University of Alberta

Upstanders: Student Experiences of Intervening to Stop Bullying

by

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The world is dangerous not because of those who do

harm, but because of those who look at it without doing

anything.

-Albert Einstein.

Be the change you want to see in the world.

-Mahatma Gandhi.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the nine students who volunteered their time to take part in this research. Your stories and your actions inspire those who witness them.

Abstract

Bullying is a considerably common form of peer violence and harassment occurring within schools and communities. Although most incidents of bullying are witnessed by peers, the majority will not take action to stop bullying, providing tacit evidence that bullying is permissible. Despite physical and emotional risk, a small number of students do take action to stop bullying – these students have been called 'upstanders' or 'defenders' and their intervention in bullying signals that bullying is not acceptable. Despite their important role, there is little research exploring the prosocial actions of student upstanders. The question guiding this research is: "What meaning do students give to their experiences of acting in response to witnessing bullying?" In exploring this question, I have employed the methodology of basic interpretive qualitative inquiry using thematic analysis. Nine participants were recruited using school principal nominations and advertisements. I used semi-structured interviews to ask participants about their thoughts and feelings, the outcomes of their interventions and their ideas for bullying prevention. The findings are represented using five narrative exemplars and a description of the five themes identified from the thematic analysis.

The first theme, *Feeling Sensitive to Bullying,* speaks to participant sensitivity in noticing bullying and in their strong personal responses to witnessing bullying. The theme, *Deciding to Face the Risks,* describes reactions to witnessing bullying and motivations for intervening. The theme, *Knowing What to Do,* illustrates participants' complex understanding of their social context and the multiple strategies and skills used. The theme, *Thinking About the Bigger Picture,* depicts how participants connected their actions to school strategies and larger issues. The final theme, *Questioning "Does it*

Make a Difference?" speaks to participants' ambivalence about the impact of their actions to stop bullying. In exploring the meaning of these findings, I offer comparisons to classical theory on bystander action and a parallel motivational model. The experiences of participants provide implications for schools in creating bullying prevention and intervention programs so that schools are not put in the role of the bystander. Implications for future research are offered, particularly regarding the impact of upstanders on other students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

"Although science has often been portrayed as an objective, value-neutral enterprise, it is suffused with the values of a dominant order that has institutionalized war and injustice" (Wessells, Schwebel, & Anderson, 2001, p. 352).

Research is not an objective activity. I was brought to this research topic by a deep and strongly held belief in the compassion inherent in human nature, and the immense possibilities that arise before us as a community when we remember our connectedness. My research question was narrowed by my own experiences of bullying in school, sometimes as a target of bullying, sometimes as a bully, and many times as a witness of bullying. My research methods were defined and re-defined by my belief in the social construction of reality. My writing has been informed by reading about bullying, injustice and acts of courage in academic works, non-fiction and fiction. Much of my learning has been the result of my interaction with others, through their writings, through lectures, through intimate conversations. This work is a part of myself, and my self is weaved throughout this work. And as such, I hope to provide you with windows to some of the more obvious meeting points between myself and this research, so that you can see my journey to this work in order to judge for yourself its usefulness to your work, your life experiences, and this shared community in which we live. These meeting points are my experiences of this research and the research topic, presented in italics throughout this document.

To begin, I would like to share a story that starts for me in the sixth grade:

A 'slam book' was started among my girl friends, which was meant to be a public record of our opinions of one another. The book was created by all of us with care and passed

around, one by one. When the pink decorated book finally came around to me, I remember looking forward to reading what my friends had written about me. With shock and pain, I came face to face with stinging and hurtful comments directed at me and slowly realized that I had been singled out as the sole focus of the negative words in the book. It seemed like a joke gone horribly wrong as I felt the shame and public humiliation of my reaction. That day, I felt completely alone; the existence of any supportive friends or family seemed to fade from my memory.

I am unable to remember exactly how I managed to feel safe and comfortable among my peers and friends again. But I do remember the second appearance of the slam book. A few months later in class, I saw that another book had been created and was now being passed around to all members of my class. Although all eyes were supposed to be trained upon the teacher, I could feel the observation of the others as it was my turn to receive the book. The pressure to open it and write in it was palpable, and the curiosity to read the contents was pulling at me like the urge to gape at a car accident. It was obvious who the target was this time: Samantha, a newer girl in the class without many friends. I know it might sound trivial, but passing that book on without opening it or writing in it was incredibly difficult. It seemed as if time slowed for a moment and I had the opportunity to hear the whispers, notice the trembling in my leaden hands, and feel the deathly looks from some of the girls when they realized that I was not willing to go along with them. It was very disheartening to see that the person I passed the book onto hastily opened it up, although I did notice that a few others after me also chose to pass the book along unopened.

Looking back, I can recognize this as an important act that defied the social pressure to take part in harming Samantha. But at that moment, it just felt tremendously hard and terrifying. And while I know that my actions did serve to dampen the excitement of taking part in this activity, I still lament not actively trying to stop the book from being passed around at all. In truth, I was scared of the consequences. My past experience as the target of these actions helped me to feel a deeper sense of empathy for Samantha and also a strong sense of fear about ever having to experience that type of exclusion again.

I wish I could say that this moment of silent defiance was the beginning of a pattern of stronger and more overt action against bullying and other harmful social practices. But my reactions to bullying weren't always in line with my values. I have actively tried to find the power to be more vocal against harm to others, yet as I continued through school and into the larger world I have regretfully found myself in situations in which the feelings of helplessness and fear were too paralyzing.

These experiences are part of the story of my research. Knowing the feelings of pain involved in witnessing the pain of others, the visceral sense of being trapped, and the racing thoughts that do not lead to an answer of what to do, have supported my understanding of the immense risks, courage, and passion needed to act to stop bullying or other acts of social harm or injustice. The above experience has combined in my memories with many other occasions in which I have witnessed the complete inaction of bystanders to bullying, many times these bystanders also included myself. These experiences have intersected to underscore the importance of this issue to me. The true importance of this story to me is that this experience has demonstrated the power of even the smallest action to show that bullying is not acceptable. My imagination overflows

with the potential outcomes, had my actions in this instance been amplified by confidence, practice and repetition. These possibilities are what have seen me through to the completion of this research.

Overview and Purpose of the Study

School can be a place of prolonged risk of physical harm, intimidation, fear and shame for many students. The phenomenon of bullying has received international attention and a great deal of research activity in many countries (Analitis et al., 2009; Boulton, Bucci, & Hawker, 1999; Cerezo & Ato, 2005; Eslea et al., 2003; Rios-Ellis, Bellamy, & Shoji, 2000). Although the definition of bullying can differ from culture to culture, in all cultures it appears to involve the action of willfully harming another person. A common understanding of bullying among researchers is the intentional, repeated aggression towards a vulnerable student by another student or group (Elinoff, Chafouleas, & Sassu, 2004; Olweus, 2002; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefooghe, 2002). The aggression can take the form of physical assault, verbal attacks or intentional damage to one's social standing or relationships (Smith, 2004; Crick and Groetpeter, 1995).

