflection on the experience of parenting a child involved in bullying.

By utilising participants who can incorporate their own experiences of the phenomena, we are also able to gather information on emotional responses and specific actions taken, as compared to what participants think they *should* do, and any effects these actions have on the situation. Honig and Zdunowski-Sjoblom (2014) conducted family interviews with children who had experienced bullying, as well as the child's older sibling and one of their parents (n = 28). Parents described their feelings after finding out their child was bullied; they found most parents reported feeling a negative emotional response while some parents were not very concerned about their child's bullying experiences. Parents

utilised various strategies to intervene in the bullying their child was experiencing. For example, about half of the parents asked the child to stay away from the bully and 29% of the parents contacted the families of the bullies directly. Similarly, another study (Harcourt et al., 2015) identified that parents took a range of actions in response to their child's bullying victimisation. That is, parents described speaking to their child, their child's teacher, senior management at their child's school, and the parents of the bully.

Hale et al. (2017) recognise that the experiences of the parents are often overlooked in the literature. To begin addressing this literature gap, the researchers interviewed parents about their child's victimisation experiences. They found that parents saw themselves as having a protective role that was simply part of being a parent, and both instinctual and fundamental. Parents, however, unfortunately encountered barriers when they tried to fulfil this role; they identified difficulties working with their child's school and teachers which led to distrust and frustration. Hale et al. (2017) concluded that their study emphasises the importance of clear and ongoing communication between parents and teachers. However, they recognise that all parties may view school bullying in different ways. As such, they illustrate the importance of perspective-taking for both parents and teachers to enhance this relationship during bullying intervention.

Parents of Bullies as Research Participants. Currently, there is a dearth of studies that include the parents' experiences when their child engages in bullying perpetration. The existing literature on parents of children who *bully* has created the following profile of these parents:

“Families of bullies are often characterized by a lack of warmth, a lack of closeness, and as focused on power. Bullies are likely to grow up in homes without a father figure and are also likely to have been physically and emotionally maltreated while growing up.” (Duncan, 2004, pp. 240-241)

For families of bully-victims, research has not yet included the parents' experiences but they have nevertheless received the following profile:

“Similarly, the families of bully-victims are often high in aggression and violence and low in warmth. The parents are likely to provide inconsistent discipline and are unlikely to monitor the behaviour of their children. In fact, mothers tend to be

described as neglecting their children and are often viewed as relatively powerless.”
(Duncan, 2004, p. 241)

As discussed earlier in this section, when the parents of children who bully have been included in research, much attention has been paid to the relationships between parents and children, parenting styles, and attachment. Much of this literature has attempted to link parents' behaviour to their child's behaviour with regard to bullying. However, many of these studies are exclusively based on the child's perspective and do not include parent input. Although some attention has been given in the literature to the importance of effective communication (e.g., Lee & Wong, 2009), the vast majority of studies have focused on the links between bullying behaviour, attachment, and parenting styles.

Hypothetical Responses. When compared to the available literature focused on parents whose children are victimised, the literature on involvement of parents whose children are perpetrators of bullying is very limited. One study, using a hypothetical scenario methodology, analysed mothers' responses to pre-schoolers' hypothetical relational and physical aggression situations (Werner et al., 2006). The results from the 87 participating mothers suggested that negative affect and likeliness to intervene was lower for relational compared to physical aggression. That is, mothers reported “significantly lower levels of upset, anger, and sadness” in response to relational aggression scenarios, when compared with responses to physical aggression scenarios.

Lived Experience. Reflections on actual lived experience of parents of children that act as perpetrators of bullying is even rarer among the literature. Zaklama (2003), in a study of perceptions and practices of children and parents regarding bullying, interviewed one parent of a child who had bullied others, one parent of a victim of bullying, and one parent of an uninvolved peer. The parent of the bully discussed their relationship with their child and the home life, as well as their own perspective on what should be done about bullying in general. The parent described improved home-school communication as an important intervention to prevent bullying, but he/she also identified more teacher involvement as desirable, particularly as they are the chief witnesses of bullying incidents in school. This study did not explicitly describe what this parent did in response to the bullying.

Parent perspectives have also briefly been examined on the topic of cyberbullying, where Dehue et al. (2008) included parents' and children's perspectives on cyberbullying. However, the focus was on the parents' awareness of bullying perpetration and victimisation and rules they have – or have not – set surrounding technology use. In sum, there is a need

for further research to elucidate the experiences of parents of children involved in bullying in all roles.

Parents' Childhood Experiences of Bullying. One possible impact on how parents perceive and respond to bullying is if they themselves have had experience with bullying. Cooper and Nickerson (2013) have investigated parents' past experiences of bullying in relation to their current views regarding their children's bullying involvement. The researchers conducted a quantitative study to investigate this issue. Most of the participants were able to recall either being involved in or witnessing bullying when they were children or adolescents. This study suggests that parents' past involvement in bullying does relate to their current views when considering their own children. However, the researchers acknowledge that their study was merely the first step in including parents in bullying research.

Cooper and Nickerson (2013) identify that, at the time of their publication, "there exists only one research study that specifically addresses the population of parents and their recollections of bullying experiences in childhood." That study, Sawyer et al. (2011), added a question about parents' own experiences of bullying to their interview guide after it was recurrently raised by participants without prompting. However, most of these participants had not told their parents, or another adult, about the bullying. For those that did tell a parent, the participants all reported that their victimisation stopped after their parents took action. This success in intervention emphasises the important role that parents have in supporting their children through experiences of bullying.

Since then, Miller (2015) has investigated how parents' memories of school shape their current views of their children's schooling. This included many aspects of schooling and bullying was one of many experiences mentioned by participants. For the parents that had experienced bullying themselves, they were concerned that the same would happen to their own children. As such, the parents identified taking a number of actions, such as being heavily involved in the school environment, observing the classroom, and preparing their children to respond to incidents of bullying. Miller (2015) also affirms the idea that this area remains under-researched, but they believe these memories of victimisation do influence parents' views of the schooling experience for their children and also impact the decisions they make and actions they take as parents.

Another study examined the strategies parents used to stop their victimisation when they themselves were children and the strategies they would currently recommend to their children (Boddy, 2015). Boddy (2015) found no link between the effectiveness of the strategies for parents and the likelihood they would recommend them to their children. That

is, Boddy (2015) found that even when parents reported that a certain strategy might not have been effective in stopping their own experiences of victimisation, they would still recommend it to their children. In order to find out more about this decision-making process, Boddy (2015) suggests that future research using qualitative methodologies could elucidate the process that parents are using to choose intervention strategies that they used as a child, and that they would now recommend to their own children.

A systematic literature review analysed 11 studies of adults' (both parents and non-parents) retrospective recollections of bullying victimisation (Boddy et al., 2015). Overall findings from the review included the importance of enduring memories and effects of bullying events and the expression of anger at others' failure to intervene in the bullying. For participants who had become parents, the review identified current concern about their own children being bullied. The review also found that some victims of bullying could recall accounts of engaging in bullying perpetration as a form of coping (Boddy et al., 2015). Retrospective accounts of bullying are useful in that we are able to consider long-term effects and current influences that bullying may have. For parents in particular, it has been identified that most parents are able to recall bullying experiences from their childhood with consistency (Rivers, 2001). As such, this is a reliable way to explore the past bullying experiences of parents.

Stives et al. (2018) explored the advice that parents would give, or have given, to their children about how to respond to bullying as a victim and as a bystander. If their child was bullied, parents most often said they would tell their child to report the bullying to an adult and avoid the bully. When considering their child as a bystander, they would suggest to their child to defend the victim and confront the bully. However, the researchers note that this can be a problematic approach if children are not given appropriate strategies to do this effectively. Some interesting findings in the study suggest that parents did not think their child would be likely to become a victim of bullying because there was not bullying at the school the child attends, their child was confident and strong, or they perceived their child as being 'normal' and therefore not an obvious target for bullying. Alternatively, some parents were concerned about their child becoming a victim of bullying because of their uniqueness or differences in comparison to their peers (Stives et al., 2018).

Stives et al. (2018) go on to discuss the differing views of parents and schools in understanding bullying. They suggest that any significant reduction in the effects of bullying is "improbable, if not impossible" (p.14) until all parties can reach a consensus on which behaviours fit the definition of bullying. Stives et al. (2018) suggest that future research could

consider asking parents about their own experiences as a victim of bullying in an effort to understand if the strategies they suggest to their child would differ based on parents' own experiences.

Taking the chronosystem into account, retrospective accounts of bullying are useful in that we are able to consider long-term effects and current influences that bullying may have. While there is an emerging body of research that considers adults' views of past bullying, there is even less literature that considers the effect on these adults when they are parents (Cooper & Nickerson, 2013). This is of critical importance to understand how parents' own experiences may be projected onto their concerns for their children. For example, in a study of adults (not specifically parents), Malaby (2009) describes one, previously victimised, participant's concern that his son would be subjected to bullying so he was pro-actively teaching his child to stand up to bullies in an aggressive way. To this point, most of the research on retrospective accounts of bullying has focused on victimisation, a few studies have been concerned with adults identifying as a 'bully-victim', but very few studies have yet considered the retrospective recollections of adults who were involved in bullying as perpetrators while young.

Although this existing research goes some way to understand how parents that have previously been involved in bullying may manage their own child's bullying experience, it is still significantly under-researched. Specifically, the complexities of *relational* bullying in particular have not been a focus of this research as yet. Furthermore, the positioning of this experience across generations as part of the parent's chronosystem in a parent-centred ecological model is a unique way to utilise this framework that ordinarily places the child at the centre. Through exploration of the parent at the centre of the social-ecological framework we are able to reflect on the experiences of the parent, both currently and across their lifespan. This approach is integral to the study of relational bullying as parents are the most likely people to be told about bullying situations by their children (Fekkes et al., 2005).

The Intergenerational Continuity of Bullying. Studies have shown that parental responses to bullying are shaped by their own upbringing and past experiences. This dynamic has been shown for parents that experienced constructive parenting practices while they were growing up (Chen & Kaplan, 2001), and for parents who experienced childhood maltreatment (Harel & Finzi-Dottan, 2018). In addition, research has shown that childhood experiences of bullying can continue to have an impact later in life (Ledley et al., 2006; Takizawa et al., 2014; Ttofi et al., 2011; Wolke et al., 2013).

One study that is closely aligned with some aspects of the current research is that of Wright (2017). Wright (2017) builds the case that very little attention has been paid to the effect of parents' childhood victimisation on their own children's victimisation. This study found that when children are victims, *and* their parents were also victims during childhood, children experienced higher levels of depression and anxiety. The researcher suggests that one possible reason for this outcome could be because the formerly victimised parents may also be exhibiting these symptoms. Wright (2017) then establishes that parents who were victims of bullying as children now engage in more authoritarian or permissive parenting styles than parents who were not victims of bullying, thus establishing childhood victimisation as a possible influence on future parenting styles. However, this study does not specifically address the more nuanced, relational forms of bullying, nor does it include those parents who have been involved in bullying as a bully or bully-victim. Although, in concluding this study, Wright (2017) argues that future research should include parents who were involved in bullying as bullies or bully-victims as well.

Counting this one study, it is clear that the ways in which parents previously involved in bullying might reflect on their experience to make decisions if their own child was involved in bullying remains considerably under-researched. One theory that might guide understanding in this area is that of intergenerational transmission. This process can be a transmission of behaviours, for example, the intergenerational transmission of aggression. The transmission of behaviours from one generation to the next is a widely researched area. For example, research has found links between the intergenerational transmissions of domestic aggression (Kalmuss, 1984). However, a meta-analysis found that there was only a weak-to-moderate relationship between growing up in an abusive family and becoming involved in a violent marital relationship (Stith, 2000). Furthermore, a birth cohort study contends that no statistically significant associations were found between inter-parental violence exposure in childhood and the subsequent increased risk of perpetration or victimisation of physical violence (Fergusson et al., 2006).

Despite these mixed findings, the idea of intergenerational transmission would support the link within the wider bullying literature that children whose parents have been involved with bullying as a perpetrator are often perpetrators too (Farrington, 1993). Moreover, Allison et al. (2014) found that the children of parents who were victimised were more likely to be victimised than children of non-victimised parents. Interestingly, some researchers have suggested that there may even be a genetic component to children becoming victims, bullies, or bully-victim (Ball et al., 2008). In addition to the intergenerational

transmission of bullying, there is *intragenerational* continuity too. That is, some individuals who bully during childhood and adolescence continue to bully throughout their lives (Farrington, 1993); this could include when they are parents.

There are some other additional factors to consider in the intergenerational transmission of bullying, namely, attachment and internal working models. As discussed earlier, attachment can impact significantly on children's development. A meta-analysis by van IJzendoorn et al. (1995) of studies investigating interventions for parents' sensitivity and the resulting infant attachment led the researchers to suggest that the link between parent sensitivity and infant security is *causal*. That is, parents tend to pass on to their children secure or insecure attachment styles (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). Smith and Myron-Wilson (1998) theorised that this intergenerational transmission of attachment may be a factor in the intergenerational continuity of aggression.

In addition to this view, John Bowlby, developed the idea of an 'internal working model' (Bowlby, 1973, cited in Bennett & Nelson, 2010). The proposition of an internal working model is that a person's experiences of attachment and caregiving lay the foundation for their own attachment and caregiving experiences later in life (Bennett & Nelson, 2010). That is, the way an individual is parented will thus influence the way they parent their own children. Rosen and Patterson (2011) discuss Bowlby's (1973; 1979) work and explain how the impact of the internal working model also affects a child's self-perception and their interpersonal relationships with others. Working models are thus important to understand how current parenting can influence a child's social behaviour and peer interactions, but also how the current parent's earlier experiences of being parented may be a factor too. In sum, internal working models may help us to further understand the intergenerational nature of bullying.

To piece all of this information together, bullying can impact those involved throughout their life, and for parents, this may carry through into their parenting decisions. However, there is a lack of research that considers how parents' past bullying experiences, particularly perpetration, impact their current parenting. Moreover, this intergenerational influence could be even more nuanced for relational bullying specifically. In contrast to other forms of bullying, it may be that these behaviours are modelled and normalised more frequently. James et al. (2010) discusses the idea that relational aggression is modelled by parents and in the media, and that it is often modelled as a tool to get what you want or gain compliance from others.

It is important to note that not every outcome from bullying is adverse and there are individual differences in responses. One alternative viewpoint to the intergenerational transmission of bullying is the idea that people can experience personal growth from trauma which helps them to overcome future adverse experiences (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Recent research has linked bullying victimisation to future posttraumatic growth in some people (Andreou et al., 2020; Ratcliff et al., 2016). Although Andreou et al. (2020) recognise that, even within one individual, elements of growth and trauma from bullying can co-exist. By providing some people with the strength to overcome future adverse experiences, posttraumatic growth for parents may mean they are able to reflect on their own experience to support their child through similar bullying experiences. Whether or not parents have experience with bullying or the skills in being resilient through the experience, parents remain in a position to act and intervene if their child is involved in bullying. Therefore, garnering insights from these parents previously involved in bullying is fundamental to understanding the cyclical patterns of bullying, and the perspectives of the key people that may be in the position to prevent and intervene in the next generation of bullying.

Summary of the Literature

Bullying is a serious issue that is present in the wider community, in workplaces, and in schools. Parents are in the unique position of supporting children through bullying experiences, yet they might also be dealing with the impacts of their own earlier experiences of childhood bullying. Despite this possibility, the parent voice is underrepresented in the literature. In addition, this voice has been particularly overlooked when it comes to relational bullying, and even more so when children are involved as bullies or bully-victims. The three studies in the present programme of research have addressed parents' missing voice in the literature by providing breadth of a range of parent perspectives through the use of hypothetical scenarios that any parent could respond to. Then, depth of parents' lived experiences was investigated when parents reflected on their or their child's actual experiences of relational bullying.

Aims of the Programme of Research

The aim of this multi-study project was to gain insight into the experiences and responses of parents to relational bullying involvement of their children and to increase understanding of how relational bullying affects families across generations. In order to achieve this aim I conducted three studies that: (a) identified how parents respond to hypothetical scenarios

about their child's involvement in relational bullying, as a victim or as a bully, (b) identified how parents have responded to actual experiences of their child's involvement as a relational bullying victim, bully, or a bully-victim, and (c) explored the lifelong impact of parents' own experiences of relational bullying on themselves and on their children.

A further aim was to challenge the way that parents of relational bullies and victims are represented in the discourse on bullying. Bullying is most often positioned as a problem of the parents, either for creating the behaviour in the first place or as solely responsible for intervention. This is too simplistic a view and does not consider the other settings and systems in the social-ecological framework. This is a position supported by Herne (2016) who argues that blaming parents for their child's bullying behaviour due to poor parenting does not recognise the complexities of this social and cultural problem. Moreover, bullying is also positioned as an individual's problem. It is seen as a result of traits within the bully and therefore, their individual responsibility. In doing so, the problem is broken down into an assumed easily solvable situation and the individual child or the 'bad' parents can be targeted for intervention and thus the problem fixed. Herne (2016) argues that such approaches, while they may be of some help on a small-scale, do not address the "complex and multi-layered social and cultural phenomenon" (p. 263) that bullying is. Sutton (2001) considered this idea many years ago, wondering if people find comfort in positioning the problem of bullying as something wrong only with an individual person. This is not to say that parents are not a part of the establishment and maintenance of bullying behaviour, nor is it to absolve the bully of all personal responsibility, but it is instead recognising that they are pieces in a very large and complex puzzle. The present programme of research aimed to present a more complex picture of relational bullying and the factors that shape peoples' responses to it.

Research Questions

To meet the aims of the programme of research, the overarching research question for this doctoral thesis is:

What do parents think and do when their child is involved in relational bullying?

The three individual studies focused on their own research question:

1. In what ways would parents respond to three distinct forms of relational bullying when their child is depicted as a victim and as a bully?

Rationale: While hypothetical scenarios have been used with parents before, the use of scenarios that are specifically focused on relational bullying remains under-researched. It is believed that no existing studies have broken relational bullying down into individual behaviours, within one study, to examine how these may be perceived differently by parents. Furthermore, very little attention has been paid to perpetrators of relational bullying.

2. How do parents react or respond to their child's actual involvement in relational bullying either as a victim, a bully, or bully-victim?

Rationale: Lived experience of parenting a child that acts as a perpetrator of bullying, and those that are 'bully-victims', are considerably under-researched. This study intends to elicit accounts from parents regarding the actions their experience when their child has been involved in relational bullying as a victim, bully, or bully-victim.

3. How do parents, who experienced childhood relational bullying, reflect on this experience, their parents' response at the time, and the current impact on their own children?

Rationale: This research question considers the existing involvement that parents have had in bullying during their own childhood or adolescence. It considers the intergenerational bullying experiences that may influence a parent's response to their child's bullying. While there exists a body of research on adult recollections of bullying and victimisation, there is little research considering how it may influence their parenting decisions.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have provided an overview of two ecological frameworks that have guided this doctoral research: Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory and Swearer and Espelage's (2004) social-ecological framework. Then, I analysed the literature utilising a revised social-ecological model to position the parent as the focus of the current research. Bullying was examined at the cultural, community, school, child, and family levels. In doing so, I have highlighted the importance of a focus on the parents' perspectives to give voice to their perceptions and experiences. My review of relevant literature showed there are gaps in the research on relational bullying: i) there is a lack of understanding about how different behaviours within relational bullying are perceived by parents, ii) there is a lack of studies on parents and this is reflected in the literature, particularly studies of parents of bullies and

bully-victims, and, iii) there is a lack of research that considers parents' previous involvement in their own relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence. In the following chapter I will outline my methodological considerations and the method used to conduct the three studies and analyse the data.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research approach and strategies that have been utilised for the three studies overall, and for the three studies individually. This chapter will first consider the specific characteristics of the research design, including the online, anonymous data collection technique. Because these studies sought to explore the perceptions and experiences of parents anonymously, and online, the methodological procedures were required to be suited to this goal. Of utmost importance in this process was to identify methodological foundations for the research that enabled the researcher to analyse a broad range of opinions, obtained with one data collection period, wherein participation was anonymous. After careful consideration of these factors, a generic qualitative methodology was chosen; this approach is described and critiqued in this chapter. After establishing the case for a generic qualitative approach to the research, the development of the research survey tool is described. Then, the participant recruitment, sample, method of data collection, and method of data analysis will be described. Following this, the validity and reliability of the research process will be discussed.

Research Design

Qualitative Research

The three studies in this programme of research utilise a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is broadly defined as the collection of data with the aim of exploring, describing, or constructing theories using data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This type of research is generally performed when there is a need or desire to discover more information about a topic, often when the researcher is intending to understand people's experiences or perspectives of a phenomenon (Patton, 2005; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). When compared to quantitative research, qualitative research is not inferential or prediction-based; it is more open-ended and unbounded in its scope. Qualitative data is often collected in the form of words or images via interviews, observation, and in-depth, open-ended questions (Patton, 2005; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Researchers then identify patterns or themes in the data and may focus on variation within broad patterns (Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

Dickson-Swift et al. (2007) identifies a number of challenges that qualitative researchers can face. These include: a need to develop rapport with participants, issues of self-disclosure, listening to untold stories from people in vulnerable positions, feeling guilty

for asking about sensitive issues, and researcher exhaustion. While researchers should consider ways to mitigate these issues, and the present researcher did the same, it was decided that the best course of action for the current programme of research was to have participants remain anonymous and retain their privacy (see the following paragraph). This approach was adapted as a way to enhance privacy for participants, protect the researcher, and enable participation from as many people throughout New Zealand as possible.

Anonymous Qualitative Research

A key aim of this research was to gain insight into the experiences of parents whose children had been a victim and/or bully. In addition, the participants also reflected on their own experiences as a childhood victim and/or bully. It was determined that, in order for participants to feel safe freely discussing such a sensitive matter, a method of data collection that ensured their anonymity was important to this process (Gibson et al., 2013). Due to this consideration, some of the more traditional qualitative methodologies were unsuitable for this project. For example, ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, and phenomenology all primarily use in-depth interviews or observations to collect data (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). While anonymity from the consumers of research can be ensured within these methodologies, the validity of this programme of research was enhanced through anonymous reporting. With such a sensitive topic, participants may have been less likely to discuss this information readily had they been face-to-face or asked to reveal identifying information. Rhodes et al. (2003) supported this idea that using an anonymous data collection technique may reduce bias, especially when discussing sensitive topics.

Generic Qualitative Approaches to Research

The methodological underpinnings of this project are that of generic qualitative research. Generic qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding the perspectives of people through their descriptions of the experience. In essence, the generic qualitative approach is characterised by providing the researcher with choice, rather than strict adherence to one of the more traditional qualitative methodological approaches. Liu (2006) suggest three guidelines for using generic inductive approaches in qualitative educational research. Firstly, studies using this approach should be exploratory and descriptive. Secondly, it should be established that the use of other methodologies would be difficult to properly fit the study. Thirdly, using this methodology means that the research can develop and become more

refined throughout the research process with a cyclical relationship between research questions, data collection, and data analysis. For example, during the iterative process of refining categories and themes during analysis.

A generic approach to research provides the researcher with methodological flexibility (Liu, 2006). Percy et al. (2015) describe how, for some qualitative studies, some of the more focused methodologies, such as case study, grounded theory, and phenomenology are unsuitable; in these cases, a generic qualitative approach can be taken. Cooper and Endacott (2007) also identify that, by their very nature, the features of these more traditional qualitative methodologies restrict their applicability to some studies. The generic approach is particularly suitable for a survey where the intention is get a broad range of opinions or experiences, rather than to achieve great depth in only a few cases (Percy et al., 2015). For the current study, the online and anonymous nature of the project ruled out many other approaches. Percy et al. (2014) define the generic qualitative approach as investigating people's reports of their attitudes, opinions, or reflections of things in the 'outer' world; this is in comparison to other methodologies, such as phenomenology, which has an inward focus on the person's experience of the event and their interpretation. That is, phenomenology would be unsuitable for this project because the current programme of research has utilised a combination of beliefs and perceptions about hypothetical scenarios *and* lived experience. In contrast, phenomenology would be concerned only with the lived experience.

As with all methodologies, there are limitations and critiques of this approach. Kahlke (2014) identifies that there has been significant debate about using such an approach. For example, some critics describe generic qualitative approaches as being atheoretical or lacking theoretical robustness. In response to such critique, proponents of this approach maintain that an insistence to fit within an existing methodology may be unnecessary and that robustness can be maintained, in the absence of existing guidelines, through a justification of the researcher's choices. This requires the researcher to think broadly about their research and to make choices that are informed by their research questions without being hindered by methodological rules or assumptions (Chamberlain, 2000; Kahlke, 2014). Sandelowski (2000, p. 337) recognises that qualitative descriptive designs can be "an eclectic but reasonable and well-considered combination of sampling, and data collection, analysis, and representational techniques." The onus, then, is put on the researcher to describe and defend their choices as reasonable for their purposes. Nevertheless, while such issues within this approach do exist, there is also a need for innovation in methodology to fit the research, the discipline, and the researcher, which outweighs the difficulties of the generic approach. In

sum, the qualitative work of the current studies is appropriately broad and exploratory, but remains underpinned by a suitable methodological approach. It is important for this type of research to be conducted before more focused, empirical work becomes feasible.

Surveys

Survey research involves "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 160). Survey methods are versatile, efficient, and can enhance generalisability through the ability to access a large population. Moreover, survey research can enhance understanding of "just about any educational issue" (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 160). Ponto (2015) describes the flexibility of the survey method in that it allows a range of recruitment and data collection techniques, and can suit quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research.

Online Qualitative Surveys

With so much modern interaction now online, research too has now found a space in the online world. This is particularly evident with participant recruitment via social media. Twitter has been evaluated as an effective tool for recruitment (O'Connor et al., 2014). O'Connor et al. (2014) identify that this is particularly useful for reaching populations that would otherwise be difficult to access. In addition, Smith (2014) has recognised that there is difficulty in recruiting parents of children who are involved in bullying, in *any* role. It was thought that if it is difficult to access parents of children in any role of bullying, this could prove even more so when combined with the sensitive issue of bullying *perpetration*. As such, participant recruitment for the studies was primarily via online social media and email, thus making the research convenient and accessible (and anonymous) in an effort to increase participation.

Lefever et al. (2007) identify many strengths and limitations of online research. Some of the strengths of this method of data collection include the ability to gather a large amount of data in an efficient way, that in comparison to other data collection methods, does not require a large amount of time or money. In addition, participants may complete the research in their own time and at their own pace. However, there are also limitations to online data collection. For example, participants are required to have access to a computer and internet connection (Lefever et al., 2007). Furthermore, many online data collection procedures use an initial email to contact participants. With this, there is a risk that this email contact may be

interpreted as ‘junk mail’ (Lefever et al., 2007). Despite the possible limitations to the online survey method of data collection, it was determined to be the most efficient way to contact potential participants as well as maintain their anonymity.

Therefore, an online, anonymous questionnaire was used to gather information about parents’ perspectives of relational bullying, any experiences their children had had with relational bullying, and any experiences of relational bullying from their own lives. Potential research participants were directed to a project website and were then linked to the Qualtrics survey where all three studies were presented as one survey.

Questionnaire Development

Terminology

The practicality of recruiting parents who would freely identify and label their child as a ‘bully’ posed many obstacles. It was decided early on that the most respectful, and quite likely the most accurate, way to find out about these behaviours was to remove the ‘bully’ label where possible. Furthermore, avoiding the term bullying was an attempt to reduce the social desirability bias that may be associated with the term bullying. That is, survey questions asking about sensitive topics can lead to the research participant answering in a way that they think is more socially acceptable, showing a social desirability bias, which can then generate inaccurate findings (Krumpal, 2013). In removing the word bullying, it was expected that participants were more likely to respond in an unbiased and thus more valid way.

Study One Aim

The aim of this study was to explore the responses of parents to hypothetical relational bullying involvement of their children, both as a victim and as a bully. This was to gain a greater understanding of the way parents react and respond to this specific form of bullying.

Hypothetical Scenarios

Hypothetical responses have been used in many studies considering parents’ responses (e.g. Offrey & Rinaldi, 2017), teachers’ responses (e.g. Yoon, 2004), preservice teachers’ responses (e.g., Bauman & Del Rio, 2006), and peers’ responses (e.g. Jennifer & Cowie, 2012) to bullying situations. This method is practical in nature since hypothetical responses enable researchers to analyse similarities and differences to the same situations, and obtain

answers that are not influenced by defensiveness (i.e. by parents of bullying children). Furthermore, it enables the collection of data from a larger sample, as there are fewer criteria that participants must meet in order to be eligible to participate in the research.

Research has shown that for children and young people, reported rates of victimisation were higher when they were *not* provided with a definition (Vaillancourt et al., 2008). It was expected that this would be similar for parents reporting on the bullying behaviour of their children. As such, during recruitment, potential participants were not told that the hypothetical scenarios in Study One were describing situations of relational bullying. While the situations did indeed match the criteria and definition of bullying, the term ‘bullying’ was not used until Studies Two and Three. Instead, for Study One, the researcher used phrases such as ‘social peer situations’, ‘negative peer experiences’, ‘situations where someone is left out’, ‘situations where someone is spreading rumours’, and ‘situations where someone is withholding or manipulating friendship’.

Study One Questionnaire Development

Parents were presented with scenarios depicting three distinct forms of relational bullying (exclusion, rumour spreading, and friendship manipulation) and asked a series of questions about how they would respond to each of these, first with their child depicted as a victim, and then with their child as a perpetrator. As identified, the scenarios were developed to depict behaviour that met the definition of bullying, but they were not identified as bullying until later in the survey. This allowed participants to focus on the actual behaviour presented, while reducing the likelihood that inconsistent definitions of bullying across participants would impact their responses. Parents were asked about their feelings, types of action they may take, and their reasoning both for and against taking action.

The questionnaire for Study One, see Appendix A, consisted of qualitative questions asking participants to describe their response to hypothetical peer social situations. The hypothetical scenarios have been adapted from those used by Allan (2015). Allan’s (2015) questions were informed by Bonnet et al. (2011) and Offrey and Rinaldi (2014). Allan’s (2015) hypothetical scenarios guided the development of the scenarios used in the current study and were adapted to fit the context of the research; the adaptations included refining the scenarios specifically for relational bullying, and extending these to include additional scenarios for bullying perpetration. In addition, the question format was altered, where necessary, to suit a qualitative research design. The six hypothetical scenarios for Study One

depicted the participant's child as the victim and as the bully for three forms of relational bullying: exclusion, rumour spreading, and friendship manipulation. The six scenarios were:

1. You have found out that your child's peers have been repeatedly and deliberately leaving your child out of activities during lunchbreak and after school.
2. You have found out that your child has been repeatedly and deliberately leaving another child out of activities during lunchbreak and after school.
3. You have found out that your child's peers have been repeatedly spreading nasty rumours about your child.
4. You have found out that your child has been repeatedly spreading nasty rumours about another child.
5. You have found out that your child's best friend has been repeatedly telling your child that s/he doesn't want to be friends with your child anymore. However, your child's best friend will then change their mind and decide to be friends again.
6. You have found out that your child has been repeatedly telling their best friend that s/he doesn't want to be friends with them anymore. However, your child will then change his/her mind and decide to be friends again.

Following each of the scenarios, participants were asked the following prompting questions:

- How would this scenario make you feel?
- In this scenario, how likely are you to take action?
 - Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely
 - [If likely or very likely is selected]
 - Please explain why you would be likely or very likely to take action in this scenario.
 - What specific action would you take in response to this scenario? (Consider the first action you might take, and then other actions if that did not resolve the situation)
 - Please describe, in as much detail as you can, the reasons for choosing these specific actions.
 - [If unlikely or very unlikely is selected] Please explain why you would be unlikely or very unlikely to take action in this scenario.

Participants were then asked to define bullying, and if they considered each of the three described behaviours to be bullying. Demographic information was also collected. As illustrated in the response pathway above, the total number of questions each participant answered varied based on their likeliness to take action in the given scenario. That is, for participants that answered they would take action, there were three further questions per scenario. For participants who would not take action, there was only one further question per scenario.

Study Two Aim

The aim of this study was to explore how parents responded to their child's involvement in relational bullying as a victim, bully, or bully-victim. This was to gain a greater understanding of how relational bullying affects families and the role parents play in children and young people's relational bullying involvement.

Study Two Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire for Study Two, see Appendix B, consisted of qualitative questions asking participants to describe their actual experience with their child's involvement in relational bullying as a victim, bully, or bully-victim. Participants were asked about their emotional responses to their child bullying others and to identify and describe any action they took. Parents were also asked about the effects of the bullying on themselves, their child, and the rest of the family. The questions for this study were based on parts of the questionnaire developed by Harcourt et al. (2015) to investigate parents' responses to all forms of bullying victimisation and subsequently adapted by Lynch et al. (2015) to investigate parents' responses to cyberbullying victimisation. The Harcourt et al. (2015) questionnaire was originally developed based on questions used in related research by Brown (2010), Humphrey and Crisp (2008), and Sawyer et al. (2011).

For the current study, participants were first provided with a definition of relational bullying, and then presented with the following questions:

- Having read the definition of relational bullying above, has your child been a **victim** of this behaviour? Y N Unsure
 - [If yes is selected]

- My child has been a victim of: (please select all that apply)
- Exclusion (being left out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

- Other (please describe the relational bullying).....
- Did the perpetrator (bully) use technology when your child was a victim of relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)
 - Thinking about the most memorable experience of your child as a victim of relational bullying, please respond to the following questions.

- How did you find out about the behaviour?
- How did you feel when you first found out about this behaviour?
- What effects, if any, did the bullying have on you, your child, and your other family members?
- Did you take action when you found out your child had been involved in this?
 - Y N
 - [If yes is selected]
 - What did you do?
 - What were the effects of these actions on your child and the situation?

- Having read the definition of relational bullying above, has your child been a **perpetrator (bully)** of this behaviour? Y N Unsure
 - [If yes is selected]
 - My child has engaged in the following behaviour: (please select all that apply)
 - Exclusion (leaving peer/s out) rumour spreading
withholding friendship
 - Other (please describe the relational bullying)
.....

- Did your child use technology to engage in relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)
 - Thinking about the most memorable experience of your child as a perpetrator of relational bullying, please respond to the following questions.
- How did you find out about the behaviour?
- How did you feel when you first found out about this behaviour?
- What effects, if any, did the bullying have on you, your child, and your other family members?
- Did you take action when you found out your child had been involved in this?
 - Y N
 - [If yes is selected]
 - What did you do?
 - What were the effects of these actions on your child and the situation?
- Throughout your child's life, has s/he been involved in relational bullying as both a victim *and* a perpetrator?
- Yes No
 - (If yes is selected)
 - Thinking about your child as a victim and perpetrator of relational bullying, please describe this in as much detail as you can. Please consider if these were at the same or different times in your child's life, what you believe came first or started the relational bullying, and explain any link you think there was between the victimisation and perpetration of relational bullying.

Participants were then given an opportunity to write anything else they wanted to say about the experience. As illustrated in the response pathway above, the total number of questions each participant answered varied based on their responses to different questions.

Study Three Aim

The aim of this study was to retrospectively explore parent participants’ own childhood experiences of relational bullying. This included how their parents managed the situation at the time, as well the impact of relational bullying on their lives, and how this experience has shaped what they would do with their own children if they were to experience relational bullying.

Study Three Questionnaire Development

The questionnaire section for Study Three, see Appendix C, consisted of qualitative questions asking participants to describe their own experiences of relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence. Participants were asked to reflect on how their parents responded to their involvement in relational bullying and to consider if they would do anything differently with their own children. This questionnaire was informed by the questionnaire and results of Boddy (2015). However, in contrast to Boddy (2015), the current study focused on relational bullying and utilised a qualitative methodology.

First, participants were provided with a definition of relational bullying, and then presented with the following questions:

During your childhood or adolescence were you involved in relational bullying as a **victim**:

Y N

[If yes is selected]

Please select all that apply:

Exclusion (being left out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did the perpetrator use technology when you were a victim of relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

During your childhood or adolescence were you involved in relational bullying as a perpetrator: Y N

[If yes is selected]

Please select all that apply:

Exclusion (leaving peer/s out) rumour spreading withholding
friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did you use technology to engage in relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

As an adult, have you been involved in relational bullying as a victim: Y N

[If yes is selected]

Please select all that apply:

Exclusion (being left out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did the perpetrator use technology when you were a victim of relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

As an adult, have you been involved in relational bullying as a perpetrator: Y N

[If yes is selected]

Please select all that apply:

Exclusion (leaving peer/s out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did you use technology to engage in relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

Throughout your life, have you been involved in relational bullying as both a victim and a perpetrator? Yes No

(If yes is selected)

Thinking about yourself as a victim and perpetrator of relational bullying, please describe this in as much detail as you can. Please consider if these were at the same or different times in your life, what you believe came first or started the relational bullying, and explain any link you think there was between the victimisation and perpetration of relational bullying.

Thinking about your most memorable experience as either a victim, perpetrator, or victim and perpetrator, during your childhood or adolescence, please respond to the following questions.

I will be referring to my experience as a (select one):

- Victim of relational bullying
- Perpetrator of relational bullying
- Both a victim and a perpetrator of relational bullying
- I was not involved in relational bullying in any role (if selected, skip to *Do you have anything else you would like to say about your experience? Please share any further comments you may have, remembering that your responses will remain anonymous.*)

Were your parents/caregivers aware of the situation? Y N Unsure

[If 'yes' was selected]

- How did your parents/caregivers find out about the bullying?
- How do you think your parents/caregivers felt when they first found about the bullying?
- Did your parents/caregivers take action when they found out about the bullying?

Y N Unsure

[If yes is selected]

- What did your parent/caregivers do?
- What were the effects of these actions on you and the situation?

- Thinking about your parents'/caregivers' response to your experiences of relational bullying, would you do anything differently with your own children?

Participants were then given an opportunity to write anything else they wanted to say about the experience. As illustrated in the response pathway above, the total number of questions each participant answered varied based on their responses to different questions.

Pilot Testing of the Questionnaire

An earlier version of the questionnaire was completed by five parents of school-aged children. The project website address was given to these five parents, so they could learn about the project and, from there, they were directed to the survey. The five parents were asked to complete the survey as if they were regular research participants. They were also asked to provide any feedback upon their completion of the questionnaire. Feedback could include the functioning of the Qualtrics survey, the content of the questionnaire, or any other matter they wished to comment on.

The five parents' answers to the questionnaire were examined to ensure that the interpretation of each question was as expected. In response to the parents' feedback, only minor changes were made to the wording and flow of the questionnaire. This pilot testing also confirmed that the project website and subsequent redirection to the questionnaire was functional and that responses to the survey were anonymous. To acknowledge the time spent on completing the survey and providing feedback, these five parents were given a \$20 New World Supermarket voucher/gift card.

Participant Recruitment

The researcher recruited parents of school-aged children to respond to the online, anonymous three-part questionnaire. The term 'parents' also encompassed other primary caregivers of children to provide a wider inclusion of all parent-child relationships. Within the questionnaire, participants were directed to answer only the questions that were relevant to them. For example, a parent whose child had *not* experienced bullying, but the parent themselves had experienced bullying in their childhood would respond to Study One (hypothetical scenarios) and Study Three (parent experience of bullying), but they would not be presented with the questions for Study Two (child experience of bullying) if they selected 'no' their child had not been a victim or perpetrator of this behaviour. Therefore, the recruitment of participants remained the same for all three studies. Given the difficulty in recruiting parents of children who are involved in bullying in any role (Smith, 2014), no further restrictions were placed on these or other demographic characteristics in participant recruitment.