Bullying is a significant problem in Canada (Craig & Pepler, 2007). It is estimated that approximately one-third of Canadian students have been bullied at school, while most students have witnessed bullying (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Among junior high school students, bullying has been associated with feelings of anxiety, depression, physical complaints, and suicidal ideation in students who bully and those who are bullied (Cassidy & Taylor, 2005; Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen, & Rimpela, 2000; Rigby, 2001). Recent technological advances have also meant that students can be bullied electronically at any time or place. This adds to the complex

dynamic of the roles involved in bullying and means that bullying is often outside of the traditional context of school (Kowlski & Limber, 2007; Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Although there have been few studies examining the effects of bullying on witnesses, it has been found to be associated with negative feelings such as helplessness, fear and decreased feelings of safety (Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi, & Franzoni, 2008; Jeffrey, Miller, & Linn, 2001)

Adolescents may be at particular risk from the negative consequences of bullying, as peer approval becomes particularly important in solidifying their independent and social identities (Prinstein & Greca, 2002; Erikson, 1964). The likelihood of a student reporting bullying to a teacher or parent also decreases as adolescents enter junior high school (Whitney & Smith, 1993). Therefore, it follows that the actions taken by adolescents who witness the bullying of their peers play a pivotal role in determining whether this violent behaviour is seen as socially acceptable. When witnesses do not act, either to stop the bullying or to signify their disapproval, their silence can be taken as tacit agreement that bullying is permissible. Yet, it can be extraordinarily difficult for students to take action against bullying – research has found that only 10-25% of students will act when observing bullying, even though the vast majority of bullying incidents are seen by multiple witnesses (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001; Atlas & Pepler, 1998).

Social behaviour researchers have studied the social forces that can make it extremely difficult for an individual to act in a way that is contrary to the larger group (e.g., Checkroun & Brauer, 2002; Latané & Darley, 1970), meaning that if others are inactive when witnessing violence, it may be hard to be the first one to act. Yet, studies have also shown that the action of a single individual can be all that is required for others

to act (Asch, 1951; Milgram, 1965). Therefore, the behaviour of even one student who acts against bullying can be of utmost importance in changing the behaviour of the group and the resulting acceptability of bullying.

Although social pressures such as conformity and peer approval can be particularly strong among adolescents, some students do take action against bullying, in spite of the personal risks. These students have been labeled *upstanders* in the literature by authors such as Devine and Cohen (2007). Research has shown that those who do act to help targets of bullying can increase their liking of school (Staub & Spielman, 2003) and that the action of helping in and of itself can lead to more prosocial helping behaviours (Goleman, 2003). Yet, despite the potential importance of the action taken by these students, few studies have examined the social forces acting upon adolescent witnesses of bullying (Jeffrey et al., 2001) and there is a surprising paucity of research regarding the experiences of students who take action against bullying (Simona, Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009). Therefore, the question guiding this research is: "*What meaning do students give to their experiences of acting in response to witnessing bullying?*"

In exploring this question, I have employed the methodology of basic interpretive qualitative inquiry (Merriam, 2002). Using in-depth interviews, I asked nine junior high school students about a prominent incident in which they acted to try to stop bullying. I asked participants to describe the situation, their actions and the outcomes of their actions. I also explored with participants their descriptions of their thoughts and feelings about this experience, and their ideas about what needs to happen in the future. After the

interviews were completed, I conducted a thematic analysis and constructed five narrative exemplars from the interviews.

A deeper understanding of the feelings, motivations, and decision-making processes involved in these exceptional students' choices to act is important in order to understand the social forces involved in bullying and the social action of individuals. This understanding combined with the students' own ideas on how to strengthen the role of witnesses provides implications for how to better promote these actions in schools, giving students the power to create school environments which are less accepting of bullying and violence. In addition, an exploration of individual action in the midst of collective inaction in this instance may be useful for deepening our understanding of how individuals can be motivated and engaged to act when they witness violence.

<div align="center">Peace as a Backdrop of the Study</div>

The overarching principles and theoretical assumptions guiding my approach to this research are taken from the field of peace psychology. In this sense, theories of nonviolence, peaceful conflict resolution and the promotion of social justice act as a backdrop upon which this study is situated. I am informed by theories outlined by Christie, Wagner and Winter (2001) in their description of peace psychology. These authors describe the field of peace psychology as in transition from a past exclusive focus upon nonviolent opposition to direct violence, to include the wider promotion of social justice at a societal level. Christie and colleagues distinguish between direct violence and structural violence, or what Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) refer to as symbolic violence. Direct violence consists of actions that engender "direct, acute insults to the psychological or physical well-being of individuals or groups" (Christie et al., p. 8). This

form of violence erupts periodically and occurs as specific events or episodes. In contrast, they refer to structural violence as "structure-based inequalities in the production, allocation, and utilization of material and non-material resources" (Christie et al., p. 8). This form of violence is continual and less readily visible. Most cases of publicized violence in schools can be categorized as direct violence – for instance, bullying generally involves repeated but distinct episodes of violent action that result in psychological or physical harm. However, there are forms of structural violence that influence and impact upon bullying, such as the hierarchical and competitive structure of schools. Structural violence strengthens direct violence, and in turn, episodes of direct violence serve to strengthen structural violence. For instance, in bullying, societal structures of dominance through material wealth may support an action of verbal aggression targeting a student who cannot afford popular brands. This action also serves to solidify and reinforce the idea that popularity and dominance are related to material goods. Keeping this cycle of violence in mind, it is important to ensure that peaceful efforts be made at both levels.

Christie et al. (2001) discuss *peacemaking*, which refers to the resolution of conflict or violent episodes, and *peacebuilding,* which refers to the active efforts to promote social change in response to structural violence. MacNair (2003) similarly denotes three levels of nonviolent or peaceful action: 1) opposition to violence, aimed at removing the causes of violence, 2) building nonviolence, aimed at causing positive, counter-violent activity, and 3) peace education and research, aimed at teaching and researching peace and nonviolence. Within these frameworks, this project can be considered peace research as it examines peacemaking behaviours in opposition to

bullying, a direct form of violence. This study will examine how children can and are acting to create school climates that are not apathetic toward violence. These actions are not insignificant; they represent one of the most salient peaceful choices that early adolescents can make to change the world around them.

Peace as Nonviolent Action

I have often attended public lectures, gatherings or demonstrations focused on what is wrong in this world – the increasing depletion of our forests, water, and air, the millions of children dying from hunger and a lack of clean water even though there is enough to share worldwide, and the continued episodes of international and interpersonal violence here and across the globe. I have found myself leaving these gatherings with a sense of despair. The straight facts seem too overwhelming; I struggle to find a way out of the powerlessness at being able to act to stop the cascade of destruction. In these instances, I have also heard others echo my internal question, "how can I as an individual act to stop this?" How is it possible to help others find their own power to act? I undertake this research with these questions in mind. The adolescents who will take part in this study have found a way to combat a sense of powerlessness. Their actions to stop violence may seem small compared with other imminent global issues noted, and yet these students have found a way to act when others have not. It is my hope that we can all learn from them.

Although the word peace sometimes invokes images of stillness, quietness and calm, such as a feeling of 'inner peace' (MacNair, 2003), peace can be thought of as an active force, requiring effort and energy. *Nonviolence* is promoted by many researchers and educators as the active method through which peace can be achieved (Maittani, 2002;

Mayton, 2001; Weil, 2002). The United Nations (2004) has also identified nonviolence as a necessary element for putting a stop to global violence at the levels of the family, community, and school.

Nonviolence does not mean simply refraining from violence. Mahatma Gandhi (1920/1964) understood nonviolence as "ever and incessantly active" (p. 14) in his model of nonviolence as a set of attitudes and behavior rejecting violence in favor of pursuit of truth and love. In this way, nonviolent action is different from passivity or inaction, as it can take many forms (Mattaini, 2003), but it is clearly a choice to act – even choosing not to participate in violence is an action in itself.

Nonviolent action may be most visible in situations in which one might be expected to support violence (Mayton, 2001). As noted above, in most cases of bullying, student witnesses do not act to stop the bullying or signal disapproval, particularly as this can place them at risk of social or physical harm (Lenthall, 2005). Therefore the phenomenon of bullying is a case in which students may be expected to support violence, at least tacitly. When students do act in response to bullying, their actions are that much more visible due to the risks involved. A deeper understanding of these students' abilities to make this choice may contribute a piece of the puzzle as to how individuals can make choices to respond to violence with peaceful action, and how these choices can be better promoted in schools and communities.

Peace Education

Many teachers, counsellors and administrators are recognizing the need for activities promoting peace in their schools. As Weil (2002) observed, "if you want peace, you should prepare for peace" (p. 28). Some of these strategies include whole-school

efforts, such as Smith and Carson's (1998) suggestions for incorporating peace education into the already existing subjects taught in schools. Others suggest that efforts need to be made at even broader levels by changing curriculum (Coleman & Deutsch, 2001) to assist students in moving from a social system that stresses dominance and competition to one that stresses partnership (Eisler & Miller, 2004). Eisler and Miller advocate for teaching integrity and emotional caring in schools using a system of student partnership rather than student discipline. Instead of punitive discipline, restorative justice is offered as an alternative response to school violence – the focus becomes the harm that has been done rather than the rule that has been broken broken (Conrad & Unger, in press), with efforts to restore relationships through a focus on retribution (Wachtel & McCold, 2004). Others promote peaceful education initiatives in response to school violence. For instance, programs such as the Peace Learning Centre (Nation, 2003), the PeaceBuilders program (Flannery, 2003), and Project Trust (Batiuk, Boland, & Wilcox, 2004) are promoted as effective ways to teach conflict resolution and peer mediation skills to students, reward prosocial behaviour, and decrease social exclusion. In addition, some anti-bullying programs have also begun to focus upon positive actions rather than only discouraging violent behaviour (e.g., Soutter & McKenzie, 2000).

Adolescence may be a particularly important age to focus upon peace education. Most children conceptualize peace in concrete terms such as the absence of war. There is evidence, however, that more complex elements of an understanding of peace may emerge in adolescence (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998). Sources of meaning and meaning-making also become important in adolescence (Fowler, 1981). Smith and Carson (1998) underscore the importance of meaningful participation in peace education

leaving students feeling that they have the power to influence the world around them. Clearly, individual student action against bullying ties in with the concepts taught in various peace education programs. What is less clear is how students' own understandings of their power to act can be used to validate and strengthen efforts at peace education.

<div align="center">Counselling Psychology and Social Change</div>

Leaders in the field of psychology have been involved in the work of social change since the inception of the field. William James has been referred to as the first peace psychologist (Christie et al., 2001) for his advocacy for a moral alternative to the violence of war. Other psychologists actively vocal about social change include Gordon Allport, Jerome Frank, B. F. Skinner, and Carl Rogers. Groups advocating the agenda of social change have also emerged within psychology, including Psychologists for Social Responsibility, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, and Peace Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association. The Canadian Psychological Association (2000) has also underlined the importance of social activity in the dedication of one of four primary ethical principles to the responsibility of psychologists to society.

Wessels et al. (2001) note that "psychologists are in a position to build understanding of activism, of how to empower people and keep them involved in the face of adversity, and of what leads to activism within the system or outside of it" (p. 358). Psychotherapy techniques have proven useful for this purpose, in promoting peace action and education (Weil, 2002). Counselling psychology in particular may be moving from a system of providing direct client services to indirect services for clients by committing to

social action (Moeschberger & Ordóñez, 2003). For instance, Ordóñez describes her experiences as a counselling psychologist overseas – in response to social inequities, she began to move from a position of helping clients adjust to unfair social systems to a public advocate of social change. Goodman et al. (2004) also highlight the important role that counselling psychologists can have in amplifying the voices and strengths of community members so that "others can learn about their needs, wishes, strengths, and vision" (p. 803). These trends have been applied specifically to bullying by counsellors. For example, Greene (2003) discussed the roles of counsellors in a systemic approach to bullying, emphasizing the counsellor's role in enacting a "climate change" (p. 298) within the schools. This change of focus from the students who bully or are bullied to the whole school, family, and larger community goes beyond easing specific incidents of bullying; it also acts to help prevent other bullying episodes in the future.

As a member of the discipline of counselling psychology, this growing movement hits close to home. At the time of writing, I am currently working as a counsellor with adolescents in an inner-city school. The stories of my clients touch my heart every day. I realize that the similarity of their experiences is inextricably tied to marginalizing social inequalities tied to gender, ethnicity, income, age, and family misfortune. The energy, hope and resilience of these adolescents are powerful. I believe that there is room within the counselling field to look at ways to act to stop some of the causes of our clients' problems. In part, that is why I undertake this research. Instead of focusing on the after-effects of bullying, the depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation of targets of bullying, or the disciplinary problems or emotional troubles of students who bully, I am searching for a way for counselling psychologists to understand and promote the action of witnesses to

stop bullying and in the process promote a more equal and safe school environment. I am motivated by the potential for change within the field of counselling psychology and the power of individuals within this field to make that change by progressively and determinedly shifting our focus.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpreting Bullying

An adult client describes to me her feeling that it has never been safe to show her true self to the world. She tells me that she learned this early in life. In junior high she was repeatedly told by her friends that she was awkward, ugly, and ridiculous. Her attempts to fit in by adopting the latest trends were met with hidden or outright laughter and ridicule. She found herself wondering how she could become invisible. The event that still causes visceral pain to recall, even in adulthood, even in the safe refuge of a counsellor's office is the day when it somehow became known that she held secret feelings for another member of her class. That day, her first crush came to talk to her, complimenting her on her new hairstyle. Her heart leapt in her chest and she felt the warmth of love for the first time. After this, the starkness of her reality bombarded her with a force she had never before known when she realized that it was all a cruel joke. They were laughing at her. She saw the faces of her friends gathered around her, took in the details of their mirth, their scorn, and wished for nonexistence. Even today, she tells me "it is hard to truly believe in my right to be here, to exist." This is what sometimes knocks the wind out of me as a counsellor, a statement of such anguish told with simple, regretful truth. I feel angry and powerless in the face of a world that would allow this to happen.

Violence is a pervasive part of growing up in North America. Findings of a recent study of thousands of children and adolescents in the United States signal that over one half of children under 18 have experienced a physical assault within the last year (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Hamby, 2005). In this climate of violence it is no surprise

that bullying is one of the most common forms of physical and psychological violence affecting children and youth. There is a healthy research tradition examining the phenomenon of bullying, yet through all of the research findings and statistics, it can be easy to overlook the deep personal impact of daily direct stories of worthlessness and shame, of helplessness and anger. In this study, it is my hope that an understanding of the research on bullying and witness action can assist in changing the stories of the future.

Situating Bullying in History

Research tradition. The phenomenon of bullying first received research attention in Europe, where it was referred to as 'mobbing' – quickly escalating violent behaviour directed at one student by a group of students (Olweus, 2001). The concept of bullying has since evolved from this group phenomenon to include repeated episodes of peer aggression that can involve small groups or a single student who bullies (Olweus, 1993). Although the original focus of bullying research was physical and verbal aggression, research in the 1990s (Smith, 2004) has seen an expansion of the definition of bullying to include indirect aggression (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukianen, 1992). Rivers and Smith (1994) describe direct aggression as involving face-to-face confrontation, while indirect aggression typically occurs through a third party.