Questionnaire Distribution

Recruitment of participants occurred primarily through convenience and snowball sampling, to recruit the largest possible sample to participate in the studies. Convenience sampling is where recruitment includes easily accessible people that are volunteering for and are conveniently available to participate in the research (Dörnyei, 2007). Typically, snowball sampling involves existing research participants identifying other people who may be potential participants in the research (Goodman, 1961). In the current study, this was achieved via ‘sharing’ on social media. For Study Two and Study Three, purposeful, criterion-based sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015) was used within the questionnaire. Participants had to meet certain criteria for participation in these two studies. That is, the participants had to have actual experience of supporting a child who had been involved in relational bullying for Study Two, whereas in Study Three, the parents themselves had to have some childhood experience of relational bullying.

In order to recruit participants to the online questionnaire, a project website was made at kidsandpeers.com. This website provided potential participants with general information about the project, described what participating in the study would involve, and provided contact details for the student researcher and project supervisors. Then it provided a link to the questionnaire on the Qualtrics website.

To recruit potential participants to the project website and subsequent questionnaire, two main processes were used. Firstly, the researcher of the current study advertised the project throughout her social media networks (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, and Neighbourly), inviting ‘followers’ and ‘viewers’ to participate and/or forward the website link on to people that they thought could be interested in participating. Online social network recruitment has been evaluated an effective and efficient way to engage with hard-to-reach populations while also providing anonymity, accessibility, and convenience (O'Connor et al., 2014). These were essential factors to consider in the current study.

Secondly, schools and community organisations were contacted via email with a request to post the webpage link on their websites, social media pages, and in their newsletters. An email was sent to every school in New Zealand that had a current email address supplied on the New Zealand Ministry of Education website. In addition, emails were sent to several community and health organisations that may have been interested in the research. Because all information needed to access the questionnaire was supplied in these

emails up front, it is unknown how many groups or schools went on to advertise or take part in the studies.

New World Supermarket Voucher/Gift Card

To acknowledge participants' time spent on the questionnaire, there was an opportunity to go into a draw to win one of up to 100 \$20 New World vouchers/gift cards. That is, if 100 or less participants entered the draw, all would receive a voucher. If 101 or more participants entered the draw, a random selection of 100 participants would be chosen to receive one \$20 New World Supermarket gift card. If participants wanted to go in to the draw to win one \$20 New World gift card, they were able to enter their contact details when they completed the questionnaire. This section was not linked to the questionnaire in any way and participants' responses remained anonymous.

Upon closing the questionnaire, 90 people had entered the draw for the vouchers/gift cards. However, four entries did not receive one of the gift cards for the following reasons: One participant had entered the voucher draw twice, one participant requested their voucher be donated to charity, and two participants did not supply a postal address and did not respond to emails requesting a postal address for the gift card to be sent to. As such, 86 participants with valid and complete entries were sent one \$20 New World Supermarket gift card. The remaining four pre-purchased gift cards were donated to charity four months after data collection was completed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was gained for this research through the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (Reference number: 22748). As participation in the study was completely anonymous, participants could not be contacted to review the information they provided or verify themes that were developed during the analysis. However, participants were given the opportunity to send an email to request a summary of the findings. The email address and details provided in this contact would not be linked to their response on the online survey. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. In addition, participants had the right to withdraw their participation at any time by closing the internet browser they were using to access the survey. To further ensure that all participants were voluntarily participating in the research, the final question asked participants to confirm if they were ready to submit their response, or if they would like to withdraw from the research.

There were no significant foreseeable risks involved with participation, completion, and dissemination of this research, and no deception was involved. However, the researcher acknowledged in the participant information sheet that it may be upsetting for participants to talk about negative peer relationships in their family, past or present, so the website provided potential participants with several webpage links to resources and support for families and children. These support links were also displayed upon completion of the survey.

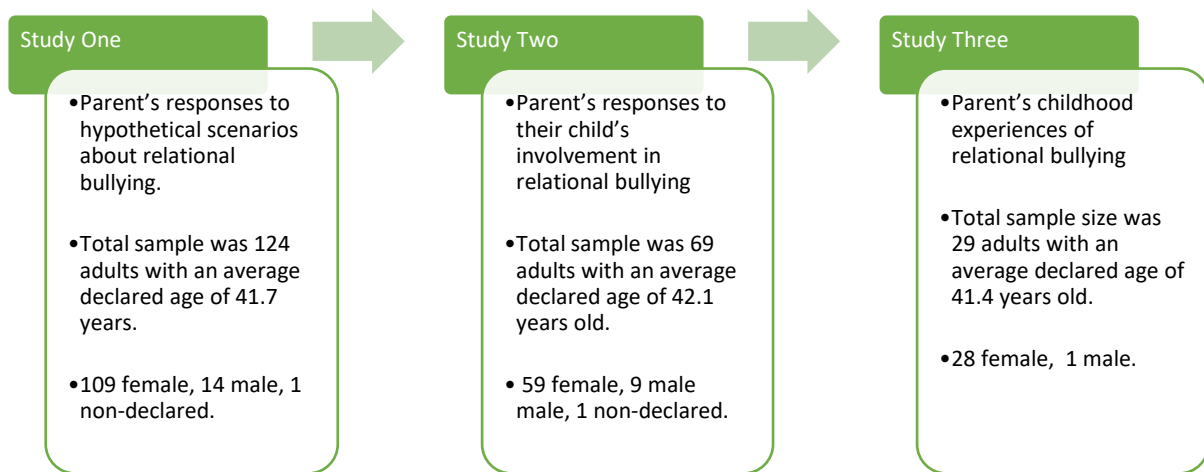
Anonymity of participation was enhanced by selecting the relevant settings options during the construction of the online questionnaire to anonymise responses and to avoid the collection of Internet Protocol (IP) address information. IP address information can be used to identify the device or internet network that a participant used, so it was essential to avoid the collection of this information.

Participants

The survey was open for data collection for three months from 03 August 2016 to 03 November 2016. At the time of closing, there had been no new responses since 17 October 2016 – over two weeks earlier. It was determined that this indicated a satisfactory level of data collection and that it was unlikely, within the recruitment strategies utilised, that many new responses would be completed, if any. At closing, there were a total of 128 responses to the survey. However, one response was excluded due to illogical and nonsensical answers to the questions, and three responses were excluded due to the respondent's children not fitting the criteria for 'school-aged' (i.e., one child was four years old, and two children were 22 years old.). In addition, the response that was excluded for illogical answers also stated their child was 20 years old, so this response would have been excluded at this stage as well. As such, 124 participants completed Study One, 69 completed Study Two, and 29 completed Study Three [see figure 4].

Figure 4

Participant demographic data for the programme of research



Study One Participants: Parents' Responses to Hypothetical Scenarios about Relational Bullying

Participants in this study were the total participant pool of 124 parents. Of the 123 participants that indicated their gender, 88.6% (n = 109) were women, while the remaining 11.4% (n= 14) were men. Of the 98 participants that indicated their age, the mean age of respondents was 41.7 years. Participants' children were 53.2% female (n = 66), 46% male (n = 57), and 0.8% (n = 1) selected 'other'. Participants' children ranged in age from 5-18 years.

Study Two Participants: Parents' Responses to their Child's Involvement in Relational Bullying

Participants were 69 parents from the pool of 124 (Study One) who identified that their child had been involved in relational bullying. Of the 68 parents that indicated their gender, 87% were female (n = 59) and 13% were male (n = 9). Not all of the participants indicated their age, but the average age was 42.1 years old. The children involved in the relational bullying included 39 girls and 30 boys. All of the participants that took part in this study identified that their child had been a *victim* of relational bullying (100%, n = 69). In addition, 36% (n = 25) of participants identified that their child had also been a *bully* of relational bullying (therefore, they were 'bully-victims', while 63% (n = 44) of participant's children were 'victims-only'. No parents identified their children had *only* been a bully of relational bullying.

While parents manually selected whether their child was a bully or victim and then responded to the relevant sections, some wrote they were unsure. For these responses the descriptions of the behaviour were checked to ensure it met the definition of bullying and was then assigned to the correct bullying role (four responses were assessed in this way). In addition, five responses were manually re-categorised when parents responded to a specific question later on in the survey about their child as a bully-victim but had not previously selected that their child was a bully. The responses were assessed, and their child's role was changed to be accurately represented in the findings.

Study Three Participants: Parents' Childhood Experiences of Relational Bullying

Participants were 29 parents (from the pool of 124) who had experienced relational bullying as a child or adolescent, as a victim, bully, or bully-victim. In addition, their parents had to have been aware of the bullying. Twenty-eight of the 29 participants were female; the remaining participant was male. Of the 27 participants that reported their age, the mean age was 41.4 years old. The 29 participants were asked to recall their most easily remembered experience as either a victim, bully, or victim and bully, during their childhood or adolescence to respond to the survey questions. Twenty-three participants discussed being a victim of relational bullying, one participant described being a bully, and five participants described being a victim and a bully (i.e., a bully-victim).

As this study focused on how participants' parents intervened in their bullying situations, parents had to have been aware that their child was being bullied. From the initial pool of 124 respondents in the entire study, 32 were uninvolved in relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence, 55 identified as victims, 30 were bully-victims, and 7 were bullies. Of these 92 participants that were involved in relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence, only 29 said their parents were aware of the bullying, while the remaining 63 were either unsure if their parent knew (16 participants) or said their parents did not know (47 participants). Therefore, 29 participants were included in this study.

Data Analysis

There are many methods that can be used to analyse qualitative data including content analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis. Content analysis involves interpreting people's attitudes, opinions, or behaviour from their responses with a focus on quantifying how often these concepts are repeated in the dataset (Tolich & Davidson, 2003). Discourse

analysis considers how participants use language and connects their choice of words to their wider thought patterns. The present programme of research used thematic analysis, which is also used for identifying and analysing patterns in data, but it is not concerned with quantifying these patterns or detailed linguistics, and it is not bound by wider theoretical constraints (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was chosen because it is an established way to search for themes across a large dataset, and can highlight similarities and differences within this. In addition it is useful for generating “unanticipated insights” (p. 97) which is crucial for inductive research.

The inductive thematic analysis approach has also been detailed, specifically for generic qualitative research, by Percy et al. (2015). The steps described by Percy et al. (2015) are comparable to the process identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). For the current studies, data were coded using nVivo (developed by QSR International), a computer programme designed to support the organisation and coding of large amounts of qualitative data. The qualitative analysis used an inductive thematic analysis approach to develop overarching themes by following the steps outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006).

The six stages of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) are:

1. *Familiarisation with the data.* This included reading and re-reading the data, noting down any initial ideas.
2. *Generating initial codes.* This involved coding features of the entire data set and ordering data into relevant codes. Coding was not restricted by a pre-determined coding scheme. Full and equal attention was given to each item of data.
3. *Searching for themes.* After ordering data into codes, the codes were collated into potential categories and themes. Themes were mapped firstly within nNivo as ‘parent and child nodes’ and these were later transferred into tables for ease of use. For an example of how individual codes have been ordered into categories and then into a theme, see Table 1.
4. *Reviewing themes.* This involved checking if the themes resonated through individual codes and across the entire data set. This was an iterative process as themes were

continually analysed and reframed during the analysis and writing phases.

5. *Defining and naming themes.* This involved ongoing analysis to refine the themes, overall analysis, and develop clear names and definitions for themes. To enhance a connection to the original dataset, themes in Study One have been named using the participant voice to capture the overall essence of the theme. Because this study utilised hypothetical scenarios, this was a way to reflect the very real emotion that the issue of bullying can evoke, regardless of lived experience. For Studies Two and Three, theme names were developed by the researcher in a more direct, descriptive way.
6. *Producing the report.* Lastly, the researcher selected extracts from the data that related to the research questions and existing literature and used these to produce a scholarly report of the analysis. This too was an iterative process of ensuring the research questions were answered using evidence from participants, but in addition to this, the evidence was used to create an overarching and interesting narrative.

While the overarching rigour of the research project will be discussed in the following section (See: Validity and Reliability), the ways in which rigour was enhanced during the thematic analysis process will be discussed here, alongside description of the data analysis procedures.

Nowell et al. (2017) identify many ways that researchers can enhance trustworthiness (also called rigour) when using thematic analysis research. This research has enhanced trustworthiness using the following techniques identified by Nowell et al. (2017). In phase one of Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps of thematic analysis, the researcher established trustworthiness through prolonged engagement with the data, documenting initial thoughts and codes, and storing raw data in secure and well-organised archives (Nowell et al., 2017). This process involved reading over the data at various stages of the analysis and going back to the raw data to increase contextual understanding.

In phase two, the researcher utilised a coding framework that was driven by the data and was aided in organisation by the nVivo programme. While these types of programmes can assist in efficiency and depth of analysis, they cannot replace the intellectual process needed to analyse, judge, and interpret data (King, 2004; Nowell et al., 2017). As the coding was data-driven, this meant there was no pre-determined coding scheme for the researcher, and every piece of data was coded as a possible finding. As analysis progressed, and some

codes were found to be more frequent than others, the researcher maintained a focus to code everything as a possible finding. However, where there was overlap and redundancies in the coding, these were simplified and refined throughout the analysis (Thomas, 2006).

In phase three, themes were constructed from the data using an inductive, data-driven, approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach means codes and themes were constructed based on the data collected, and not analysed in relation to a pre-existing coding scheme. This means that codes and subsequent themes are linked strongly to the raw data and may not have a clear relation to the specific questions that participants were asked (Nowell et al., 2017). To enhance trustworthiness in this phase, researcher triangulation can be useful. This process involves data being analysed by more than one researcher and this is a way that credibility of analysis can be enhanced (Côté & Turgeon, 2005; Nowell et al., 2017). In this phase, the primary researcher asked a second coder to search for any data which did not fit the current codes and alert the researcher if there was a need to verify existing codes or develop new codes to encapsulate the data more fully. This process will be more fully explained in the Validity and Reliability section below.

In phase four, Nowell et al. (2017) identify that trustworthiness can be established by having themes and sub-themes vetted by team members. This process was enhanced by the research supervisors and team meetings wherein the themes and sub-themes that had been constructed from the researcher's analysis were reviewed and interrogated by the research supervisors. This process resulted in some themes being expanded, while others were collapsed and broken down to more accurately synthesise with other themes. This was an iterative process where the researcher and the research supervisors tried to resolve Braun and Clarke's (2006) suggestion that there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between the individual themes. However, this resulted in some overlap between categories within a theme.

This became clearer in the next phase, phase five, where Nowell et al. (2017) state that trustworthiness can be established by team consensus on the final themes. In the current research, the themes were reviewed and reorganised so that they best reflected the data and were displayed in the most meaningful and useful way. This reorganisation was continual throughout this and the next phase until a consensus was reached between the researcher and the research supervisors. This process was similar to that used by other qualitative researchers (Nowell et al., 2017). Table 1 shows an example of how codes from the current programme of research fit into the categories, and the categories into the themes.

In the final phase, phase six, trustworthiness was established in the writing of the final report by fully describing the process of coding and analysis and reporting on the theoretical, methodological, and analytical underpinnings of the research (Nowell et al., 2017). Trustworthiness was also enhanced by using direct or verbatim quotes from participants. Using participant quotes in the final report assists the reader’s understanding and interpretation of themes (King, 2004) and the use of participant quotes not only adds to the narrative, but additionally provides evidence of the analysis undertaken (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 1

Example of organisation of codes and categories into a theme

Theme	Categories	Codes	Example coded quote
Impact on Family	1) Parent impact	Parent conflict, Time off work, Time spent on resolution, We’re victims too.	“It caused arguments between myself and my husband about how best to respond to the situation.” [<i>parent conflict</i>]
	2) Impact on siblings	Anger, Stress, Upset.	“Even her younger sibling was upset.” [<i>upset</i>]
	3) Impact on household	General impact, General tension, Sadness, Stress.	“The stress level in the household is raised.” [<i>stress</i>]

Validity and Reliability

Trustworthiness versus Rigour

There are many debates in qualitative research, one of which is the recurring disagreement around the terminology of ‘rigour’ or ‘trustworthiness’. This thesis follows Morse’s (2015) recommendation that qualitative researchers should “return to the terminology of social sciences, using rigour, reliability, validity, and generalisability” (p. 1212). However, if researchers have used the alternate term, I have kept their usage, for example, as above, when citing Nowell et al. (2017). Validity in qualitative research refers to how well the research represents the given phenomenon and what researchers do to enhance this characteristic. Reliability, on the other hand, refers to how consistent and repeatable the study is and the ability that a repeated project would come to the same results (Morse, 2015). Morse (2015)

also acknowledges that, in qualitative research, these are often intertwined and support each other.

Transparency

In this section I hope to provide transparency on my research and data analysis processes. Moravcsik (2009) identifies three dimensions of transparency in qualitative research: data transparency, analytic transparency, and production transparency. Data transparency is about providing the reader with evidence to support the researcher's claims, such as rich quotes in participants' own words. Analytic transparency is when the researcher provides the reader with precise information about how they reached their conclusions and what their data analysis procedures were. Lastly, production transparency is about being open about the choices the researcher has made, and explaining why these choices of evidence, theory, and method were chosen compared to other alternative options. My transparency in these three areas is discussed in this chapter, and evidenced throughout this thesis.

Epistemology

A key feature in qualitative research is acknowledging the researcher's preconceived notions and ways of thinking. Crotty (1998) describes epistemology as an *understanding of knowing*, or "how we know what we know" (p. 8). Epistemology involves the idea of how someone sees the world, and how they make sense of it. Crotty (1998) goes on to define different stances that attempt to encapsulate different epistemologies. Two major stances in epistemology are objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism is the idea that meaning and truth exist, independently of the researcher's knowledge of them. This epistemological stance positions research as a way of discovering the knowledge, and therefore the truth. Constructionism does not believe that there is one discoverable truth to knowledge. In contrast, it identifies that, even within a given phenomenon, people may construct meaning in different ways (Crotty, 1998). That is, knowledge is viewed as the product of interactions between a person and their environment, primarily within the social context (Crotty, 1998).

A social-constructionist view is relevant to the bullying context and has been utilised to contextualise many aspects of bullying within social contexts (Thornberg, 2011). Understood in this view, a social-constructionist position takes into consideration the cultural patterns, social hierarchies, and power dynamics between peers. It also considers the labelling and stigma which do not only create bullying in the first place, but can continue to impact on

both victim and bully. This view also considers the group process of bullying and its positioning as a complex social phenomenon (Thornberg, 2011). When considered in this way, the constructionist view is complementary to the social-ecological framework that underpins these studies. Moreover, it emphasises the need to garner insight from a large sample of parents to better understand the different ways people construct meaning within this one phenomenon.

The Researcher

To enhance the rigour of qualitative research, it is important to recognise that the researcher has pre-existing beliefs, values, and insights about the research topic (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Nowell et al., 2017). These perspectives exist within the researcher before engaging with data, and often develop and change during their immersion with the data. One way that researchers can acknowledge the influence of their preconceptions is to use ‘bracketing’ (Tufford & Newman, 2010). This approach is heavily debated as to how it is done and how well it works, but in its simplest interpretation, it involves acknowledging the researcher’s preconceptions related to the research. In doing so, rigour of the research can be enhanced (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Morse (2015) describes how researcher bias can involve a tendency for the researcher to see what they anticipate or expect to see. Researcher reflexivity involves disclosing one’s beliefs, assumptions, and values that may shape their research (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

To acknowledge my position prior to undertaking this research, I have provided a brief background of my research in this area. In 2014, I completed a Master of Educational Psychology degree investigating the experiences of parents whose children had been victims of cyberbullying. Upon completing this, I was curious to learn more about other forms of bullying. One striking finding during my master’s degree was the realisation that many of these cases of cyberbullying were not random, anonymous attacks but were existing bullying situations that, like many aspects of modern life, utilised technology as a means to communicate. That is, I was learning that the ‘cyber’ aspect of cyberbullying was often more about bullying via an additional medium, rather than being a distinct form of bullying in and of itself. Having focused on only *victims* of bullying, I was also curious to explore the experiences of parents whose children were the bullies or were both a bully and a victim. Moreover, I wanted to continue to explore the other ways the social-ecological framework (Swearer & Espelage, 2004), that underpinned my prior research, could further be used to

understand bullying when positioning parents at the centre of this model. Viewing bullying in this way has allowed the current study to explore the bidirectional relationships between parents and their children, home and school, and also considers the influence of time and life events of the parent – all of which are points of interest of mine that emerged through my prior research in this area.

Supervision of the Researcher

One way to reduce the impact of research bias is through peer review and debriefing (Morse, 2015). Creswell and Miller (2000) explain that this process involves having someone, who is familiar with the research and the phenomenon, review the data and the research process. This process enhances internal validity (Morse, 2015). In this thesis, this process occurred primarily through the role of the thesis supervisors. The review and debriefing process is in place to prevent bias, aid in the conceptual development of the project, and, in my case, provide insight and experience from highly experienced advisors (Morse, 2015). Throughout the supervision process, I have been able to synthesise and refine my ideas, follow new leads, and enhance the overall rigour of each of the studies. Supervisors have reviewed codes, categories, themes, and overarching conclusions to enhance consistency and validity of the research.

The Participant Voice

Utilising the participant voice seeks to establish validity and support the researcher's conclusions by providing the reader with verbatim participant responses. These quotes help the reader to understand that the conclusions are credible and allow the reader to decide about the generalisability to other contexts (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The breadth of the current dataset was a benefit of the online survey method of data collection. In contrast, to have collected interview data from 129 participants, across the country, would not have been feasible in the scope of this project. However, by putting the questions online, the resulting dataset was suitably broad and included many perspectives.

Triangulation

Another procedure that the current study used to establish rigour is triangulation. This approach maintains validity by using multiple forms of evidence to support a category or theme, rather than a single occurrence (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Triangulation in this

programme of research occurred through a systematic and iterative process of reading and re-reading the data, sorting common codes into categories, and the categories into themes. It should be noted that the final themes are the salient themes that were constructed from the analysis and can never be truly independent of researcher bias. The themes were chosen because they capture the essence of the overall experience of participants' or their children's involvement in relational bullying.

Inter-Rater Reliability

While Braun and Clarke (2006) do not advocate inter-rater reliability calculations for thematic analysis, a percentage agreement has been calculated as a way to enhance the rigour of the studies. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that inter-rater reliability simply shows the training of two coders to be the same, rather than the correctness of their coding – because, in this perspective, there is no one correct way to code data and analyses will always be influenced by the researcher. Braun and Clarke (2006) are properly noting that just because a coding scheme is reliable, it is not necessarily valid. However, one needs to have reliability before one can obtain validity. Training a second coder to code this data in the same way would reduce issues of human error, overlooked pieces of data, or any other mistakes made in this process, if any. This was considered to be an appropriate step in lieu of member checking, where participants are able to provide feedback on analysis (Côté, & Turgeon, 2005), which is not possible with anonymous research.

A second coder was employed to establish inter-rater reliability. This coder was a postgraduate student in the final stages of a doctoral thesis. The researcher trained the coder in the use of nVivo and carefully explained what was expected of the coding. The second coder was instructed to code against a list developed by the researcher during the inductive coding process. However, the second coder was urged to alert the researcher to any data that were not accurately represented in the coding scheme. Upon completion of the inter-rater reliability process, the second coder agreed that the dataset was accurately represented by the codes the researcher had developed and no new codes were needed.

The second coder was given 30% of the data from each of the three studies to code independently in nVivo. Coding the same partial dataset, a percentage agreement was calculated for agreement between the researcher and the second coder for presence of codes. For Study One, the percentage agreement between the researcher and the second coder was 82.3%. For Study Two, this percentage agreement between the researcher and the second

coder was 79.5%. And for Study Three, the percentage agreement between the researcher and the second coder was 80.2%.

Overall Research Quality

In addition to the above described strategies to enhance reliability and validity, Tracy (2010) identifies eight characteristics of excellent qualitative research for which researchers should strive. Tracy's (2010) eight criteria that high quality qualitative research should have are: a worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, and resonance; it should make a significant contribution, be ethical, and have meaningful coherence. To have a *worthy topic*, the research should be relevant, timely, and of significance. For the current research, this has been established through the literature review positioning bullying as a serious and significant problem in the New Zealand context that is garnering increasing scrutiny. For qualitative research to have *rich rigour*, it should show the richness and complexity of the phenomenon through its theoretical constructs, amount of data, size and breadth of sample, and appropriate analysis procedures. Rigour has been enhanced in the current programme of research by providing "a rich complexity of abundance" (p. 841) in descriptions and explanations of the ample data, ensuring data support claims, and prolonged immersion in the dataset during analysis.

To achieve *sincerity*, the researcher needs to be reflexive about their views and transparent about their processes, which have both been described earlier in this chapter. *Credibility* is enhanced through detailed description, triangulation, and inclusion of many perspectives. The current research has achieved this goal through including a variety of participant voices and collating these views where similar, and contrasting these views where different. One aspect of credibility, i.e., member reflections, could not be adhered to due to the anonymous nature of participation. However, I would argue that anything lost in credibility here has been gained in authenticity of responses that were enhanced through confidentiality. To obtain *resonance*, the research should reverberate with its audience. Resonance has been strived for in the current research through the inclusion of evocative participant responses that capture their experience. It is hoped that the reader can relate to the experience, rather than simply read about it.

To make a *significant contribution*, high quality research extends existing knowledge, improves practice, and can generate future research. The current research has sought to do this through addressing research gaps, and in the discussion chapter, hopes to evoke a call to

action to take relational bullying seriously, and generate further research necessary to extend this field of knowledge. To be *ethical*, good research follows procedural ethical guidelines, deals with ethical issues if they crop up, is conducted by a researcher who respects their participants, and presents their findings in a way that attempts to avoid unintended consequences. In the current research, ethical procedures have been enhanced by the researcher following the ethical guidelines of their institution, respecting the personal and sensitive stories that have been disclosed, and providing enough context that misinterpretation should be reduced. Lastly, for high quality research to have *meaningful coherence*, it should achieve the stated purpose, and interconnect the research methods and analysis with theoretical and methodological underpinnings. In addition, high quality research should provide coherence that spans connections from initial literature right through to findings and interpretations. This programme of research has aimed for coherence with studies that meet the espoused aims. In addition, the logic of the ecological framework should be clear to the reader as well as the case for the flexibility of both a generic approach to the research and the thematic analysis of the data analysis. Finally, a coherent narrative from introduction through to conclusion of this thesis has been strived for.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the research strategies that have been utilised for the three studies overall, and for the three studies individually. Because these studies sought to explore the perceptions and experiences of parents anonymously, and online, the methodological procedures were required to be suited to this. As such, a generic qualitative methodology was chosen and has been described and critiqued in this chapter. In addition, this chapter has described the development of the research survey tool, participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis strategies. Namely, that of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis which has guided the data analysis and development of the research findings. Lastly, the various ways that this programme of research has established rigour have been discussed. The following three chapters will present the analysis of the findings from each of the three studies.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDY ONE
PARENTS' BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT CHILDREN'S
HYPOTHETICAL INVOLVEMENT IN RELATIONAL BULLYING AS A VICTIM
AND AS A BULLY.

Findings

This study sought to analyse how parents would respond to their child's involvement in three different forms of relational bullying behaviour, for both victimisation and perpetration. Parents' responses to the six hypothetical scenarios (exclusion bully, exclusion victim, manipulation bully, manipulation victim, rumour spreading bully, and rumour spreading victim) were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) and led to the identification of four themes, named using the parent voice: (i) "kids being kids", (ii) "we need to protect all children, not just ours", (iii) "a teachable moment", and (iv) "their hurt is my hurt". These four themes included twelve categories that are displayed in Table 2. A wide range of viewpoints from parents are represented in the themes and evidenced by verbatim quotes. While the findings cannot represent all of these points of view, attention has been paid to prominent considerations that appear to resonate with many of the 124 participants. Findings for all six scenarios have been analysed to highlight similarities and differences within each theme. Where there are similarities, these are discussed under thematic sub-headings. When differences emerged between different roles in or type of relational bullying, these are discussed under headings that highlight the role or type of bullying that is being referred to.

Table 2

Themes and categories found in the thematic analysis of research findings from Study One

Themes	Categories
<i>1. Kids being kids</i>	a) Normalising bullying b) Inaction and ignoring c) Victim-caused exclusion
<i>2. We need to protect all children, not just ours</i>	a) Child responsibility and accountability b) Parenting role and responsibility c) School responsibility and partnership
<i>3. A teachable moment</i>	a) Supporting my child b) Encouraging empathy c) Empowering my child
<i>4. Their hurt is my hurt</i>	a) All relational bullying can provoke anger, sadness, and disappointment b) Exclusion and rumour spreading can be upsetting and worrying c) Manipulation can be annoying and frustrating

Theme 1: Kids Being Kids

The first theme explores the idea that relational bullying is sometimes viewed as a common, normalised behaviour and not an adverse situation that even needs to be addressed. For the most part, parents described this behaviour as ‘common’ or ‘normal’ and referred to the idea that it is prevalent among school-aged children, and something to be expected during the school years, rather than an abnormal event or an atypical behaviour. Analysis of parental responses to the scenarios showed bullying is normalised, the reasons why parents decide not to intervene, and the reasons why they think there are acceptable and unacceptable reasons for children to both exclude or be excluded. This theme ‘kids being kids’ was made up of three categories: a) normalising bullying, b) inaction and ignoring, and c) victim-caused exclusion. While there may be some overlap between the three categories, each provides insight into a different aspect of the overall theme.

a) Normalising Bullying.

Parents viewed bullying as just a ‘normal part of growing up’ or a ‘rite of passage’. Parents often considered exclusion and rumour spreading (both victim and bully scenarios) as normal, but this normalisation was most evident for both the *manipulation bully* and *manipulation victim* scenarios.

Manipulation Bully. When responding to the manipulation bully scenario, parents described manipulation as being the most prevalent form of relational bullying, yet they downplayed the impact of it:

These are fairly normal incidents in children's relationships.

Such a common playground occurrence with girls, that I'm over it already.

This is very common among school children to behave that way. So, it won't affect me.

Nothing really just kids growing up.

Parents thought that social manipulation was how some children learn about group dynamics and learn about themselves: “Likely a normal interaction between small girls who are figuring out their own personalities.” There was a focus in responses to this scenario of manipulation as just “kids being kids,” and “a normal part of 6-year-old dynamics.” While this could be an attempt to downplay the issue of their child being the bully, it is perhaps

indicative of a view that is recurring throughout this chapter – that manipulation is seen as a less serious form of relational bullying than exclusion and rumour spreading. Supporting this, is the fact that this category of normalising was evident in the manipulation *victim* scenario as well.

Manipulation Victim. When responding to the manipulation victim scenario, parents had the same ideas as when their child was the bully in this scenario. That is, they described it as fairly frequent behaviour for young children: “My son is 6 so this is a bit of a regular occurrence while kids flip around between mates.” Parents believed that their child could bounce back from being a victim of social manipulation: “I’d feel that that is quite normal, and they will get over it.” And they believed that being the victim of manipulation was a common occurrence and children need to develop strategies for coping with it:

Life is full of people like these, you see the same behaviour in adults from time to time, they just hide it better. Simply idiotic attention seeking behaviour designed to manipulate and exert their dominance in a friendship. Life is too short to waste breath on these people, simply expand your pool of friends so you don't need to put up with such dross.

Parents did not believe manipulation was as big a problem as the other bullying scenarios:

While it can be temporarily distressing to a child, this is (in my opinion) less of a concern than a group led exclusion situation as it is limited to one fickle child.

They also stated that they believed this to be a behaviour more frequently exhibited by girls:

Sometimes this is part of the natural friendship cycle, especially for girls.

This is a common issue with children - especially girls.

Parents downplayed and minimised the potential impact and seriousness of manipulation:

[I would be] bored, it happens all the time.

I think this is fairly typical so as long as my child wasn't too devastated, I would probably fluctuate between hopefully hidden amusement and mild concern.

Parents reported that they believed consequences of such behaviour would be short lived:

Child[ren] say things they don't mean all the time and if they are friends again the next day then all is well.

I don't think that it has lasting effects.

They also thought that being involved in social manipulation might just be how children figure out about social dynamics: “I believe this behaviour to be common as a way of figuring social relationships and consequences.”

Category Summary. Primarily when responding to the manipulation scenario, parents responded that both the victim and bully scenarios were possibly just normal behaviour for children. Parents sometimes considered exclusion and rumour spreading (both victim and bully scenarios) to be normal too. However, when asked about their initial feelings in response to each scenario, manipulation was the only scenario that frequently elicited strong responses that suggested manipulation was normal in nature, or where parents explicitly stated they themselves would be unaffected. This was evident for both bully *and* victim scenarios. Overall, many parents identified that they would feel “normal”, “indifferent”, and “unconcerned” by manipulation.

b) Inaction and Ignoring.

The second category in the theme *kids being kids* explores the reasons parents gave for either ignoring the behaviour or deciding not to take action. This was present for all three *victimisation* scenarios, as well as the *manipulation bully* scenario. Parents described they would be more likely to take action and respond to the bullying when their child was a bully enacting exclusion or rumour spreading, and less likely to take action when their child was a bully in the manipulation scenario. Within this category there is some overlap with the normalising attitudes that were highlighted in the first category, however the current category focuses on the wide-ranging reasons parents gave for *inaction* or ignoring. That is, in addition to many other reasons for inaction, normalisation may be included in this category as a *reason* for inaction.

Manipulation Bully. When responding to the *manipulation bully* scenario, parents wrote that their children would be able to understand that this behaviour would not have a

positive outcome for them: “because kids have to figure this out and come to their own realization that they need to be a good friend to keep good friends.” Parents also suggested that manipulation was common amongst children, provided a learning opportunity, and adults did not always need to intervene: “They have ups and downs, and provided it doesn't escalate, children can and should learn to work through this relying on their own resources. We don't always need adult intervention.”

All Victim Scenarios. Across the three victim scenarios, there were some similarities in parents' reasons for inaction or ignoring. Some parents in the manipulation victim scenario described that intervention wasn't necessary:

Generally, these silly hiccups resolve themselves without intervention. (manipulation).

Usually by the next day they are back to being friends again. (manipulation).

Parents also justified their inaction by explaining that it wasn't their place to intervene:

Past experience has shown me lots of things are "kids' politics" which the children get over faster than the parents and then the parents have fallouts and the children have made up and forgotten already. (exclusion).

You can't rescue your kids from hurt, it does them no favours. (manipulation).

Kids can work this out on their own. (manipulation).

This does not affect me. (manipulation).

Parents in the rumour spreading and exclusion scenarios stated that their child could ignore the bullying:

[I would] advise them to take no notice of the rumours. (rumour spreading).

I would remind my child how petty and silly children can be and tell my child to ignore it. (rumour spreading).

Depends on how badly it is affecting my child [...] suggest she ignores it. (rumour spreading).

There was also a shared view for exclusion and rumour spreading victimisation that the victim would learn coping skills and resilience if the parents left them to it:

I would be unlikely to take action because my child needs to learn how to problem-solve his own friendship issues. (exclusion).

Because kids normally work these kinds of things out on their own, and one learns resilience and how to cope from situations like it. (exclusion).

I believe that to take action is to get involved in petty, child-like behaviour and so would only take action if this escalates to more serious bullying or distress for my child. (rumour spreading).

However, parents in the exclusion and rumour spreading scenarios had a fear that intervention would be ineffective or could even make things worse for their child. Parents were wary about amplifying the issue and did not want to “add fuel to the fire” (rumour spreading):

I do not want to embarrass my child and am aware of the likelihood that nothing would come out of my intervention. (exclusion).

I would also be worried that any action I took may make things worse for my child. (exclusion).

My interfering directly could cause my child to become a target. (exclusion).

My belief is taking action could negatively impact my child. (rumour spreading).

Category Summary. The key ideas in this category are that parents considered that action was not always necessary due to the perception that the behaviour was normal, their child could just ignore it, or that children would resolve the issue on their own. Parents also refrained from taking action because they felt there was a risk that it could make the situation worse for their child. Parents did not see inaction as an abdication of parenting responsibility, but rather an opportunity for children to learn to be independent and develop resiliency.

Parental inaction and ignoring of relational bullying was found in all three victimisation scenarios, as well as the manipulation bully scenario (i.e. *not* the exclusion bully, or rumour spreading bully scenarios.). For the victimisation scenarios, inaction was driven by a belief that the behaviour was normal, a fear of making things worse for their child, or a desire to help their child grow and learn from the experiences independently. For the manipulation *bullying* scenario, inaction was driven by a view that this behaviour was normal, and parents believed a more hands-off approach to intervention was necessary compared to the other two forms of relational bullying which sometimes required parental intervention.

c) Victim-Caused Exclusion.

In this category, parents identified a number of reasons why victims are excluded, and explained that there are both acceptable and unacceptable reasons for this behaviour. There was some evidence of this point of view in the rumour spreading victimisation scenario, but the idea of victim-blaming was most evident in the scenarios about *exclusion*.

Exclusion Bully. When responding to the exclusion bully scenario, parents wrote about how there might be an ‘acceptable reason’ that their child excluded another child, and that this would determine how they dealt with the situation:

If she had a reason to exclude I would want to know it and then I would have to decide from there whether it needed any follow up.

Firstly, I need to understand if there is a valid reason for my child doing this, i.e. the child is causing problems or is not being very nice, so it is easier not to play with them.

Parents tried to rationalise their child’s exclusion of others by wondering if there was a valid cause: “Maybe the kid smells or swears lots and my child doesn't want to be around a kid like that. Maybe the kid was nasty to them in some way.” Parents stressed the importance of knowing more about the context of the exclusion and ensuring they did not blame their child unnecessarily: “I would find out from my child if there was a particular reason for their behaviour rather than putting all the blame on them.” They wrote that they needed to investigate before responding:

[I would] ask my child why they have been doing this. If a reasonable answer (the other child is unkind or difficult) then work with my child to help them understand the situation. If no good answer, then explore why my child felt the need to exclude another.

Parents wrote they would support their child excluding others if there was a just cause: I would talk to him about it and find out why he is excluding the other kid. “If it is justified (such as, if the other kid is always violent) then I would agree with his decision.”

Exclusion Victim. When their child was a *victim of exclusion*, parents wrote about how they would fear for their child not fitting in or behaving in a way that makes others wish to exclude them:

Worried that my child is behaving in an off-putting way or exhibiting bad behaviour.

What’s wrong with my child? Is there a reason she’s being left out?

[I would] wonder why other children don't want to play with my child.

It's also important to consider what actions your child may be doing to contribute rather than focusing on blame on the other children or labelling them as mean.

Parents were concerned their child lacked the appropriate social skills to effectively integrate with the wider social group or that their child was not liked by their peers:

[it] leaves me wondering why and if there was some reason that my child is not wanted to be part of the activity. Is my child unliked?

Parents suggested then that they would try to fix their child’s behaviour as an intervention tactic: “[I would] make sure my child has not done anything to cause the situation and if so teach her how to correct this and approach her friends to talk.” Parents in this scenario recognised that there might already be traits in their children that would make them more at-risk of being a victim of exclusion: “My child is not perfect by any means, they may be leaving her out due to her being bossy, etc.” Meanwhile, one parent wrote about the nuances of peer group mentality as a whole, and how potential victims could adapt to protect themselves:

If your kid has a 'funny little habit', there is a chance that this could be used to separate them out and act as a subject for teasing, then exclusion. It sucks but this is human behaviour all over the world, and it doesn't really change with age. The unusual will be outcast by the community to bolster their own group dynamic and solidarity. Identifying if there is an easily fixed (non-core) character trait or behaviour, or providing some practical strategies around countering this abuse that will deflect/deflate, could very well stop this exclusion before it becomes rooted in the group mentality.

Another parent simplified the situation into two possible options, that the other children are not nice, or that there is something the victimised child needs to change if they wish to be accepted:

The likelihood is that either the other kids are nasty shits, and he is best to avoid them, or he is acting in an undesirable way in which case he needs to learn how to modify his behaviour if he wants to be accepted.

Category Summary. Throughout this category, parents' responses showed that when their child is the bully in the exclusion scenario, they hesitate to lay blame with their child. Instead, they look for reasons why this behaviour might be okay. This could be a way of distancing themselves and their child from what would be an undesirable behaviour or personality trait, whereas if there was a 'good reason' why they did this, they would see the situation in a different light. In contrast, when their child was the victim, they said they would lay blame with the bully and proceed to explore if there was something their child had done to cause the exclusion. Parents did not want their child to be a bully, but they also do not want to have to view their child as a victim. Parents wanted their children to be accepting and to be socially accepted by others. If there was a particular reason for the exclusion, parents may see this as easier to fix than if their child was constitutionally a bully or victim and thus seemingly unchangeable.

Theme Summary. Parents' responses to hypothetical scenarios showed parents hold normative beliefs towards bullying, particularly for manipulation. Parents sometimes said they would choose not to intervene when their child was in the victim scenario due to a fear of making things worse for their child. Parents also chose not to take action because they wanted their child to take ownership, solve their own problems, learn, grow, and be resilient in the future. When children were depicted in the exclusion scenarios, parents said they

would take a cautious approach and hesitated to lay blame with their bullying child, and also hesitated to lay blame with the bully when their child was victimised. Relational bullying that involves exclusion may be viewed as less ‘clear-cut’ by these parents than rumour spreading, which was seen as less acceptable to parents, and manipulation, which they thought might not even be a problem. Parents’ responses to exclusion scenarios were more nuanced. They wouldn’t want to erroneously position their child as a victim or bully if they did not have to; instead, they tried to find ways to explain the behaviour in less extreme ways, ways in which they could perhaps fix the situation with ease. Possible reasons that parents may look for alternative reasons for their child’s behaviour include a reluctance to accept that their child would be doing this behaviour on purpose, or that there must be an explanation for the behaviour that makes it more acceptable to them.

Theme 2: We Need to Protect All Children, Not Just Ours

Parents described who they thought would take responsibility, and in what ways, in response to the six hypothetical scenarios about relational bullying. Parents saw the children as responsible in terms of the bullies needing to take accountability for their behaviour and make amends. Parents believed victims could take responsibility by trying to address the bully directly, or make improvements to their coping strategies so they could get through the experience. Parents saw themselves and other parents’ as responsible for intervening in the bullying. Intervention was seen as part of the parenting role and helping their child develop into a socially competent adult. Parents viewed the school staff as having a responsibility to respond to relational bullying in students and saw this as part of their duty of care. Parents saw school staff as responsible for providing parental support and advice and monitoring of the situation. This theme is made up of three categories: a) child responsibility and accountability, b) parenting role and responsibility, and c) school responsibility and partnership.

a) Child Responsibility and Accountability.

Parents identified that, depending on the scenario, both victims and bullies would be responsible in different ways. Bullies should take responsibility by being held accountable for their actions, while victims could take responsibility by taking action to try and stop the bullying or by trying to mitigate the harm it might cause them.

For the bullying scenarios, there was emphasis on holding the child accountable, making the child apologise, and the child taking responsibility of the situation – both for now

and for their future personal growth. Differences between the scenarios did emerge and are highlighted in this category.

The Bully Needs to Apologise. When their child was depicted in the exclusion bully scenario, parents described that they would want their child to be accountable for their actions, apologise to the victim, and learn from the experience:

The child needs to be responsible for fixing this and being responsible for their actions. (exclusion bully).

[I want to see an] apology and reparation from my kid. (exclusion bully).

[I would] get my child to look at why acting way they are, think his other person may feel, and then to seek to apologise and sort it out. (manipulation bully).

However, for rumour spreading in particular, parents identified that the apology might need to be directed towards any other parties that may have heard the rumours and they would *make* their child do this. That is, they would *force* their child to take responsibility, even if it was uncomfortable or made them feel bad:

Make them apologise to the other child and make them go to every person they told and set things straight. (rumour spreading bully).

Make them apologise to the child in front of the class. (rumour spreading bully).

Apology face to face to the victim. Public apology at school. (rumour spreading bully).

I would want my child to have to be uncomfortable and look the child in the eye and have empathy for them and what damage their actions and words have caused. (rumour spreading bully).

I'd want her to feel so bad and uncomfortable about it that she'd never do it again. (rumour spreading bully).

Taking Responsibility for Personal Growth. For all three types of bullying perpetration, parents recognised that doing the right thing, and taking responsibility, even when it is difficult to do so, could be an area of growth for their child:

I think it is the child's responsibility to stop and they can build resilience by doing the right thing even when it is rough. (exclusion bully).

I want her to look at her own behaviour and how it affects others. She needs to be considerate of others and work out how she can resolve conflict without being hurtful. (exclusion bully).

It's the child's responsibility to fix their wrong. (rumour spreading bully).

I would want them to take responsibility for their actions by apologising to the other child and hopefully mitigate some of the hurt caused. (rumour spreading bully).

Children need to be responsible for their actions. (manipulation bully)

Parents also reported that some responsibility and accountability lie with the *victims* of all relational bullying. For the three victimisation scenarios, parents described the child's responsibility in terms of the child taking action to try and stop the bullying or mitigate the harm it had caused to the victim. However, there were differences between types of relational bullying that will be highlighted within this category.

Exclusion and Manipulation Victim. For the exclusion *and* manipulation victimisation scenarios, parents wrote that their victimised child should be autonomous and take action to sort the situation out themselves:

My child needs to learn to get on with life and make decisions and take action for herself. (exclusion victim).

My child will come across situations like this again in the future, by intervening I will be taking away skills my child needs to learn and develop to cope as a teen/adult. (exclusion victim).

I like to talk to my children about this and to think of ways for them to deal with the situation. Interfering at this stage takes the ability to solve problems away from the child. (exclusion victim).

As long as you think you can do something even if it's change directions, decide you want different friends, you're still feeling in control over your own life not being a helpless victim. (exclusion victim).

I'd get my child to make the decisions herself on this one. She knows what a good friend is, and what a crap one is. Her choice. (manipulation victim).

It is up to my child to manage friendships and conflicts. (manipulation victim).

Although they did recognise that they might have to intervene if the situation went beyond the scope of what the child could manage alone: "Some relationship issues, like this one, can be left to children to work through themselves. If it escalates, that's another story" (manipulation victim).

Rumour Spreading Victim. For the *rumour spreading victimisation* scenario, however, the child's responsibility was described by parents in two main ways: avoidance or approach. They saw the child as either needing to avoid and ignore the bully, or to approach and confront the bully to request they stop. Parents wrote that they would tell their child not to take any notice of the rumours:

[I] would talk to my child, explain why rumours happen and why worth ignoring them. (rumour spreading victim).

I would prefer to talk to my child and advise them to take no notice of the rumours rather than approaching the school, child spreading the rumour or the parent of that child. (rumour spreading victim).

However, parents did recognise that they would have to assess the impact of the rumour spreading on their child to determine how much they would encourage their child to shoulder the responsibility of addressing the issue:

This all depends on how badly it is affecting my child, but I would talk with her and suggest she ignores it or goes to her teacher in the first instance. (rumour spreading victim).

Interestingly, one parent initially wrote that they would get their child to ignore the rumours and the bully, but subsequently reflected on how they may not be considering the full extent of the pain that this situation can cause:

I would feel upset but hope we could ignore them. I think that my statement here suggests I have forgotten the very real pain the rumours may cause, and my child's level of distress may force me to feel more distress myself. (rumour spreading victim).

The other main way parents suggested their children could take responsibility in this scenario was to confront the rumour spreader directly.

I'd encourage them to talk to the rumour spreader if possible. (rumour spreading victim).

I will first discuss with my child strategies of confronting these people. (rumour spreading victim).

Helping my child to confront rumours/rumour spreaders if necessary. (rumour spreading victim).

Category Summary. The key ideas in this category are that parents said they would want to encourage their child to take responsibility if they excluded other children, or if they were manipulative towards other children. However, if their child was spreading rumours, they would insist their child be held accountable for their actions and apologise. For victims of exclusion or manipulation, parents suggested that, by leaving it up to their child to intervene, they would be learning coping skills and resilience and then be better equipped to deal with similar situations in future. When their child was a victim of rumour spreading, parents were divided with whether approaching or ignoring the bully would be the better option for their child. Overall, parents wanted their child to take responsibility and expected them to learn how to cope themselves, while recognising the limitations of their abilities. However, rumour spreading specifically elicited clearer responses about the importance of

apologising, both privately and publicly. This suggests rumour spreading may be more ‘clear cut’ to parents, with a more defined act of wrongdoing.

b) Parenting Role and Responsibility.

The second category in the theme *we need to protect all children, not just ours* involves the ways in which parents saw both themselves and the other child’s parents as being responsible in the six hypothetical scenarios. Parents discussed their own responsibility in similar ways for all three *bullying* scenarios. Parents identified taking responsibility as part of their role as a parent, that by acting they would be helping their child develop into a socially competent adult, and that the bullying behaviour goes against their family values. There was an underlying idea here that not taking action would be an abdication of their parental responsibility. For the three victimisation scenarios, parents discussed their responsibility, but suggested that the level to which they felt responsible to take action would be guided by how severely their child as a victim was impacted.

Bully: A Parent’s Role. When their children were depicted in the *bully* scenarios, parents had similar ideas about their role and responsibility for all three scenarios. Parents described their responsibility as being part of their parenting role:

My job as a parent is to guide my child in appropriate behaviour. (exclusion bully).

I am in a position to find out why and understand my child motivations for the behaviour. (exclusion bully).

My responsibility to mould social behaviour. (manipulation bully).

I see it as my duty to ensure my child behaves fairly and treats other people with respect. This I can have an impact on, and I believe it is well within my ability to affect positive change. (rumour spreading bully).

Really this is just about identifying a destructive behaviour trait before it can be reinforced and carried on into adulthood. (manipulation bully).

I can’t change what others do but I can have power over how our whānau acts and behaves. (rumour spreading bully).

It is my job as a parent to help my child navigate the tough parts of childhood/teen years, so she can be as balanced as possible. (rumour spreading bully).

If you don't act, you're reinforcing the behaviour. (manipulation bully).

I feel it is my responsible to teach my child to take responsibility for her actions. To overlook this would be to send the message it is okay, when it is not. (exclusion bully).

Parents felt responsible for their child's development and shaping them into a person that is accepted *by* and accepts others. Conversely, to fail in this duty would essentially be a failure in their parenting role.

Bully: Family Values. Another reason parents gave for taking action when their child was depicted as a perpetrator is that they thought it was unacceptable for them to not intervene and it would go against family/whānau values. They identified that they would feel a sense of failure, shame, or guilt in their role if their child was engaged in this behaviour:

Kindness is a core value in our family. How you treat others is extremely important.
(exclusion bully).

[It] goes against the values we teach our children. (exclusion bully).

Horrible as a parent. (rumour spreading bully).

Ashamed that my child should stoop to such behaviour. (rumour spreading bully).

Guilty that my child was doing something unpleasant. (rumour spreading bully).

Sometimes a fear of judgement spurred action and parents suggested they would intervene because they would not want their child to be labelled as difficult: "I don't want my child to be "that child"" (exclusion bully). Or labelled as a bully: "I wouldn't want my child to be seen as the difficult child or the bully" (exclusion bully).

Bully: Contact the Other Family. As a way to defend their parenting, and prove to the victim's parents that they were 'good parents', parents said they would reach out to the victim's family to explain that their family was not accepting of this behaviour. This action

was present in all three bullying scenarios, but was most evident in the rumour spreading scenario:

I would involve the other parents so that they knew I was taking my child's actions seriously and that I was on their side. (rumour spreading bully).

I'd want the other family to know that we are 'good people'. (rumour spreading bully).

[I would] approach the parent so that we could set up something where both children could save some face, but also be able to address the problem. (rumour spreading bully).

Speak to the parents to let them know that I was taking action to rectify the situation. (rumour spreading bully).

I would also inform the parents of the other child (if I knew them) of the actions we had agreed on. (rumour spreading bully).

I would contact the parent to let them know we were sorry and dealing with it. (manipulation bully).

If necessary, talk to the other child/parents to apologise and resolve. (manipulation bully).

While parents discussed that this behaviour would not be aligned with the values they have, they implied that they thought bullying behaviour may be a reflection of poor parenting that other families teach:

I know for sure I don't teach that sort of thing at home. (exclusion bully).

This is unacceptable behaviour in our family. (exclusion bully).

I have not raised my child to be a bully. (exclusion bully).

That behaviour is not what we teach our children. (rumour spreading bully).

This is not how we've brought our kids up. (exclusion bully).

No action necessary as I can assure you that my boys would never say something like that.
(manipulation bully).

While many parents identified bullying as something that happens to ‘other families’, some parents could see how it is a complex issue involving many different people. They wanted all parties impacted by this situation to be supported, stating that they would act “to restore the mana of my tamaiti and our whānau. To maintain the mana of other tamaiti” (manipulation bully). They believed that by helping their child to make better choices, they would in turn be protecting other children: “I want to give my child tools to build positive relationships and also help protect other children” (manipulation bully). These examples reflect collective values, for the betterment and optimal wellbeing of everyone in the community. This holistic view of the responsibility for intervening, suggesting that, as a group, parents should be working to support all children: “We need to protect all children, not just ours.” While many parents were prepared to take action and consult with other parents, they did not state how they determined when it was or was not necessary to work with other parents.

Victim: A Parent’s Role. Parents discussed their responsibility for the *exclusion victim* and *rumour spreading victim* scenarios in many similar ways. Parents recognised that teaching their child how to respond to this situation is part of their role as a parent and they needed to guide their child to help them develop coping skills that will help them in the future:

It’s my role to help my child make their way in the world and teach them about responding to social situations. (exclusion victim).

It's a chance to help my child develop strategies to deal with similar situation in the future and to boost his confidence. (exclusion victim).

Because I believe you can be proactive to make life better and I want my child to learn this. I don't want him to feel helpless and powerless. I want him to be a problem solver. (exclusion victim).

It is my job as a parent to help my child navigate the tough parts of childhood/teen years so she can be as balanced as possible. I want her to feel that she can talk to me about anything and be assured of my help if she wants it. (rumour spreading victim).

We all have the right to be treated fairly & have someone stand up for us when that's not the case. My child or not, I'd stand up for the child. (rumour spreading victim).

I know that I'm not there to 'fix' things for my daughter. However, as her mum I am responsible for ensuring that she is well and able to manage herself in difficult situations. (rumour spreading victim).

Manipulation Victim. Parents did not discuss their own responsibility as explicitly in the *manipulation victim* situation. However, parents did identify that they would involve the parents of the bully so *they* could take responsibility for resolving the situation. Another option that parents discussed was taking a more indirect approach to try and communicate with the bully's family:

I would passively aggressively mention it to lots of friends and hope it gets back to the family.

Parents also reported that they would use this opportunity to take a collaborative approach to resolve the situation:

I'll discuss with the parent how my child feels, and I'll ask them if they realised that this was happening with a view to try to provide my child and theirs with some support if possible.

More specifically, parents would utilise this course of action to work with the other parents to try and restore and strengthen the friendship between the children: "If it was ongoing I may speak to the parent of the other child to see if the friendship could be developed more out of school."

Victim: Contact the Other Family. Parents discussed involving the bully's parents mostly in the *rumour spreading* victim and *manipulation* victim scenarios. Parents said they would inform the bully's parents of the situation and ask for assistance:

There comes a point where a bully's parents need to be made aware of situations especially when they become potentially damaging to another child. It is, however, also up to the bullied child's parents to find the best in the situation, to be supportive, and seen to be interested and committed to standing by their child. (rumour spreading victim).

I'd always like to give the parents the opportunity of managing the situation themselves, with the option of escalating the issue if there was no change in behaviour. (rumour spreading victim).

I feel you need to let the parent know what is happening, as they may be completely unaware. They then need to be given the opportunity to deal with it how they see fit. (rumour spreading victim).

Establish what they intended to do about this. (rumour spreading victim).

I would call the child's parents for a resolve. (manipulation victim).

I would do this so that the parents can talk to their child about how to be a good friend and explain that saying these things makes others feel bad. (manipulation victim).

Some parents suggested a more restorative point of view in tackling this situation and that involving the other parents could be a collaborative way to address the situation:

[For] the safety of my tamaiti and to make the other tamariki and their whānau aware and accountable for their behaviour. That behaviour may be a symptom of something in the child's life that needs to be managed better. (rumour spreading victim).

I would contact the children parents to see if they are keen in coming to some resolution. (rumour spreading victim).

Contacting the peer's parents because they need to know what is going on and might be able to help. (rumour spreading victim).

While parents were more likely to engage with and try to collaborate with parents when their child was the victim of rumour spreading and manipulation, there was some mention of this in the exclusion scenario. In the *exclusion* scenario, parents identified that, if they knew who the bully's parents were, they would attempt to contact them and tell them what was going on to notify them or to prompt them to act:

If I knew the ring-leader's parents I would discuss with them. (exclusion victim).

Contact other child's parents as they may not be aware of what is going on. (exclusion victim).

However, some parents were reluctant about involving the bully's parents: "I would be too apprehensive of approaching the other children's parents" (exclusion victim). Sometimes because they didn't think it would be effective to do so:

I would not approach parents having experienced my child being bullied and the parents turning a blind eye. Children who behave nastily often mirroring their parents anyway. (rumour spreading victim).

Parents also emphasised the importance of communication with their child at all times when addressing their bullying. Parents needed to communicate with their children, to ensure they felt supported and reassured, and to make sure children felt that parents understood their situation: "You have to communicate with your child in order for them to talk to you when things are tough" (rumour spreading victim).

Category Summary. The key ideas in this category are that parents felt it was part of their role to address and intervene when their child was a bully. If they chose not to intervene, they recognised that it would be reinforcing the behaviour and that their child may then think that it was acceptable. However, parents wanted to think that the values they foster in their children could stop their child engaging in bullying behaviours in the first place and perhaps bullying was more of an issue for 'other families'.

When their child was a victim, parents said they would respond because it was their role as a parent to help their child develop the skills they needed to manage and cope with being a victim and to deal with similar situations like this in future. This response was most evident from the parents' responses to exclusion and rumour spreading perpetration scenarios (i.e., not as evident in the manipulation bully scenario). However, for *all* victimisation scenarios, parents identified they would involve the parents of the bully – most evidently for rumour spreading and manipulation. Interestingly, this pattern suggests that while they were less explicit about their own role when their child was a bully in *manipulation*, they saw the parents of the bully as having a role in the intervention process when their child was a *victim*

of manipulation. Similarly, when their child was a victim of exclusion they saw themselves as responsible, whereas the bully's parents were less so. For rumour spreading, this responsibility appeared to be shared between all parents of the involved children.

c) School Responsibility and Partnership.

The third category in the theme *we need to protect all children, not just ours* involves the ways in which parents saw the school as being responsible in response to the six hypothetical scenarios. Parents consistently identified that talking to the school staff and requesting they take action would be one of their primary actions in most of the scenarios and that this approach would help protect all children. However, parents did **not** discuss school responsibility when responding to the *manipulation bully* scenario. This inconsistency suggests parents may see this form of relational bullying in a different way.

Exclusion and Rumour Spreading Bully: School can Provide Support. For the exclusion and rumour spreading *bully* scenarios, parents said a key reason they would talk to school staff was so that the school could provide support, resources, and a solution:

[I would] get the school involved as they should have the tools to deal with situations like that. (exclusion bully).

I want the school to know, if it does continue, that we are aware of the issue and we will do what I can to work on the problem. (exclusion bully).

I would talk to the school to let them know what my child is doing and to ask for help to make a plan to get them to stop behaving in a nasty way. (rumour spreading bully).

Parents positioned teachers and the school as having responsibility for intervening in the situation:

The teacher needs to know so that he or she can intervene effectively. (exclusion bully).

[I would] inform teacher so it can be investigated and addressed at school. (rumour spreading bully).

I would probably tell the school what had happened, so they knew what was going on, what my child had done, so they knew how to support/manage it going forward. (rumour spreading bully).

Teachers and the school were also viewed by parents as providing insight and consequences:

I would also possibly approach her teacher to see what she thinks and get my daughter to make a sincere apology and receive appropriate punishment from school. (rumour spreading bully).

[My child would be] forced to admit his guilt to the head of year at his school. (exclusion bully).

Teachers and the school were viewed by parents as being able to act as an intermediary between themselves and the family of the victim to facilitate collaboration, or to make sure the victim was okay:

I would [...] encourage the school to deal with it via a restorative justice system so all have a voice in the solving of the problem. (exclusion bully).

I would also contact the school and ask if the other family will accept an apology from my child. (rumour spreading bully).

Maybe have her talk to the teacher about her behaviour and do something restorative. (rumour spreading bully).

[I would] speak with dean about my child's role and concern for [the] other child. (rumour spreading bully).

[I would] talk to the school to ensure they can provide support to the other child. (rumour spreading bully).

Exclusion and Rumour Spreading Bully: Home-School Collaboration. Parents recognised that, while the school certainly had some responsibility in this instance, this view

was part of a wider, collaborative approach where both home and school had areas of responsibility:

I know that the school can't compensate for failings of my family but my daughter spends a lot of her waking hours at school and I would like the flow of information and support for her to grow and learn (and make mistakes) to be clear and consistent. (exclusion bully).

I would request a sit down with my child and the teacher together to make a plan about what to do next, as it would require actions/consequences at home and at school. (exclusion bully).

Exclusion and Rumour Spreading Victim: Schools are Responsible. Parents expressed different ideas about the school's responsibility in the victim scenarios and school responsibility varied depending on which scenario parents were responding to. There was some evidence of school responsibility emerging from the manipulation victim scenario, however it emerged more prominently from the *exclusion* and *rumour spreading* victim scenarios. For these two scenarios, parents had expectations that the school should be responsible for the social and emotional wellbeing of their students and educating children how to be inclusive and good peers:

I think that the school has the responsibility to ensure that children have certain social attributes, and inclusion is one of those. (exclusion victim).

I think it would be a good first step to make the teacher aware and view it as a learning issue. That is, the children need to learn how to be good peers and learn to include, not exclude. (exclusion victim).

I believe it is the school's responsibility to develop and reinforce a non-bullying culture and to educate and discipline their students in relation to this and to the harm it can cause. (rumour spreading victim).

Parents in the exclusion and rumour spreading victim scenarios expected schools to be responsible for enunciating and enforcing school policies and training staff to manage bullying:

In accordance with school complaints policy, and most likely person to observe behaviour and effect change. (exclusion victim).

[The] teacher is in position of influence, as are parents. (exclusion victim).

The teacher in the class is the best first point of contact as they are with all the children all day. (exclusion victim).

There is a process which ensures that the teacher directly in charge of that child is informed first as they have the day to day involvement with the child. (exclusion victim).

To see how they deal with bullying, what actions they were taking to stamp it out and to ensure it didn't happen to others. (rumour spreading victim).

Our school has an anti-bullying policy and each of the children at school have signed up to and agreed to abide by rules that ensure bullying and negative behaviours are addressed early.” (rumour spreading victim).

In the school environment your child is there to be supported, and if the policies and procedures aren't being followed nor working, then this need to be addressed at a higher level. (rumour spreading victim).

Rumour Spreading Victim: Home-School Collaboration. Parents in the *rumour spreading victim* scenario identified wanting to contact the school to see “how we can manage it as a team.” Similar to when their child was depicted as a rumour spreading bully, parents also discussed wanting to utilise the school as an intermediary agent to seek out the bully’s family to discuss solutions or consequences:

I would talk with the teacher and request a meeting with the other children's parents. So we could all sit down and figure out a solution forward. (rumour spreading victim).

I would talk to the teacher or the principal and sort a meeting with them and the other children's parents to discuss punishment. (rumour spreading victim).

Parents in the rumour spreading victim scenario said they would also utilise the school's position of influence for advice: "[I would] seek advice from the school," for ongoing monitoring: "I would raise this with a teacher in order for them to keep an eye on the situation," or simply ask for their understanding: "The teacher needs to know what is going on as they may be able to effect change in behaviour at the school or at least understand why my child may not be her usual self." Overall, parents discussed needing to share responsibility of rumour spreading victimisation with the school. This shared responsibility was because it was not a situation that was isolated to just the family, and as such, needs a wider solution that could then benefit the whole community:

It's a wider social issue than I can deal with - with many leaning opportunities for the other kids too. (rumour spreading victim).

Category Summary. The key ideas in this category are that parents saw schools as responsible for intervening in bullying both independently and in partnership with the involved families. Schools were seen by parents as being able to provide restorative processes to help the victims and bullies and were resources to act as intermediaries between all impacted parties. In addition, parents said that the environment should be one that promotes inclusivity. They saw communication as important so people could be made aware of any issues between students, and so they could restore wellbeing in the school context. Parents supported a collaborative approach between home and school in response to most of the bullying scenarios. However, the responsibility of the school did not emerge as a theme in the *manipulation bully* scenario. Moreover, seeing the school as responsible for *manipulation victims* was not as clear or consistent when compared to exclusion or rumour spreading victims.

Theme Summary. This theme, *we need to protect all the children, not just ours*, has explored who parents see as responsible for intervening in relational bullying. The analysis shows that parents would sometimes be likely to encourage, or make, their child take responsibility, and at other times they themselves would be the ones to take action.

Parents considered it was part of their role as a parent to intervene in bullying but also wondered if all families had similar values or if all parents saw this as part of their role. Schools were seen as being responsible for fostering an environment that promotes inclusion, social skills development, and does not allow bullying behaviour. Schools were also seen as key contexts that can provide support to all parties, and providing continual monitoring of

bullies and responses. These responsibilities were discussed for school independently, and as part of a collaborative approach between families and school.

When it came to rumour spreading, parents delineated clear and broad areas of responsibility. Parents wrote that they would force their child to be accountable for their actions, they themselves would take action, they would involve the school, and they would also talk to the other parents involved. The responsibilities that parents discussed for victims of manipulation were less clear, with suggestions that this matter could probably just be sorted out by the children involved and they did not identify the school as having a duty of responsibility for intervening in the manipulation bully scenario. Parents did, however, say that they might involve the parents of the bully if their child was a victim of manipulation. For exclusion, parents identified that an inclusive school culture was important, they believed children should have more autonomy, take responsibility for their actions, and could often sort the situation out themselves.

Theme 3: A teachable moment

When they decided to take action themselves, parents discussed a range of strategies they would use to intervene in relational bullying. They said they would support their child regardless of which scenario they were responding to. However, the specific type of support they offered to their child differed between the scenarios. If their child was engaged in bullying, they discussed promoting empathy and developing social skills to help them in future. If their child was a victim, they identified ways in which they would empower their child and also upskill them for the future. Parents suggested diverse, often divided, actions and struggled with knowing when, how, and how much to intervene – if at all. This theme was made up of three categories: a) supporting my child, b) encouraging empathy, and c) empowering my child.

a) Supporting my Child.

The first category in this theme is based on the actions parents said they would take to directly help their child in response to the six hypothetical scenarios. Parents wrote that they would support their child in a general sense, they would seek to address any underlying issues, and provide their child with the strategies they needed to resolve the situation. Intervention was focused both on resolving the current situation, and on preparing their child for the future.

Looking for Underlying Issues. For *rumour spreading perpetration*, parents wrote that they would support their child to explore what might be causing this behaviour and that they needed to work with their child to find out what was motivating their behaviour:

I would take action because if my child is spreading rumours about others, this would suggest to me that my child has some emotional/psychological issues that need to be addressed.
(rumour spreading bully).

I feel talking and getting to the bottom of the issues, is far better than just telling a child not to do something. (rumour spreading bully).

Maybe there's something deeper going on and they need help too. (rumour spreading bully).

Get my child back on the right track - maybe something is going on with them. (rumour spreading bully)

In addition, parents reported that they would seek professional help to assist their child through rumour spreading perpetration. That is, they wrote: "I would also refer her/him to counselling to address underlying cause of behaviour."

When their child was depicted as a perpetrator of *manipulation*, they would take action to find out why and to help their child through this: "My child is obviously confused or doing it for another reason like attention, so I would need to help them with what's going on." Parents feared that their child was bullying others because they did not fit the norm: "I would take action because it's not really normal to play those kind of mind games."

Preparing my Child for the Future. For all forms of bullying *perpetration*, parents reported they would take action with some sort of future-focus. For *exclusion*, parents were concerned about their child becoming a victim and being ostracised by others in the future:

A child who is very controlling of who can play game often ends up being the one excluded.
(exclusion bully)

Being mean also doesn't make you feel good long-term and people are more drawn to kind and nice people and tend to move away from mean people over time. So, if he's mean, over time he'll have less people that want to spend time with him. (exclusion bully)

For all perpetration scenarios, parents wanted to intervene and support their child to help them now and to prevent further issues:

I would like my children to grow up challenging their own behaviour to check that they're being the best person they can be. I think that will make them happier, more successful people with more opportunities presented to them in their lives. (exclusion bully).

It needs to be addressed as this type of behaviour has negative consequences for the victim but also for the perpetrator. (rumour spreading bully).

I don't want my child to grow up and be a nasty person, so I'd get them the help they need. (rumour spreading bully).

Because that behaviour is abusive and not really acceptable and not conducive to fulfilment long term. (manipulation bully).

I would be worried that my child will lose friendships or end up with no friends if they continue to act like this. (manipulation bully).

For manipulation perpetration specifically, parents were worried about the long-term implications of this behaviour in their child's other relationships: "He may manipulate his friends, family, partners, workmates. This is a negative behaviour and can lead to him being untrustworthy." They also worried that the behaviour could escalate into manipulation in other relationships: "I would worry that he would carry this into his adult relationships. Imagine if he did it to his partner or me when I'm old."

Parents were also future-focused in the *victimisation* scenarios. They were aware that it could lead to further issues if not addressed, and wanted to upskill their child to prepare for this:

This could be the start of something more serious. (exclusion victim).

To help my child develop strategies to deal with similar situations in the future and to boost his confidence. (exclusion victim).

Similar to the manipulation bully scenario, parents responding to the manipulation *victim* scenario were concerned about the effect on their child's other relationships in the future:

If he accepts it [manipulation] now, then he may accept it in future relationships - such as romantic ones or employment. (manipulation victim).

I don't believe it is healthy for anyone to stay in manipulative relationships so, if I noticed my child was in one, I would feel the need to advise them. (manipulation victim).

If you can encourage them to have solid and loyal friends it will set them up for life. (manipulation victim).

Monitoring the Situation. For all three forms of perpetration, parents identified they would be vigilant and they would provide: "continued monitoring to see that this never happens again." (exclusion). They also described monitoring the situation to check how well their intervention was working, to monitor their child's behaviour, or to see if they needed to take further actions:

[I would] check up with him how that was working. (rumour spreading bully)

[I] would make the school aware so they can [...] keep an eye on my child's behaviour. (rumour spreading bully)

If my child continues to engage in this behaviour I would follow through with consequences. (manipulation bully)

[I would] make sure it doesn't recur. (manipulation bully).

[I would] wait to see if behaviour stops. Inform teacher if ongoing. (manipulation bully).

Enhancing my Child's Wellbeing. For *exclusion victimisation*, parents wrote that they would support their child in order to protect their child's self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. They also wanted to safeguard their enjoyment of school, enhance their sense of belonging, and to help them find enjoyment by encouraging them to pursue other activities.

They said they would provide advice, suggest strategies, and listen to their child and help them feel connected:

The action I would take would be supporting my child and ensuring they had the mental toughness and emotional support they needed to cope with the situation. I would be helping them with strategies and being a listening ear, so they felt valued and a sense of belonging at home even if not at school. (exclusion victim)

I want my child to enjoy school and not feel excluded or like she didn't belong there. (exclusion victim)

Look at joining them up for an after-school activity they are interested in so they can meet like-minded people. (exclusion victim)

Because the child has a right to feel safe and included at school (exclusion victim)

When responding to the *manipulation victim* and *rumour spreading victim* scenarios, parents identified that they would offer this support as a way to 'be there' for their child and so their child felt supported:

So my child can feel loved and reassured that I am responding to their current experiences/feelings. (manipulation victim).

My daughter needs to be heard and acknowledged that what is happening is confusing and upsetting. She needs to be supported if she wants to let her 'friend ' know how she is feeling and supported through the possible ramifications of that action. (manipulation victim).

My child needs to know that other people are there for them even if their 'best friend' isn't. (manipulation victim).

[He] just needs to know I'm there and that he can always ask for help if he needs it. (rumour spreading victim)

I don't want my child feeling alone, ridiculed, unsupported. (rumour spreading victim).

We all have the right to be treated fairly and have someone stand up for us when that's not the case. (rumour spreading victim).

For *manipulation victims*, parents said they would offer advice which included teaching their child to minimise the damage by ignoring the child that was manipulating them: “I would tell my child to find another friend to play with and ignore the friend that was doing this.” And encourage them to strengthen bonds with other peers and make better choices about friendships:

[I would] talk to my child about friendships and that real friends don't treat each other like that, they are worth more than that. I would encourage my child to strengthen friendships with other children. (manipulation victim).

I would encourage her to make new friendships or foster better ones with existing friends. I would ask how she might do this. I would also assist this by inviting other children on play dates. (manipulation victim).

Encouraging them to choose others to play with shows them that they can choose not to put up with someone who is unreliable and unsatisfactory as a friend. (manipulation victim).

For both victimisation *and* perpetration of rumour spreading, parents were troubled about the potential impact on their child's social reputation and status:

Because rumours can be hurtful, they can be damaging to a person's self-esteem and confidence and damaging to a person's reputation and relationships with peers. (rumour spreading victim).

I believe if this goes unchecked it could have significant consequences for my child's mental health. (rumour spreading victim).

Rumours can create long-term damage to [a child's] reputation, and can easily escalate, particularly in the modern online community. (rumour spreading victim).

[I would] take immediate action to protect both the child and my own child's image. (rumour spreading bully).

[I] do not want my child to have a reputation of being a nasty person. (rumour spreading bully).

Category Summary. This category explored how, and for what reasons, parents would support their children through relational bullying. If their child was bullying others, parents said they would support them to resolve the situation now, and to enhance their child's development into a 'good person' so that that this doesn't happen again in the future. If their child was the victim of relational bullying, parents said they would support their child through the current situation and to reduce the harm they might face in future. Overall the support they offered to their child appears to be driven by a desire for their child to be compassionate to others, to feel acknowledged during victimisation, show resiliency through adversity, and behave in a way that fits social norms.

There were differences between the three forms of bullying within this category. In response to the *exclusion* scenario, parents said they would focus on wanting children to feel included by their peers, both for current victims, and for bullies if retaliation were to occur. In regards to *rumour spreading*, parents wondered if there were deeper issues that their child might need professional help with and were concerned that their child would get a reputation for the behaviour as a bully, or a reputation based off the rumour for the victim. Lastly, when responding to the *manipulation* scenario, in contrast to some parents in Theme One normalising the behaviour, other parents were worried about the abnormality of the behaviour. They were particularly concerned with the possible ramifications in other areas of life, such as romantic relationships or in the workplace. They wanted victims to learn not to tolerate manipulative behaviour, and for bullies to learn that it is not acceptable to engage in this behaviour.

b) Encouraging Empathy.

The second category in the theme *a teachable moment* relates to the actions parents described they would take to teach their child in response to the three *perpetration* scenarios. Parents reported they would teach their child to be empathetic in *all three* perpetration scenarios. Key strategies here were: developing the child's awareness of wrongdoing and encouraging empathy, for the benefit of both the victim and the perpetrator.

Developing Awareness. Parents wrote that they would encourage their child to become more socially aware, consider the victim's point of view, understand that their behaviour is unacceptable, and that it is having a negative impact on others:

I feel I need to educate her firstly. She may not have considered how the other child/ren feel and that is something she needs to think about. (exclusion bully).

It's important for my child to learn what is appropriate social behaviour early on so that they can understand the impact of what they do to others. (exclusion bully).

[I would] teach my child right from wrong, explain to them that spreading nasty rumours has consequences they might not foresee/take seriously. (rumour spreading bully).

I would talk to my child about how the behaviour might make others feel and what they should do differently. (manipulation bully).

Empathy for the Current Situation. Parents discussed that they would want to develop empathy in their child for a number of reasons, such as to understand the consequences of their actions:

[I would] talk to him about how the other child might be feeling and maybe how he would feel if it was happening to him. (exclusion bully).

I would talk to him about human rights and get him to empathise by putting himself in that situation. (manipulation bully).

I want my child to have empathy for others and understand the consequences of his actions. (exclusion bully).

I would want my child to understand this and how their behaviour can affect others. (rumour spreading bully)

[I would] ask her to think about how it would make her feel if someone did that to her and try to think about it from that angle. (exclusion bully).

My child needs to know how his behaviour can make someone else feel and it needs to be done before it escalates. (exclusion bully).

Parents indicated that they would want to promote empathy in their child, not just for their child's development, but to help protect the victim:

I want to give my child tools to build positive relationships and also help protect other children. (manipulation bully).

To teach my child the 'right' way to handle friendship dilemmas so the other child isn't continuing to be poorly treated. (manipulation bully).

Another reason parents gave to develop empathy was to help their child understand what they have done is wrong and then learn how to make amends:

I want my child to have empathy, to be able to admit wrong doing and to be able to take responsibility for their wrong doing and be able to make restitution. (rumour spreading bully)

I think it is important to learn to make amends for inappropriate behaviour. I want my kids to learn what is unacceptable and what isn't. (rumour spreading bully)

We need to teach children the right course of action even when they have done the wrong thing. They need to know how to make it right. (rumour spreading bully)

I want my child to understand and be accountable for their own behaviour (manipulation bully).

Empathy for the Future. Parents believed if their child had empathy, the experience could be used as a learning and developmental opportunity and could help their child in the future. They saw empathy as a useful skill for their child to have that would help them make and keep friends and develop healthy social relationships in the future:

Understanding why the behaviour is wrong should help her to make a better decision next time. (rumour spreading bully).

I would take action as it could cause another person long-term effects and also be a regret my child had later. (exclusion bully).

I want him to be able to empathise because it's a useful life tool. (rumour spreading bully).

We want to raise caring adults. To do this we must teach our children to feel empathy. We do this by acknowledging the things that hurt them and giving them comfort and helping them resolve their problems. We also teach empathy by helping them see that the things they do that hurt others aren't to be left, but to be addressed, and the hurt acknowledged and as much done to right the wrong as possible. (rumour spreading bully).

I want my child to be a loving, caring and loyal friend, who builds strong and positive relationships and so would take this as an opportunity to help develop empathy and morally sound conduct in my child. (rumour spreading bully).

I would want to ensure that my child develops empathy and positive social skills in order to be a positive influence and a 'good person'. (manipulation bully).

Category Summary. Overall, the key idea in this category is that parents said they would be likely to encourage empathy in their child if he or she was bullying others. They also said they would try to help their child learn right from wrong, guide them towards better choices, find alternative solutions, and to prevent future similar behaviour. This response appears to be driven by parents' desire for their children to develop into a well-rounded person who contributes to the wellbeing of others: "I want my child to be kind and to make others feel good about themselves." Moreover, the message from parents here is that, in order to support this growth into an empathetic and kind adult, they need to take action in these critical situations for children to see their wrongdoing and learn from their mistakes.

c) Empowering my Child.