More recently, bullying has been receiving a large amount of attention in North America, from researchers, policy-makers, and the general public. Bullying research in North America has tended to place more focus upon the concept of peer rejection (Olweus, 2001), studies have historically concentrated upon status in the peer group as judged by peer nominations, and there has been a larger emphasis on the aggressor rather than the target of the aggression (Juvonen and Graham, 2001). This can be seen in the use

of the term *peer victimization*, which captures a broader scope of aggressive behaviours than the term bullying (Salmivalli, 2001).

Gendered bullying. Historically, bullying appears to be a gendered phenomenon. On the average, boys are more involved in physical forms of bullying and girls are more involved in relational bullying (Björkqvist et al., 1992; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Smith & Shu, 2000; Whitney & Smith, 1993), which is arguably more distressing for girls, as they have been socialized to place more emphasis on close relationships, particularly in adolescence (Crick and Nelson, 2002). Relational bullying is more subtle than physical aggression and is far more likely to be overlooked by parents and teachers (Elinoff et al., 2004), as adults may still have the idea that bullying typically involves physical aggression (Hazler, Miller, & Carney, 2001). In fact, Crick and Nelson found that if bullying is defined only as overt aggression, over 70% of bullying among girls would be overlooked, as it tends to involve indirect relational aggression, often between 'friends' (Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2001). Even if an adult were looking for relational aggression, the subtlety with which a rumour can be spread can oftentimes prevent adult intervention.

The effects of bullying also appear to differ by gender. In a study of adolescent students, male students who had bullied and male targets of bullying showed poor mental and physical health outcomes, while female students who had bullied showed better mental health outcomes than females who were the target of bullying (Rigby, 2001). Bullying also appears to result in different health outcomes for each gender, with boys being more likely to engage in drinking, and girls being more likely to have an anxiety, depressive or eating disorder (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2000). This likely relates to gender

socialization, as the effects of bullying appear to differ by gender across cultures (Cerezo & Ato, 2005; Elsea et al., 2003).

Defining Bullying

The term bullying is not easily defined – researchers who have devoted their careers to studying this phenomenon cannot agree on a common definition (Guerin & Hennessey, 2002). Likewise, students are not always in agreement as to what this word means (Arora, 1996; Dunn & Truscott, 2004; Smith, 2002). In addition, an understanding of bullying differs across cultures. There is not always a word that correlates directly with bullying in all languages (Smith et al., 2002). For example, in Japanese, the word *ijime*, which has been likened to bullying refers mainly to physical bullying behaviour, leaving out other forms of emotional aggression (Rios-Ellis et al., 1999).

It is also likely that the increasing attention focused upon the phenomenon of bullying may be impacting its definition. In recent years, the word bullying is sometimes used as a catchall for almost all forms of violence and harassment occurring within the school setting and beyond. The word bullying is increasingly being applied to adult relationships, as can be evidenced by research on workplace bullying (Johnson, 2009; Zapf, & Gross, 2001) and bullying in the correctional system (Archer, Ireland, & Power, 2007; Blaauw, Winkel, & Kerkhof, 2001). Some researchers have been expanding its definition within the schools, including separate categories of violence such as discrimination and sexual harassment in their definitions of bullying (Sanchez et al., 2001; Swain, 1998). This trend brings with it the danger of ignoring more subtle forms of violence, such as relational aggression and social exclusion, and downplaying more severe forms of violence such as physical and sexual assault by labeling them 'bullying.'

Defining bullying becomes even more difficult when considering that students and researchers do not always define this concept in the same way. For instance, although most students consider both direct physical and verbal aggression to be bullying (Arora, 1996; Boulton, 1999; Guerin & Hennesey, 2002; Smith et al., 2002) and can distinguish teasing from bullying that is meant to hurt the target (Espelage & Asidao, 2001; Land, 2003), there is some confusion about student understandings of indirect bullying such as relational aggression and social exclusion (Boulton, 1997; Boulton et al., 1999; Smith & Levan, 1995). It appears that while most students agree in theory that these forms of aggression are bullying (Swain, 1998), they do not appear to consider these behaviours to be prototypical forms of bullying when asked to envision an episode of bullying (Guerin & Hennessey, 2002). Adolescents have a better ability to distinguish between different types of aggressive behaviour, and have a less inclusive definition of bullying than younger students (Smith et al., 2002). For instance, Smith and Levan (1995) have shown that adolescent students are better able to discriminate between bullying and other forms of aggressive behaviour or play-fighting that may occur between friends.

There are as many ways to interpret bullying as there are individuals involved. The focus of this study is on *action* against bullying. Because of the varying meanings implied by the word bullying, this study was undertaken with the intention to fully explore student action against bullying from their own unique perspectives. When interviewing students, the definition of bullying was left purposefully flexible to allow for differences in student interpretations of bullying.

Finding a Place Among the Theories

This study is informed by social-ecological theories of bullying which emphasize the role that school climate, community, and larger society play in the phenomenon of bullying. Although biological theories of aggression and violence posit that bullying may result from evolutionary mechanisms for self-protection or goal attainment (Griffen & Gross, 2003; Davidson, Putnam, & Larson, 2000), impairment in neural systems of emotion regulation (Sterzer et al., 2005), attachment formation (Blair, 2004), or response inhibition (Paus, 2005), not all researchers agree that there is a biological human tendency toward violence. With support from the United Nations, an interdisciplinary expert panel of scientists and researchers from fields such as psychology, neurophysiology, animal behaviour and behavioural genetics met in Seville in 1986 to formulate the Seville Statement on Violence (1986). This statement declares that violence is not innate to human nature, and that it is scientifically incorrect to claim that violence is inherent in human ancestry, biological or genetic makeup, environmental selection of traits, or brain functioning. This statement declares that human beings are just as capable of producing peace as they are of producing violence.

The forms that violence takes appear to be the result of socialization. With development, children's aggression changes from direct physical aggression to more socially acceptable forms of indirect aggression (Tremblay, 2004), suggesting the important role of social processes in violence. Likewise, from an anthropological perspective Korbin (2003) concludes that the concept of 'violence' is culturally constructed, taking on different meanings in different cultural settings. She supports this assertion by citing evidence of both predominantly violent cultures and predominantly

nonviolent cultures, positing that violence in childhood (such as bullying) is related to cultural level of aggression, child-rearing and child-care patterns.

Bullying within the social-ecological model. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) human ecological systems model highlights the progressively expanding reciprocal interactions between systems of individuals, communities, organizations, social structures, policies, and cultural contexts, and how these systems interact across the individual lifespan and the development of cultures (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Bronfenbrenner's systemic levels can be described as sets of concentric circles, each outer circle capturing more of the wider social context of a phenomenon. Swearer and Espelage (2004) situate bullying within the social-ecological model, placing bullying within the first and most embedded level, the microsystem. Systems such as the family and school are situated at the next level of the mesosystem. Social structures such as anti-bullying policies or governmental initiatives on bullying find a place within the broader level of the exosystem, and the cultural context including community attitudes about bullying are situated within the most expansive level of the macrosystem. The ecological metaphor used in this model suggests a symbiosis between the levels of the system – changes at one level create changes across other levels. Community levels of acceptance for violence and attitudes toward peaceful conflict resolution impact the level of violence in day to day interactions between students in the schoolyard. Conversely, individual episodes of bullying can impact broader systems. For instance, widely publicized episodes of severe bullying such as the Canadian case involving Reena Virk, have impacted families, school policies and public perceptions about this phenomenon (e.g., Coloroso, 2003).