The third category in the theme, *a teachable moment*, covers the actions parents would take to teach their child in response to the three *victimisation* scenarios. Parents wrote how they would try to empower their victimised child in all three of the victimisation scenarios. This category also discusses the difficulties parents face when trying to decide if they *should* upskill and empower their child or take a more direct 'hands on' approach. This debate, at the end of this category, includes evidence from both victimisation and perpetration scenarios.

Empowerment for Now. Parents reported that they would use their child's experience of victimisation to educate their child on healthy versus unhealthy friendships, as well as on strategies to deal with these incidents. Parents identified that they would ideally want to give their child the tools to deal with this situation themselves, empowering their child, and would be there to support and provide scaffolding if needed:

I would see this as a 'teachable' moment for my child. (manipulation victim).

I would likely take action in order to reassure my child and to try and equip them with the skills to deal with it. (exclusion victim).

Children need to learn some independence at problem solving, but at the same time I want to be able to provide support. (exclusion victim).

I would like to give my son the opportunity to master solving problems, but also let him know I am there to back him up. (rumour spreading victim).

Resilience for the Future. Parents consistently described a future-focused approach and identified how they would upskill their child rather than intervening in the situations directly themselves. In this way, their child could learn to solve their problems in future:

I want to empower my child to deal with whatever life throws at them. (exclusion victim).

I want my child to have the tools to deal with unhealthy relationships. (manipulation victim).

It's a chance to help my child develop strategies to deal with similar situation in the future and to boost his confidence. (exclusion victim).

I want to empower my children with the resilience and skills to deal with situations like this. (rumour spreading victim).

[I would] work with my child so it gives them strategies to work with so they can become less of a victim. (rumour spreading victim).

Some parents reported that they would consult with their child about how they wanted to proceed, both so that the child could indicate a preference, their child learnt what to do, and so they had some autonomy over the situation:

I would ask her opinion about what was happening and what she thought the best options to resolve the situation might be. (rumour spreading victim).

[I would] ask her if she wants my intervention. (rumour spreading victim).

[I would] discuss with my child how they want to deal with it.” (rumour spreading victim).

My child will come across situations like this again in the future, by intervening I will be taking away skills my child needs to learn and develop to cope as a teen/adult. (exclusion victim).

It would depend on how my child was emotionally, if they were upset by this I would want to try and help my child, if they weren't bothered I would leave it alone. (exclusion victim)

I would take action only if my child was upset about it. (exclusion victim)

My child is the one in the friendship, not me, so the best thing I can do is teach my child that this behaviour is wrong and let them make the best decision they feel is right. (manipulation victim)

I would make it known to my child if I felt the friendship was unhealthy and why I thought this, but I would leave the decision making up to them. (manipulation victim).

We are a team; I would not take any further action on anything until I have gauged my son's feelings on the situation. (manipulation victim).

How Much is Too Much? Parents' responses throughout this chapter indicate a difficult balance they want to strike between helping their child directly, or allowing them to problem-solve and develop resilience. While some parents would 'lay down the law': "I would counsel my child to say to her friend that she cannot be friends with her if she treats

her like that” (manipulation victim), others would take their child’s abilities into account and adjust their level of intervention to suit:

I ultimately believe children need to learn to resolve conflict and rescuing them from every scenario does not equip them to do this. However, as children are not yet at a point of maturity where they can resolve all conflicts themselves an adult may need to be present to assist a healthy resolution. (exclusion victim).

This dilemma was echoed in the *perpetration* scenarios too where parents were afraid that intervening too much could do more harm than good:

I see this as quite minor and intervening too much (i.e. - involving the other family or the school) could cause more problems and interfere with children learning how to handle some situations on their own. (manipulation bully).

Children need to learn how to behave, and take responsibly for it, and have the freedom to make choices. (exclusion bully).

[I would] give my child the opportunity to fix it themselves and revisit the situation some days later.” (exclusion bully).

Some parents directed their child towards a specific way of taking action, such as making a decision about the friendship and sticking to it: “Outline the options for our child - you are either their friend or not” (manipulation bully). At the same time, other parents recognised that the child should be able to figure out the consequences of their behaviour on their own: “Because kids have to figure this out and come to their own realisation that they need to be a good friend to keep good friends” (manipulation bully).

Category Summary. The overall message in this category was that parents wanted to “empower my child to deal with the situation to assist them with coping strategies [and] to encourage resilience.” Parents recognised this goal could be achieved through equipping their child with the skills they need, rather than a direct, hands-on, intervention: “My job is not to rescue my child but give them the confidence, strategies and support to work out these sorts of things themselves.” This issue ties back into the debate throughout this theme on the conflict parents face between wanting to protect their child and wanting to let their child learn how to resolve these situations independently. Throughout this chapter, parents described the

difficulty they would have finding a balance between wanting their child to develop resilience, but also wanting to protect them and other children from the experience and its effects. Knowing how much support to provide their child, and when to provide it, is a difficult balance to strike.

Theme Summary. This theme, *a teachable moment*, has explored in what ways, and for what reasons, parents support their child through relational bullying. Parents took a future-focused approach and recognised the importance of early intervention. They wanted to foster the qualities and values they would like to see in their children when they become adults. Parents thought their children might suffer in the future if they did not address the issues now. Parents wanted their child to be able to solve their own problems, but also felt the need to support, advise, guide, and teach their child. This theme showed that parents may try to balance the more active and involved support strategies by instead supporting their child ‘behind the scenes’ and equipping them with the skills they need to resolve the situation and learn from it – whether it be a lesson in empathy for bullies, or in resiliency for victims. Parents wanted to raise children who have the skills to become caring adults. They discussed that, in order to do this, they need to be “acknowledging the things that hurt them” when they are victimised, and by “helping them see that the things they do that hurt others” when they are bullies. Parents were conflicted about how much autonomy children should have when intervening in bullying. Moreover, parents were torn between wanting to take action themselves to protect their child, or to allow their child the space and time to develop their own skills and resiliency to better cope in future.

Theme 4: Their Hurt is My Hurt

Parents described how they would *feel* in responses to the six hypothetical scenarios. When considering their child in the roles of victim or bully, parents wrote that they would have a range of emotional responses to the events, many of which have been discussed in previous bullying literature (e.g., Harcourt et al., 2014). This theme focuses on the areas that these feelings were different and distinct across the types of relational bullying, or the roles that participants were responding to. This theme is made up of three categories: a) all relational bullying can provoke anger, sadness, and disappointment, b) exclusion and rumour spreading can be upsetting and worrying, and c) manipulation can be annoying and frustrating.

a) All Relational Bullying can Provoke Anger, Sadness, and Disappointment.

The first category in the theme *their hurt is my hurt* covers the emotional reactions of being angry, sad, and disappointed, which were present for all six scenarios.

Angry. Parents consistently identified that they would feel *angry* in all six of the scenarios. When considering their child as a bully, they felt a shameful sort of anger towards their child: “angry at my child.” When their child was a victim, they said they would feel angry at the situation and on behalf of their child: “I would feel angry that my child was being hurt this way.” Anger was also directed at multiple people. Parents were angry at the bullies for behaving in this way, or at their parents for allowing them to behave in this way:

[I would] feel some anger towards the children who are being mean to my child.

Angry at the parents as they let children behave that way without correcting them.

Sad. Parents consistently identified that they would feel *sad* in all of the scenarios. When their child was a bully, parents felt sad about their child’s behaviour and also empathised with the victim as a result of their child’s behaviour: “I would feel sad for the other child and sad that my child was acting that way.” Conversely, when their child was a victim, parents identified that “this would make me feel sad for my child.”

Disappointed. For all types of *bullying perpetration* (exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation), parents frequently identified that they would feel *disappointed*:

Disappointed that my child has contributed to making another child feel left out. (exclusion bully).

Disappointed in my child. (rumour spreading bully)

Disappointed that they think this is acceptable. (manipulation bully).

Disappointment was also a key feeling identified in the scenario about *victims of exclusion* and was directed towards the bully for not displaying more inclusive behaviour: “[I would feel] disappointed in the other children.”

b) Exclusion and Rumour Spreading can be Upsetting and Worrying.

Upset. For the scenarios about *exclusion* and *rumour spreading*, for both victims and for bullies (i.e. four of the six scenarios), parents identified that a key emotion would be feeling *upset*. This reaction was *not* a prominent feeling discussed in the manipulation scenarios. For the exclusion *bullying* scenario, parents described that they would be upset that their child was not showing empathy: “upset that my child was not considering how this might make another child feel.” When their child was a *victim* of this exclusion behaviour, parents wrote that they would feel upset for their child, but also upset with the bully: “[I would feel] upset at the other children.” For the scenarios about rumour spreading, parents said they would feel upset that their child had made a poor decision in *perpetration*: “Upset that my child has chosen to do this.” Similarly, parents described they would feel upset both for their *victimised* child and about the behaviour in a general sense: “Upset for my child and upset that kids spread nasty rumours at all.”

Worried and Anxious. Parents reported that they would feel *worried* or *anxious* when considering their child in the *exclusion scenarios*, both for victims and for bullies, and for victims of rumour spreading (i.e., this was not prominent for perpetrators of rumour spreading or for manipulation in any role). When their child was a *victim of exclusion*, they worried about their child’s feelings and self-esteem:

Worried about how my child is doing.

Worried about my child's sense of self.

This reaction was also present when their child was a *victim of rumour spreading*: “[I would feel] concerned for my child's emotional wellbeing.” For rumour spreading, parents described how they would be worried for the future and what might happen next:

Worried about the impact of the rumours.

Worried about my child - how this is impacting them at school and their self-esteem.

When considering their child in the *exclusion bully* scenario, this concern was regarding their child’s actions: “concerned about my child's behaviour.” In addition, this concern often

factored in the victimised child and their own child's lack of empathy, with parents feeling: "concerned that my child is not acknowledging the feelings of others."

c) Manipulation can be Annoying and Frustrating.

The third category in the theme *their hurt is my hurt* covers the emotional reactions of being annoyed and frustrated. These feelings were evident primarily for *manipulation*, both for perpetration and victimisation. When their child was a bully and socially manipulating others, they described being "very annoyed with my child." They also said that they would feel bothered or annoyed when their child was the *victim* of manipulation: "annoyed, but not really upset." The manipulation perpetration scenarios also made parents feel *frustrated* with their child for not being more mature: "I would be frustrated with my child, not angry but I would see that they were immature and needed help to see that this is not what friendship is." Parents were frustrated that their child was a victim of this, and that the bully was doing it at all: "frustrated with the other child."

Theme Summary. This fourth and final theme has explored parents' emotional reactions and feelings towards relational bullying. Parents reacted differently to the three forms of relational bullying. The manipulation scenario was the only type of relational bullying that led to parents being annoyed and frustrated. Some parents had a less intense reaction and felt that this behaviour was more of an inconvenience, and less problematic, than the other two forms of relational bullying. Furthermore, unlike the exclusion scenarios, manipulation was **not** prominently described as being upsetting or causing worry and was instead described as "just really annoying behaviour."

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings from the analysis of 124 parents' responses to three hypothetical scenarios about forms of relational bullying: exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation. Thematic analysis was used to construct four key themes: (i) "kids being kids", (ii) "we need to protect all children, not just ours", (iii) "a teachable moment", and (iv) "their hurt is my hurt".

Some differences appeared between the three forms of bullying. Some parents sought to explain or rationalise *exclusion* and said exclusion could be due to something annoying the victim had done. They also speculated about what was wrong with their child when they were depicted as the victim, and if their bullying child had 'an acceptable reason' to exclude. The analysis highlighted that some parents held normative beliefs towards manipulation in

particular, as compared to the other two forms of relational bullying. They saw social manipulation as common, frequent, and a normal part of childhood experience and something that could be sorted out by the children involved. For *manipulation*, however, parents were divided in their views as to whether this behaviour was acceptable or not. Some considered it may be just how children learn about social dynamics among peers. *Rumour spreading* appeared to elicit clearer responses from parents. They saw this behaviour as unacceptable, and they saw many people as having a responsibility for intervention.

Across all three forms of relational bullying analysed in this study, parents expressed diverse opinions. Despite some diverse views it was clear from the analysis of the data that parents struggled with: (i) deciding when and how much to intervene, (ii) who was responsible for the issue and the response, and (iii) their concern for their child and other children.

Firstly, there was a tension where parents struggled with wanting to promote autonomy in their children, but also wanting to protect them. They had to find the right balance of protection and independence for their child that would work for the situation, their child, and the other involved parties. This struggle held true for parents deciding if they should intervene at all, what kind of intervention they would choose, and how involved they would be in this process. Parents sometimes chose not to intervene when their child was a victim in all scenarios due to a fear of making things worse for their child, or because they didn't think intervention was necessary. In addition, parents sometimes chose not to take action because they saw inaction as the best way to solve the problem while also allowing their child to be autonomous, take control, and become resilient in the future. When they did take action, they still wanted their child to be able to solve their own problems (with parental support and guidance) and described the need to scaffold their child through the experience. One suggestion to reach this balance was by supporting their child 'behind the scenes' and equipping them with the skills they need to resolve the situation and learn from it – whether it be a lesson in empathy for bullies, or in resiliency for victims.

The second overarching idea that the findings and analysis show is that parents saw themselves and other parents as responsible, not just for intervention, but for creating this behaviour in the first place. When it came to intervention, parents were often future-focused and future-concerned. They recognised the importance of intervention in order to foster the qualities they would like to see in their children in future. Parents emphasised that to act with their child's future in mind would be fulfilling their parenting role and their duties. Therefore, to not act would be seen as an abdication of these responsibilities and, as such, could be seen

as a failure. In order to fulfil their parenting role, parents primarily taught their child skills and sometimes forced lessons upon their child. This approach was both to prevent further issues for their child and to prevent their child from causing further issues to other people.

Third, the parents' descriptions showed that parents wondered if bullying was something that 'other' families might have to deal with instead, because it did not reflect the values they had raised their child to have. Parents acted and reacted out of fear, worry, and concern for their family, their child, or themselves becoming the 'other'. They were worried their child would become an 'other' if they were involved in bullying – either because they were not accepted by their peers and then became a victim, or because their child was bullying others and became 'that child'.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY TWO

PARENTS' RESPONSES TO THEIR CHILD'S INVOLVEMENT IN RELATIONAL BULLYING

Findings

This second study sought to address the lack of research on parents' experiences and responses when their child was involved in relational bullying as a victim and/or a bully. This study involved analysing parents' accounts of the impact and effects of relational bullying on their children, wider family/whānau, and themselves. In this study, 69 parents (from the sample of 124 parents who completed Study One) discussed their child's actual (as opposed to Study One's hypothetical) experience of bullying involvement. Participants' children comprised 44 victims and 25 children who had been involved in relational bullying as a victim *and* a bully (i.e. bully-victims). No parents identified their children had *only* been a bully of relational bullying. However, because the victimisation and perpetration experiences were discussed by participants separately, aspects of the bullying experience can be highlighted throughout the chapter. The type of relational bullying the child experienced (exclusion, rumour spreading, or manipulation) was not a focus of this analysis as the primary aim was to gain a greater understanding of how relational bullying affects families and the role parents play in children and young people's relational bullying involvement as a whole.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006), as outlined in chapter three, was used to analyse the data and responses from parents and it led to the construction of five themes: (i) the impact on family/whānau, (ii) the school relationship and response, (iii) issues in taking responsibility, (iv) the effects on the child, and (v) parents' reactions and intervention. These themes included several categories and are displayed in Table 3. The analysis revealed parents reacted and responded in a variety of ways. While the findings cannot represent all of these experiences of participants, attention has been paid to prominent experiences that appear to resonate with many of the 69 participants.

Table 3

Themes and categories found in the thematic analysis of research findings from Study Two

Themes	Categories
<i>1. Impact on family/whānau</i>	a) Impact on parents b) Impact on siblings c) Impact on household/general family
<i>2. The school relationship and response</i>	a) Relationship between school and family b) School response
<i>3. Issues in taking responsibility</i>	a) The bully must put things right b) The victim can take back control c) The parents are responsible d) This is a school and community issue
<i>4. The effects on the child</i>	a) Sadness, confusion, and regret b) Withdrawal and retaliation
<i>5. Parents' reactions and intervention</i>	a) Parents' emotional reactions b) Communication within the family c) Communication with school d) Communication with others e) Minimising harm f) Effect of parents' intervention

Theme 1: Impact on Family/Whānau

Relational bullying affected the children involved, but also their wider family. It impacted on parents, other children in the family, and on the household in general. Analysis of the parents' written descriptions and accounts of their experience showed that relational bullying can cause a great deal of stress and distress for all the family/whānau. This theme is made up of three categories: a) impact on parents, b) impact on siblings, and c) impact on household/general family.

a) Impact on Parents.

The first category in the theme *impact on family/whānau* relates to the impact that the child's involvement had on the parents. It affected their mental health, caused increased stress and created strain on interpersonal relationships: "It caused arguments between myself and my husband about how best to respond to the situation." Others described the stress and costs of trying to resolve the situation: "We as parents have lost time and money through lost work having to go to school to deal with the situation." For others, there was a psychological toll, including shame and guilt: "[I felt] embarrassment from being the mother of a bully," as well as triggering past trauma and memories of their own experiences of being hurt: "[it] raised historic feelings in his father of bullying while at school." Overall, parents felt their children's involvement in relational bullying rippled out and affected them on a deep level. One parent explained that they felt like victims too when the effects on their daughter started to impact the family: "[our] daughter's upset behaviour spilled over making us victims too."

b) Impact on Siblings.

The second category in the theme *impact on family/whānau* relates to the impact that the child's bullying situation had on other children in the family/whānau unit. Siblings were also affected by the child's involvement in relational bullying because resolving the issue took focus and energy away from them and impacted on their status/mana. One parent of a victim wrote that the relational bullying had a: "huge effect on the family [...] other kids in the family shattered and angry." Another parent, discussing victimisation, found that "even her younger sibling was upset." Disagreement and arguments between the adults about how to handle the situation also affected siblings of the child involved: "We have a newborn baby and so all the fighting made him unsettled." However, relational bullying also brought siblings closer together and strengthened relationships between siblings in some cases: "Her sister and her are close and supported each other."

c) **Impact on Household/General Family.**

The third category in the theme *impact on family/whānau* is the impact that the child's involvement had on the collective wellbeing and dynamics of the family/whānau unit. A parent of a victim of relational bullying wrote about the impact on the wider family: "My child was extremely upset which meant that the rest of the family were impacted by her being upset." Another parent, whose child was involved as both a victim and a bully, found that the relational bullying had several ramifications, both inside and outside the family unit:

It has affected my child and now [s/he] finds it hard to trust people other than family. Socialising is hard and [s/he] has become very insular. It's hard on a family seeing this and, in the long-term, effects all immediate family members.

Other parents described increased tension in the household and collective sadness as "it made everyone sad." Another parent of a bully-victim – but specifically discussing the child's experience as a victim – reported that their child became angry and confrontational towards the rest of the family: "My child became very angry and argumentative at home [...] and the whole household was in a heightened state." The increased tension and arguments led to more stress on the family system: "The stress level in the household is raised."

Theme Summary. Overall, this theme shows how the individual child's involvement in relational bullying caused both individual and collective stress and distress for all the family/whānau. This effect was indicated in disagreements between parents, stress on siblings, and general tension in the family unit. Families experienced this stress both when their child was a victim and when their child was a bully.

Theme 2: The School Relationship and Response

Parents discussed the important role that schools had in their child's experience of bullying. While the questionnaire didn't ask directly about the school's role, this setting was described as a common location of the bullying and an integral context for the intervention process. Schools played an important role in informing parents of incidents, or needing to be informed by parents. Schools were sometimes allies providing assistance, but for the most part, parents were dissatisfied and disappointed with the ways school staff managed relational bullying. This theme is made up of two categories: a) relationship between school and family, and b) school response.

a) **Relationship between School and Family.**

The first category in the theme *the school relationship and response* is based on what parents described as being important about the relationship between the family and their child's school. Having a positive and constructive relationship with the school was important for parents. They needed to feel safe and have their concerns respected when they informed the school that their child was being bullied. A positive relationship was also important so that schools could inform parents that their child had either been a victim of relational bullying or was bullying others (this communication process is discussed further in theme five). In some cases, parents failed to take their child's notification seriously until they, and the school staff, saw the effects on the child: "He told me and I brushed it off at first, then both the teacher and I noticed changes in his personality and behaviour." The ideal relationship described by parents was where they and the school worked together to resolve the situation: "teacher and I discussed the problem. All the children involved were spoken to at school."

b) **School Response.**

The second category in the theme *the school relationship and response* was based on participants' descriptions of how the school staff responded and tried to manage the relational bullying situation. Parents described *unhelpful* responses including a lack of support from the school and *helpful* responses, such as teachers addressing the issue or arranging meetings.

Unhelpful School Responses. Parents described unhelpful school responses which included a lack of support and leaving parents to deal with it on their own:

My partner and I were furious and helpless especially given the lack of help from the school.... it felt like we were on our own and the people we trusted to protect him while he was at school wouldn't.

Other victim's parents explained how a lack of effective school support meant they had to remove their child from the school: "[we] got the school involved, they were no help, and in the end we changed his school." Another parent explained how a lack of school response ended in a serious assault on their child and then removal from the school to protect him from further harm: "[It] achieved absolutely nothing [...] Child was eventually seriously assaulted, and we removed him from the school."

It wasn't just the school staff (teachers and principals) that were criticised for being ineffective and unsupportive, some parents also identified Boards of Trustees as having a

culture of acceptance: “The Board of Trustees did nothing when I raised concerns at the school’s attitude to bullying.” They wrote that the Board of Trustees minimised the issue, based on the number of students impacted:

I have taken this matter to the school Board of Trustees and they felt, as it was only one child affected, they did not have to address it or develop a school bullying policy.

Other senior staff were criticised as ignorant, unaware of the issue and its impact on students’ mental health and wellbeing, and normalised the bullying:

I contacted the intermediate my daughter attended to let the teacher know that there was bullying in the playground and could the teachers keep an eye on it. I later got a call from the deputy principal of the school to say that kids were self-harming themselves and that my daughter was one of them. She had no idea that I have raised a concern that my daughter was being bullied in the playground and was so blasé about the whole thing. "It's like measles. We get runs of it and this is a year for it." I was shocked at the school’s attitude.

Parents were disappointed at the dismissive attitude of staff and inaction of the school: “Honestly I found my daughter’s school not particularly helpful except for one teacher who thanked me for mentioning it.” Another parent felt guilty for not telling the school sooner, but was also left disappointed by the school’s lack of action until the issue was escalated to senior staff: “I waited way too long to raise it and they did not handle it well when I did, until the principal was involved.”

Some parents were left to resolve the issue themselves, which often meant moving schools, but they were still angry with their original school ignoring the issue and making no improvements: “Now that he has moved school, he is much happier. [But] his previous school has made no changes to the way they deal with bullying.” Overall, many parents were unsatisfied by the response they received from their child’s school when they were trying to resolve the issues of relational bullying. This inaction raises the question of who has the responsibility to intervene, as well as when and how this should be done.

Helpful School Responses. While parents talked more about the unhelpful school responses, some did describe a number of helpful and constructive school responses. Helpful responses included teachers or principals addressing the issue with students directly:

The teacher spoke to the girls involved. She also encouraged friendships with some other children in the class which have gone well now.

It helped as the principal talked about it with the children and they became a lot better.

Arranging meetings, discussing the issue in depth, and making sure parents felt heard, was important for addressing concerns: “When they spoke to their teacher, they had a meeting with the bully during school time and were able to work out the problems.” The school’s openness and honesty, and willingness to acknowledge the problem was also appreciated by the parents of victims: “The school is very good on addressing issuing of bullying, being aware that bullying can and will happen at every school.” However, helpful and positive responses to relational bullying did not always mean the situation was successfully resolved and that no further incidents occurred. Parents acknowledged the school staff’s meaningful efforts and attempts as well, with parents praising that “as much as the teacher has tried,” they had decided to move their child to another school.

Theme Summary. Overall, this theme has identified the importance of the school staff and parents working together to try to address their child’s involvement in relational bullying. Parents saw the school as a source of support and wanted a respectful and constructive relationship. Unfortunately, parents consistently described a lack of support from their child’s school, which left them feeling frustrated, isolated, and helpless. A lack of school support also led to serious outcomes for their children, and sometimes meant the home-school relationship was irreparable and led to parents choosing to move their child to another school. Parents also identified the governing bodies of schools, the Boards of Trustees, as complicit and having dismissive attitudes when addressing relational bullying. Some parents identified good outcomes for their child after approaching the school. This effort involved school staff and schools acknowledging that bullying was a problem, interacting with families and involved children, and helping victims to seek out healthier friendships. These were key factors in parents’ experiencing effective responses from the school.

Theme 3: Issues in Taking Responsibility

The issue of responsibility was raised by many parents. They wrote about who they thought was responsible and what they expected to be done. They clearly saw relational bullying as involving more than just the bully and the victim. They identified their child, the other

involved child, the staff at school, and themselves as taking action to address the bullying situation. Parents had strong views about *who* should take responsibility, and that those people should take a range of actions. They also had beliefs about what an acceptable response was and that responses should include prevention, intervention when it happens, and ongoing care and support. This theme focuses on *who* parents identified as needing to take action, rather than the specific actions taken and is made up of four categories: a) the bully must put things right, b) the victim can take back control, c) the parents are responsible, and d) this is a school and community issue.

a) The Bully Must Put Things Right.

The first category in the theme *issues in taking responsibility* relates to the different perspectives parents had about accountability for the misbehaviour. Parents strongly believed that the bully must be held accountable for their actions, that there needed to be some expression of remorse, and that the bully and their family should be involved in the restorative process:

We spoke to the parents of the other boy. They agreed to meet with us. And they apologised and so did the son - we held a night of mihimihi in our whare. It was beautiful, and it was really meaningful. They were really embarrassed and the process we followed allowed them to maintain their mana with us and we remain close as do our two sons.

Bullies Need to Understand What They Did is Wrong. Parents described how important it was that their child (who was bullying) showed they understood that their behaviour was wrong and expressed contrition and regret: “he knew it was wrong and agreed he didn't want to do it again.” Another parent agreed that their child “had admitted it because he knew it was wrong.” Admission of guilt was an important first step: “He confessed to me that they'd been leaving a boy out. He knew it was wrong. I talked to him about it.” It was also important for children who were bystanders to also make amends:

We discussed this in detail, and she told me that it was not okay for her to do what she did. She did apologise to the child (she was not really the instigator just stood there and watched this happen when she could have done something about it).

It was not always easy to get bullies to accept responsibility. Parents described their struggles and the difficulties involved with parenting a child who was involved in relational bullying as

a victim *and* a perpetrator: “[it is] disappointing to see your own child engaging in such behaviour but [she] can't seem to see it is exactly what she does when it happens to her.”

Bullies Need to Apologise. Parents expected the bully or bullies to take responsibility and apologise and were upset and felt it was unjust when the bully was not held accountable for their actions:

The children involved were spoken to and my daughter received many apologies and it stopped.

Nothing really happened. Basically, the perpetrators got away with it and continue to do it to others.

When their child was a perpetrator of relational bullying, parents described how they supported their own child to take responsibility and show remorse: “[we] talked through and had him apologise put it right and got him to pray for the child.” Another parent also assisted their child to do this: “[I] spoke to the other girl with my daughter and apologised. Encouraged her to be a nice and good friend. Checked up on her as to how it was all going.”

Bullies Need to Change. Another parent described how punishment/removal of privileges did not lead to a change in attitude or bullying behaviour, even within the family context:

My child also repeatedly teases his younger siblings and we are having a great deal of trouble trying to get him to stop. Despite the removal of technology privileges, he makes the choice to continue to name call and tease to get a response for his own entertainment.

Others recounted how their children needed to be repeatedly advised about what is acceptable behaviour, but recognised the group dynamic of bullying means it can be difficult to manage: “She has taken heed but needs reminding often especially where peer pressure is involved.”

b) The Victim Can Take Back Control.

The second category in the theme *issues in taking responsibility* relates to parents’ perspectives and beliefs about the role the victim can take in preventing and resolving relational bullying. Parents stated it was important for victims to address their disempowerment and take action:

[my child] took back control of the situation.

[my child] selected an action and decided to confront the issue. It blew up first off, but [...] [they] appeared to have renewed confidence, and the situation to date has been resolved.

Taking responsibility as a victim also meant looking after one's own wellbeing, being proactive, and changing their perspective. One parent identified how their child found happiness and new friends by "changing themselves":

[they became a] happier child as they took back control of the situation by changing themselves and seeing the situation for what it was. Made new friends too.

Another parent described the importance of victims being adaptable. She described how her child was able to resolve their own bullying situation, but unfortunately the bully continued the behaviour elsewhere; the victim "changed her attitude and ignored the bully who then moved on to someone else."

Taking responsibility as a victim also meant avoiding being a target for bullying and learning to avoid conflict. One parent reflected on working with potential victims to be aware of behaviours that could make them a target of bullying:

I often know the kids who will be bullied at school - they are easy to pick as a former teacher. I did what I can to protect them. Some learned behaviours they have make it worse, so I have tried to teach them strategies like how to approach peers with less confrontation etc.

c) The Parents are Responsible.

The third category in the theme *issues in taking responsibility* was based on what parents thought adults should do to prevent and resolve relational bullying. Parents explained that adults needed to: look at their own parenting, be vigilant, avoid overreacting, build resiliency in children, and be a supportive presence to their child during the bullying experience.

Looking in the Mirror. Parents described how some other parents needed to take a good hard look at their own parenting because they might be teaching the behaviour which their children might subsequently teach other children. Some parents believed that children 'picked up' bullying behaviours from other children or other families because their children couldn't have learned it from them:

Parents are usually part of the problem.

I don't teach this sort of thing... it would have to be whilst they are at school.

Parents believed that certain parenting practices predispose children to acting as perpetrators of relational bullying. One example of this comes from a parent of a victim:

I may not know if my child is being a perpetrator, just have to believe that the way we have raised them does not predispose them to behave that way.

For the most part, participants felt uninvolved or laissez-faire parents were part of the problem. Parents stated that children need support, but they felt other parents didn't give this to their children: "[children] need guidance and some parents don't seem to care... about what their kids get up to at school." Similarly, they identified that some parents simply don't know or care what their children are doing:

[other parents] haven't got a clue what's going on in their child's life - no monitoring of devices or conversations to help build a better person, [and] poor role modelling themselves.

[I am] surprised at how many parents are in denial about their children's behaviour and how little action is taken.

This denial continued even when another parent tried to remedy a relational bullying situation, they found "the other parent chose to ignore me."

Different Understandings of Relational Bullying. Parents acknowledged that different people have different views about what constitutes relational bullying and what is seen as acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. There was admission that differing views might shape parent reactions and children's responses:

My child was excluded from a birthday party and this was enforced by the parent of the other child. I hope parents consider what their actions are teaching their own child and not impose their opinion/choice on their child.

At the same time another parent considered that excluding people was just a normal part of life: “I do not agree that we must invite everyone because in the real world we are not friends with everyone, but we are not nasty to them either.”

A Balanced Approach. Parents struggled with knowing how much they should do to prevent and intervene in bullying:

It is hard to know how much to get involved as I would like to see it sorted out by itself in time. Meanwhile I try to support my daughter and raise her the best way I can.

Some were concerned about parents who do *too much* to try and resolve the situation and who perhaps rob children of opportunities to work through and learn to resolve issues themselves. They took issue with “helicopter parents - trying to solve all the issues themselves - not empowering their own child,” and how some “parents make a bigger deal of it than they need to.” Other parents explained how parents need to use a balanced combination of monitoring and intervention to protect their own child against bullying, or intervene in bullying when it does happen:

I keep a watchful eye on my daughter as she is very naïve. She tries her best but is a very loving person who is also very forgiving, and this sometimes causes a lot of [hurt] for her from other students.

However, others wished they or others had been more action-oriented, and intervened individually or collectively sooner:

I wish that I had done something about it sooner rather than leaving it for a few terms. I should have acted after a few weeks instead - when I realised it wasn't going to resolve itself.

I was disappointed by the other parents at the school. The boy bullied all the children in the class... I felt that we had an opportunity as a community to do something but no one except me was prepared to do or say anything.

Parents were cautious and struggled with taking responsibility for an issue that they did not witness first hand. They often had to rely on, and trust, the accounts of others. They held back

because they wanted their children to have some autonomy and opportunities to resolve and solve the problem first. This approach was explained by a parent:

As a parent, it's hard to determine if bullying does occur. We aren't there and have to rely on recounts from the child who may or may not have interpreted the situation accurately. We don't want to over-react or under-react. We want to interfere but also want to give them a chance to develop strategies and resilience. It's hard to strike a balance.

Supporting Children and Building Resiliency. Parents emphasised trying to build resilience in their children to help them develop self-efficacy, confidence and self-reliance so they could cope effectively with similar situations in the future:

We frequently remind our daughter, if she is a kind considerate person, she will find her own heart and not to look to others to do this for her.

With our kids we have managed to manage bullying quite okay and build our child's resilience up to such behaviours.

Other parents described how their child was able to avoid some of these issues by ignoring the bully, finding other friends, and moving on from the experience. One participant identified how their child "has just carried on and plays with others," while others shared:

My child handled it very well - she chose to ignore it and make other friends.

My child is fairly resilient and has a wide and varied group of friends. She just moved on to another one of her friendship groups while her "best friend" got over it.

Parents described how adults should support their child by being present and being available to listen to their child when they are ready to share their experiences:

I think just being available for those moments when they suddenly blurt out what's been bothering them is important. Remembering that they may not want something solved, just need to share their burden.

I think it is so important to be 'present' at school, to be chatting with other parents, with the teacher, to know who is at school, to be able to place names. To be an active part of the school community.

Overall, parents had different views about what was and was not bullying, when it was appropriate to take action themselves and when they should let their child solve the problem themselves. Parents were concerned with supporting their children and building resiliency. Some parents promoted resiliency and coping by taking action and resolving the bullying, where others stood back and let their child take the lead and offered a supportive presence and encouragement.

d) This is a School and Community Issue.

The fourth category in the theme *issues in taking responsibility* is based on what parents thought and experienced in terms of the school and wider community responsibility for addressing relational bullying. Parents reported that schools failed to take responsibility and this abdication caused significant distress:

The school took no action at all as didn't see it to be within their framework of responsibility.

It felt like we were on our own and the people we trusted to protect him while he was at school wouldn't.

Schools are really good at covering it up, blaming victims [...] Never believe a school that says it's on top of bullying problems.

A lot of schools actually allow it to happen. As parents, we need to stand up for our children and make the school accountable for bullying in their schools.

Other parents felt the school did take responsibility but were ineffective at addressing the issue: "School tries to manage things during class time as best they can but, the reality is, I believe some of that makes him more of a target as the bullies see him getting special treatment."

Prevention and Early Intervention. Parents discussed how a more a comprehensive approach towards prevention was needed:

The school's response of holding one child accountable and punishing that child made things much, much worse. We need to find a way to work with the children relationally in order to develop empathy, social skills, and positive peer relationships.

Others suggested that early intervention was also required and that this effort would help minimise the damage and distress:

I find bullying at early stages, i.e. Year 1 and 2 at school, is not pounced on by teachers and is dismissed as 'normal child behaviour' by the time kids are in years 4, 5, 6, they have bullying down to a fine art and the teachers largely have very little idea that it's going on. By then, the bullies don't care and the victims know nothing effective is going to be done by the teachers.

Parents tended to agree that intervention in schools needed to target and support both the victim and the perpetrator: "both parties need support." Overall, parents viewed the school as essential in the battle against bullying and described the school as "vital in ensuring that [bullying] is stopped and addressed."

Community Responsibility. Parents had varied points of view regarding the wider positioning of relational bullying at the community level and who should be responsible for addressing it. Some did not condone bullying but believed it might be a part of working out conflict and a way to help people learn about relationships: "Being bullied and bullying is on a basic level part of what people do to learn about relationships." Another suggestion was that children in today's world may feel differently about relational bullying: "Children today are somewhat desensitized when it comes to relationships/friendships." Others blamed the rise of use of social media for increases in relational bullying and a lack of education for children around ethics and communication: "Social media gives people a platform to voice their thoughts too easily, without them thinking of the many consequences and hurt it can cause." Some parents suggested that there was a need for leadership and that society needed to take a more deliberate legislative approach to addressing relational bullying in schools:

The New Zealand government has made schooling compulsory, so they should ensure that all children feel safe and welcome at school. There are many laws relating to workplace ethics, but not many for children.

Theme Summary. Overall, the theme *issues in taking responsibility* has shown how parents position the responsibility for relational bullying as belonging to many people within the child's ecosystem. They positioned the bully as being responsible for apologising and making things right again. This view was consistent for when parents had supported their child as a victim, and when they had supported their child to make amends after bullying perpetration. However, they recognised that this was not always a straight forward process. Parents wanted victims to be empowered and take back control of the situation and resolve the bullying. They saw other parents being responsible for setting behavioural expectations for their children to prevent bullying and for providing support when incidents do arise. They saw schools being responsible for effective social integration of all children and effective and timely intervention when bullying incidents do arise. Parents also positioned the wider community as being responsible for setting and *enforcing* effective protections around children regarding bullying. Parents recognised that both community attitudes towards bullying and legislation would be important in the overall community response to bullying. In sum, parents identified shared responsibility, people and systems working together, and a combination of prevention, early intervention, and support as being most important to address relational bullying.

Theme 4: The Effects on the Child

Parents described how their child's involvement in relational bullying deeply affected their child, impacting the way their child thought and felt about themselves, others, and school and how they acted. Parents described in detail how they noticed adverse changes in their children. This theme is made up of two categories: a) sadness, confusion, and regret, and b) withdrawal and retaliation.

a) Sadness, Confusion, and Regret.

The first category in the theme *the effects on the child* relates to the children's reactions to bullying. Parents described their children as experiencing a range of emotions, but they mainly described how the child was upset, sad, and angry. Being a victim of bullying made one child "angry, frustrated, upset at home, and worried about how she would deal with the friend the next day." And it made others "sad and mad." Children's confidence and sense of self-worth was also damaged and the bullying "made her lose confidence, question herself." The sadness in the victimised children was mirrored in the sadness of the parents who felt their child had not had an ideal school experience:

My child was quite sad, but it didn't affect her wanting to go to school which was a relief. I felt quite sad as it wasn't the start to her school life that I had envisioned.

Difficult Decisions and Feeling Torn. Parents also identified that their children felt confused and conflicted when involved in bullying. They often faced difficult decisions about how to manage the situation and were worried about the fallout if they tried to make things better. For example, the parent of a bully-victim identified that their child was concerned about the consequences from adults: “[she] was worried she would be in trouble at school and with me.” At the same time, the parent of a victim described how her child was concerned about the consequences from the bully:

[she] felt a bit trapped because she was told by this child she would get in trouble if she didn't do what she said so she feels bad if she says 'no'.

Other parents also described their children as struggling with tough choices and decisions that often included choosing between keeping quiet, submitting to the bully, or risk having the bully turn others against them: “It made my daughter sad as she was torn between friends, the bully would make the kids choose her or the other kids.”

Temporary and Enduring Distress. Some parents commented that the experience of sadness, worry, and confusion their child endured was only temporary, and they sought to minimise the damage by creating distance between their child and the bully:

Initially [my child experienced] hurt and confusion and loss of confidence; but [then they] moved on quickly.

Temporary - confusion and hurt; we then pulled away from this child so no long-term effect.

Other parents described the ongoing nature of some of these issues, and how relational bullying was not something children quickly recovered or bounced back from: “[he] has had ongoing issues as a result of the relational bullying.”

Regret, Guilt, and Shame. Parents described how their bully-victim children had feelings of regret about their involvement in relational bullying. Parents described how taking part in bullying perpetration made children feel “sad and remorseful when she realised what

she had done and the hurt she was part of causing.” Children grappled with feelings of guilt, shame, and remorse, especially those who knew what their victims may have experienced, having been victims themselves: “Having been a victim, my child knows it is wrong, is upset with herself when it happens, and tries hard not to continue the behaviour.” Other children made verbal commitments to their parents that they would not repeat their bullying of others because they felt bad: “[he] knew it was wrong and agreed he didn't want to do it again.”

b) Withdrawal and Retaliation.

The second category in the theme *the effects on the child* explores how the relational bullying led some children to internalise their hurt and socially withdraw from others. This isolation then impacted their mental health, school attendance or academic performance. Other children externalised their hurt, reacted with anger, and began to bully others.

Parents described how their children withdrew from social activities where they might encounter more bullying and withdrew from their peers because they didn't have the energy or confidence to interact with others. One parent described how relational bullying impacted her child's ability to connect and develop and maintain relationships with peers: “It has affected my child and [s/he] now finds it hard to trust people other than family.” Some children experienced anhedonia – they lost their interest in doing things they once found made them happy: “[he] did not enjoy things he had previously”, and some parents reported their children had a “lack of confidence and reluctance to join in.”

Parents identified how involvement in bullying had adverse effects on their child's mental health including an increase in symptoms of stress and anxiety:

Bullying has broken my precious daughter and taken her joy.

She exhibited stress signs.

She felt anxious and lost confidence.

Children affected by relational bullying struggled with school performance or attendance as social problems took over:

[he] pretty much wasted [the year] academically while he either coped with bullying or worked out how to make new friends.

She was so upset that she didn't want to go to school anymore.

He was very depressed and anxious, he did not want to go to school, and would cry often.

Some parents considered moving their child to a different school while others took more decisive action: “[I] removed child from the school straight away.” Relational bullying had ramifications for future school attendance and choice: “[it impacted] her decisions about intermediate schooling as she didn't want to go with the other children from her school.”

Some children who were victims of relational bullying reacted to being disempowered by retaliating and becoming bullies. This strategy enabled them to gain some control over others and their situation and they become empowered through perpetration:

[He] was being bullied first and I believe he didn't like how it felt so resorted to becoming the bully to regain some power/control over his situation.

[They were] bullied first, then discovered the power it has, so became a bully.

One parent of a bully-victim explained how their child was expelled from school for rumour-spreading which was in retaliation to being a victim of the same behaviour. Some children didn't retaliate and become bullies right away. Some waited to see if things would improve and the system would put things right and subsequently turned to bullying when things did not change:

Definitely [a] victim first, grew up and got disillusioned by humans and then put her foot down when older, unfortunately using the wrong means.

After my child has been bullied she has learned how to hurt others and so has on occasion repeated the bullying behaviour against other children at particular times.

Theme Summary. This theme has explored the impact on the children involved in relational bullying. While some parents identified immediate and ongoing adverse effects of involvement in relational bullying, both victims and bully-victims experienced sadness, anxiety, and felt conflicted. Bully-victims also identified feeling regret over their role in perpetration. Children withdrew socially and internalised their pain while others lashed out

and began bullying others – parents cited the victimisation experience as a key factor in their child subsequently becoming involved in relational bullying perpetration.

Theme 5: Parents' Reactions and Intervention

Parents discussed many ways that their child's involvement in relational bullying affected them and identified the actions they took in response to the situation. First, adults had strong emotional reactions, and they spent a great deal of time talking about the issue and their child's involvement (within the family, to the school, and with others). Then they tried to make sense of the bullying and weighed options. Finally, they acted to provide care and support to their child and intervened to prevent further bullying. This theme is made up of six categories: a) parents' emotional reactions, b) communication within the family, c) communication with school, d) communication with others, e) minimising harm, and f) effect of parents' intervention.

a) Parents' Emotional Reactions.

The first category in the theme *parents' reactions and intervention* covers a broad range of powerful emotional reactions that parents felt after finding out their child was involved in bullying.

Anger and Sadness. Parents of children who were victims and bullies were angry and upset about what happened and were sad for the victims. Parents were angry that the school had failed in its duty to protect their child, that others had not intervened, and for not knowing about the issue earlier:

It made me feel annoyed and upset for my daughter.

My partner and I were furious and helpless especially given the lack of help from the school.

[I felt] sad, and mad at the instigator and that the others didn't stand up to him.

[I was] really sad for my daughter and cross at the other girl.

[I felt] sick, angry and very sad, then guilty for not realising earlier.

Powerlessness. Some parents were angry because they felt powerless and unable to personally prevent the bullying from happening. They were angry that they failed to protect

their child: I am angry, powerless, and heartbroken for him. Others were frustrated at the lack of power they had to address the situation and the lack of power exercised by schools who they felt should have been more proactive in addressing the bullying:

It upset us, as we were powerless to a certain degree, and the kids who were causing the trouble seemed to not be caught or dealt to with consequences either.

Disappointment and Shame. Parents of bullies were upset that their child had bullied others and brought shame to their family:

Upset, disappointed in him.

Upset with his behaviour.

Annoyed that my child could be mean like that.

Disappointing to see your own child engaging in such behaviour.

Others expressed mixed emotions about their child bullying others: “disappointed, annoyed, defensive.” However, this sense of disappointment and shame was diminished when their child admitted to bullying others and took responsibility: “[I was] disappointed in her but glad to know and have the chance to discuss and encourage her for future interactions to take the high road.”

Worry and Concern. Parents of victims and bully-victims were worried or concerned about the impact victimisation might have on their child and for their child’s personality, development, and behaviour:

[I was] worried that my child will be greatly affected by the bullying.

[I was] concerned that [my] child behaved this way.

Overall, parents experienced a range of emotions when they found out their child had been involved in relational bullying including anger, sadness, shame, frustration, and

powerlessness. These were reactions to the situation, their child being the victim of bullying or bullying others, and to what schools were doing to address the situation.

b) Communication within the Family.

The second category in the theme *parents' reactions and intervention* relates to the communication that occurred between parents and their child within the context of the family. Communication was primarily focused on talking about the problem and discussing solutions. Initially, parents found out about their child's involvement in relational bullying because their children told them. Finding out through their child happened for both parents of victims and parents of bully-victims. Parents reported that they spent time talking to their child about what happened and talked to their child in order to support them.

Parents talked to their children, gave them advice and spoke about possible actions their child could take to prevent them from being bullied again. Some discussions were conversational in nature with an emphasis on enhancing the child's self-efficacy and agency:

[I] discussed it with my child and talked about his options to deal with it.

[I] talked to my daughter and discussed what options she could do.

Other discussions were more adult-directed with parents providing guidance and advice to their child: "I advised my child about how to respond to the situation." Talking about the bullying helped their child feel heard, find solutions, feel supported, and had a cathartic effect:

Being able to tell me made her feel better.

I think it gave my daughter strength to know that I was there to stand up for her and that this behaviour was not acceptable.

Parents emphasised the importance of ongoing communication with their child. While some had 'one off' talks about what happened, others continued to discuss the issue, the child's attempts at problem-solving, and the ongoing effects on the child. One parent shared that talking with her children, in a general sense before any bullying occurred, meant that these lines of communication were already open: "[Being] able to maintain great communication

with my children means that problems are found quickly and dealt with before the long-term damage can become a huge problem.”

Parents also talked to their children when they found out their child was bullying others. When asked specifically about what action they took when their child was a perpetrator of relational bullying, parents described talking to their child and advising them on ways to resolve the situation, or to help them recognise their wrongdoing:

I spoke with my daughter and gave her steps to improve or resolve the situation.

[I] talk[ed] to him about right and wrong.

Talking and communication also extended into a restorative process when parents encouraged their child to try and make amends with the victim. Some parents were involved in this process alongside their child, while others monitored from the sidelines:

[I] spoke to the other girl with my daughter and apologised. Encouraged her to be a nice and good friend.

[I] ensured son put things right with those concerned.

c) Communication with School.

The third category in the theme *parents' reactions and interventions* involved the communication that occurred between parents and their child's school. Some requests and communication were directed at teachers, others at principals and Boards of Trustees, but not all communications led to a positive outcome: “I have taken this matter to the school Board of Trustees and they felt, as it was only one child affected, they did not have to address it or develop a school bullying policy.” While the school's role in the intervention has already been discussed in terms of responsibility (see category 3d), this theme explores the origins and details of the communications between home and school.

Talking to the school first involved informing the school about the bullying and raising awareness of the issue:

I talked to my child about what she could do. When she said she was too afraid to act, I emailed her teacher, and had a meeting with the school principal.

[I] had a quiet word with her teacher so they were aware of the problem.

Some parents asked the school for advice and assistance because they felt they couldn't deal with the situation alone or when their initial responses were not effective:

I spoke with the teacher and asked them what to do next.

Eventually [I] contacted the teacher and asked for assistance.

I advised my child about how to respond to the situation. When things did not improve, I encouraged her to speak to her teacher about it.

Some parents communicated with their school in more formal and forceful ways because of the seriousness of the issue. One parent recounted how they approached the school and "demanded a response." Others requested a specific intervention from their child's school: "I talked to the school and asked my daughter be separated from sitting near this girl in class and encouraged my daughter to speak up." Another parent quickly arranged to meet with senior school staff so that timely intervention could be made:

[I] met immediately with the principal to put a plan in place to stop the bullying and ensure that no other children endure what our child went through.

Some parents gave a clear message that they expected immediate action, ongoing communication, and monitoring:

I told the class teacher and asked them to speak to the child concerned. I asked for a report back and requested a period of monitoring to ensure that the behaviour didn't continue.

Parents whose children were bullying others also went through a similar process of meeting with and talking to school staff. For example, parents raised their child's involvement in bullying perpetration with the teacher to make them aware of the situation and increase the ability for ongoing monitoring:

[I] met with my child's teacher to make them aware of what he was doing so she could help manage/watch out for it at school.

[I] had a meeting with the school.

d) Communication with Others.

The fourth category in the theme *parents' reactions and interventions* involved parents talking to the other child/ren involved, to the parents of other children, and professionals who could assist their child. Talking to others enabled parents to intervene in the situation, encourage solutions, and support their child. Parents talked directly to the bully to help them understand that their behaviour was unacceptable and to outline the consequence should their behaviour continue:

[I] Spoke firmly to the bully and stated what behaviours I saw and said very bluntly that it was bullying and that if it happened again at school I would be speaking with teachers and in my home I would call a meeting with his parents.

Others talked to the bully to request a change in their behaviour:

I initially contacted the child (as a response to one of the abusive messages), explaining who I was and asking the child to please stop messaging my child until things were friendly again. The child then moved to a different media platform, and I made my request again.

When their child was bullying, parents talked to the parents of victims in order to resolve the situation, check on the welfare of victims, and put things right:

I talked to the victim's mother to see if there were any indicators from the victim that he was upset.

[I] spoke to the other girl with my daughter and apologised.

Some parents of victims approached the bully's parents only when attempts to talk to reason with the bully directly failed:

After I got an abusive and disrespectful message personally from the child, I contacted the child's mother to let them know what was happening.

Some found talking to other parents challenging: "I tried to talk to the parents, but they were unreceptive." Other parents recognised a *shared* helplessness for both families and felt sympathetic towards the parents of bullies who were often struggling with their child's behaviour:

I spoke to the child's mum. The mum said she did not know what to do with her daughter as she was so mean. The mum feels quite helpless.

Sometimes, parents communicated with community service providers and sought help from professionals:

[I] went to the Police and the Ministry of Education.

[We] needed the support of the police as well to take down the posts and threaten the new cyber law to students and parents.

[I] contacted the police, mental health team, hospital, school counsellor, psychiatrist, and psychologist. Also families' support agencies.

Parents utilised the additional support available within the school context. For example, one family "informed Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour who was called into observe and assess child." Another parent identified seeking help from a therapist during their child's victimisation *and* perpetration experiences. During victimisation, this parent recalled: "We engaged a social therapist to teach our son how to act and also pass on resources to the teacher for teaching the class how to deal better with situations." During perpetration, they utilised the same strategies and used the social therapy to "help teach those social interactions."

e) Minimising Harm.

The fifth category in the theme *parents' reactions and interventions* is based on the strategies that parents said they used to minimise the harm their child experienced or caused, monitor progress, and the efforts they made to help their child stay resilient. Parents tried to support their child by encouraging them to keep participating in enjoyable activities, strengthening other friendships that their child had, and checking in to ensure there were no repeated incidents or negative effects:

[I] took my child away from all electronic devices for a while and did fun things together to help her feel better.

I joined my daughter up to sports teams to widen her circle of friends.

I maintained interest in the situation and was kept up to date.

Checked up on her as to how it was all going.

Parents often tried more than one strategy when supporting their child:

Spoke with [the] Dean. Situation was severe. Removed child from the school straight away. Supported my child, apologised to my daughter, police involved. Looked for another environment to get our daughter into. Supported her in things she enjoyed, had good friends over. Open communication with her.

Some parents said they became more sensitive, more caring and attentive towards their child, and more aware of their child's feelings:

[I was] more attentive and displayed more affection than I normally would. Our other family members also showed the same behaviour to our child.

f) Effect of Parents' Intervention.

The sixth, and final, category in the theme *parents' reactions and interventions* is based on the outcomes and effectiveness of parent actions. Throughout this chapter, a wide range of actions that parents took when their child was a victim or a bully have been discussed. This

category provides examples of those that parents found effective, and those that were ineffective at resolving the bullying.

Effective Strategies and Resolution. In some cases, parents found that their actions resolved the situation and stopped the bullying. For example, a parent that approached the bully directly explained that the: “bully went away and my daughter could resume life.” Another parent found success in their approach too, although it involved trying many different strategies: “[the] whole approach has seen her repair and bloom back to the carefree, loving child she was.” This parent used multiple strategies including communicating with their child and the school, supporting their child with other activities and friendships, engaging police help, and removing their child from the school. Successful resolution often meant a positive outcome for both victims and bullies and no further incidents:

When they spoke to their teacher they had a meeting with the bully during school time and were able to work out the problems. They all cried at the end of it. The bully did tell everyone about their discussion but there have been no further issues.

Parents reflected on the impact of their strategies on their child’s wellbeing and sense of being supported:

My child was visibly happier once she knew I had spoken to her teacher, and the teacher spoke to the girls involved.

I think it gave my daughter strength to know that I was there to stand up for her and that this behaviour was not acceptable.

Many parents discussed how responsive their *bullying* child was to intervention. This process involved their children recognising that they did not want to continue with bullying behaviour and that they wanted to learn right from wrong. Parents acknowledged, however, that it would take more time and effort for their child to stop bullying completely, and they understood it could be more difficult to manage their behaviour during group social interactions.

Despite these complexities, parents whose children were bullying others also identified some success from their strategies. One parent described how talking to their child

and to the teacher “helped alleviate situation.” Another wrote that, after talking to their child, their child learned “awareness of your actions and the effects they can have on others.” Another parent used the strategies of talking to their child and offering solutions to try and stop their child from bullying others. The outcome was that their child “was happy and a resolve was met.”

Ineffective Strategies and More Issues. There was no quick fix for some parents and sometimes things got worse before they got better. One parent wrote about upsetting their child while trying to seek a resolution, however, this was successful in fixing the problem:

My child was initially angry with me for telling her teacher. I suspect that this was more embarrassment than anything else. After a few days my child's mood improved, and I suspected that this was a direct correlation of the bully's behaviour at school ceasing.

In other cases, the situation got better but there was also a social cost of seeking help and things got worse. One participant explained that the school's action “did reduce it a bit, but the class also got angry with my daughter for being a tattletale. So, a bit of a double-edged thing.” Another parent explained how the strategies used appeared to work initially but then the bully changed tactics and the bullying became worse:

My child felt much better getting away from electronic devices and also that I had talked to the other child's mother. I could tell my child felt relieved and safe. Unfortunately, the child then escalated their bullying at school (previously it was mostly confined to social media) and so the bullying behaviour got worse as a consequence.

Unresolved and Ongoing Issues. Others described how the actions had only temporary benefits and did not prevent further bullying: “My child knew we were working to fix it and things got a little better but didn't resolve. We moved [school] the following term.” Many parents found that the relational bullying continued despite their attempts at intervention. One parent wrote that their intervention strategy, which involved talking to the teacher, “hasn't changed the situation, as much as the teacher has tried.” Another parent described how, after speaking with the school, no intervention occurred, and the situation remains: “Nothing really happened. Basically, the perpetrators got away with it and continue to do it to others.” Another parent described their struggle with the perpetrator remaining in

their child's peer group: "The situation is still day-by-day because she is still in this child's class and her circle of friends."

Theme Summary. This theme has identified various parents' reactions to their child's involvement in relational bullying and their actions, and discussed the outcomes of these actions. Parents emphasised communication as a key method of resolving their child's bullying experience – both for victimisation and perpetration. Communication occurred within the family, between home and school, and with wider community services. Parents reported trying multiple strategies to help their children and they recognised the importance of ongoing monitoring and support – again, these strategies were for both victimisation and perpetration. As a result of their interventions, some parents found resolution for their child's victimisation or perpetration, while others' actions were of some help in fixing the issue. Unfortunately, other parents also identified that their child's victimisation or bullying did not stop and they had ongoing issues.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the main findings from Study Two. When reflecting on their child's lived experience and involvement in relational bullying, parents described how the bullying affected their child and how they themselves responded to this situation. Parents identified wide-reaching consequences of their child's involvement in bullying. Their child experienced sadness and social withdrawal, but there was also frequently a negative impact on the entire family unit. While some parents were able to assist their child to resolve the situation, others struggled to find a solution and identified a lack of support from their child's school as key feature of this experience. There were conflicting views about who was to blame and who should take responsibility for intervention and prevention and when it should occur.

Parents cited communication as a key intervention and support strategy. Despite the negative effects of the relational bullying, parents identified the importance of collaboration and communication and the home-school relationship as integral in managing relational bullying. The home-school relationship was important for ensuring timely support, but these relationships posed significant challenges to overcoming the bullying when the response from school and other involved parties was unsatisfactory.

Parents identified some complex issues that hinder the prevention and intervention of relational bullying. A key issue preventing timely and effective intervention are the differing views about how the situation should be handled, who parents believe is responsible, and if

relational bullying is even an issue that *needs* to be addressed. These different perspectives were present between parents, schools, and the wider community – differences were present both for consensus between groups and *within* these groups.

Overall, parents of relational victims and parents of relational bullies are in a shared struggle; children, their peers, and their families are all suffering. When the relationship between home and school or between families were ineffective – often because of denial that it was a problem, blaming others, or an abdication of responsibility – bullying continued, and parents were left feeling frustrated, isolated, and helpless. However, when schools and families worked together well, and lines of communication were open, everyone had a shared goal of stopping the bullying. Features of effective, respectful, and reciprocal relationships were: notifying others that the bullying was happening, reaching out or providing support, and working together towards positive outcomes for all involved children. When this reciprocal relationship between involved families and the school worked well, children – in any role – were getting the help they needed to resolve the situation in a timely and consistent manner with school or parental support tailored to their individual needs. For some, this strategy was a hands-on approach where parents and schools worked directly with the involved children, and for others, it was about upskilling children to respond to the situation themselves.

CHAPTER SIX: STUDY THREE
REFLECTING ON RELATIONAL BULLYING: THE ONGOING EFFECT AND
INTERGENERATIONAL IMPACT.

Findings

This third study sought to address the lack of research on parents' own childhood experiences of relational bullying involvement during their childhood or adolescence. This study involved analysing 29 parents' accounts of the impact and effects of relational bullying on themselves as children, their parents' response then, and how their experience may impact their own responses if their children are involved in bullying. Twenty-three participants discussed being a victim of relational bullying in their childhood, one participant described being a bully, and five participants described being a victim *and* a bully (i.e., a bully-victim).

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006), as outlined in chapter three, was used to analyse the data. Responses from parents led to the construction of three themes: (i) reactions to the event, (ii) the ongoing impact, and (iii) resilience and protection. These themes included several categories and are displayed in Table 4. The analysis shows parents had a wide range of experiences and outcomes, with some identifying resilience and growth while others remain deeply distressed by their bullying experience many years later. While the findings cannot represent all of these experiences, the most salient experiences were captured and described in the themes.

Table 4

Themes and categories found in the thematic analysis of research findings from Study Three

Themes	Categories
<i>1. Reactions to the event</i>	a) Misery and withdrawal b) Finding out c) Parents' reactions d) Parents' interventions e) Effect of parents' interventions
<i>2. The ongoing impact</i>	a) Regret b) Trauma c) Impact on parenting
<i>3. Resilience and protection</i>	a) Protecting myself b) Protecting my children

Theme 1: Reactions to the Event

Participants recalled experiences of their involvement in relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence. Looking back at the event, participants identified ways in which the bullying affected them personally, as well as how it affected their parents at the time. The participants described how their parents found out, how their parents reacted emotionally, the actions their parents took (if any), and what the effects of their parents' interventions were on their situation. Some participants described adverse experiences such as feeling unsupported by their parents and other adults, i.e., teachers, during this time. This theme is made up of five categories: a) misery and withdrawal, b) finding out, c) parents' reactions, d) parents' interventions, and e) effect of parents' interventions.

a) Misery and Withdrawal.

The first category in the theme *reactions to the event* is the personal impact the bullying had on individuals, primarily feelings of misery and social withdrawal. Participants described feeling worried, upset, sad, and fearful at the time of the event. Their involvement in relational bullying affected their school attendance and performance; some participants described not wanting to go to school. Others did go to school but felt "miserable", while another said they "dropped out of school." A participant described how they "kept feigning illness as I was too afraid to go to school." Involvement in relational bullying also had a negative impact on the participants' mental health. Victims experienced feelings of loneliness, lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and one participant reflected on incidences of self-harming behaviour. Another, a bully-victim, described how the experience left them feeling like they couldn't trust the adults in their life to keep them safe:

[I]did not trust the school, my parents or friends to keep me safe and feeling loved.

Participants described how their experience of victimisation was instrumental in their becoming a perpetrator of bullying:

I was bullied first [...] As a result, I tended to manipulate and hurt others without much remorse in order to reduce my own bullying.

Another participant explained that she lashed out at another child in response to her experience as a victim:

I excluded her because I felt horrid from the others bullying me and took it out on her.

b) Finding Out.

The second category in the theme *reactions to the event* related to how participant's parents found out about the relational bullying. There were three main ways parents found out about their child's involvement in relational bullying: self-disclosure, others telling, and parents noticing changes in their child. The main way their parents found out about their involvement in relational bullying was because the participant told them, while others said their parents heard about the relational bullying from uninvolved parents, or from the parents of the victim (when the child was a perpetrator of relational bullying). Some participants only told their parents after their parents noticed a change in their behaviour and asked the participant about their physical or emotional wellbeing: "I kept feigning illness as I was too afraid to go to school. My mother asked me about it. I told her." One participant explained how their parent noticed injuries from self-harming behaviour before they "confessed all" to their parent. Sometimes it took parents a long time to notice or identify that something was wrong: "I was sad, so they asked me after a long time, so I told them." Interestingly, no participants identified that their parents found about the relational bullying out via school.

c) Parents' Reactions.

The third category in in the theme *reactions to the event* relates to the reaction of participants' parents when they found out their child was involved in relational bullying. Participants reported that their parents generated a wide range of emotional reactions.

Participants described how their parents felt angry and sad. Participants reported that their parents felt sad, concerned, worried, upset, or angry about their involvement in relational bullying. A participant described how their parents were sad for them, but how they were also annoyed that they did not simply walk away from the bully. They were angry that they had to spend more money fixing broken belongings that the bully destroyed. Participants recalled that their parents were also angry towards the bully (for victims) or were angry about the situation. A participant wrote that her parents were "annoyed at the school and the snobby girls" while another (bully-victim) wrote that her parents were "angry with the school for not responding and angry at the children who were bullying me." This participant also recalled

that her parents had trouble coming to terms with their daughter's involvement as a perpetrator of relational bullying: "They did not believe that I was also involved in bullying behaviour."

Participants reported that their parents were disappointed, denied or minimised the severity of the issue, or that they had a victim-blaming perspective. A participant recalled her involvement as a perpetrator of relational bullying and explained that her parents were "disappointed in my behaviour." Some participants reported that their parents showed minimal interest in their involvement and "didn't seem to be concerned." Another participant wrote that their parent abdicated responsibility because "they disregarded it as if it was something that wasn't their problem." Some parents adopted a victim-blaming attitude. A participant stated that her parents "didn't care and would blame me for everything," while another wrote that her parents "probably thought I asked for it." Some victims described being judged by their parents: "My mother was upset but also wondered if I was being overly sensitive." This experience was echoed in the responses of another victim: "I think my mother felt bad for me, but also wondered why I wasn't doing anything about it." Those who were a perpetrator or bully-victim did *not* describe being blamed by their parents.

d) Parents' Interventions.

The fourth category in the theme *reactions to the event* related to the actions parents took when they found out about the participants' involvement in bullying, if any. Participants identified that their parents took a range of actions and directly intervened when they found out that their child was involved in bullying. Intervention or action included contacting the school, talking to the child, supporting the child, or talking to other involved parties.

Participants recalled that their parents contacted teachers and principals at the school for assistance. A participant described how their parent "went to the school to discuss options with the principal and my teachers." Another described how their parent took a more forceful approach to protecting them and *demanding* action from the school: "My mum refused to let me go to school until the teachers made the bullies stop." Contacting the school was often used in combination with other forms of intervention such as contacting the bully's parents. One participant described how their parent enrolled them in a martial arts class.

Participants also recalled their parents talking to them and supporting them through the experience:

My mum told me about an experience she had - I guess to normalise it but also to show how you move on from it. [She] told me how I'll achieve something with my life and that they, more than likely, may not as I am a lovely, thoughtful person.

Another victim of relational bullying recalled that her parents “tried to support me by giving me suggestions on how to deal with it.” Parents spent time talking to their children about their experience and offered presence support by being there for them as they went through it.

Participants explained how their parents contacted the other children who were involved and the other child’s parents. A victim commented that her parent “confronted the bully”, while another victim’s parent knew the father of the bully so “rang him and talked it through.” Another participant, who was a perpetrator, described being forced to take responsibility for her actions; her mother and the mother of the victim “put us two girls in a room together to sort ourselves out.”

Parents also discussed with their children and staff from schools, the possibility of avoiding future incidents through changing schools. A victim recalled how her parents: “offered to send me to boarding-school but I thought it would be worse to be bullied and away from home than bullied at home, so I said no.” Another participant, a bully-victim, did change schools and wrote that “going to a school that was larger was the best thing ever!”

e) Effects of Parents’ Interventions.

The last category in *reactions to the event* explores what happened after participants’ parents took action or intervened in their child’s bullying situation. Participants reflected on the consequences of their parents’ actions and identified incidences where the intervention was ineffective or not helpful: “The situation continued. I had to sort it myself.” Another described how discussion did not always lead to action or change:

They had a meeting with the school to talk to them about it. However, nothing came of it. The school did not put any plans in place to address the situation and my parents never spoke to me about it again.

This lack of action led to mistrust and to the student taking matters into her own hands:

I did not trust the school, my parents or friends to keep me safe and feeling loved. I began to hurt others before they could hurt me in order to try and establish myself as a strong and confident persona. Things got worse and for many years I was extremely miserable at school.

Other participants also experienced a lack of intervention: “The teachers did nothing - so that was pointless,” and situations which got worse: “the bully picked on me more.”

Some of the actions of parents were helpful and in some cases the intervention resolved the bullying completely. Having adults take effective action helped participants feel safe and less fearful: “It made me feel a little more protected, but I was very worried that 'telling' might make it worse.” One participant, who discussed their experience as a bully, said: “It worked, we sorted ourselves out and ended up very strong friends.” Other victims also reported that they found adult/parent intervention effective: “it never happened again,” or “it immediately stopped.”

Theme Summary. The analysis of the data in this theme shows that participants were deeply impacted by their bullying at the time it happened and often struggled to tell their parents about what was happening. Some participants turned to bullying perpetration to try and regain some control over their situation. When some individuals disclosed their bullying, there was no immediate resolution of the situation. For some perpetrators, parents remained in denial about their involvement. Participants reported that their parents were sometimes annoyed about having to deal with the victimisation and its outcomes, and some blamed their victimised child or were unconcerned about their victimisation. Some victims reported that their parents tried to downplay the severity of their experience and their parents wondered why their child did not just fix the problem themselves. Other parents were good sources of support for their children and proceeded to take action and resolve the issue. Effective actions and interventions included talking to the school, talking to the bully and the bully’s parents, and facilitating a restorative process. When successful action was taken by participants’ parents, the participants felt safer and less anxious.

Theme 2: The Ongoing Impact

Participants described how their past involvement in relational bullying as a child or adolescent had a long-term impact on them. This theme was made up of three categories: a) regret, b) trauma, and c) impact on parenting. Some bullies (including bully-victims)

experienced feelings of regret, while victims or bully-victims described feeling the ongoing and adverse effects of past and current victimisation.

a) Regret.

The first category in the theme *the ongoing impact* involved the feelings of regret described by participants after engaging in relational bullying behaviour, even after many years have passed. A bully-victim wrote about feeling “life-long remorse” as a result of bullying others while another bully-victim explained feeling terrible about her behaviour:

I have remembered that occasion for almost 30 years (and have told my kids about it) as it made me feel bad at the time and has put me off repeating that type of treatment since then. Mean people suck and I found that being mean didn't make me feel good.

A participant explained how she had tried to make amends to the victim for her childhood bullying behaviour: “When we eventually ended up at high school and I had better self-confidence and self-esteem I looked out for her and pointed out her really amazing points.” The only participant that identified solely as a perpetrator of bullying (i.e. they had not been a victim of bullying *or* a bully-victim), did not describe experiencing any feelings of guilt or remorse. This attitude may have been because the intervention that their parents had taken, led to some restoration and repair of their friendship: “it worked, we sorted ourselves out and ended up very strong friends.”

b) Trauma.

The second category in the theme *the ongoing impact* explores the trauma that both victims and bully-victims described going through and how the bullying has affected their adult lives. A victim stated how their experience had impacted her self-concept, self-esteem, and confidence:

Bullying, in my own experience, can impact on a person's whole life. I'm not as confident as most people. I'm quick to put myself down, and have trouble standing up for myself.

Being a victim of bullying adversely affect the confidence of participants and created barriers to them reaching their potential: “I feel my childhood experience and resulting lack of confidence have really held me back and led me to make some awful decisions in life.” A bully-victim identified how her experience fed her self-doubt: “It still affects me. I'm

confident, but, when it comes to being left out, I am secretly anxious and take it personally.” While another bully-victim wrote about how it affected her sense of safety: “My experiences of childhood bullying still affect me today. I still feel sad, insecure, and sometimes paranoid.”

Participants reported having experienced new incidences of bullying as adults, primarily in the workplace, and how it affected their self-concept:

As an adult I've been bullied once by a subordinate at work who spread rumours and backstabbed me at work leading people to think I wasn't good at my job.

Adult experiences of bullying differed from childhood experiences because as adults, victims felt more empowered and better able to manage and resolve the situation:

As an adult I was (emotionally and socially) equipped to deal with the bully. I was upset and frustrated, but I was also able to seek a resolution that worked for me. [...] Importantly too, I knew about the process and the ways concerns would be worked through within the organisation I work for.

c) Impact on Parenting.

The third category of the theme *ongoing impact* focuses on the impact the bullying experience had on the participants' parenting of their own children. Participants wrote about how their own experiences of childhood bullying impacted their parenting style and approach and/or the way they interacted with their child/ren:

I am using my negative experience to give my son skills for a head start on having a great life [...] I am happy I can turn my negative into a positive for him.

I have grown to be positive about anyone and everyone. We don't know what shoes they have walked in their lifetime. You can choose who your friends are and choose those who aren't. I try to model this for my children.

I always talk with my children about what is going on their life. I explain to them that I can't fight for them if I don't know what's going on.

Encouraging and normalising open communication, early in life, was seen as a form of early intervention and prevention: “I would have more regular discussions about what happens at school and bullying in general from an early age so that those conversations become normal.”

Overall, relational bullying had a lasting and negative impact on participant’s lives but also prompted participants to learn from their experience, become present-focused, and model skills that would encourage their own children to be resilient. This view is summed up by a victim who wrote: “Life is precious, and I want to help my son have every opportunity to make the most of it.”

Theme Summary. This theme *the ongoing impact* explored the impact that participant’s childhood bullying involvement has had on their lives today. Participants who had been involved in bullying perpetration as bully-victims expressed regret and remorse over their actions. Where there was no effective resolution, relational bullying took a toll on their whole lives. Some victims identified continuing to struggle with self-esteem, confidence, and anxiety. In addition, some victims identified continued victimisation through their adult lives as well. Participants wrote about how their own experiences of childhood bullying impacted their parenting and interactions with their child. They tried to learn from their experience and use it model resilience to their children. Some ways they did this was by teaching their children about empathy, modelling positivity, and engaging in open communication.

Theme 3: Resilience and Protection

The final theme relates to participants’ experiences of *resilience and protection* and is made up of two categories: a) protecting myself, and b) protecting my children. Participants discussed overcoming their past involvement in relational bullying, by building up their self-esteem, protecting their sense of self, and what they would do and how they would protect their child/ren if their own children were involved in relational bullying.

a) Protecting Myself.

The first category in the theme *resilience and protection* explores the ways in which parents demonstrated resilience in spite of their bullying experience. Participants described using various effective strategies for coping with their past experience and some of these strategies were used to protect their sense of self. Participants wrote about how they tried to take a positive perspective and focus on what they had achieved since the incident:

I have done more with my life than those mean girls - I know that sounds terrible too. But it is my coping mechanism, knowing that I am happy and content now.

Another participant reflected on how her positive connections, familial support, and positive personal traits protected her against more negative and ongoing effects of the relational bullying:

I think that I have got away very lightly in terms of bullying. I was raised in a stable and loving family and have very high self-confidence.

Reflecting on experiences of relational bullying throughout one's life, one participant who experienced relational bullying as a child *and* as an adult, wrote about how important it was to have a sense of agency and control:

I was in control of how the situation progressed; I was able to report it with relative ease. I was also able to communicate my concerns in a way that maintained my sense of worth and integrity.

Another participant described how she rejected being positioned as a victim and focused on personal growth and resilience:

I have found victory over the bullying abuse by claiming it as a growth challenge that will make me an amazing person by the time I have dealt with it all. I am working towards that and becoming proud of myself. I dislike the thought of being perceived as a helpless victim. I am working hard to remove myself from that definition.

b) Protecting my Children.

The second category in the theme *resilience and protection* explores the ways in which parents said they would support their child through a bullying experience. Some parents said they would take a similar approach to their parents. Others said they would take a more proactive approach, while some said they would just take a different approach to their parents. Participants indicated they would employ many of the same strategies their own parents used. For example, a victim identified she would use the same problem-solving strategy that her parents used with them because "my parents are great and were then too.

Looking back, they responded in a positive way. They talked to me and helped me work out things to do.” Other participants reported how they would offer support and take their own children’s concern seriously “I support my children and take their concerns seriously.”

Many participants stated they would adopt a more hands-on, proactive approach, and have an ongoing active role with their own children, compared to what their parents took with them. This proactive approach meant getting involved earlier in the situation, checking in with their children, and being persistent:

My mum listened to me and said that we'd see how things go. She never brought it up again and it stopped so I didn't raise it again. For my kids I'd hope that I would remember to ask them about it and check they were ok and that the issue was resolving i.e. stay more involved.

Follow up in a few days.

I would continue to look for opportunities for addressing the issues and helping the children engage respectfully and compassionately.

As a result of their own personal lived experience as children, many participants reported that they would take a different approach to their own parents, e.g., they would do “everything differently as my children are my world and I will do anything for it not to happen to them.” Participants suggested other actions that they would take with their own children that their parents did not take with them including: removing their child from the school and sending them elsewhere, speaking directly to the bully, contacting the school, contacting the parents of the bully, and supporting their child. A participant stated how, unlike their parents, they:

Would not rely on school authorities to resolve the issue, as I believe they don't have the time or perhaps 'heart' to address the foundational relational issues.

A victim who had been involved in a school-based meeting with their parents, the perpetrator, and the parents of the perpetrator, wrote that they wouldn’t want this for their own child. She stated she preferred for the school teachers to sort it out before it got to that stage because things can get worse once parents get involved: “[the perpetrator’s] parents were horrified of her behaviour as it came out, and I think she suffered some fairly serious consequences from her parents.”

Participants acknowledged that current bullying was worse than when they were growing up due to the advancement of technology and social media and so was more difficult to prevent and intervene in: “Technology plays a big part in today’s bullying. It’s a bigger beast now.” Another participant agreed and added that bullying was more pervasive and intrusive than when they were children:

My experiences with bullying were nowhere near as bad a bullying is today. With one push of a button the bully can cause a lot of stress and anguish.

This sentiment was shared by other participants who lamented ineffective strategies and responses: “We are more aware of bullying nowadays than when we were young, but it's still not being dealt with properly.”

Theme Summary. This theme has explored the ways in which participants reported becoming resilient since their experience of relational bullying. They focused on their personal achievements, assets, strengths, regaining control over their lives, and avoided being positioned as a victim. Participants reflected on their own experiences of relational bullying to describe many ways in which they would manage a relational bullying situation if their child was to become involved. Some would model their choices after what their own parents had done because this was effective for them. Others suggested that they would be more proactive and less dismissive. They also stressed the importance of persistence in intervention until the situation was resolved, something that many participants did not experience in their own victimisation situations. Participants expressed concerns that they believed bullying now is even worse than during their childhoods. Moreover, they cited the use of technology has made bullying more invasive and relentless, however, they argued that prevention and intervention has remained ineffective.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the main findings from Study Three. When reflecting on their own lived experience and involvement in relational bullying as children, participants identified how bullying affected them and how their parents responded to this situation. Some participants felt they had been supported, other participants described bullying as having an ongoing and adverse effect on their lives and identified a lack of support as key feature of this experience. Participants that had engaged in relational bullying behaviour as a bully-victim experienced feelings of regret, while those who were victims or bully-victims described its

negative impact on their confidence, self-esteem, identity, and mental health. Overall, involvement in relational bullying (as victims, bullies, or bully-victims) had long-term adverse effects on the participants.

Despite these negative effects and experiences, some participants described the importance of overcoming their adversity and their desire to protect their current sense of self and protect their own children. Participants also expressed that they wanted their own children to become resilient in the face of any relational bullying:

While my child might always carry with them the effects of being bullied, I hope that they also carry the lessons and skills they learned through positive and encouraging responses.

In sum, participants reflected on their own involvement in childhood relational bullying (as victims, perpetrators, or both) and considered the impact this had on their life. They wrote about how this experience affected their personal development and their parenting behaviour and practices, both generally, and in relation to approaches they would take if their own child was involved in relational bullying.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the three studies covered a wide range of perspectives that parents have about relational bullying. Study One investigated the responses parents had toward hypothetical scenarios of three different forms of relational bullying. Study Two focused on the real-life experiences parents had of their children's involvement in relational bullying. Study Three delved into parents' own involvement in relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence. This last chapter will first summarise the findings from the three individual studies and position the findings within the existing literature. This process will illustrate the findings that are consistent with the existing research as well as identify the new areas of knowledge that the three studies have brought to light. Then, the implications of these findings will be discussed in terms of both practical and theoretical suggestions. This discussion will then address the limitations of the current research and suggest ways in which future research might address these issues. Finally, this chapter will present a concluding statement to summarise the contribution that this doctoral research has made to the literature and to understanding bullying in New Zealand.