There is support for the interconnections between larger social systems and individual aggression and bullying among research findings. For instance, it has long been known that violence in children can be increased through the modeling of aggression by adults, such as viewing aggression on television (Bandura, 1978). Recent increases in the violent content in the media, such as movies may send the message that violence is an acceptable means of problem resolution (Harkness, 2002; Monk-Turner et al., 2004; Roche, 2003), which can in turn impact thought processes and attitudes about the acceptability of bullying for attaining goals, social dominance, or resolving conflicts. Messages about the desirability of popularity and social dominance may also influence the incidence or form that bullying takes (Hawker & Boulton, 2001). Rodkin (2004) notes that "popular bullies implicate the values of mainstream childhood culture as possibly encouraging aggression and victimization against others" (p. 88).

One of the most visible ecological influences upon bullying in school is the school environment. Researchers have found that when bullying is not tolerated within the school climate, bullying decreases (e.g., Olweus, 1993). The attitudes and behaviour of teachers and school staff can also impact student aggression – a climate in which teachers are in conflict with one another or use shaming and sarcasm as behaviour management techniques can create a climate where bullying may flourish (Soutter & McKenzie, 2000). Holt and Keyes (2004) also note that when school staff voice their opinions that bullying is unacceptable or act to stop bullying in their school, the overall climate of schools becomes less tolerant of bullying (p. 124). Research findings have shown that anti-bullying programs focused on changing school climate have not only resulted in less bullying, but fewer forms of other antisocial behaviour among students

(Olweus, 1997). In addition, the influence of peer groups also has an important influence on aggression and bullying (Orpinas & Horne, 2006; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003). Peer support and peer mediation programs have proven effective in lowering incidences of bullying (Cowie & Olafsson, 1998; Cunningham et al., 2000). In line with the social-ecological model, research has shown that school climate impacts bullying, so it would be reasonable to assume that cumulative individual responses to bullying can also impact the school climate. The actions of witnesses of bullying have the power to influence not only individual episodes of bullying, but the overall acceptability of bullying within the school climate. When looking at the larger picture, it is also possible that changing school climates could result in a ripple of change across broader system levels, influencing public attitudes toward the acceptability of bullying and violence.

Witnessing Bullying

The Importance of Witnesses

Bullying is often a public phenomenon (Jeffrey et al., 2001). Recent research on bullying is turning toward the collective responsibility of the peer group in this phenomenon, and the behaviour of those who witness bullying is increasingly becoming the topic of research and intervention efforts (Rigby & Johnson, 2005; Sutton & Smith, 1999). A study by Rogers and Tisak (1996) found that when sixth graders were asked how they *should* respond when witnessing bullying, 91% said they would respond with some form of action, such as telling an authority figure or confronting the aggressor. However, when asked what they thought witnesses *would* do, 45% said they thought witnesses would do nothing. And even this figure appears to be a gross under-estimation

of what witnesses *actually do*. Although peer witnesses are present in 80-90% of bullying episodes, those witnesses were found to intervene only 10-25% of the time (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997; Hawkins, Pepler & Craig, 2001; O'Connell et al., 1999).

Further research has examined the different roles that witnesses can play in episodes of bullying. Salmivalli and colleagues (1996) identified four roles that peer witnesses can play (apart from the students who bully or are bullied). These were labeled: the assistant to the bully, reinforcer of the bully, outsider, and defender of the victim. As identified by these authors, assistants to the bully join in once the episode of bullying has begun, reinforcers act to strengthen the bully's position by actively watching an episode of bullying, cheering, or encouraging others to watch, while outsiders attempt to distance themselves from the bullying. Defenders of the victim take the side of students who are bullied, attempting to console them or actively attempting to intervene on their behalf. Most students were found to be reinforcers, outsiders or defenders. Although Salmivalli and colleagues reported that approximately 12% of students could not be placed into a participant role, it is likely that even those who were placed within a participant role can switch roles depending upon the situation. For instance, some students have been found to both bully and be bullied (Schwartz, Proctor, and Chien, 2001). Sutton and Smith (1999) found that the roles of bully, assistant to the bully, and reinforcer may be collapsed into one 'pro-bully' factor, with some students being ringleaders of bullying, and others being followers. It is interesting that even though outsiders are not pro-bully, their inaction may serve to strengthen the power of the student who bullies. In fact, O'Connell and colleagues (1999) refer to witnesses who do nothing as reinforcers rather

than outsiders because they give the student who bullies a positive message that bullying is normal. Over half of the students in O'Connell et al.'s study were found to fall into this category.

Notably, some students do act to stop bullying (Naylor, Cowie, & del Ray, 2001) even though this may result in a decrease in their social standing (Hawker & Boulton, 2001). Hawkins, Pepler and Craig (2001) found that when peers did attempt to intervene, they were effective more than half of the time. Hawkins and her colleagues also found that the strategies used by students were aggressive roughly half of the time and non-aggressive roughly half of the time. This tended to differ based upon whether those students who acted to stop the bullying were directing their efforts at the student who was bullying (in which case aggression was used more frequently) or at the target of the bullying (in which case non-aggressive strategies were more frequently used). The effectiveness of the students' interventions was not related to whether they used an aggressive or non-aggressive strategy. In only 10% of occasions, did the intervening students wait for a request for help from the target of bullying (Hawkins et al., 2001). This suggests that these students were independently able to determine the need for outside intervention.

Upstanders

Recently, a new word has been used to describe students who intervene to stop bullying. The word *upstander* has been used by authors such as Devine and Cohen (2007) as a way to distinguish these students from bystanders – students who witness bullying but do not act. This word has also been used independently by a handful of anti-bullying programs. For example, in Clark Elementary School, staff held a contest to come up with

a new word for witnesses who intervene to stop bullying. The winning student entry was also *upstander* (Charlottesville City Schools, 2006). This word is not confined to the bullying literature. Just as a bystander can refer to anyone who passively witnesses an episode of violence, upstanders are defined as any person "who chooses to take positive action in the face of injustice in society or in situations where individuals need assistance" (Facing History, 2008). For instance, Brotz (2006) used the term upstanders to refer to otherwise ordinary individuals in Bosnia and Herzegovina who stood up to war crimes.

Rigby and Slee (1993) found that these students who would be termed upstanders are often admired by their peers, perhaps because of the physical risk or risk to social standing involved in intervening in bullying. However, little is known about these students' experiences.

Witness Experiences

Despite the importance of witnesses to bullying, there is surprisingly little research on the experiences of witnesses – bystanders or upstanders. It has been found that when students witness bullying, just over half report negative experiences such as fear and helplessness, while others report excitement, relief or indifference (Jeffrey et al., 2001). Nishina and Juvonen (2005) also found that students who witnessed bullying reported increased levels of anxiety and dislike for school, yet they also found that witnessing bullying can act as a buffer against humiliation for those students who are the target of bullying. When bullied students witness other students being targeted, they may feel that they are less personally responsible for the bullying, lessening its humiliating impact. Interestingly, Nishima and Juvonen also found that students appeared to have

more empathy for students who were the target of verbal aggression as compared to physical aggression.

Even though it is not directly known whether witnessing peer violence has further detrimental effects upon witnesses, studies of adolescent exposure to community violence have shown that it is associated with intrusive thoughts, distraction, and lack of belongingness (Howard, Feigelman, Xiaoming, Cross & Rachuba, 2002). Witnessing violence at school also likely leads to feelings of helplessness, particularly if students feel they are unable to stop the bullying. Jeffrey and colleagues (2001) argue that this may lead to feelings of helplessness in other situations as well: "bystander students who are helpless in the presence of another student's victimization learn to be dominated and powerless in the face of force and intimidation and have important experiences in failing to defend the human rights of others" (p. 146).