Summary of Findings – Study One

In the first study, I asked *'In what ways would parents respond to three distinct forms of relational bullying when their child is depicted as a victim and as a bully?'*

Four themes were constructed: (i) kids being kids, (ii) we need to protect all children, not just ours, (iii) a teachable moment, and (iv) their hurt is my hurt.

Study One explored parents' responses to three forms of relational bullying: exclusion, rumour spreading, and manipulation. Earlier studies have examined participants' perspectives about different forms of bullying (e.g., Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Bell & Willis, 2016) and others have looked at ostracism and manipulation as specific relational aggressive behaviours (e.g., Abell et al., 2016; Williams, 1997), and it is believed that this is the first study that has drawn comparisons between parents' perceptions of three different behaviours which are usually conflated into one phenomenon, relational bullying.

The first theme **kids being kids** showed that parents responded to these three forms of relational bullying in several different ways. For exclusion, parents often suggested the

exclusion could be due to something the victim had done and wondered if their bullying child had ‘an acceptable reason’ to exclude. This response was consistent for when their child was depicted as a victim too – they wondered what was wrong with their child. Rumour spreading appeared to elicit clearer responses from parents that the behaviour was unacceptable. For manipulation, however, parents were divided about whether this behaviour was acceptable or not, with some parents normalising this behaviour. The thematic analysis highlighted that parents held these normative beliefs towards manipulation, in particular, as compared to the other two forms of relational bullying. Parents viewed bullying as just a ‘normal part of growing up’ or a ‘rite of passage’. This point of view has emerged in the wider bullying literature before (e.g., Balanovic et al. 2018). In addition, *parents* blaming the victim has been identified in the research before too (e.g., Harcourt et al., 2014). However, the present work is the first study to establish a range of varying levels of blame within different forms of relational bullying, i.e., indicating that some forms of this type of bullying are viewed by parents as more acceptable than others.

Parents sometimes considered exclusion and rumour spreading (both victim and bully scenarios) as normal and common, but this view was even more pronounced for the *manipulation victim* and *manipulation bully* scenarios. While Balanovic et al. (2018) have also explored this discourse in the New Zealand context, their work was based on online comments on news articles from the general public, while the current study has focused on parents’ written comments – many of whom had actual experience of their own or their child’s involvement in relational bullying. The current study shows that these normalising and dismissive views are pervasive in the population of parents with current school children, those who have children that have been involved in bullying, and those whose children have been bullied. It also shows that some specific relational bullying behaviours are viewed as more ‘normal’ than others. That is, exclusion and friendship manipulation were more often referred to as ‘normal’, ‘part of growing up’, and ‘kids being kids’. In contrast, rumour spreading was less often considered in this way.

In the theme **we need to protect all children, not just ours**, the analysis highlighted that there were contrasts about whether parents encouraged, or made, their child take responsibility, or if they saw someone else as responsible. The views on responsibility also differed by the *form* of relational bullying parents were discussing. *Rumour spreading* had clear and broad areas of responsibility with parents writing that they would force their child to be accountable for their actions, they would take action themselves, they would involve the school, and they would also involve the other parents involved. The responsibilities that

parents discussed for *victims of manipulation* were less clear, with suggestions that this type of problem could probably just be sorted out by the children involved. However, parents did say that they might involve the parents of the bully when their child was a victim of manipulation. Interestingly, parents were less explicit about their own role when their child was a bully in a manipulation situation, but they saw the parents of the bully as having a role in the intervention process when their child was a victim of manipulation. For *exclusion*, while parents identified that an inclusive school culture was important, there was more of a focus on children having autonomy, taking responsibility for their actions, and sorting the situation out themselves.

When responding to the perpetration scenarios, parents encouraged and allowed their child to take responsibility when they excluded other children, or when they were manipulative towards other children. However, when their child spread rumours, they often *forced* the child to be accountable for their actions and apologise. In addition, the manipulation bullying scenario elicited a more hands-off approach to intervention, if any action was involved at all, when compared to the other two forms of relational bullying. However, parents did not discuss school responsibility when responding to the *manipulation bully* scenario. This pattern consistently suggests parents may see this form of relational bullying in a different, more normalised, way. Similar to the way that relational bullying is seen as less serious than other forms of bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Bell & Willis, 2016), manipulation was consistently portrayed as less serious than rumour spreading.

Parents saw themselves and other parents as responsible for relational bullying, not just for intervention, but for creating the behaviour in the first place. This stance is not an unusual approach, with Herne (2016) explaining that parents are consistently blamed for children's bullying behaviour, and that society needs to move away from such "counter-productive discourses of responsibility and blame" (p. 254). In the current study, parents reflected on their parenting styles to inform how they might approach the situation, with comments defending their suggested approach such as "I'm not a helicopter parent." Meanwhile, they also took issue with other parents doing too much to try and help: "Helicopter parents - trying to solve all the issues themselves - not empowering their own child." It appears, from the parents' perspective at least, that doing too much to solve bullying incidents is just as problematic as not doing enough. However, parents wondered if this was something that 'other' families might have to deal with instead, because it did not reflect the values they had raised their child to have. Positioning this view within the social-ecological framework (Swearer & Espelage, 2004), putting the responsibility only on other parents does

not account for the complex and interrelated systems that children develop in. Instead, bullying must be viewed as a whole-community problem that requires a whole-community solution.

In the theme **a teachable moment** parents described a future-focused approach and recognised the importance of early intervention. They wanted to foster the qualities and values they would like to see in their children when they become adults, such as resilience and empathy. Parents wanted their children to be able to solve their own problems, but also felt the need to support this process. For some parents, this support was a light touch, while other parents said they would be fully involved in the intervention process. Parents were conflicted about how much autonomy children should have when intervening in bullying. Moreover, parents were torn between wanting to take action themselves to protect their child, or to allow their child the space and time to develop their own skills and resiliency to better cope in future. Bonnet et al. (2011) found that strategies to promote autonomy in children show promise in decreasing peer victimisation, but that the impact would dissipate over time. With this in mind, continued monitoring would remain vital in this process.

Within the theme **their hurt is my hurt**, responses to the three forms of relational bullying also differed in terms of parents' emotional reactions to the bullying. The manipulation scenario was the only type of relational bullying in which the idea of being annoyed and frustrated emerged. This result suggests that there is a sense that this behaviour is more an inconvenience, and less of a stress, than the other two forms of relational bullying. Moreover, unlike the exclusion scenarios, manipulation was not prominently described as being upsetting or causing worry. In addition, in contrast to parents generally considering spreading rumours to be unacceptable, it was less clear that manipulation was fundamentally wrong, rather it was described as "just really annoying behaviour."

Overall, the findings for this study discussed the perspectives of parents' responses to the relational bullying scenarios. Parents expressed diverse opinions towards relational bullying. Finding the right balance of protection and independence for their child that would work for the situation, their child, and the other involved parties did not appear to be a clear or easy process, and there were many views of how to go about this. Parents sometimes chose not to intervene when their child was a victim in all scenarios due to a fear of making things worse for their child, or because they didn't think intervention was necessary. In contrast, parents sometimes chose not to take action because they saw inaction as the best way to solve the problem while also allowing their child to be autonomous, take control, and become resilient in the future.

Perhaps the largest contribution to the literature that this study has made is in bringing to light how parents view different behaviours within relational bullying. The findings suggest that the three different forms of relational bullying are viewed by parents in different ways. Overall, rumour spreading was more often seen as a behaviour that was unacceptable and needed intervention, whereas manipulation was more normalised, and exclusion was positioned as possibly being caused by the victim.

Indeed, these differences were not simply between victims and bullies, but regarding the very foundation of this behaviour as being ingrained as a ‘normal part of growing up’ as opposed to something that even needs to be addressed. Moreover, when bullying was presented in the three different forms of relational bullying, there was a suggestion that some of these types were clearly upsetting (rumour spreading), where others were a normal way for children to learn about friendships (manipulation), or something the victim may have caused (exclusion). This pattern of findings is illustrated in Table 5. It must be noted that not all parents took this perspective, nonetheless, salient differences emerged in the beliefs and perceptions between the three forms of relational bullying.

Table 5

Parents’ views of different types of relational bullying

Rumour spreading	Unacceptable behaviour Needs intervention
Manipulation	Normal for children Let them sort it out
Exclusion	Caused by something the victim does Teach empathy

Summary of Findings – Study Two

1. In the second study, I asked *‘How do parents react or respond to their child’s actual involvement in relational bullying either as a victim, a bully, or bully-victim?’*

Five themes were constructed: (i) the impact on family/whānau, (ii) the school relationship and response, (iii) issues in taking responsibility, (iv) the effects on the child, and (v) parents’ reactions and intervention.

In **the impact on family/whānau**, families experienced stress both when their child was a victim and when their child was involved in bullying perpetration. Stress in the victim's wider family has been established in regard to cyberbullying by Lynch et al. (2015). However, this insight into parents of children involved as victims *and* perpetrators is a new finding.

Beyond the family, parents in the theme **the school relationship and response** consistently described a lack of support from their child's school, leaving them feeling isolated and helpless. While some parents were able to assist their child to resolve the situation, others struggled to find a solution and identified a lack of support from their child's school as key feature of this experience. Parents identified the importance of collaborative communication and the home-school relationship as integral in overcoming relational bullying experiences. That is, these relationships were great sources of support when they worked well, and posed significant challenges to overcoming the bullying when the response from school and other involved parties was unsatisfactory. When these relationships were adverse, they also led to serious outcomes for their children and sometimes meant the home-school relationship was irreparable, and sometimes the child was moved to another school. Brown et al. (2013) identified that most of their participants had experienced opposition from their child's school when trying to resolve a bullying situation when their child was a victim. The current study reiterates this finding and, even more so, establishes that the consistent downplaying of relational bullying may perpetuate schools' opposition even further. This risk is particularly important to acknowledge as research has shown that teachers are less likely to intervene in *any* form of bullying when they see this as a normative behaviour (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Pelletier, 2008). Addressing this viewpoint is even more critical for relational bullying in particular as it is consistently rated by teachers as less serious than physical bullying (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006; Bell & Willis, 2016).

In **issues in taking responsibility** parents positioned the responsibility for relational bullying as belonging to many people within the child's ecosystem. They saw the bully as being responsible for apologising and making things right again. This finding was consistent for when parents had supported their child as a victim, and when they had supported their child to make amends after bullying perpetration. However, they recognised that this remediation was not always a straight forward process for their perpetrating children. Parents wanted victims to be empowered and take back control of the situation and resolve the bullying. Consistent with the findings of Harcourt et al. (2015), parents in the current study identified a shared responsibility for bullying intervention that involved parents and schools

working together. The current study adds to this by identifying that shared responsibility is a key part of effective intervention in *relational* bullying. Overall, parents highlighted the importance of a whole-school approach to bullying prevention which research has shown to be effective in all of these areas (Maunder & Crafter, 2018).

In **the effects on the child**, parents identified wide-reaching consequences of their child's involvement in bullying, including sadness and withdrawal in their victimised child, and regret over their bullying behaviour when perpetrating. Some parents in this study identified that it was their child's victimisation experience that was the catalyst for their child subsequently becoming involved in relational bullying perpetration. That is, some children who were victims of relational bullying reacted to being disempowered by retaliating against peers and becoming bullies. According to parents, this reaction enabled them to gain some control over others and their situation, and they become empowered through perpetration. Some waited to see if their victimisation would lessen and then subsequently turned to bullying when things did not improve. Others used bullying as a strategy later on, in other contexts. This finding, that some bullies may have originally been victims and subsequently turned to bullying, is important to note as there may be an opportunity for intervention at the victim stage to prevent future perpetration of others. Kennedy (2018) has developed definitions for types of bully-victims based on the amount of bullying versus victimisation they reported, but it remains unclear if early intervention could prevent victims becoming bully-victims in the first instance, as highlighted by the parents in this study.

In **parents' reactions and intervention**, within the family, parents cited communication with their child as a key intervention and support strategy for their children – both for victimisation and perpetration. This finding is supported by the literature that suggests communication within the family, as well as warmth, supervision, and involvement and support from parents are protective factors against children's involvement in bullying (Nocentini et al., 2019). However, the current study highlights that these characteristics are important, not just in risk of involvement, but throughout the intervention process for parents supporting both victims *and* bullies in resolving relational bullying.

Parents whose children were bullying others identified a range of outcomes that came from the strategies they utilised to support their child. Such strategies included talking to their child, their child's teacher, and suggesting ways their child could fix the problem. These strategies have been established for victims' parents (e.g., Harcourt et al., 2015). However, the current study adds to this area of research with the inclusion of bullying *perpetration*. Many parents discussed how responsive their child was to intervention and how their

strategies worked. On the other hand, others were more realistic and knew it would take more time and effort for their child to stop bullying, but that they were monitoring this behaviour.

One of the key new areas of knowledge from this study is that some victims' parents attributed bullying to be a problem of other families' poor parenting; they suggested that some parents simply don't know or care what their children are doing. They also identified that some parents of bullies are simply denying that their children are bullies. There is some merit in this perspective, as some parents did approach the bully's parents and found them unresponsive to requests for help. This point of view of bullying perpetration being a problem for other families was not uncommon in this study and is somewhat supported by the descriptions of bullies' families in the literature. A recent systematic review adds to this narrative, suggesting that children's involvement in bullying is associated with domestic violence, parental mental health problems, abuse, neglect, and authoritarian parenting styles (Nocentini et al., 2019). Prior to the current study, it was unclear how these typical family characteristics of bullies would fit within the context of relational bullying which is characterised by more covert, manipulative behaviour that can be harder to detect from outside the relationship, as compared to bullying that is characterised by overt violence.

The current study adds to the research in this area as it has found that, contrary to some believing that parents of bullies are the main problem, parents of bullies *would* try to get involved and make amends. When parents in the current programme of research were describing how they had responded to their child's involvement in *perpetration* of relational bullying, they were often responsive, took action, and continued to monitor their child's progress. Some parents in this study discussed helping their child to make amends when their child bullied others. These parents were also personally upset that their child was a perpetrator, sometimes describing feeling embarrassed or ashamed. However, their children often admitted to bullying others and took responsibility for reparation. Parents would assist their child in this process by supporting their child and sometimes by talking to the parents of victims in order to resolve the situation and check on the welfare of victims. Even some victims' parents recognised the *shared helplessness* of the parents of children in all roles of bullying experience. With these findings in mind, we need to rethink the way parents of bullies are positioned both in the rhetoric around bullying and in the research.

Summary of Findings – Study Three

In the third study, I asked *‘How do parents, who experienced childhood relational bullying, reflect on this experience, their parents’ response at the time, and the current impact on their own children?’*

In this study, participants – in all roles – were deeply impacted by their bullying at the time it happened, and it continued to have ongoing impacts on their current lives and on their parenting behaviour. Responses from parents led to the construction of three themes: (i) reactions to the event, (ii) the ongoing impact, and (iii) resilience and protection.

Reactions to the event considered participants’ reactions to the event at the time that it happened, including their own and their parents’ responses. While some participants felt they had been supported at the time, other participants described bullying as having an ongoing and adverse effect on their lives and identified a lack of support as key feature of this experience. Some participants identified turning to bullying perpetration to try and regain some control over their situation. After doing this, though, participants that had engaged in perpetration experienced feelings of remorse.

Participants who were involved in perpetration sometimes mentioned that their parents remained in denial about their involvement. While some parents of victims were annoyed about having to deal with the victimisation and its outcomes, some blamed their victimised child or were unconcerned about their victimisation. Parents normalising bullying has been evidenced to some degree in literature around homophobic bullying (Clarke et al., 2004). At the same time, blaming the victim has been previously established in a systematic review of parents’ perspectives on bullying (Harcourt et al., 2014). In addition, some victims identified that their parents tried to downplay the severity of their experience and wondered why they didn’t just fix the problem themselves. Sims-Schouten and Edwards (2016) assert that the view that bullying victims can take back control is often not possible when they lack the resources or power to deal with their victimisation. Meanwhile, other parents were good sources of support and proceeded to take action and resolve the issue.

The ongoing impact of bullying explored the impact that participants’ bullying involvement was still having on their lives. For victims, the ongoing impact from relational bullying has tainted many areas of their lives. They identified continued struggles with self-esteem, confidence, and anxiety. The lifelong impacts of victimisation have been established

in traditional bullying (e.g., Carlisle & Rofes, 2007), but less was previously known about relational bullying specifically. When discussing their relational bullying perpetration, participants expressed regret and remorse. Interestingly, the one participant who was a bully-only did not identify experiencing any feelings of guilt or remorse, perhaps because the intervention that their parents had taken was effective in resolving the situation. However, the small number here may mean that this is not a representative sampling of views from only-bullies at a group level. A new area of knowledge around how parents who have previously been involved in bullying see this experience as impacting on their parenting behaviour, particularly when considering their own child as needing to be supported through this experience, was explored in this theme. Participants wrote about how their own experiences of childhood bullying impacted their parenting in general and their interactions with their child. Parents tried to learn from their experience and use it to develop resilience in their children. Some ways they did this was by teaching their children about empathy, modelling positivity, and engaging in open communication.

Resilience and protection explored the ways in which participants had been resilient since their experience of relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence. They highlighted their personal achievements, regaining control over their lives, and repositioning themselves as victorious over their experience, rather than a victim of it. This idea of resiliency as an outcome of bullying is supported in the relational *aggression* literature (e.g., Hammel, 2008). Another finding in this theme was that parents reflected on the strategies their parents used when they were children when they considered what they might do if their child was involved in bullying. Parents' strategy selection based on their own experiences has been established in a quantitative study (Boddy, 2015). Boddy (2015) found no link between the strategies parents chose and the perceived effectiveness of these, and that, even when parents reported that a certain strategy might not have been effective in stopping their own experiences of victimisation, they would still recommend it to their children. In contrast to the findings of Boddy, parents in the current study emphasised they would use the same strategies *because* they had been effective for them, whereas others suggested that they would be more proactive and less dismissive than their own parents had been, i.e. they would use different strategies than their parents had used.

Reflecting on the idea that some participants were able to overcome these experiences and lead happier, healthier lives as a result, Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) identify three aspects of 'post-traumatic growth'. This growth includes changes in: self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and general life philosophy. Growth in self-perception includes

the idea that the person will see themselves as stronger and more competent in future interactions, including future incidences of trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). It is possible then, that for past involvement in bullying, this resilience could extend to their own child's involvement in a bullying incident. In addition to resilience, post-traumatic growth can benefit interpersonal relationships through an increased sensitivity towards others and a willingness to improve relationships (Collins et al., 1990). Again, this could be beneficial in the parent-child relationship.

Overarching Findings from the Programme of Research

Across the three studies, I have identified several notable overarching findings, some of which are supported by the existing literature, and others which are new areas of knowledge. The overarching findings are explained under the following four key ideas:

- Some parents have normalising and dismissive views
- Parents have many considerations when choosing an intervention
- Parents consider the current impact on everyone involved and are thoughtful about the future
- Parents consider their own and their child's personal experience and reactions to bullying.

Normalising and Dismissive Views

Throughout the programme of research some parents suggested they, or their own parents, would consider this behaviour to be a 'normal part of growing up' or that that it might be primarily the problem of the victim.

Victim-Blaming Attitudes. Particularly for the exclusion scenarios in Study One, but throughout the programme of research, parents identified the presence of victim-blaming attitudes. Sometimes this attitude was in an effort to dismiss the behaviour of their bullying child, but other times it was to defend the bullying child or wonder what their child had done to prompt the exclusion. Purcell (2012) identified similar attitudes among their participants, finding that parents and teachers positioned bullying in general as an issue for the victim, rather than a problem of the bully. Research in the field of ostracism suggests that exclusion activates the same part of the brain that is activated when people experience physical pain (Eisenberger et al., 2003), even when participants were told that the exclusion was due to a

technical malfunction – i.e. a ‘good reason’ (Eisenberger and Liebman, 2005). This holds true even when people are excluded by people they would not want to associate with (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007). One could extrapolate from this knowledge, that regardless of the participants in the current programme of research wondering if there was a ‘good reason’ for their child to exclude the other child, or a ‘good reason’ that their child was excluded – it would still hurt and should therefore not be tolerated.

Normalising. The current studies provide evidence of parents’ normalising attitudes towards relational bullying. The existing literature has found similar normalisation of bullying in general (e.g., Balanovic et al., 2018). However, the current study adds to this knowledge showing that normalisation is also present for parents whose children have actually been victims of bullying, *and* for parents who themselves have experienced bullying. These two key ideas of normalising and victim-blaming (see: paragraph above) are supported by the ideas enunciated by Walton (2011) who asserts that a failure to address the underlying societal context in which bullying occurs is a crucial reason that bullying persists “in spite of the growth of programs and policies that purport to address and reduce it, the proliferation of experts in the field, and the development of a profit-generating anti-bullying industry” (Walton, 2011, p. 142). To make real change, intervention must address the social norms, hierarchies, and social privilege that are reinforced by bullying as it is the intolerance of difference that continues to fuel bullying behaviours (Walton, 2011).

Othering. A possible reason for positioning bullying behaviour as normal could be so that the parent or their child/ren are still able to maintain the *identity* of being ‘normal’. To take on a victim identity, or for their child to take on a bully or victim identity could elicit feelings of failure as they are instead positioned as *other*. ‘Othering’ is a term often used to understand ethnocentrism in cross-cultural research and is essentially the classification on an in-group and an out-group, or an ‘us vs. them’ hierarchical structure (Staszak, 2008). SooHoo (2009) used this term to describe the construction of a social hierarchy in which female bullies determine who is part of the in-group and who is not. The term othering has also been used to describe the outcomes of bullying too. That is, Lutgen-Sandvik (2008) describes how acts of bullying itself were a contributor to the othering in the workplace through ongoing humiliation and undermining of victims’ competence and social standing. Therefore, maintenance of normalising views, particularly when participants themselves, or their children, had been victims of bullying, could be a protective act of resistance against becoming the *other*. That is, the construction of in-groups and out-groups is not just for

victims or bullies, but for parents too in being seen as the parent of “that child” and thus part of the ‘other’.

Intervention Considerations

Overall, parents across the programme of research identified varied opinions on whether intervention would be needed, if they might inadvertently make the situation worse, how actively involved they should be in the intervention process, and when to step back and equip their child with the skills they would need to resolve the situation directly.

Parents of both Bullies and Victims Struggle with Intervention. The findings in the current studies suggest that parents do indeed grapple with how involved they should be. Many parents in this doctoral research were conflicted about how much responsibility they personally needed to take to resolve the bullying, and how much agency they should give their child to fix the problem themselves. They identified this as a difficult balance to strike. Instead of vilifying the parents of bullies, the focus should be on positive parent behaviour, clear communication, and responsive interaction with children. Although some attention has been given in the literature to the importance of effective communication in families (e.g., Lee & Wong, 2009), the vast majority of studies have focused on the links between bullying behaviour, attachment, and parenting styles.

For the most part, parents in the current studies who identified that they would not act or that they would suggest their child ignore the bullying, did so because they wanted their child to learn to be resilient and learn to respond to these incidents effectively in future. Moreover, some parents identified that these strategies did work for them in their own childhood experiences of relational bullying. However, it is important to note here, that early intervention in bullying has been shown to be crucial in victims’ self-appraisal of their ability to stop the bullying, regain control, and avoid long-term victimisation (Hunter & Boyle, 2002). While allowing children to gain control and build resilience is important, this must be balanced with the individual child’s abilities.

Another key factor that impacted parents’ decisions not to intervene in relational bullying was a worry about making it worse for their child. Parents were aware of how too little or too much intervention might impact their child in the future. While there was an emphasis on empowering children to take ownership of their experiences and agency in addressing their problems, some parents who had their own experiences of childhood relational bullying suggested that personal growth towards resilience was not an easy journey

and may not be something to ‘seek out’. Meanwhile, others reflected on ignoring the bullying as a strategy that *did* work for them and resolved the bullying situation they were experiencing.

Current Impact and Future Outlook

Parents considered the ways in which their child, themselves, or the wider family group were impacted by the bullying. They thought about the future and what they wanted for themselves, or the qualities they wanted to instil in their child.

The Family-Wide Impact. For parents reflecting on their own experiences of childhood relational bullying, there was an emphasis on the need for ongoing monitoring, collaboration, and support for everyone involved – victims, bullies, and the wider family/whānau who are also experiencing high levels of stress.

Resilience. Victims of bullying in the current research reflected on their ability to flourish in spite of their experience. This ‘stress-related growth’ (Park, 1998), was evidenced by parents who were victims of relational bullying, and some parents identified that their victimised children had made good recoveries too. Parents in the current studies also discussed the importance of bonding and care within the family. This finding is supported by the existing literature that reports victims’ resilience is supported by positive interactions between siblings (Honig & Zdunowski, 2012), and warm parent-child relationships (Bowes et al., 2010; Greeff & Van den Berg, 2013). This care within the family after bullying involvement has even been shown to reduce antisocial behaviour for *bullies* (Hemphill et al., 2014).

Personal Experience and Reactions

Parents reflected on their own experience with bullying to inform what they might do for their own child. This has been discussed in the findings for Study Three (see above). Parents reflected on what type of parent they saw themselves as and considered what type of intervention would be aligned with this. Parents considered what would work for their child, and how their child may have previously been impacted by bullying, as a way to inform their actions. A critical finding in this space is that the personal experience of parents and children – and their role they have in bullying – may change over time.

Progression of Victimisation and Retaliation. Parents in the current studies indicated an awareness of a progression or change over time in their or their child’s role in

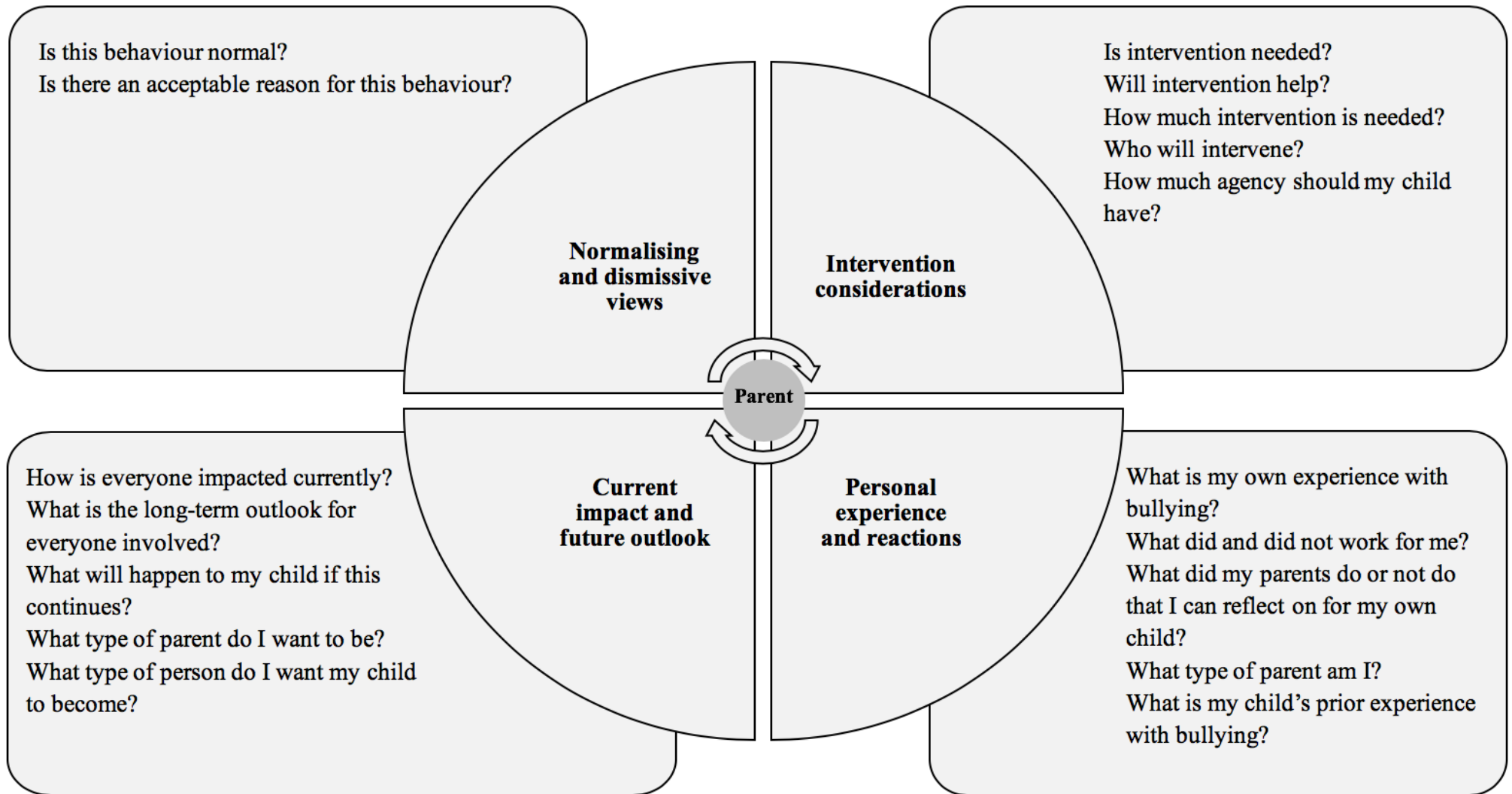
bullying. That is, they identified instances where they or their child were originally a victim and then became a bully in responses to their experience. The development of bully-victims was explored by Kennedy (2018) who identified four different types of bully-victims based on the amount of bullying and victimisation they reported. These four types included ‘aggression predominant’ and ‘victimisation predominant’ bully-victims to reflect the idea that while they may all be termed bully-victims, there is diversity in their behaviour. Salmivalli and Nieminen (2002) looked into the aggressive nature of bullies, victims, and bully-victims and found that bully-victims were not simply victims who were somewhat aggressive but were instead ‘highly aggressive’ themselves. In fact, they showed higher aggression than the bullies. In contrast, the current programme of research, particularly reflecting on the parents’ own experiences of bullying, brings to light a new group of bully-victims, ones who have been involved in bullying as a victim and as a bully at different times throughout their lives. This issue warrants further investigation to explore the experience of these types of bully-victims across the lifespan.

A Synthesised View of Parents’ Perspectives on Relational Bullying

To synthesise the findings from all three studies in a cohesive and practical way, the findings have been represented in a *multidimensional model of parents’ perspectives on relational bullying* [see Figure 5]. This model represents these overarching findings from the studies. In sum, parents have a wide range of experiences, opinions, and values which impact their perspectives on relational bullying.

Figure 5

The multidimensional model of parents' perspectives on relational bullying



The *multidimensional model of parents' perspectives on relational bullying* isolates the family-level influences of the social-ecological framework that has underpinned this programme of research. The model extracts and explores the unique complexities of just one small part of the social-ecological framework. It could be hypothesised that a similar model, with similarly broad, complex, and often contrasting perspectives, could be developed to understand the attitudes at each of these levels – the children involved, the peers, the school, and the wider community, and culture. This model has been developed to show the key domains of parents' perspectives when they assessed and responded to relational bullying situations across all three studies in this programme of research.

The visual representation synthesises the prominent themes across all three studies from participants into four key ideas that emerged as impacting on parents' perceptions of relational bullying: *normalising and dismissive views*, *intervention considerations*, *current impact and future outlook*, and *personal experience and reactions*. The central circle in this model, comprised of four interacting dimensions, represents these four overarching themes that were constructed across the three studies. Inside these four dimensions, the arrows show how these can interact and influence each other in a multidirectional manner. While outside the central circle, the boxes show the key questions that parents identified as influential in their appraisal of, and intervention in, relational bullying situations. The responses parents gave in the three studies often differed based on how they positioned themselves within these dimensions, and these questions highlight key areas in which parents were divided.

Moreover, the dimensions may be present for some parents and not for others, or more prominent in some forms of relational bullying and not others. For example, a parent with a significant personal experience of their own bullying may rely on their experience to guide interventions that have helped them in the past, and they may also reflect on how they have been impacted in the long-term by this experience to fortify the importance of taking action. In this vein, they may not hold views that would fit into the 'normalising and dismissive views' dimension. This model is to be used as a matrix to understand the often-conflicting range of perspectives held by parents and not to illustrate that any particular perspective is correct. Overall, parents have differing perspectives when it comes to relational bullying and the key areas in which they differ are explored in the model. Future research may use, or build upon, this model to aide understanding of the many different interactions and experiences that form an individual's perspective on bullying.

Implications: Practical and Theoretical Contributions

To position the current findings in the social-ecological framework, the contributions in this section are highlighted to illustrate the specific level of the framework to which they relate. Swearer and Espelage (2004) conceptualised the social-ecological framework to adapt Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory to the bullying context. In addition to Swearer and Espelage's framework, the current programme of research positioned parents as the focus of the issue and considered the impact on parents of the passage of time, i.e., the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). This issue was studied with regard to the parents' prior bullying experiences. In this chapter, it has been established that that parents' perceptions of relational bullying are varied, complex, and sometimes normalised. Furthermore, each parent approaches their child's bullying involvement with their own unique bullying experiences (embedded within the chronosystem), whether that is as a bully, victim, bully-victim, bystander, or simply as part of a wider society that, to some degree, condones and perpetuates this behaviour (macrosystem). This key idea has been discussed in relation to the findings above and was highlighted with *the multidimensional model of parents' perspectives on relational bullying* to enhance understanding of these complexities.

In the following two sections, two further contributions to the field are proposed:

- (i) Bullies' Families are not Inherently Bad: A Theoretical Contribution.
- (ii) Bullying is a Cultural Issue: A Practical Implication

Bullies' Families are not Inherently Bad: A Theoretical Contribution

A theoretical contribution of the current programme of research is the idea that the perception of bullies' families as *bad* families (microsystem) is inaccurate and does not account for the experiences of parents, their goals for their children, and the social and cultural environment in which bullying occurs (perpetuated by all levels of the system).

The Development of Bullying is Complex. Parents may interpret, intervene in, and communicate about bullying in different ways but, by positioning bullying in a social-ecological system, we must acknowledge that blaming families and poor parenting as the cause of this behaviour is perhaps too simplistic. Instead, bullying needs to be understood as having many contributing and interacting factors that establish and maintain this behaviour (e.g., Herne, 2016). Existing research suggests that, for bullying in general, certain types of parents with certain characteristics (Bowers et al., 1994; Duncan, 2004) are essentially raising

children to become bullies. However, the present doctoral research suggests that this view may be too simplistic in that it does not account for the systemic nature of bullying at the cultural level, particularly for the somewhat more covert forms of relational bullying.

The current research findings suggest that the process of children becoming bullies is far more nuanced than it may first appear. Indeed, with relational bullying, we need to also consider that this behaviour has social rewards and that social interactions are reflective of wider power relations (Ng, 2003). I would argue that, for the most part, bullying is not the intended goal of this behaviour – that is the perpetrator does not set out to become a bully – but instead they are trying to meet their social goals *through* this behaviour. This perspective is consistent with the research that suggests perpetrators of relational bullying are skilled at manipulating social situations to determine the outcome they desire. To do this, perpetrators of relational bullying can increase their social status through relational bullying, or lean on their existing high status to meet their social dominance goals (Peeters et al., 2010; Smith, 2014).

This is not to say that the family has no role in the development of bullying. At all levels of the ecological system, bullying behaviour may be both actively and passively reinforced, and this includes within the family context. One explanation of how bullying may be perpetuated within the home is in the area of sibling bullying. Wolke and Skew (2012) highlight the importance of sibling dynamics as a ‘training ground’ for bullying at school and has found that sibling bullying is closely related to bullying at school. That is, these dynamics within the home can act as a model for behaviour outside of the home. It could be that parents, by not intervening in sibling bullying, are inadvertently promoting these behaviours.

Bullies’ Parents Can be Responsive. Balanovic et al. (2018) explored the discourse of the bully as a villain in their exploration of New Zealand media comments regarding bullying. The findings from the current programme of research suggest that this vilification extends not just to the bully, but to seeing their whole family as complicit in their actions. Given how pervasive and normalised relational bullying has been shown to be in the current studies, this simply can’t account for relational bullying in the same way as it might – or might not – for physical bullying. Moreover, this view does not capture the true extent of the causes and maintenance of bullying behaviour. In particular, the findings from Study Two show that, when their child was bullying, parents *were* concerned about their child’s perpetration, they took action to resolve it, and they monitored the situation to ensure restoration was made.

Effective and Timely Intervention is Critical. Parents in this study reflected on their own experiences or their child's bullying perpetration as a form of retaliation in response to their victimisation. Intervention must be available, timely, and effective to prevent the progression of victims to bullies. Lindstrom-Johnson et al. (2013) discuss that students who felt their school was unsafe were more likely to retaliate in response to their victimisation than students who felt their school was safe. The researchers hypothesise that, in safer environments, students would be more likely to seek help. While this research is in the context of traditional bullying and safety is thought of in terms of violence, this concept is of critical importance: If students feel they can safely seek support, then they do.

When responding at the individual incident level, *effective* intervention needs to be expedient – i.e., occur before victims become bully-victims. Children need to know that help and support is available before they need it. We, as a society, need to move away from the view that bad people become bad parents, and raise bad children to realise that there is more to bullying – it occurs in, and is maintained by, society and only through recognition of this fact can we start moving towards the cultural shift needed to improve the wellbeing of *everyone* involved.

Changing the Perception of Bullies and Their Families. In this section, *Bullies' Families are not Inherently Bad: A Theoretical Contribution*, I have explored the idea that bullying is a complex issue, which is not the sole fault of parents. The negative perception of the families of bullies was evidenced in the responses of parents in Study One with parents suspecting that failings in bullies' upbringing would have led to this behaviour. However, **all** children that parents identified as being bullies in Study Two had also been victims. This fact suggests that the positioning of parents of bullies is not as simple as the “us versus them” mentality, but is instead a case of a shared struggle that should be seen for the multi-faceted issue that it is.

To effectively address the underlying social systems in which relational bullying is occurring, we must recognise that this behaviour is a problem that resides not just within and among individual children, and it is not even positioned only at the school level, rather it is a cultural-level issue which requires a cultural shift to reduce and resolve (Mauder & Crafter, 2018). Research consistently suggests that the most effect interventions involve the whole school, the family, and the wider community (Cowie, 2011; Mauder & Crafter, 2018). These approaches recognise that bullying is not a problem of only individual children; they consider the many social-ecological influences that have underpinned this research.

Bullying is a Cultural Issue: A Practical Implication

An overarching practical contribution that this thesis makes is that bullying, especially in New Zealand, is a cultural problem (macrosystem) that requires a cultural change. It is perhaps unsurprising, given the range of often conflicting perspectives, that there is not a straight forward solution to addressing bullying prevention or intervention. Responding to bullying events as individual and isolated situations is not working; we need to acknowledge the shared struggle and we need to do better.

The School Context. While the problem of addressing bullying involves many people across multiple contexts, schools are critical in this response. Schools in New Zealand can adopt bullying prevention policies as they see fit, however, these are not mandatory, and some schools choose not to adopt any (Slee et al., 2016). When bullying policies *are* adopted, these include ‘zero tolerance’ approaches. However, Walton (2011) describes zero tolerance as “politically expedient knee-jerk reactions” (p. 141). He argues that real change needs to reach beyond such simple approaches and instead acknowledge that this behaviour is rooted in wider societal attitudes, inequities, and intolerance to difference. ERO’s recent reports into bullying in New Zealand schools (ERO, 2019a) identified that many children in our schools are experiencing bullying and similar negative behaviours. In addition, there are issues with existing intervention practices. When students applied what they had learned about how to resolve bullying, their efforts did not always work. For approximately a third of students, the bullying stopped. But for the remaining students, sometimes bullying stopped for a while and then started again, while others said the bullying continued despite them using the intervention strategies they had learned at school. Currently, New Zealand schools can choose to implement bullying intervention strategies how they see fit. For schools that are doing anti-bullying well, ERO (2019b) identified that they had consistency in their school-wide approach and ongoing monitoring of its effectiveness. ERO suggested that a more effective approach is one where families are involved *proactively* to develop a shared understanding of bullying and prevention and intervention strategies before incidents occur.

Division of Responsibility. Parents in the current study were often confused and conflicted about who had the responsibility for intervention in relational bullying incidents. Naturally, one might think that a clear division of responsibilities would enhance clarity in these incidents, but that is not quite the case. Changes in Denmark’s educational policy in response to international comparison data meant that Danish schools became legally obligated to implement response plans when a child was involved in bullying at school (Hein, 2017). At this point, while they may consider the wider family context as part of the issue, the

responsibility for action and resolution remains with the school. However, this explicit division of responsibilities was positioned by parents as ‘initiating a conflict’ with the school (Hein, 2017). When they disclosed their child’s bullying to the school, parents were trying to get the school to accept their legal obligation to take responsibility. Hein (2017) describes that the conditions that this system creates is not one of trust or cooperation and instead leads to a sense of powerlessness on all sides. What happens in practice is that parents seek to define behaviours as bullying to get assistance from the school, while schools attempt to clarify that they will accept this as their responsibility *only* for clearly defined (i.e., usually extreme) cases of bullying.

Home-School Cooperation. In contrast to legally establishing roles of responsibility, van Niejenhuis et al. (2019) assessed the effectiveness of an intervention aimed at improving parent-school cooperation in regard to bullying at schools in the Netherlands called ‘working with parents in creating a pleasant school’. They found that, after one year of intervention, parents and teachers were more aligned and cooperation was improved. In addition to the improvement in home-school partnership here, the researchers also noted an unexpected finding. That is, when they compared the change in attitudes of parents from intervention schools to that of control schools, the intervention school parents disapproved *less* of bullying at follow-up. The researchers surmise that this result could have occurred because the parents are more aware of the social context of bullying and that this is a group process which has made them reject specific behaviours instead of rejecting the child. This outcome is a promising emergent finding in relation to the issues presented in the current research findings as it suggests that the change in attitude that is needed to effectively address bullying is possible – within the span of only one year – at the school level. If such a shift in attitudes can happen in such a short timeframe at the school level, it indicates that a community and cultural shift may be possible too.

Changing Bullying Culture Through Intervention. One way to address bullying is through a whole-school approach to bullying prevention, such as the KiVa programme developed in Finland to change school bullying culture. This programme was born out of a partnership between the Finnish Ministry of Education and researchers at the University of Turku to create a programme that would be suitable for schools to implement nationwide (Salmivalli et al., 2011). KiVa is an acronym for Kiusaamista Vastan meaning “against bullying”; in addition, the word ‘kiva’ in Finnish means “nice” (Salmivalli & Poskiparta, 2012). KiVa harnesses the power of bystanders to stand up to bullying behaviour and defend victims. In addition to this action, it also aims to promote a culture of inclusion

that rejects bullying from happening in the first instance. However, when bullying does occur, there are clear intervention pathways for both students and teachers to follow (Salmivalli et al., 2011).

Interestingly, there is also compelling evidence for interventions that do not take a whole-school approach. A recent meta-analysis of 100 independent evaluations of four anti-bullying programmes – including KiVa – found that the most effective programme at reducing bullying victimisation was a non-whole-school approach called ‘NoTrap!’ (derived from the Italian phrase *Noncadiamointrappola!*) (Gaffney et al., 2019). This is a peer-led approach, developed in Italy, and involves students developing and moderating a website to promote anti-bullying which peers can use to ask questions and raise concerns (Menesini et al., 2012). Moreover, Menesini et al. (2012) found that increased engagement with the whole class and with school teachers was even more beneficial and allowed space for the involved students to act as ‘agents of change’.

In sum, changing school culture and acceptance of bullying through both peer and teacher engagement in intervention turned out to be critical in the fight against bullying. KiVa challenges the acceptance of bullying and addresses some of the underlying issues that perpetuate bullying by promoting inclusion, even when bullying is not present (Salmivalli et al., 2011). Similarly, NoTrap! empowers students to tackle bullying problems and allows them the space and agency to do this. Both of these interventions are best effective when teachers and the wider school community are involved too. Moreover, KiVa further enhances the possibility of a cultural shift by empowering bystanders to stand *up* to bullying behaviour and defend victims. That is, it involves, not just those who are involved in bullying, but shares the responsibility of intervention with the wider social group. These actions go some way to addressing the idea that behaviour that is rooted in wider societal attitudes, inequities, and intolerance to difference that Walton (2011) identified as preventing any real change. However, a consistent, effective, and country-wide approach would further challenge the status quo, change what many in our society see as normal, and address the New Zealand culture of acceptance around bullying and therefore contribute to a cultural change.

Implementing Cultural Change. In this section, *Bullying is a Cultural Issue: A Practical Implication*, I have presented research on the wider New Zealand context, combined with the findings of the current study, and suggested there needs to be a significant shift in how bullying and other forms of aggression are perceived by New Zealanders at both the local community and the whole-country levels. To begin this change, emphasis needs to be placed on enhancing effective and collaborative home-school partnership and positioning

bullying as a whole-community problem that requires a whole-community response. Claiming that bullying would not happen in a particular family or a particular school is no longer enough, and we need to address this problem at the cultural and community-level *for* the community. With this research, and the findings from the current study in mind, I would urge the New Zealand Government to consider uptake of a nationwide strategy to prevent bullying, for example, the KiVa programme. It is a whole-school, evidence-based, and consistent approach. It involves children, schools, and families working collaboratively. Most importantly, it has already been shown to have promising results in reducing bullying in the New Zealand context (Green et al., 2020). While this research noted variations in impact across age groups and gender, overall there were reductions in children's self-reported rates of victimisation and perpetration.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While the three research studies were methodologically appropriate and sound, there are nevertheless limitations with all research. However, future research may be able to address these limitations and further add to the body of research in this field. To begin with, the data were collected only via online survey which required access to a computer, tablet, or similar device, an internet connection, and an ability to use these with ease. While computer literacy and internet access are relatively commonplace, i.e. 88% of all households in New Zealand with dependent children have access to the internet (Statistics New Zealand, 2012), it should still be noted that an option to submit responses via hard copy, for example, may have been preferable for some potential participants. However, if participants were enabled for other methods of submitting their responses, it would have posed other issues such as maintaining the anonymity of the research participants. Although, another limitation of the chosen design was with the anonymity itself. Anonymity in research poses many challenges. For example, some researchers suggest that anonymity may compromise the accuracy of participants' reports (Lelkes et al., 2012). One reason for this is due to the lack of accountability that participants have towards the researcher, which could reduce their motivation to respond accurately. Counter to this, Gibson et al. (2013) considers that anonymity, rather than simple confidentiality, can be necessary for participants to be willing to participate in sensitive research, particularly when they may feel shame about their experience, or if they are concerned about potential exposure.

The current study was based in New Zealand and, as such, is positioned with the cultural context of this location. To get a fuller picture of the complexities of relational

bullying, future research could incorporate parents from various locations and, therefore, varying social-cultural contexts. Another limitation of the current research is with the gender distribution within respondents. While one respondent did not indicate their gender, the remaining 123 participants were comprised of 109 women and 14 men. With 105 participants identifying as the mother of the child they discussed, and only 14 fathers, there is a large gender asymmetry here. This imbalance is an important limitation because bullying research has shown that mothers have been more likely to suggest strategies that are passive, pro-social, and emphasise help-seeking behaviour. In contrast, fathers are more likely to suggest their child 'fight back' against bullying perpetrators (Lester et al., 2017). In addition, Campbell et al. (2018) found gender differences in the identification of and perception of severity in cyberbullying and non-cyberbullying. That is, they found males were more accurate in identifying non-cyberbullying scenarios, whereas females perceived both traditional and cyberbullying scenarios as more serious. Future research should endeavour to include comparable numbers of both mother and father participants to ensure responses are reflective of parents as a whole.

One limitation of the current study is that, upon analysing the data, the researcher felt that participants in Studies Two and Three were not given adequate open-ended writing space to describe their own or their child's situations in full. A fuller picture of the incident/s, may have created a richer dataset that highlighted the nuances and complexities of relational bullying. Future research, perhaps utilising a case study design, could explore these experiences in-depth to learn more about the intricacies of these experiences for parents. Such research should also consider that people may experience different forms of bullying, either at once, or throughout their lives, and this may include more direct or overt forms of bullying in addition to relational bullying.

Another limitation of the current research is that the criteria for participants to take part in Studies Two and Three required participants to have been aware of their child's bullying involvement (Study Two) or for participant's own parents to have been aware of the participant's involvement in bullying (Study Three). This limitation is because the focus was on parents' *responses*. However, research suggests that many parents of children that are involved in bullying do not know that it is happening (Sawyer et al., 2011). That is, Sawyer et al. (2011) found that half of their participants were not aware of their child's victimisation until their child self-reported this fact during their study. In the current programme of research, as Study Three focused on how the participants' parents intervened in their bullying situations, parents had to have been aware that their child was being bullied. From the initial

pool of 124 respondents, 32 were uninvolved in relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence, 55 identified as victims, 30 were bully-victims, and 7 were bullies. Of these 92 participants that were involved in relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence in any role, only 29 said their parents were aware of the bullying, while the remaining 63 were either unsure if their parent knew (16 participants), or said their parents did not know (47 participants). Therefore, 29 participants were included in Study Three, but 92 participants had actually been involved in bullying during their childhood or adolescence. In other words, 74% of all participants identified that they had been involved in relational bullying in their childhood or adolescence, but this study focused only on the 23% of the original participant pool who were involved in relational bullying *and* whose parents knew about their involvement. Future research should endeavour to capture the experience of the participants whose parents were *not* aware of their involvement in relational bullying.

Despite these limitations, the study contributed significantly to the existing literature on relational bullying, and will have a positive impact on future protocols designed to prevent and intervene in bullying, both in the New Zealand context and internationally. To guide future research in this area, there are a number of avenues researchers could take. When we compare the findings from Studies Two and Three, we can see the relationship between the parents' childhood bullying status and their child's bullying status. This aspect of the data was not a focus of the current programme of research, so these relationships were not explored, and this angle has not been included in the analysis. However, future research could focus on these links. The following table, Table 6, shows the relationships between the parent and child bullying status:

Table 6*Parent and child bullying status*

Victim parent with victim child	23
Victim parent with uninvolved child	23
Uninvolved parent with uninvolved child	17
Bully-victim parent with bully-victim child	11
Bully-victim parent with uninvolved child	10
Uninvolved parent with victim child	10
Bully-victim parent with victim child	9
Victim parent with bully-victim child	9
Bully parent with uninvolved child	5
Uninvolved parent with bully-victim child	5
Bully parent with victim child	2
Bully parent with bully-victim child	0
Bully parent with bully child	0
Bully-victim parent with bully child	0
Victim parent with bully child	0
Uninvolved parent with bully child	0

What might be of particular interest would be to explore how parents who were involved in childhood bullying may be using strategies to protect their children against bullying involvement. For example, as shown in Table 6, parents that themselves were victims, bully-victims, or bullies, and now have *uninvolved* children made up 31% of the participant pool. In the current findings, some previous victims did identify using their previous bullying experience to inform their parenting behaviour with their own children, but it would be useful to explore in more depth, how and in what ways these parents are doing these things. Deeper insights from these parents about how they broke the intergenerational cycle should be included in future research and would also add an interesting perspective to the field. Another point of interest here, and somewhat counter to the intergenerational experience of bullying, are those parents who were uninvolved in bullying in their own childhood but now have children who are involved in bullying ($n = 15$). Further research should also include the perspectives of this group.

Another area for future research to build on is the idea that parents may be experiencing *current* bullying. This programme of research did not focus on how many participants had been involved in bullying during their *adulthood*. While Study Three focused on parents who had experienced relational bullying as a child, an exploratory question was asked during the data collection process if parents had experienced relational bullying, or

were currently experiencing it, as an adult. This question was not in scope for the current programme of research, but was instead asked with the purpose of guiding future research in this area. The purpose behind this question was to explore the idea of intergenerational continuity of bullying further, but realising that the often life-long experience of bullying could mean that parents are experiencing victimisation – or exhibiting bullying behaviour – concurrently with their child’s experience. The findings from this probing question revealed that from the 124 total participants, 36.3% (n = 45) had been involved in relational bullying as a victim during adulthood. In comparison, 2.4% (n = 3) identified they have been involved in relational bullying as a bully during adulthood (N.B. only 123 of the total 124 participants responded to the bully question here). That is, over a third of the participants in this study have been involved in bullying as an adult. It would be prudent to assume that dealing with their own experience of bullying alongside their child’s bullying could indeed influence their response to these situations. This influence has been incorporated into the *multidimensional model of parents’ perspectives on relational bullying*, but future research should explore this phenomenon in a deeper fashion. These intergenerational experiences of bullying may hold important insights into the lifelong experience of relational bullying across contexts, i.e. from school through to workplace bullying.

Future research should also look more closely at parents experiencing bullying for the *first time* as an adult, as this group was not included in Study Three. For example, 11 participants who had experienced relational victimisation as an *adult* had been uninvolved in bullying as a child. Going through this experience for the first time as an adult could be a very different experience and may influence how they might handle their child’s bullying experience.

Throughout this doctoral research, consideration has been given to how parents’ childhood experiences of bullying may influence how they manage their children’s current bullying involvement. However, if parents are experiencing *current* bullying, this experience could be even more influential over their intervention and handling of their child’s bullying involvement. Future research should seek to incorporate the perspectives of parents who are involved in current relational bullying, either for the first time or as part of lifelong bullying. Exploring the experiences of these parents is vital to see how parents’ own bullying experiences can influence the management of their children’s experience.

Concluding Statement

The overarching research question for this doctoral thesis was:

What do parents think and do when their child is involved in relational bullying?

The key message to be taken from the findings of this doctoral research is that responding to relational bullying is a complex, highly nuanced process. The behaviour is so engrained in societal norms that some do not perceive these behaviours to be problematic. Meanwhile, others agree that they are problematic but maintain that they are not an issue which would affect them or their family personally and is instead a problem for other people to deal with. From the findings of the three studies, this discussion explored three key conclusions. Firstly, it explored the varied and complex perceptions of parents towards relational bullying and positioned these in the wider social-ecological framework as being rooted in cultural norms. It recognised that parents approach their child's relational bullying involvement with their own unique bullying experiences, whether that is as a bully, victim, bully-victim, bystander, or simply as part of a wider society that condones and perpetuates this behaviour. Furthermore, this programme of research recognised the need to explore this idea further as these experiences are not exclusive to childhood and adolescence. That is, many parents identified being involved in bullying themselves during adulthood and it remains unexplored how these experiences may shape their handling of their child's involvement in bullying. This doctoral thesis has proposed a multidimensional model to understand the many influences on a parent's perceptions of relational bullying. The model has been developed to reflect the variety of influences on parents' perceptions of relational bullying and to illustrate just how complex and intergenerational this issue is.

The second key conclusion that this discussion explored was the idea that the perception of bullies' families as *bad* families is simplistic and does not account for the experiences of parents, their goals for their children, and the social and cultural environment in which bullying occurs. The third, and final, key conclusion that this thesis discussed was that bullying, especially in New Zealand, is a cultural problem that requires a cultural change. These conclusions should add to the emergent literature on shifting the focus of bullying prevention and intervention from responding to individual-based actions, to addressing the discourse that is causing this behaviour in society in the first place (e.g., Walton, 2011). In sum, responding to relational bullying events as individual and isolated situations is not working and more needs to be done to shift the cultural norms that position bullying as a

normal part of growing up as a New Zealander. Relational bullying has adversely impacted, and is continuing to impact, New Zealanders across generations and throughout their lifespans, and we cannot accept it any longer.

References

- Abell, L., Brewer, G., Qualter, P., & Austin, E. (2016). Machiavellianism, emotional manipulation, and friendship functions in women's friendships. *Personality and Individual Differences, 88*, 108-113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.09.001>
- Allan, K. (2015). *Parent Definitions of Bullying and Responses to Hypothetical Bullying Scenarios*. (Unpublished Master of Educational Psychology Report). Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- Allison, S., Roeger, L., Smith, B., & Isherwood, L. (2014). Family histories of school bullying: Implications for parent-child psychotherapy. *Australasian Psychiatry, 22*(2), 149-153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1039856214520791>
- Andreou, E. (2006). Social preference, perceived popularity and social intelligence relations to overt and relational aggression. *School Psychology International, 27*(3), 339-351. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034306067286>
- Andreou, E., Tsermentseli, S., Anastasiou, O., & Kouklari, E.-C. (2020). Retrospective accounts of bullying victimization at school: Associations with post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and post-traumatic growth among university students. *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-020-00302-4>
- Arnett, J. J. (2018). *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood*, 6th Edition [VitalSource Bookshelf version]. <https://www.vitalsource.com/products/adolescence-and-emerging-adulthood-jeffrey-jensen-arnett-v9780134006086>
- Arora, C. M. (1996). Defining bullying: Towards a clearer general understanding and more effective intervention strategies. *School Psychology International, 17*(4), 317-329. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034396174002>
- Arseneault, L. (2018). Annual Research Review: The persistent and pervasive impact of being bullied in childhood and adolescence: Implications for policy and practice. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 59*(4), 405-421. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12841>
- Atlas, R. S., & Pepler, D. J. (1998). Observations of bullying in the classroom. *The Journal of Educational Research, 92*(2), 86-99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220679809597580>
- Balanovic, J., Stuart, J., & Jeffrey, J. (2018). "Harden up and face reality:" Exploring underlying bullying beliefs in New Zealand. *Journal of School Violence, 17*(1), 46-57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2016.1208570>

- Baldry, A. C., & Farrington, D. P. (2000). Bullies and delinquents: Personal characteristics and parental styles. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 10*(1), 17-31. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(sici\)1099-1298\(200001/02\)10:1%3C17::aid-casp526%3E3.0.co;2-m](https://doi.org/10.1002/(sici)1099-1298(200001/02)10:1%3C17::aid-casp526%3E3.0.co;2-m)
- Ball, H. A., Arseneault, L., Taylor, A., Maughan, B., Caspi, A., & Moffitt, T. E. (2008). Genetic and environmental influences on victims, bullies and bully-victims in childhood. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 49*(1), 104-112. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01821.x>
- Barboza, G. E., Schiamberg, L. B., Oehmke, J., Korzeniewski, S. J., Post, L. A., & Heraux, C. G. (2009). Individual characteristics and the multiple contexts of adolescent bullying: An ecological perspective. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*(1), 101-121. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9271-1>
- Barzilay, S., Brunstein Klomek, A., Apter, A., Carli, V., Wasserman, C., Hadlaczky, G., Hoven, C. W., Sarchiapone, M., Balazs, J., Keresztesy, A., Brunner, R., Kaess, M., Bobes, J., Saiz, P., Cosman, D., Haring, H., Banzer, R., Corcoran, P., Kahn, J. P., ... Wasserman, D. (2017). Bullying victimization and suicide ideation and behavior among adolescents in Europe: A 10-country study. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 61*(2), 179-186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.02.002>
- Bauman, S., & Del Rio, A. (2006). Preservice teachers' responses to bullying scenarios: Comparing physical, verbal, and relational bullying. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(1), 219-231. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.219>
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology, 4*(1), 1-103. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0030372>
- Bell, K. J., & Willis, W. G. (2016). Teachers' perceptions of bullying among youth. *The Journal of Educational Research, 109*(2), 159-168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2014.931833>
- Bennett, S., & Nelson, J. K. (2010). *Adult attachment in clinical social work (Essential clinical social work series)*. Springer.
- Bentley, T. A., Catley, B., Cooper-Thomas, H., Gardner, D., O'Driscoll, M. P., Dale, A., & Trenberth, L. (2012). Perceptions of workplace bullying in the New Zealand travel industry: Prevalence and management strategies. *Tourism Management, 33*(2), 351-360. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2011.04.004>

- Bergeron, N., & Schneider, B. H. (2005). Explaining cross-national differences in peer-directed aggression: a quantitative synthesis. *Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression*, *31*(2), 116-137.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20049>
- Berk, L. (2013). *Child development*. (9th ed.). Pearson.
- Björkqvist, K., Lagerspetz, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (1992). Do girls manipulate and boys fight? Developmental trends in regard to direct and indirect aggression. *Aggressive Behavior*, *18*(2), 117-127. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-2337\(1992\)18:2%3C117::aid-ab2480180205%3E3.0.co;2-3](https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-2337(1992)18:2%3C117::aid-ab2480180205%3E3.0.co;2-3)
- Björkqvist, K., Österman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (2000). Social intelligence – empathy = aggression?. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *5*(2), 191-200.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789\(98\)00029-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789(98)00029-9)
- Boddy, E. (2015). *Parents' retrospective recollections of bullying incidences and effectiveness of strategies used*. (Unpublished Master of Education Dissertation). Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.
- Boddy, E., Green, V. A., Allan, K., & Lynch, T. (2015). *A systematic review of adults' recollections of childhood bullying* (Unpublished systematic literature review). Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Bonica, C., Arnold, D. H., Fisher, P. H., Zeljo, A., & Yershova, K. (2003). Relational aggression, relational victimization, and language development in preschoolers. *Social Development*, *12*(4), 551-562. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9507.00248>
- Bonnet, M., Goossens, F. A., & Schuengel, C. (2011). Parental strategies and trajectories of peer victimization in 4 to 5 year olds. *Journal of School Psychology*, *49*(4), 385-398.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2011.04.002>
- Bowers, L., Smith, P. K., & Binney, V. (1994). Perceived family relationships of bullies, victims and bully/victims in middle childhood. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *11*(2), 215-232. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407594112004>
- Bowes, L., Maughan, B., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T. E., & Arseneault, L. (2010). Families promote emotional and behavioural resilience to bullying: Evidence of an environmental effect. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *51*(7), 809-817.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2010.02216.x>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Brimblecombe, N., Evans-Lacko, S., Knapp, M., King, D., Takizawa, R., Maughan, B., & Arseneault, L. (2018). Long term economic impact associated with childhood bullying victimisation. *Social Science & Medicine*, *208*, 134-141.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.05.014>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, *32*(7), 513-531. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.32.7.513>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1992). Ecological systems theory: Revised formulations and current issues. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Six theories of child development* (pp. 187-249). Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Brown, J. R. (2010). *Trajectories of parents' experiences in discovering, reporting, and living with the aftermath of middle school bullying*. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (UMI No. 3409133)
- Brown, J. R., Aalsma, M. C., & Ott, M. A. (2013). The experiences of parents who report youth bullying victimisation to school officials. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *28*(3), 494-518. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260512455513>
- Brunstein Klomek, A., Barzilay, S., Apter, A., Carli, V., Hoven, C. W., Sarchiapone, M., Hadlaczky, G., Balazs, J., Keresztesy, A., Brunner, R., Kaess, M., Bobes, J., Saiz, P. A., Cosman, D., Haring, C., Banzer, R., McMahon, E., Keeley, H., ... Wasserman, D. (2019). Bi-directional longitudinal associations between different types of bullying victimization, suicide ideation/attempts, and depression among a large sample of European adolescents. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *60*(2), 209-215.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12951>
- Bull, A., Brooking, K., & Campbell, R. (2008). *Successful home-school partnerships. (A report prepared for the Ministry of Education)*.
https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/884_Successful_Home-School_Partnership-v2.pdf
- Bullying Free NZ. (n.d.) *Different types of bullying*. <https://www.bullyingfree.nz/about-bullying/different-types-of-bullying/>
- Bullying Prevention Advisory Group. (n.d.). BPAG - *Who are we?*.
<https://www.bullyingfree.nz/about-bullying-free-nz/bpag-who-are-we/>
- Campbell, M., Whiteford, C., & Hooijer, J. (2019). Teachers' and parents' understanding of traditional and cyberbullying. *Journal of School Violence*, *18*(3), 388-402.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2018.1507826>

- Carlisle, N., & Rofes, E. (2007). School bullying: Do adult survivors perceive long-term effects? *Traumatology*, *13*(1), 16-26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534765607299911>
- Chamberlain, K. (2000). Methodolatry and qualitative health research. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *5*(3), 285–296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135910530000500306>
- Check, J., & Schutt, R. K. (2012). *Research methods in education*. Sage.
- Chen, Z. Y., & Kaplan, H. B. (2001). Intergenerational transmission of constructive parenting. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *63*(1), 17-31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00017.x>
- Child Poverty Action Group. (2016). *Facts about child poverty*. <https://www.cpag.org.nz/assets/170925%20Facts%20about%20CP.pdf>
- Cillessen, A. H., & Rose, A. J. (2005). Understanding popularity in the peer system. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *14*(2), 102-105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2005.00343.x>
- Clarke, V., Kitzinger, C., & Potter, J. (2004). ‘Kids are just cruel anyway’: Lesbian and gay parents' talk about homophobic bullying. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *43*(4), 531-550. <https://doi.org/10.1348/0144666042565362>
- Collins, R. L., Taylor, S. E., & Skokan, L. A. (1990). A better world or a shattered vision? Changes in life perspectives following victimization. *Social Cognition*, *8*(3), 263-285. <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.1990.8.3.263>
- Cooper, L. A., & Nickerson, A. B. (2013). Parent retrospective recollections of bullying and current views, concerns, and strategies to cope with children’s bullying. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *22*(4), 526-540. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-012-9606-0>
- Cooper, S., & Endacott, R. (2007). Generic qualitative research: A design for qualitative research in emergency care? *Emergency Medicine Journal*, *24*(12), 816-819. <https://doi.org/10.1136/emj.2007.050641>
- Côté, L., & Turgeon, J. (2005). Appraising qualitative research articles in medicine and medical education. *Medical Teacher*, *27*(1), 71–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01421590400016308>
- Cowie, H. (2011). Understanding why children and young people engage in bullying at school. In C. Barter, & D. Berridge (Eds.). *Children behaving badly? Peer violence between children and young people* (pp. 33-46). Wiley.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, *39*(3), 124-130. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3903_2

- Crick, N. R. (1996). The role of overt aggression, relational aggression, and prosocial behavior in the prediction of children's future social adjustment. *Child Development, 67*(5), 2317-2327. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1131625>
- Crick, N. R., & Grotpeter, J. K. (1995). Relational aggression, gender, and social-psychological adjustment. *Child Development, 66*(3), 710-722. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1131945>
- Cross, D. I., & Hong, J. Y. (2012). An ecological examination of teachers' emotions in the school context. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(7), 957-967. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.05.001>
- Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L. (2009). *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS)*. Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth. https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian_covert_bullying_prevalence_study_executive_summary.pdf
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundation of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Allen & Unwin.
- De Luca, L., Nocentini, A., & Menesini, E. (2019). The teacher's role in preventing bullying. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01830>
- Dehue, F., Bolman, C., & Völlink, T. (2008). Cyberbullying: Youngsters' experiences and parental perception. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior, 11*(2), 217-223. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2007.0008>
- DeKlyen, M. & Greenberg, M. T. (2008). Attachment and psychopathology in childhood. In J. Cassidy & P.R. Shaver (Eds), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research and clinical applications* (2nd ed, pp. 637-665). Guilford.
- Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2007). Doing sensitive research: What challenges do qualitative researchers face? *Qualitative Research, 7*(3), 327-353. doi:10.1177/1468794107078515
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Dukes, R. L., Stein, J. A., & Zane, J. I. (2009). Effect of relational bullying on attitudes, behavior and injury among adolescent bullies, victims and bully-victims. *The Social Science Journal, 46*(4), 671-688. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2009.05.006>

- Duncan, R. D. (2004). The impact of family relationships on school bullies and victims. In D. L. Espelage, & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in American schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention* (pp. 227-244). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Education Review Office. (2019a). *Bullying Prevention and Response: Student Voice*. <https://www.ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Bullying-Prevention-and-Response-Student-Voice-May-2019.pdf>
- Education Review Office. (2019b). *Bullying Prevention and Response in New Zealand Schools*. <https://www.ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Bullying-Prevention-and-Response-in-New-Zealand-Schools-May-2019.pdf>
- Eisenberger, N. I., & Lieberman, M. D. (2005). Why it hurts to be left out: The neurocognitive overlap between physical and social pain. In K. D. Williams, J. P. Forgas, & W. von Hippel (Eds.), *The social outcast: Ostracism, social exclusion, rejection, and bullying* (pp. 109-130). Psychology Press.
- Eisenberger, N. I., Lieberman, M. D., & Williams, K. D. (2003). Does rejection hurt? An fMRI study of social exclusion. *Science*, *302*, 290-292. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e633912013-635>
- Espelage, D. L., Rao, M. A., & De La Rue, L. (2013). Current research on school-based bullying: A social-ecological perspective. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless*, *22*(1), 21-7. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1053078913z.00000000002>
- Farrington, D. P. (1993). Understanding and preventing bullying. *Crime and Justice*, *17*, 381-458. <https://doi.org/10.1086/449217>
- Fekkes, M., Pijpers, F. I., & Verloove-Vanhorick, S. P. (2004). Bullying: Who does what, when and where? Involvement of children, teachers and parents in bullying behavior. *Health Education Research*, *20*(1), 81-91. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyg100>
- Feldman, R. S. (2014) *Child development: A topical approach*. Pearson.
- Fergusson, D. M., Boden, J. M., & Horwood, L. J. (2006). Examining the intergenerational transmission of violence in a New Zealand birth cohort. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *30*(2), 89-108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.10.006>
- Foon, M. (2019). *Tolerating school bullying is accommodation it*. Human Rights Commission. <https://www.hrc.co.nz/news/tolerating-school-bullying-accommodating-it-meng-foon/>

- Ford, R., King, T., Priest, N., & Kavanagh, A. (2017). Bullying and mental health and suicidal behaviour among 14- to 15-year-olds in a representative sample of Australian children. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 51*(9), 897-908.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867417700275>
- Gaffney, H., Farrington, D. P., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Examining the effectiveness of school-bullying intervention programs globally: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention, 1*(1), 14–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42380-019-0007-4>
- Galen, B. R., & Underwood, M. K. (1997). A developmental investigation of social aggression among children. *Developmental Psychology, 33*(4), 589-600.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.33.4.589>
- Gibson, S., Benson, O., & Brand, S. L. (2013). Talking about suicide: Confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative research. *Nursing Ethics, 20*(1), 18-29.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733012452684>
- Gini, G., & Pozzoli, T. (2009). Association between bullying and psychosomatic problems: A meta-analysis. *Pediatrics, 123*(3), 1059-1065. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2008-1215>
- Gonsalkorale, K., & Williams, K. D. (2007). The KKK won't let me play: Ostracism even by a despised outgroup hurts. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 37*(6), 1176-1186.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.392>
- Goodman, L. A. (1961). Snowball sampling. *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics, 32*(1), 148-170. <https://doi.org/10.1214/aoms/1177705148>
- Greeff, A. P., & Van den Berg, E. (2013). Resilience in families in which a child is bullied. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 41*(5), 504-517.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2012.757692>
- Green, V. A., Woods, L., Wegerhoff, D., Harcourt, S., & Tannahill, S. (2020). An evaluation of the KiVa anti-bullying program in New Zealand. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention, 2*, 225-237. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42380-019-00034-6>
- Hale, R., Fox, C. L., & Murray, M. (2017). “As a parent you become a tiger”: Parents talking about bullying at school. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 26*(7), 2000-2015.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0710-z>
- Hammel, L. R. (2008). Bouncing back after bullying: The resiliency of female victims of relational aggression. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher, 21*(2), 3-14.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ808954>

- Harachi, T. W., Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. D. (1999). United States. In P. K. Smith, Y. Morita, J. Junger-Tas, D. Olweus, R. Catalano, & P. Slee (Eds.), *The nature of school bullying: A cross-national perspective* (pp. 279-295). Routledge.
- Harcourt, S., Green, V. A., & Bowden, C. (2015). "It is everyone's problem": Parents' experiences of bullying. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, *44*(3), 4-17.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304823091_It_is_everyone%27s_problem_Parents%27_experiences_of_bullying
- Harcourt, S., Jasperse, M., & Green, V. A. (2014). "We were sad and we were angry": A systematic review of parents' perspectives on bullying. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *43*(3), 373-391. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-014-9243-4>
- Harel, G., & Finzi-Dottan, R. (2018). Childhood maltreatment and its effect on parenting among high-risk parents. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *27*(5), 1513-1524.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0994-z>
- Hawker, D. S., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, *41*(4), 441-455.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-7610.00629>
- Haynie, D. L., Nansel, T., Eitel, P., Crump, A. D., Saylor, K., Yu, K., & Simons-Morton, B. (2001). Bullies, victims, and bully/victims: Distinct groups of at-risk youth. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, *21*(1), 29-49.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431601021001002>
- Hein, N. (2017). New perspectives on the positioning of parents in children's bullying at school. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *38*(8), 1125-1138.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2016.1251305>
- Hemphill, S. A., Tollit, M., & Herrenkohl, T. I. (2014). Protective factors against the impact of school bullying perpetration and victimization on young adult externalizing and internalizing problems. *Journal of School Violence*, *13*(1), 125-145.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2013.844072>
- Herne, K. E. (2016). 'It's the parents': re-presenting parents in school bullying research. *Critical Studies in Education*, *57*(2), 254-270.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2014.988635>
- Holmes, J., Marra, M., & Lazzaro-Salazar, M. (2017). Negotiating the tall poppy syndrome in New Zealand workplaces. *Gender and Language*, *11*(1), 1-29.
<https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.31236>

- Hong, J. S., & Espelage, D. L. (2012). A review of research on bullying and peer victimization in school: An ecological system analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 17*(4), 311-322. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.03.003>
- Honig, A. S., & Zdunowski-Sjoblom, N. (2014). Bullied children: Parent and school supports. *Early Child Development and Care, 184*(9-10), 1378-1402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2014.901010>
- Humphrey, G., & Crisp, B. R. (2008). Bullying affects us too: Parental responses to bullying at kindergarten. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 33*(1), 45-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693910803300108>
- Hunter, S. C., & Boyle, J. M. E. (2002). Perceptions of control in the victims of school bullying: the importance of early intervention. *Educational Research, 44*(3), 323–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0013188022000031614>
- Ireland, J. L., & Power, C. L. (2004). Attachment, emotional loneliness, and bullying behaviour: A study of adult and young offenders. *Aggressive Behavior, 30*(4), 298-312. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20035>
- Jadambaa, A., Thomas, H. J., Scott, J. G., Graves, N., Brain, D., & Pacella, R. (2019). Prevalence of traditional bullying and cyberbullying among children and adolescents in Australia: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 53*(9), 878-888. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867419846393>
- James, D., Flynn, A., Lawlor, M., Courtney, P., Murphy, N., & Henry, B. (2010). A friend in deed? Can adolescent girls be taught to understand relational bullying? *Child Abuse Review, 20*(6), 439–454. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.1120>
- Jang-Jones, A., & McGregor, A. (2019). *PISA 2018: New Zealand students' wellbeing: school climate & student mindsets of 15-year-olds*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.
- Janson, G. R., Carney, J. V., Hazler, R. J., & Oh, I. (2009). Bystanders' reactions to witnessing repetitive abuse experiences. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 87*(3), 319-326. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2009.tb00113.x>
- Jennifer, D., & Cowie, H. (2012). Listening to children's voices: Moral emotional attributions in relation to primary school bullying. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 17*(3-4), 229-241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2012.704314>
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational research*. SAGE.