Although there is a paucity of research examining the experiences of upstanders, Staub and Spielman (2003) found that students who intervene to stop bullying reported liking school to a greater degree than other students. Little else is known about the experiences of upstanders, students who are able to make the important choice to act when very few of their peers are able to do so.

Developmental Influences

Although "a considerable continuity exists between aggressive behavior during childhood and adolescence" (O'Connell et al., 1999, p. 437), research has shown the tremendous changes that take place during adolescence – both in peer relationships as well as actions and attitudes toward bullying. For instance, during the school years, peers become the primary agents of socialization for children, replacing the family as the

dominant model for their values and behaviour (Prinstein & Greca, 2002; Erikson, 1964; Swearer & Espelage, 2004). In adolescence, the peer group becomes more salient than it was in childhood. Cultural theories of adolescence find that "the peer group encourages and supports 'trying out' – often playfully, experimentally, and without being taken too seriously – some of the new roles and activities of adulthood without the direct interference or censure of family" (Muus, 1996, p. 368). Despite the importance of the peer group, peer affiliation drops as students enter junior high schools, partly due to fractured social groups resulting from large schools which stress individual competition (Pelligrini & Long, 2004). This can place students at risk for aggressive actions such as bullying, as peer relationships have been shown to act as a buffer against bullying (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000). Indeed, there appears to be a developmental trend in which sympathy for the targets of bullying decreases as children get older (Rigby & Slee, 1991). The degree to which students are upset by bullying appears to decrease as children move from elementary to junior high schools (Jeffrey et al., 2001). This may lead to a decrease in reports of bullying – as students mature and transition from elementary to junior high school, they are more likely to keep being bullied to themselves (Naylor, Cowie, & del Ray, 2001; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

Students in junior high were found to be more likely to assist the bully, while elementary students were more likely to sympathize with the target of the bullying (Jeffrey et al., 2001). Gender differences also become apparent as students enter junior high school. With age, male witnesses are more likely to join in when bullying occurs (O'Connell et al., 1999). Male students were also more likely to hold the belief that targets of bullying get what they deserve, and to feel excited when an incident of bullying

occurs (Jeffrey et al.). Jeffrey and colleagues suggest that as students age, they "lose their sense of righteous indignation at the victimization of others" (p. 153). These researchers suggest that students may feel safer in the role of an outsider, as it is easier to be emotionally indifferent to the distress of the victim. Other findings support the claim that adolescent students appear to have an increased pro-bullying attitudes, suggesting that exposure to unchecked bullying can lead to attitude change (Stevens, Van Oost, & Bourdeaudhuij, 2000). These findings further highlight the need for students to feel that they are able to take action against bullying, and yet older children and adolescents are less likely than younger children to say that they believe a witness would get involved when witnessing an act of peer aggression, either to tell an authority or to confront the aggressor (Rogers & Tisak, 1996).

The rate to which students reported intervening in bullying was found to decline with age (Staub, Fellner, Berry & Morange, 2003). Development also appears to impact the strategy chosen when attempting to stop bullying. Adolescent students are more likely to endorse directly intervening in an episode of bullying, while children are more likely to involve an authority such as a teacher (Tisak & Tisak, 1996). Tisak and Tisak suggest that this may be due to the increased importance of peer solidarity in adolescence as well as increased feelings of individual self-efficacy and capability to resolve conflicts.

The Role of the Witness

Because of the importance of peer reactions in adolescence, witnesses of bullying play a pivotal role in this phenomenon. Their choices determine the outcome of bullying and contribute to the acceptability of bullying within the school climate. This has been shown in the research: the more peers present to witness an episode of bullying, the

longer the incident of bullying lasted (O'Connell et al., 1999). In addition, peer groups with norms that are in favor of bullying have been shown to influence individual levels of bullying in adolescence (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003, p. 386). The importance of student-led attempts to stop bullying is paramount. Students consider student intervention the least risky alternative for the targets of bullying (Smith & Shu, 2000), as a large portion of adolescent students are either unsure or completely against collaborating with teachers to try to stop bullying (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003). The action of upstanders is also important to fight feelings of helplessness and acceptance of injustice (Jeffrey et al., 2001). There is evidence that witnessing a peer intervene in bullying increases student feelings of overall safety (Gini, et al., 2008). Mobilizing the action of peer witnesses to bullying is necessary for bringing a halt to individual instances of bullying, larger school attitudes toward bullying, and suggestions that lone individuals cannot make a difference in the outcome of violent actions in their world.

Making the Choice: Action or Inaction?

You are outside with a friend, taking your lunch break and enjoying the beautiful, sunny weather. As you're talking to your friend, you notice a woman a few feet away. You have seen her on your lunch breaks before but have never really spoken with her. When you look a bit closer, you notice that she is talking with someone who seems to be holding her arm in a threatening manner. Your heart starts beating a little bit faster. Is your friend seeing this? You turn to your friend, who seems to be shrugging it off. Yet you are starting to feel noticeably uncomfortable.

You look over again, and now you have noticed that the woman has started to quietly cry. Something isn't right. Your heart beats even faster. You become warm and

start shifting uneasily. Just now, your friend tells you "Listen, it's none of your

business." But the only thought in your head is "What do I do?"

What do you do?

How do you decide?

Would it make a difference if the woman was a close friend?

Would it make a difference if the person grabbing her arm is a male?

If you were seeing this alone?

If your friend had said: "We should do something"?

Would it make a difference if instead of adults, you were fourteen years old, and

witnessed this exact scene occurring between fellow junior high school students?

The decision to act to intervene in bullying can be just as gut-wrenching as trying

to decide what to do when witnessing violence as an adult. Although adults have more

power and a greater range of choices than adolescents, many of them find it difficult to

act to intervene on another's behalf. Some of the above questions were prominent in the

minds of researchers who began examining the phenomenon of bystander non-

intervention. These researchers were curious about why witnesses to emergency

situations or crimes did not intervene to help the victim. Research in the area of bullying,

peace psychology and social psychology have further explored the questions of how

people decide to act, and the potential reasons for action or inaction.

Making the Decision

Before choosing either action or inaction in response to bullying, students most

likely go through a decision-making process. Crick and Dodge (1994) describe their

model of social cognition for children's decision-making processes in social situations.

They note that children may rely on memories of similar situations and evaluate the successes of their past strategies. They also may make inferences about the behaviours of those around them. Children then likely decide upon a goal and formulate different responses that may help them to reach this goal. Before acting, they evaluate the potential responses, their own ability to enact each response and the appropriateness of each response for the social situation. These processes are also present in adolescent decision-making, along with the ability to take the perspective of another person (Humfress, O'Conner, Slaughter, Target, & Fonagy, 2002) and the social and moral acceptability of the potential responses (Fontaine, Burks, & Dodge, 2002; Rogers & Tisak, 1996).

In addition, students may have more than one simultaneously-existing goal for their actions. Troop-Gordon and Asher (2005) noted that "children's social behaviors may be determined, in part, by the specific combination of goals they are trying to attain . . . and the effect of any one goal may be fully understood only when it is considered within the context of other objectives being pursued" (p. 569). Changes to goals can be made in the middle of a decision-making process involving social conflict resolution.

Although little is known about the specific decision-making processes engaged when children or adolescents decide whether to intervene in an episode of bullying, there also remains the possibility that the decision-making process is too quick to be consciously articulated. For instance, Staub (2003) noted the occurrence of impulsive helping, in which an individual may not have time to engage in direct decision-making processes, or these processes may be incredibly rapid or intuitive. Although it is not known exactly how individuals decide to act when faced with a violent situation such as

bullying, researchers have examined potential factors that may be involved in the decision to act.

Inaction

When individuals do not act to intervene in violence, their decision may be less evident because they essentially remain in the same position as they were before: an uninvolved bystander. However, even inaction involves making a choice. Researchers have been exploring potential individual and environmental reasons why a large number of people will remain inactive – not coming to the aid of those who need them.

Social psychology research on the *bystander effect* has revealed the tremendous power of situational forces acting upon individuals who witness violence or emergencies. The bystander effect was first investigated by Latané and Darley (1970) as they set to understand why bystanders choose not to intervene to help others. They describe the case that started their research:

> Kitty Genovese is set upon by a maniac as she returns home from work at
>
> 3 a.m. Thirty-eight of her neighbors in Kew Gardens come to their
>
> windows when she cries out in terror; none come to her assistance even
>
> though her stalker takes over half an hour to murder her. No one even so
>
> much as calls the police. She dies. (Latané and Darley, p. 1).

Although this and other such examples of bystander non-intervention resulted in serious human tragedy, there are daily instances in which citizens do nothing in response to witnessing violence or other dire human need. Why? For bystanders to intervene, it is argued that they must a) first notice the incident, b) define it as an emergency, c) assume some sort of personal responsibility to take action, e) feel competent to help, and f) help

(Levine, 1999). In the case of bystander inaction, it is argued that some may fail to define an ambiguous situation as an emergency. For example, in the case of the short vignette at the beginning of this section, it may be possible to decide that the woman was simply upset and being comforted by a friend.

It is also argued that even after a situation has been deemed an emergency, it may be possible for witnesses not to assume a sense of personal responsibility for intervention. This may occur through what Latané and Darley term the *diffusion of responsibility*, in which the presence of others lessens the sense of personal responsibility for action, as the burden of responsibility is diffused across all present. Levine also argues that social categories can impact the assumption of personal responsibility. In the example above, it may be possible to assume an altercation within an intimate relationship, increasing the feeling that it is not the business of a bystander to become involved.

Often the simple presence of others can influence inaction. Witnesses refer to those around them for cues on how to act. If others remain inactive, it is a cue that this is the correct behaviour to assume. Those who act in a contrary manner risk social embarrassment (Chekroun & Brauer, 2002). The power of such social influence on individual behaviour can be seen in findings that the bystander effect is not limited to emergency situations (Levy, 1972). Social control and inhibition through referencing others can occur in completely innocuous situations. For instance, Petty, Williams, Harkins and Latané (1977) found that in the presence of others, individuals are less likely to even take a coupon for a free cheeseburger. Asch (1952) also comments on the extraordinarily conforming influence of the presence of others:

At . . . times social forces violently prevent the person from giving

expression to his [sic] insights and purposes. Then the individual must

take measures of defense; he may struggle to assert his individuality; he

may restrict himself by submitting or resigning himself; he may even

make common cause with those who oppress him (Asch, 1952, p. 450).

Those who witness bullying may find themselves under similar social pressure to help a

person in harm's way, and also to signal to the student who is bullying that their

behaviour is unacceptable, exerting social control through their behaviour. When

remaining inactive, witnesses not only fail to help a peer in need, they also signal that this

form of behaviour is socially acceptable. Chekroun and Brauer note that "in both cases,

intervention is associated with costs such as the fear of misinterpreting the situation or the

risk of eliciting a negative reaction" (p. 864).

Research in the field of bullying has also revealed possible reasons why students

choose to remain uninvolved when witnessing bullying. For instance, Lenthall (2005)

describes a 'code of silence' in her school, where witnesses of bullying did not even

make use of an anonymous system for reporting bullying to school staff. When asking

students why they did not act to stop bullying, she found that students gave reasons

similar to those discussed above by social psychological researchers: fear of mistaking a

non-injurious situation for bullying, the idea that they should "mind their own business"

or the idea that the responsibility for the bullying lies with the target of the bullying, and

not with the witness. Lenthall also cited a lack of empathy among student respondents. In

a similar vein, O'Connell et al. (1999) suggest desensitization to violence as a potential

reason for inaction. When witnesses are exposed to repeated episodes of violence such as

witnessing bullying on a daily basis, they may become desensitized to its urgent need for intervention. This may be partially implicated in findings that older students report having less empathy for bullied students than younger students (Rigby & Slee, 1992).

Other bullying researchers have echoed social psychological hypotheses for witness inaction, including the idea of a lack of personal responsibility (Rogers & Tisak, 1996), the influence of modeling and reinforcement (Jeffrey et al., 2001) and a feeling of not knowing how to act (Hazler, 1996). In addition, Olweus (1993) points out the important role of the social reputation of bullying students and the students who are bullied, meaning that intervention poses certain social risks to bystanders. These risks also may involve the physical and psychological risk of having the bullying immediately turn to them (Hazler; Olweus). However, none of these theories have been researched among students.

Teräsahjo and Salmivalli (2003) conducted a qualitative study examining the meaning-making that students give to bullying. This study illuminated thought processes involved in deciding how to determine whether or not bullying was harmful. While these authors found that most students agreed that bullying is wrong, they describe a number of interpretive mechanisms at work to contextualize bullying as harmless and sometimes justifiable. Teräsahjo and Salmivalli found that students appeared to underestimate the harmfulness of bullying, externalize the bullying by thinking of it as a game or attributing it to the intentions of the target (e.g., social exclusion happens because that student wants to be left alone). They also uncovered what they deemed the 'odd student repertoire' – justifying the bullying by reasoning that it results from something inherent in the target, and rationalizations that the targets of bullying 'get what's coming to them.' These

authors discuss the discordant findings that students minimize the harm inherent in bullying while still holding anti-bullying attitudes. Students may agree that bullying is wrong when thinking of certain situations in which it is not deserved, but when discussing everyday episodes of peer aggression, they are able to minimize its importance.

From the perspective of peace psychology, MacNair (2003) describes other pertinent theories that may become engaged when individuals try to rationalize their inaction. For instance, the social psychological concept of cognitive dissonance may apply in which people may feel conflict between their beliefs and their actions, and therefore change their beliefs to be congruent with their actions. Likewise, the belief in a just world (Bierhoff, 2002) may incite people to change their beliefs to blame the victims of violence in order to preserve the idea that the world is a fair place. Bandura (2002) also discusses the phenomenon of moral disengagement in which it is possible for individuals to distance themselves from implication in activities that they believe are wrong.

It may also be interesting to consider the role that inaction against bullying may have to play in further inaction on other human rights issues later in life. Ellis (2004) likens the phenomenon of passive bystanders to the involvement of youth in human rights issues. In a study of British youth, Ellis found that while most of her participants agreed that human rights were important, the vast majority were not active at promoting those rights at more than a passive level. She cites the main reasons of her participants: a) the belief that human rights issues do not directly affect them, b) a lack of personal responsibility for the issues, and c) a sense of helplessness at being able to make a difference. Ellis suggests that when youth are able to take personal collective

responsibility for the human rights abuses occurring around them, they will be more motivated to engage in active social change. This may be set into motion before youth hit the age of majority, if they have practice in stopping common forms of violence in their everyday lives. The experience of stopping bullying may offer such an experience, offering adolescents practice at taking personal responsibility, gains in feeling able to act appropriately, and a sense of efficacy at being able to act to stop violence around them.