- Juvonen, J., & Graham, S. (2014). Bullying in schools: The power of bullies and the plight of victims. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *65*(1), 159-185.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115030>
- Kahlke, R. M. (2014). Generic qualitative approaches: Pitfalls and benefits of methodological mixology. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *13*(1), 37-52.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691401300119>
- Kalmuss, D. (1984). The intergenerational transmission of marital aggression. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *46*(1), 11-19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/351858>
- Kawabata, Y., Alink, L. R., Tseng, W. L., Van Ijzendoorn, M. H., & Crick, N. R. (2011). Maternal and paternal parenting styles associated with relational aggression in children and adolescents: A conceptual analysis and meta-analytic review. *Developmental Review*, *31*(4), 240-278. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2011.08.001>
- Kennedy, R. S. (2018). Bully-victims: An analysis of subtypes and risk characteristics. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *00*(0), 1-21.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517741213>
- Kim, E. (2005). Korean American parental control: Acceptance or rejection? *Ethos*, *33*(3), 347-366. <https://doi.org/10.1525/eth.2005.33.3.347>
- King, N. (2004). Using templates in the thematic analysis of text. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research* (pp. 257-270). Sage.
- Kirkwood, J. (2007). Tall poppy syndrome: Implications for entrepreneurship in New Zealand. *Journal of Management & Organization*, *13*(4), 366-382.
<https://doi.org/10.5172/jmo.2007.13.4.366>
- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., & Pelletier, M. E. (2008). Teachers' views and beliefs about bullying: Influences on classroom management strategies and students' coping with peer victimization. *Journal of School Psychology*, *46*(4), 431-453.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2007.07.005>
- Kowalski, R. M., & Limber, S. P. (2013). Psychological, physical, and academic correlates of cyberbullying and traditional bullying. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *53*(1), S13-S20.
[doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.09.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.09.018)
- Krumpal, I. (2013). Determinants of social desirability bias in sensitive surveys: A literature review. *Quality & Quantity*, *47*(4), 2025-2047. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-011-9640-9>

- Lansford, J. E., Skinner, A. T., Sorbring, E., Giunta, L. D., Deater-Deckard, K., Dodge, K. A., Malone, P. S., Oburu, P., Pastorelli, C., Tapanya, S., Tirado, L. M. U., Zelli, A., Al-Hassan, S. M., Alampay, L. P., Bacchini, D., Bombi, A. S., Bornstein, M. H., & Chang, L. (2012). Boys' and girls' relational and physical aggression in nine countries. *Aggressive Behavior, 38*(4), 298-308. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.21433>
- Lau, J., & Ng, K. M. (2014). Conceptualizing the counseling training environment using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 36*(4), 423-439. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-014-9220-5>
- Ledley, D. R., Storch, E. A., Coles, M. E., Heimberg, R. G., Moser, J., & Bravata, E. A. (2006). The relationship between childhood teasing and later interpersonal functioning. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment, 28*(1), 33-40. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10862-006-4539-9>
- Lee, S. S. T., & Wong, D. S. W. (2009). School, parents, and peer factors in relation to Hong Kong students' bullying. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 15*(3), 217-233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2009.9748030>
- Lee, S., Smith, P. K., & Monks, C. P. (2011). Perceptions of bullying-like phenomena in South Korea: A qualitative approach from a lifespan perspective. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 3*(4), 210-221. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17596591111187738>
- Lefever, S., Dal, M., & Matthiasdottir, A. (2007). Online data collection in academic research: Advantages and limitations. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 38*(4), 574-582. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8535.2006.00638.x>
- Lelkes, Y., Krosnick, J. A., Marx, D. M., Judd, C. M., & Park, B. (2012). Complete anonymity compromises the accuracy of self-reports. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48*(6), 1291-1299. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.07.002>
- Lereya, S. T., Samara, M., & Wolke, D. (2013). Parenting behavior and the risk of becoming a victim and a bully/victim: A meta-analysis study. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 37*(12), 1091-1108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2013.03.001>
- Lester, L., Pearce, N., Waters, S., Barnes, A., Beatty, S., & Cross, D. (2017). Family involvement in a whole-school bullying intervention: Mothers' and fathers' communication and influence with children. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 26*(10), 2716-2727. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0793-6>
- Lindstrom Johnson, S., Waasdorp, T. E., Debnam, K., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2013). The role of bystander perceptions and school climate in influencing victims' responses to

- bullying: To retaliate or seek support? *Journal of Criminology*, 1-10
<https://doi.org/10.1155/2013/780460>
- Liu, L. (2016). Using generic inductive approach in qualitative educational research: A case study analysis. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(2), 129-135.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v5n2p129>
- Loeber, R., & Schmaling, K. B. (1985). Empirical evidence for overt and covert patterns of antisocial conduct problems: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 13(2), 337-353. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00910652>
- Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2008). Intensive remedial identity work: Responses to workplace bullying trauma and stigmatization. *Organization*, 15(1), 97-119.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508407084487>
- Lynch, T. E., Green, V. A., Bowden, C., & Harcourt, S. (2015). “Why our family?”: Parental responses to cyberbullying. *Kairaranga*, 16(1), 7-19.
https://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/fms/Colleges/Institute%20of%20Education/Documents/C&P/Kairaranga/Volume%2016_Issue%201_2015.pdf?E8709F0F38E4D00E4342246C9E7E5E3F
- Maccoby, E. E. (2007). Historical overview of socialization research and theory. In J. E. Grusec, & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of socialization: Theory and research* (pp. 13– 41). Guilford Press.
- Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent–child interaction. In P. H. Mussen (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (4th ed., Vol. 4, pp. 1–101). Wiley.
- Malaby, M. (2009). Public and secret agents: Personal power and reflective agency in male memories of childhood violence and bullying. *Gender and Education*, 21(4), 371-386.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250902785939>
- Martínez, I., Murgui, S., Garcia, O. F., & Garcia, F. (2019). Parenting in the digital era: Protective and risk parenting styles for traditional bullying and cyberbullying victimization. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 90, 84–92.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.08.036>
- Maunder, R. E., & Crafter, S. (2018). School bullying from a sociocultural perspective. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 38, 13-20.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.10.010>

- Mayes, S. D., Lockridge, R., Baweja, R., Waschbusch, D., Calhoun, S. L., Baweja, R., & Bixler, E. O. (2017). Stability of bullying and victimization from childhood through adolescence in a general population sample. *International Journal of Clinical Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 5, 28-33. <https://doi.org/10.12970/2310-8231.2017.05.04>
- Meland, E., Rydning, J. H., Lobben, S., Breidablik, H. J., & Ekeland, T. J. (2010). Emotional, self-conceptual, and relational characteristics of bullies and the bullied. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 38(4), 359-367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1403494810364563>
- Menesini, E., Nocentini, A., & Palladino, B. E. (2012). Empowering students against bullying and cyberbullying: Evaluation of an Italian peer-led model. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 6(2), 314–320. <https://www.ijcv.org/index.php/ijcv/article/view/2922>
- Miller, K. (2015). From past to present: How memories of school shape parental views of children's schooling. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 23(2), 153-171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2014.992869>
- Ministry of Education. (2019). *The National Administration Guidelines (NAGs)*. <https://education.govt.nz/our-work/legislation/nags/>
- Ministry of Justice. (2020). *Key parts of the Act*. <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/harmful-digital-communications/key-parts-of-the-act/>
- Mishna, F. (2004). A qualitative study of bullying from multiple perspectives. *Children & Schools*, 26(4), 234-247. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/26.4.234>
- Mishna, F., Wiener, J., & Pepler, D. (2008). Some of my best friends – Experiences of bullying within friendships. *School Psychology International*, 29(5), 549-573. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034308099201>
- Modecki, K. L., Minchin, J., Harbaugh, A. G., Guerra, N. G., & Runions, K. C. (2014). Bullying prevalence across contexts: A meta-analysis measuring cyber and traditional bullying. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 55(5), 602-611. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.06.007>
- Moravcsik, A. (2013). Transparency: The revolution in qualitative research. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 47(1), 48–53. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1049096513001789>
- Morse, J. M. (2015). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(9), 1212–1222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315588501>

- Mouly, V. S., & Sankaran, J. (2000). The tall poppy syndrome in New Zealand: An exploratory investigation. In M. Sheehan, S. Ramsay & J. Patrick (Eds.), *Transcending Boundaries: Integrating People, Processes and Systems* (pp. 285-289). School of Management, Griffith University.
- Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Foy, P., & Hooper, M. (2016a). *TIMSS 2015 International Results in Mathematics*. <http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss2015/international-results/>
- Mullis, I. V. S., Martin, M. O., Foy, P., & Hooper, M. (2016b). *TIMSS 2015 International Results in Science*. <http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss2015/international-results/>
- Murphy, T. P., Laible, D., & Augustine, M. (2017). The influences of parent and peer attachment on bullying. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 26(5), 1388–1397. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-017-0663-2>
- New Zealand School Trustees Association (n.d.). *A Parents' Guide to the Role of the Board of Trustees*. <https://www.nzsta.org.nz/assets/Information-for-parents/A-parents-guide-to-the-role-of-the-board-of-trustees.compressed.pdf>
- Ng, R. (2003). Toward an integrative approach to equity in education. In P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social change*. (pp. 206-219). Routledge Falmer.
- Nocentini, A., Fiorentini, G., Di Paola, L., & Menesini, E. (2019). Parents, family characteristics and bullying behavior: A systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 45, 41-50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.07.010>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- O'Connor, A., Jackson, L., Goldsmith, L., & Skirton, H. (2014). Can I get a retweet please? Health research recruitment and the Twittersphere. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 70(3), 599-609. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12222>
- O'Driscoll, M. P., Cooper-Thomas, H. D., Bentley, T., Catley, B. E., Gardner, D. H., & Trenberth, L. (2011). Workplace bullying in New Zealand: A survey of employee perceptions and attitudes. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 49(4), 390-408. <https://doi.org/10.1108/hrmid.2012.04420caa.012>
- Offrey, L. D., & Rinaldi, C. M. (2017). Parent-child communication and adolescents' problem-solving strategies in hypothetical bullying situations. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 22(3), 251-267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2014.884006>

- Olweus, D. (1993). *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do*. Blackwell.
- Önder, F. C., & Yurtal, F. (2008). An investigation of the family characteristics of bullies, victims, and positively behaving adolescents. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 8(3), 821-832.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234687240_An_Investigation_of_the_Family_Characteristics_of_Bullies_Victims_and_Positively_Behaving_Adolescents
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2013). *OECD Family Database. SF3.4: Family violence*. http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/SF3_4_Family_violence_Jan2013.pdf
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017). *PISA 2015 results (Volume III): Students' well-being*. PISA, OECD Publishing.
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533-544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Park, C. L. (1998). Stress-related growth and thriving through coping: The roles of personality and cognitive processes. *Journal of Social Issues*, 54(2), 267-277.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1998.tb01218.x>
- Patton, M. Q. (2005). Qualitative Research. *Encyclopedia of Statistics in Behavioral Science*. Wiley Online Library. <https://doi.org/10.1002/0470013192.bsa514>
Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social change (pp. 206-219). Routledge Falmer.
- Peeters, M., Cillessen, A. H., & Scholte, R. H. (2010). Clueless or powerful? Identifying subtypes of bullies in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39(9), 1041-1052. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-009-9478-9>
- Percy, W. H., Kostere, K., & Kostere, S. (2015). Generic qualitative research in psychology. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(2), 76-85. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/7/>
- Peterson, J. S., & Ray, K. E. (2006). Bullying among the gifted: The subjective experience. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50(3), 252-269.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/001698620605000305>
- Ponto, J. (2015). Understanding and evaluating survey research. *Journal of the Advanced Practitioner in Oncology*, 6(2), 168-171. <https://doi.org/10.6004/jadpro.2015.6.2.9>

- Purcell, A. (2012). A qualitative study of perceptions of bullying in Irish primary schools. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 28*(3), 273-285.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2012.684343>
- Ratcliff, J. J., Lieberman, L., Miller, A. K., & Pace, B. (2016). Bullying as a source of posttraumatic growth in individuals with visual impairments. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities, 29*(2), 265-278.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-016-9523-z>
- Rhodes, S. D., Bowie, D. A., & Hergenrather, K. C. (2003). Collecting behavioural data using the World Wide Web: Considerations for researchers. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 57*(1), 68-73. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.57.1.68>
- Rivers, I. (2001). Retrospective reports of school bullying: Stability of recall and its implications for research. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 19*(1), 129-141. <https://doi.org/10.1348/026151001166001>
- Rosen, L. H., & Patterson, M. M. (2011). The self and identity. In M. K. Underwood & L. H. Rosen (Eds.), *Social development: Relationships in infancy, childhood, and adolescence* (pp. 73-100). The Guilford Press.
- Salmivalli, C. (2010). Bullying and the peer group: A review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*(2), 112-120. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2009.08.007>
- Salmivalli, C., & Nieminen, E. (2002). Proactive and reactive aggression among school bullies, victims, and bully-victims. *Aggressive Behavior, 28*(1), 30-44.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.90004>
- Salmivalli, C., & Poskiparta, E. (2012). Making bullying prevention a priority in Finnish schools: The KiVa antibullying program. *New Directions for Youth Development, 2012*(133), 41-53. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.20006>
- Salmivalli, C., Huttunen, A., & Lagerspetz, K. M. (1997). Peer networks and bullying in schools. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 38*(4), 305-312.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9450.00040>
- Salmivalli, C., Kärnä, A., & Poskiparta, E. (2011). Counteracting bullying in Finland: The KiVa program and its effects on different forms of being bullied. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 35*(5), 405-411.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025411407457>

- Salmivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K., Björkqvist, K., Österman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (1996). Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. *Aggressive Behavior: Official Journal of the International Society for Research on Aggression*, 22(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351153683-13>
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334-340. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240x\(200008\)23:4%3C334::aid-nur9%3E3.0.co;2-g](https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240x(200008)23:4%3C334::aid-nur9%3E3.0.co;2-g)
- Sawyer, J-L., Mishna, F., Pepler, D., & Wiener, J. (2011). The missing voice: Parents' perspectives of bullying. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(10), 1795-1803. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2011.05.010>
- Schäfer, M., Korn, S., Smith, P. K., Hunter, S. C., Mora-Merchán, J. A., Singer, M. M., & Van der Meulen, K. (2004). Lonely in the crowd: Recollections of bullying. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 22(3), 379-394. <https://doi.org/10.1348/0261510041552756>
- Sims-Schouten, W., & Edwards, S. (2016). 'Man up!': Bullying and resilience within a neoliberal framework. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(10), 1382-1400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2016.1171831>
- Slee, P., Sullivan, K., Green, V. A., Harcourt, S., & Lynch, T. E. (2016). Research on bullying in schools in Australasia. In P. K. Smith, K. Kwak, & Y. Toda (Eds.), *School bullying in different cultures: Eastern and Western perspectives*, (pp. 55-72). Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, A. B. (2013). *Understanding children and childhood: A New Zealand perspective*. Bridget Williams Books.
- Smith, P. K. (2004). Bullying: Recent developments. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 9(3), 98-103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-3588.2004.00089.x>
- Smith, P. K. (2014). *Understanding school bullying: Its nature and prevention strategies*. Sage.
- Smith, P. K. (2016). Bullying: Definition, types, causes, consequences and intervention. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 10(9), 519-532. [doi:10.1111/spc3.12266](https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12266)
- Smith, P. K., & Myron-Wilson, R. (1998). Parenting and school bullying. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 3(3), 405-417. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104598033006>

- Smith, P. K., & Shu, S. (2000). What good schools can do about bullying: Findings from a survey in English schools after a decade of research and action. *Childhood*, 7(2), 193-212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568200007002005>
- Smith, P. K., & Slonje, R. (2010). Cyberbullying: The nature and extent of a new kind of bullying in and out of school. In S. R. Jimerson, S. M. Swearer, & D. L. Espelage (Eds.), *Handbook of bullying in schools: An international perspective* (pp. 249–262). Routledge.
- SooHoo, S. (2009). Examining the invisibility of girl-to-girl bullying in the schools: A call to action. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*, 13(6). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293271456_Examining_the_invisibility_of_girl-to-girl_bullying_in_schools_A_call_to_action
- Starks, H., & Trinidad, S. B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1372-1380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307307031>
- Staszak, J. (2008). Other/otherness. In R. Kitchin & N. Thrift (Eds.), *International encyclopaedia of human geography*. Elsevier.
- Statistics New Zealand. (2012). *Telephone and Internet access in the home*. http://archive.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/snapshots-of-nz/nz-social-indicators/Home/Social%20connections/phone-internet-access.aspx
- Stevens, V., De Bourdeaudhuij, I., & Van Oost, P. (2002). Relationship of the family environment to children's involvement in bully/victim problems at school. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 31(6), 419-428. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1020207003027>
- Stith, S. M., Rosen, K. H., Middleton, K. A., Busch, A. L., Lundeberg, K., & Carlton, R. P. (2000). The intergenerational transmission of spouse abuse: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(3), 640-654. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00640.x>
- Stives, K. L., May, D. C., Pilkinton, M., Bethel, C. L., & Eakin, D. K. (2018). Strategies to combat bullying: Parental responses to bullies, bystanders, and victims. *Youth & Society*, 51(3), 358-376. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x18756491>
- Strohmeier, D., Yanagida, T., & Toda Y. (2016). Individualism/collectivism as predictors of relational and physical victimization in Japan and Austria. In P. K. Smith, K. Kwak, & Y. Toda (Eds.), *School bullying in different cultures: Eastern and Western perspectives*, (pp. 259-279). Cambridge University Press.

- Sutton, J. (2001). Bullies: Thugs or thinkers? *The Psychologist*, *14*, 530–534.
<https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/volume-14/edition-10/bullies-thugs-or-thinkers>
- Sutton, J., & Keogh, E. (2000). Social competition in school: Relationships with bullying, machiavellianism and personality. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *70*(3), 443–456. <https://doi.org/10.1348/000709900158227>
- Sutton, J., & Smith, P. K. (1999). Bullying as a group process: An adaptation of the participant role approach. *Aggressive Behavior*, *25*(2), 97–111.
[https://doi.org/10.1002/\(sici\)1098-2337\(1999\)25:2%3C97::aid-ab3%3E3.0.co;2-7](https://doi.org/10.1002/(sici)1098-2337(1999)25:2%3C97::aid-ab3%3E3.0.co;2-7)
- Sutton, J., Smith, P. K., & Swettenham, J. (1999). Social cognition and bullying: Social inadequacy or skilled manipulation?. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *17*(3), 435–450. <https://doi.org/10.1348/026151099165384>
- Swearer, S. M., & Espelage, D. L. (2004). Introduction: A social-ecological framework of bullying among youth. In D. L. Espelage, & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in American Schools: A social-ecological perspective on prevention and intervention* (pp. 1–12). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Swearer, S. M., & Espelage, D. L. (2011). Expanding the social-ecological framework of bullying among youth: Lessons learned from the past and directions for the future. In D. L. Espelage, & S. M. Swearer (Eds.), *Bullying in North American schools* (pp. 3–10). Routledge.
- Takizawa, R., Maughan, B., & Arseneault, L. (2014). Adult health outcomes of childhood bullying victimization: Evidence from a five-decade longitudinal British birth cohort. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *171*(7), 777–784.
<https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2014.13101401>
- Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1996). The Posttraumatic growth inventory: Measuring the positive legacy of trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *9*(3), 455–471.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.2490090305>
- Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *27*(2), 237–246.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748>
- Thornberg, R. (2011). “She’s weird!”: The social construction of bullying in school: A review of qualitative research. *Children & Society*, *25*(4), 258–267.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2011.00374.x>

- Tolich, M., & Davidson, C. (2003). Collecting the data. In C. Davidson, & M. Tolich (Eds.), *Social science research in New Zealand: Many paths to understanding* (2nd ed, pp. 121-153). Pearson.
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *16*(10), 837-851.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>
- Troy, M., & Sroufe, L. A. (1987). Victimization among preschoolers: Role of attachment relationship history. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *26*(2), 166-172. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00004583-198703000-00007>
- Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2011). Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, *7*(1), 27-56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-010-9109-1>
- Ttofi, M. M., Farrington, D. P., Lösel, F., & Loeber, R. (2011). Do the victims of school bullies tend to become depressed later in life? A systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, *3*(2), 63-73. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17596591111132873>
- Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, *11*(1), 80-96.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325010368316>
- Turner, M. G., Exum, M. L., Brame, R., & Holt, T. J. (2013). Bullying victimization and adolescent mental health: General and typological effects across sex. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *41*, 53-59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2012.12.005>
- UNICEF Office of Research. (2017). *Building the Future: Children and the Sustainable Development Goals in Rich Countries, Innocenti Report Card 14*. UNICEF Office of Research. Innocenti, Florence.
- Vaillancourt, T., McDougall, P., Hymel, S., Krygsman, A., Miller, J., Stiver, K., & Davis, C. (2008). Bullying: Are researchers and children/youth talking about the same thing? *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *32*(6), 486-495.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025408095553>
- van der Ploeg, R., Steglich, C., & Veenstra, R. (2019). The way bullying works: How new ties facilitate the mutual reinforcement of status and bullying in elementary schools. *Social Networks*, *60*, 71-82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2018.12.006>

- Van IJzendoorn, M. H., Juffer, F., & Duyvesteyn, M. G. (1995). Breaking the intergenerational cycle of insecure attachment: A review of the effects of attachment-based interventions on maternal sensitivity and infant security. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, *36*(2), 225-248. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1995.tb01822.x>
- van Niejenhuis, C., Huitsing, G., & Veenstra, R. (2019). Working with parents to counteract bullying: A randomized controlled trial of an intervention to improve parent-school cooperation. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *61*(1), 117-131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12522>
- Voulgaridou, I., & Kokkinos, C. M. (2015). Relational aggression in adolescents: A review of theoretical and empirical research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *23*, 87-97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2015.05.006>
- Walden, L. M., & Beran, T. N. (2010). Attachment quality and bullying behavior in school-aged youth. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology*, *25*(1), 5-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573509357046>
- Walton, G. (2011). Spinning our wheels: Reconceptualizing bullying beyond behaviour-focused approaches. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *32*(1), 131-144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2011.537079>
- Wang, J., Iannotti, R. J., & Nansel, T. R. (2009). School bullying among adolescents in the United States: Physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *45*, 368-375. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2009.03.021>
- Weissbourd, R., & Jones, S. (2012). Joining hands against bullying. *Educational Leadership*, *70*(2), 26-31. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286818743_Joining_hands_against_bullying
- Werner, N. E., Senich, S., & Przepyszny, K. A. (2006). Mothers' responses to preschoolers' relational and physical aggression. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *27*(3), 193-208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2006.02.002>
- Williams, K. D. (1997). Social ostracism. In R. M. Kowalski (Ed.), *Aversive interpersonal behaviors* (pp. 133-170). Plenum.
- Williams, K. D. (2007). Ostracism. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *58*(1), 425-452. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085641>

- Williams, K. D., & Jarvis, B. (2006). Cyberball: A program for use in research on interpersonal ostracism and acceptance. *Behavior Research Methods*, 38(1), 174-180. <https://doi.org/10.3758/bf03192765>
- Williams, K. D., Cheung, C. K., & Choi, W. (2000). Cyberostracism: Effects of being ignored over the Internet. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79(5), 748-762. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.748>
- Wójcik, M., & Flak, W. (2019). Frenemy: A new addition to the bullying circle. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519880168>
- Wolke, D., & Skew, A. J. (2012). Bullying among siblings. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 24(1), 17-25. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh.2012.004>
- Wolke, D., Copeland, W. E., Angold, A., & Costello, E. J. (2013). Impact of bullying in childhood on adult health, wealth, crime, and social outcomes. *Psychological Science*, 24(10), 1958-1970. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613481608>
- Woods, S., & Wolke, D. (2004). Direct and relational bullying among primary school children and academic achievement. *Journal of School Psychology*, 42(2), 135-155. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2003.12.002>
- Wright, M. F. (2017). Victimized children's adjustment difficulties: The role of parenting styles and parents' childhood peer victimization status. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 26(5), 493-506. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2017.1304475>
- Ybarra, M. L., & Mitchell, K. J. (2004). Youth engaging in online harassment: Associations with caregiver-child relationships, Internet use, and personal characteristics. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27(3), 319-336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2004.03.007>
- Yoon, J. S. (2004). Predicting teacher interventions in bullying situations. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 27(1), 37-45. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42899783?seq=1>
- Yoon, J. S., & Kerber, K. (2003). Bullying: Elementary teachers' attitudes and intervention strategies. *Research in Education*, 69(1), 27-35. <https://doi.org/10.7227/rie.69.3>
- Zaklana, C. (2003). *The bullying spectrum in grade schools: Parents, teachers, child bullies and their victims*. (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (UMI No. MQ98846).

Appendix A: Questionnaire Study One

Peer Interactions Survey

- The following questions ask you to share your response to six fictional stories involving school-aged children/adolescents.
- Please respond to the questions as if they involved one of your own children, thinking of the same child for the whole survey.
- Please answer these questions in as much detail as you can.
- Please remember that each of the fictional stories is not related to the others, (this means that only the information given in each story should influence your response).

Some of the questions throughout the survey may seem similar. This allows the researcher to compare and contrast responses.

The following two stories describe your child in situations where someone is left out.

You have found out that your child's peers have been repeatedly and deliberately leaving your child out of activities during lunchbreak and after school.

- How would this scenario make you feel?
- In this scenario, how likely are you to take action?
Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely
 - [If likely or very likely is selected]
 - Please explain why you would be likely or very likely to take action in this scenario.
 - What specific action would you take in response to this scenario? (Consider the first action you might take, and then other actions if that did not resolve the situation)
 - Please describe, in as much detail as you can, the reasons for choosing these specific actions.
 - [If unlikely or very unlikely is selected] Please explain why you would be unlikely or very unlikely to take action in this scenario.

You have found out that your child has been repeatedly and deliberately leaving another child out of activities during lunchbreak and after school.

- How would this scenario make you feel?
- In this scenario, how likely are you to take action?
Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely
 - [If likely or very likely is selected]
 - Please explain why you would be likely or very likely to take action in this scenario.
 - What specific action would you take in response to this scenario? (Consider the first action you might take, and then other actions if that did not resolve the situation)
 - Please describe, in as much detail as you can, the reasons for choosing these specific actions.
 - [If unlikely or very unlikely is selected] Please explain why you would be unlikely or very unlikely to take action in this scenario.

The following two stories describe your child in situations where someone is spreading rumours.

You have found out that your child's peers have been repeatedly spreading nasty rumours about your child.

- How would this scenario make you feel?
- In this scenario, how likely are you to take action?
Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely
 - [If likely or very likely is selected]
 - Please explain why you would be likely or very likely to take action in this scenario.
 - What specific action would you take in response to this scenario? (Consider the first action you might take, and then other actions if that did not resolve the situation)

- Please describe, in as much detail as you can, the reasons for choosing these specific actions.
- [If unlikely or very unlikely is selected] Please explain why you would be unlikely or very unlikely to take action in this scenario.

You have found out that your child has been repeatedly spreading nasty rumours about another child.

- How would this scenario make you feel?
- In this scenario, how likely are you to take action?
Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely
 - [If likely or very likely is selected]
 - Please explain why you would be likely or very likely to take action in this scenario.
 - What specific action would you take in response to this scenario? (Consider the first action you might take, and then other actions if that did not resolve the situation)
 - Please describe, in as much detail as you can, the reasons for choosing these specific actions.
 - [If unlikely or very unlikely is selected] Please explain why you would be unlikely or very unlikely to take action in this scenario.

The following two stories describe your child in situations where someone is withholding or manipulating friendship.

You have found out that your child's best friend has been repeatedly telling your child that s/he doesn't want to be friends with your child anymore. However, your child's best friend will then change their mind and decide to be friends again.

- How would this scenario make you feel?
- In this scenario, how likely are you to take action?
Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely

- [If likely or very likely is selected]
 - Please explain why you would be likely or very likely to take action in this scenario.
 - What specific action would you take in response to this scenario? (Consider the first action you might take, and then other actions if that did not resolve the situation)
 - Please describe, in as much detail as you can, the reasons for choosing these specific actions.
- [If unlikely or very unlikely is selected] Please explain why you would be unlikely or very unlikely to take action in this scenario.

You have found out that your child has been repeatedly telling their best friend that s/he doesn't want to be friends with them anymore. However, your child will then change his/her mind and decide to be friends again.

- How would this scenario make you feel?
- In this scenario, how likely are you to take action?

Very unlikely Unlikely Likely Very likely

- [If likely or very likely is selected]
 - Please explain why you would be likely or very likely to take action in this scenario.
 - What specific action would you take in response to this scenario? (Consider the first action you might take, and then other actions if that did not resolve the situation)
 - Please describe, in as much detail as you can, the reasons for choosing these specific actions.
- [If unlikely or very unlikely is selected] Please explain why you would be unlikely or very unlikely to take action in this scenario.

How would you define bullying?

Do you consider the scenarios about leaving someone out of activities to be instances of bullying?

Not Bullying Possibly Bullying Definitely Bullying Unsure

Do you consider the scenarios about rumour spreading to be instances of bullying?

Not Bullying Possibly Bullying Definitely Bullying Unsure

Do you consider the scenarios about withholding/manipulating friendships to be instances of bullying?

Not Bullying Possibly Bullying Definitely Bullying Unsure

Your child's gender: Female Male Other

Your child's age:

Does your child have a disability?

Yes No I would prefer not to say I am unsure

- If yes is selected – Please describe your child's disability.

Appendix B: Questionnaire Study Two

Child Involvement in Relational Aggression and Bullying Survey

For the following questions, please continue to think about the same child you thought about in Part 1.

In this section, we are investigating actual experiences that parents have had with responding to their child's involvement in *relational bullying*. This experience can include your child being a victim, perpetrator (bully), or both victim and perpetrator. Please read the following definition of relational bullying to ensure that the experiences you discuss meet this definition.

Definition of relational bullying:

- The purposeful manipulation or damage of another person's peer relationships or social standing (Crick, 1996).
- These actions must be intentional, repeated over time, and based on an abuse or imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993). An imbalance of power may include differences in confidence, social support, popularity among peers, or being outnumbered (Smith, 2014).
- Examples of relational bullying include social exclusion, spreading malicious rumours or gossip, social manipulation, or withholding friendship (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).
- Relational bullying can occur both with and without the use of technology.

Having read the definition of relational bullying above, has your child been a **victim** of this behaviour? Y N Unsure

[If yes is selected]

My child has been a victim of: (please select all that apply)

Exclusion (being left out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying).....

Did the perpetrator (bully) use technology when your child was a victim of relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

Thinking about the most memorable experience of your child as a victim of relational bullying, please respond to the following questions.

- How did you find out about the behaviour?
- How did you feel when you first found out about this behaviour?
- What effects, if any, did the bullying have on you, your child, and your other family members?
- Did you take action when you found out your child had been involved in this?
 - Y N
 - [If yes is selected]
 - What did you do?
 - What were the effects of these actions on your child and the situation?

Having read the definition of relational bullying above, has your child been a **perpetrator (bully)** of this behaviour? Y N Unsure

[If yes is selected]

My child has engaged in the following behaviour: (please select all that apply)

Exclusion (leaving peer/s out) rumour spreading withholding
friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did your child use technology to engage in relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

Thinking about the most memorable experience of your child as a perpetrator of relational bullying, please respond to the following questions.

- How did you find out about the behaviour?
- How did you feel when you first found out about this behaviour?
- What effects, if any, did the bullying have on you, your child, and your other family members?

- Did you take action when you found out your child had been involved in this?
 - Y N
 - [If yes is selected]
 - What did you do?
 - What were the effects of these actions on your child and the situation?

Throughout your child's life, has s/he been involved in relational bullying as both a victim *and* a perpetrator?

Yes No

(If yes is selected)

Thinking about your child as a victim and perpetrator of relational bullying, please describe this in as much detail as you can. Please consider if these were at the same or different times in your child's life, what you believe came first or started the relational bullying, and explain any link you think there was between the victimisation and perpetration of relational bullying.

Do you have anything else you would like to say about your experience? Please share any further comments you may have, remembering that your responses will remain anonymous.

Appendix C: Questionnaire Study Three

Parent Recollections of Relational Bullying

In this section, we are investigating parents' own experiences of relational bullying during their childhood or adolescence. This experience can include being a victim, perpetrator (bully), or both victim and perpetrator. Please read the following definition of relational bullying to ensure that the experiences you discuss meet this definition.

Definition of relational bullying:

- The purposeful manipulation or damage of another person's peer relationships or social standing (Crick, 1996).
- These actions must be intentional, repeated over time, and based on an abuse or imbalance of power (Olweus, 1993). An imbalance of power may include differences in confidence, social support, popularity among peers, or being outnumbered (Smith, 2014).
- Examples of relational bullying include social exclusion, spreading malicious rumours or gossip, social manipulation, or withholding friendship (Bauman & Del Rio, 2006).
- Relational bullying can occur both with and without the use of technology.

During your childhood or adolescence were you involved in relational bullying as a **victim**:

Y N

[If yes is selected]

Please select all that apply:

Exclusion (being left out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did the perpetrator use technology when you were a victim of relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

During your childhood or adolescence were you involved in relational bullying as a perpetrator: Y N

[If yes is selected]

Please select all that apply:

Exclusion (leaving peer/s out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did you use technology to engage in relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

As an adult, have you been involved in relational bullying as a victim: Y N

[If yes is selected]

Please select all that apply:

Exclusion (being left out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did the perpetrator use technology when you were a victim of relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

As an adult, have you been involved in relational bullying as a perpetrator: Y N

[If yes is selected]

Please select all that apply:

Exclusion (leaving peer/s out) rumour spreading withholding friendship

Other (please describe the relational bullying)

Did you use technology to engage in relational bullying? (For example, mobile phones, websites, social media, apps, texting, messaging, as well as any other electronic forms of contact.)

Throughout your life, have you been involved in relational bullying as both a victim and a perpetrator? Yes No

(If yes is selected)

Thinking about yourself as a victim and perpetrator of relational bullying, please describe this in as much detail as you can. Please consider if these were at the same or different times in your life, what you believe came first or started the relational bullying, and explain any link you think there was between the victimisation and perpetration of relational bullying.

Thinking about your most memorable experience as either a victim, perpetrator, or victim and perpetrator, during your childhood or adolescence, please respond to the following questions.

I will be referring to my experience as a (select one):

- Victim of relational bullying
- Perpetrator of relational bullying
- Both a victim and a perpetrator of relational bullying
- I was not involved in relational bullying in any role (if selected, skip to *Do you have anything else you would like to say about your experience? Please share any further comments you may have, remembering that your responses will remain anonymous.*)

Were your parents/caregivers aware of the situation? Y N Unsure

[If 'yes' was selected]

- How did your parents/caregivers find out about the bullying?
- How do you think your parents/caregivers felt when they first found about the bullying?
- Did your parents/caregivers take action when they found out about the bullying?

Y N Unsure

[If yes is selected]

- What did your parent/caregivers do?
- What were the effects of these actions on you and the situation?

- Thinking about your parents'/caregivers' response to your experiences of relational bullying, would you do anything differently with your own children?

Do you have anything else you would like to say about your experience? Please share any further comments you may have, remembering that your responses will remain anonymous.

Appendix D: End of Survey Questions

Personal demographics

Are you: Female Male Other

Age (optional)

What is your relationship to the child you have described?

Mother Father Grandparent Aunt/Uncle Other

- [If 'other' was selected] please describe

How did you hear about this research?

Please indicate that you are voluntarily participating in the research:

I am ready to submit my response

I would like to withdraw from the research

This survey is anonymous. If you would like to go into a draw to win one of 100 \$20 New World vouchers/gift cards, please enter your details below. Please note, this section is not linked to the survey which will remain anonymous.

Name:

Email address:

Postal address:

As bullying can be a sensitive subject I have provided some relevant and helpful links that you may wish to use.

Helpful links and resources:

<u>Bullying Information</u>

Ministry of Education information page on dealing with bullying

http://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/wellbeing/bullying/

http://parents.education.govt.nz/secondary-school/wellbeing/bullying/

Kiwi Families (parenting website) information page on dealing with bullying

http://www.kiwifamilies.co.nz/articles/bullying/

Netsafe website on dealing with cyberbullying

http://www.netsafe.org.nz/

KiVa Anti-bullying Programme's Parents' Guide

<http://www.kivaprogram.net/parents/>

Mental Health Resources

The lowdown: resources and support to help young New Zealanders deal with depression

<http://www.thelowdown.co.nz/#/home/>

Lifeline: New Zealand's telephone counselling service provides 24 hours a day, 7 days a week counselling and support.

0800 543 354

Appendix E: Content of Webpage



Faculty of Education

Parents' Responses to Children's Peer Interactions

A Victoria University of Wellington research project.

Tegan Lynch, PhD student.

Thank you for your interest in this research project.

My name is Tegan Lynch and I am undertaking this study as part of my PhD research at Victoria University of Wellington, under the direct supervision of Professor Vanessa Green with secondary supervision provided by Professor Paul Jose.

In this study, I am asking parents and caregivers about social peer situations involving their children, their experiences of these, and will then ask parents if they experienced anything similar when they were growing up.

To participate in this study you will need to be a parent or caregiver (this can include grandparents, aunt/uncles, or anyone else who acts as a main caregiver or guardian) who has at least one school-aged child. Participation in this survey is voluntary and anonymous.

Your responses to the questionnaire will remain confidential and anonymous – there will be no way of connecting your answers to you, your child, or their school.

This questionnaire should take approximately 20 – 30 minutes to complete and we greatly appreciate your time and response.

To acknowledge your time spent on the survey, there will be an opportunity to go into a draw to win one of 100 \$20 New World vouchers/gift cards. If you would like to go into a draw to win one \$20 New World gift card, you will be able to enter your contact details when you

complete the survey. Please note, this section is not linked to the survey in any way and your responses to the survey will still be anonymous.

You can learn more about the overall research project, the questionnaire, your rights as a participant, and how the data you provide will be used, from the information at the beginning of the questionnaire, accessed via the link below.

If you have any further questions or concerns, you can contact:

- Tegan Lynch (student researcher) at tegan.lynch@vuw.ac.nz
- Professor Vanessa Green (principal supervisor) at vanessa.green@vuw.ac.nz
- Professor Paul Jose (secondary supervisor) at paul.jose@vuw.ac.nz

Please click this link to go to the questionnaire:

http://vuw.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_cSgW4csNOqKE8kt

Thank you again for your participation, it is greatly appreciated.

Helpful links and resources:

<u>Bullying Information</u>
Ministry of Education information page on dealing with bullying http://parents.education.govt.nz/primary-school/wellbeing/bullying/ http://parents.education.govt.nz/secondary-school/wellbeing/bullying/
Kiwi Families (parenting website) information page on dealing with bullying http://www.kiwifamilies.co.nz/articles/bullying/
Netsafe website on dealing with cyberbullying http://www.netsafe.org.nz/
KiVa Anti-bullying Programme's Parents' Guide http://www.kivaprogram.net/parents/
<u>Mental Health Resources</u>
The lowdown: resources and support to help young New Zealanders deal with depression http://www.thelowdown.co.nz/#/home/
Lifeline: New Zealand's telephone counselling service provides 24 hours a day, 7 days a week counselling and support. 0800 543 354

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet

Participant information sheet.

Following the questionnaire link on the project's webpage will lead participants to this information sheet.

Information for participants

Background and purpose of the study

This questionnaire forms the data collection component for a PhD in Education at Victoria University of Wellington under the direct supervision of Professor Vanessa Green, with secondary supervision provided by Professor Paul Jose.

We are asking parents and caregivers about social peer situations involving their children, their experiences of these, and will then ask parents if they experienced anything similar when they were growing up.

With your participation, we hope that this research can help to build on the current literature about parents and their children's social interactions.

Participant criteria

To participate in this study you will need to be a parent or caregiver (this can include grandparents, aunt/uncles, or anyone else who acts as a caregiver or guardian to a child) who has at least one school-aged child.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and anonymous. If any information with identifying features is found, this will be deleted and not included in the research.

Questionnaire details

The online questionnaire will be in three parts:

- 1) You will first be asked to respond to hypothetical peer situations.
- 2) There will be a section asking you to detail any practical examples of these situations.
- 3) There will be a section asking you to personally recall if you were engaged in similar peer situations when you were growing up.

This questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete and we greatly appreciate your time and response.

New World Voucher Prize

This survey is anonymous. To acknowledge your time spent on the survey, there will be an opportunity to go into a draw to win one of 100 \$20 New World vouchers/gift cards. If you would like to go into a draw to win one \$20 New World gift card, you will be able to enter your contact details when you complete the survey. Please note, this section is not linked to the survey in any way and your responses to the survey will still be anonymous.

Your rights as a participant

- a. Your participation in this research project will be completely anonymous. Any personal details you do accidentally provide will be removed before data analysis begins. The individual questionnaires will be organised into key ideas, but these will be summarised and reported across all respondents, rather than reported individually. While some of your comments may be quoted, these will remain anonymous.
- b. Your decision to participate in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time before you complete and submit your responses, without any repercussions. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. If you do not want to continue, you can just close your internet browser.
- c. There are no significant foreseeable physical, psychological, social, legal or other risks to you as a result of participating in this research project. However, talking about the experience of negative peer situations in your family, past or present, may be upsetting. Therefore, we have provided some support links on the study website that you may wish to use.
- d. The research project has been assessed and approved by the Victoria University Human Ethics Committee (Reference number will go here when approval has been granted). If you have any ethical queries, you may contact the Human Ethics Committee Convener AProf Susan Corbett, email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz, telephone +64-4-463 5480

- e. You can only proceed to the questionnaire once you have indicated you are aware of your rights as a participant. By entering into the survey you are giving voluntary and informed consent to participate in this study. From here you are still able to withdraw at any stage by closing your internet browser.

Data storage, reporting and dissemination

Once you have completed the questionnaire, the information you provide will be downloaded onto a computer belonging to the student researcher. These files will be password protected, and only accessed by the researcher and her supervisors. As required by Human Ethics Policy, the questionnaire data will be stored for five years after the publication of the research, and then destroyed. We will request that Qualtrics Survey Software destroy the data on their system once we have retrieved the information we require.

The findings from this research project will form the basis of a thesis to be submitted for marking to the Faculty of Education and manuscripts to be submitted for publication in academic journals and presented at conferences. No details which could identify you or your child/children, will be included in any final publications.

If you would like to receive a summary of the findings of this research project when it is completed, please email the student researcher or the project supervisors, at the addresses given below. Please note that this contact will not affect the anonymous nature of your participation, as any details provided in your email cannot be connected with any of your responses to the questionnaire.

Questions about the study

If you have questions or concerns about the research project and your involvement before, during or after your participation, please contact:

- Tegan Lynch (student researcher) at tegan.lynch@vuw.ac.nz
- Professor Vanessa Green (principal supervisor) at vanessa.green@vuw.ac.nz
- Professor Paul Jose (secondary supervisor) at paul.jose@vuw.ac.nz

Thank you for your interest in this research, your contribution is important and valued. Please click the link below to continue on to the questionnaire.