Action

Although relatively less research has been conducted on upstander action, relevant findings from bullying research, peace research and studies of helping behaviour are valuable in an understanding of how adolescent students may make the choice to act. From the perspective of peace psychology, MacNair (2003) notes factors that may make individuals more likely to intervene to stop violence, such as moral development, resiliency, courage and education. Mayton (2002) discusses adolescent values such as generosity, pursuit of truth, and self-control as personal factors that may be related to nonviolent dispositions making individuals more likely to intervene. Mattaini (2002) also highlighted the importance of social practices that reinforce and celebrate peaceful nonviolent conflict resolution.

Intervention has also been connected to biological theories on altruism. Such theories posit that individuals may engage in acts that are helpful to others because the positive action helps them in some way or gives a feeling of pleasure (Barber, 2004; Staub, 2003). However, Barber argues from an evolutionary perspective that true selfless altruism can also be traced to socially evolved emotions such as shame and empathy.

Research on bullying has uncovered that when students are asked why they believe witnesses should intervene in an episode of bullying, an overwhelming majority gave the reason, 'concern for the victim' (Rogers & Tisak, 1996). During early adolescence, the link between empathy and prosocial behaviour becomes even more evident (Espelage, Mebane, & Adams, 2004, p. 39). Endresen and Olweus (2001) found that empathy was associated with a more negative view of bullying, which in turn appears to act to decrease bullying behaviour. Gini, Albiero, Benelli and Altoe (2007) found further support for this link, showing a correlation between empathy and a student's identification with the participant role 'defender.'

Rigby and Johnson (2005) examined the reasons given by students who said they would intervene in a hypothetical situation. Students who participated in their study were asked to write a sentence about why they would intervene in a hypothetical bullying incident. Students cited a moral viewpoint, the ability to take the target's perspective, and concern for others as reasons for intervening. In addition, some students said they would intervene out of reciprocity, expecting the same in return, and others said that they would intervene because this was the "type of person" they saw themselves to be. However, these findings were only related to the intention to intervene.

In a study of an anti-bullying intervention program, Stevens et al. (2000) found that intervention in bullying was predicted by an intention to intervene as well as a personal evaluation of success in the intervention. This suggests that students do indeed engage in a decision-making process, and that their self-efficacy is an important part of their decision. Moreover, social standing is also associated with an ability to intervene, as elevated standing among peers makes certain students less vulnerable to peer social

pressures (O'Connell et al., 1999). This also suggests a degree of confidence or self-efficacy related to the choice to act.

Other personality traits may be related to the decision or ability to act to stop bullying. In a study of the 'Big Five' personality traits based on Salmivalli's (2001) participant roles, Tani and colleagues (2003) found that those witnesses who acted to stop bullying ('defenders of the victim') scored higher on measures of agreeableness and extraversion. These authors posit that the trait of agreeableness allows these adolescents to focus on others, and the trait of extraversion allows them to be less self-conscious of what others might think of them. In contrast, 'outsiders' or those witnesses that attempted to distance themselves from the bullying scored lower than other students on extraversion, and lower than 'defenders' on agreeableness.

Environmental factors may also be related to an upstander's decision to act. Olweus (1993) noted that social modeling and reinforcement may encourage peer involvement in bullying, but it may also be just as likely to encourage un-involved peers to become involved by intervening, particularly if this is regarded as a worthwhile or laudable behaviour. The power of such reinforcement and modeling can be seen in bullying intervention programs stressing the role of witnesses (e.g., Frey et al., 2005; Stevens et al., 2000). In addition, other social factors may be involved in the decision to act. For instance, Ginsburg (1977) found that peers were more likely to intervene in aggressive episodes when the target of the aggression was displaying nonverbal signals of submission such as head-bowing or lying motionless on the ground. These behaviours may make it clear that the aggression is not wanted or deserved, making the situation less ambiguous to an outsider.

The strategy adolescents choose to use when acting to stop bullying may differ based on the relationship to those involved. For instance, when asked about their hypothetical actions, adolescents said that they would be more likely to directly confront the bullying student if they were friends with him or her. Otherwise, they would be more likely to use indirect forms of action such as reporting the bullying to an authority figure (Tisak & Tisak, 1996). In addition, those students who bully or are bullied appear more likely to support aggressive witness responses to bullying in hypothetical situations (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005).

Based upon these findings, it appears that witness response to bullying may be bolstered by focusing on increased witness responsibility to act, knowing how to act and a feeling of confidence and self-efficacy about the results of one's action. In addition, a school environment supportive of witness action against bullying may serve to increase student action, just as student action can serve to shape a school climate that is less tolerant of bullying.

Action as a Force of Change

Although there are significant reasons for witnesses of violence to remain uninvolved, there are upstanders who choose to act, sometimes even if this action places them at personal risk. Even more remarkable, the social forces that can prevent witnesses from acting can also intensify the actions of a single individual. For instance, Olweus (1993) noted that social contagion may influence witness responses to bullying. It has been shown that the actions of a single individual can influence others to act. In his famous experiments on conformity, Milgram (1965) found that in groups, the presence of an individual who did not agree to go along with harming another human being

dramatically increased the likelihood that others would also refuse to participate. Similarly, Asch (1951) found that a single person who acted in a way that was divergent to the rest of the group freed others in the group from the social pressures of conformity, allowing them to voice their true opinions. When witnesses are referencing others around them for how to act, the presence of a person who takes action allows others to follow. The action of upstanders is of supreme importance in their ability to establish a new and immediate group norm. Adolescents who choose to act to stop bullying have the opportunity to be the first to begin to establish the idea that bullying is a form of violence that is not acceptable in their environment.

In communities with higher ratios of children and adolescents, it is more likely to find a higher level of youth political involvement and volunteering (Hart, Atkins, Markey, & Youniss, 2004). Hart et al. have found that this is due to the increase in social influence of a larger peer group. These population data findings support the impact of social influence, in which "knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors are shaped in daily interactions with other people" (p. 592). Based on the model of social influence, it seems logical to conclude that if more adolescents acted to stop bullying, particularly in situations involving only peers, this could impact and shape the behaviour of others.

Just as the action of students who stand up against bullying can be a force of change for the world around them, their actions may also be a force of inner change as well. While remaining a passive bystander can lead to rationalizations against becoming involved, actively helping through acts of altruism can lead to more and greater acts of helping (Goleman, 2003). Similarly, interviews with junior high school students trained in befriending, conflict resolution and counselling-based peer support strategies revealed

increases in self-confidence and a belief that they were making a positive contribution (Cowie, 2000). There is an immediate need for further research in this area, as it is quite possible that those students who intervene in bullying are more likely to also become involved in future actions directed at positive social change.

<div align="center">In Close</div>

The actions of students who witness a peer being bullied are crucial to the outcome of the incident, and also to the outcome of future incidents of bullying. Student action against bullying is a signal to their peers, their school, and the wider community that violence in the form of bullying is not acceptable. The actions of upstanders can and do influence others, and also create feelings of self-efficacy, which may potentially lead them to becoming more involved in future attempts at putting a stop to violence or promoting other forms of social change.

Terasahjo and Salmivalli (2003) suggest that much of the context of bullying has been overlooked because the majority of bullying research has come from a post-positivist perspective, relying heavily on quantitative research. Although such research has greatly enhanced our understanding of the large trends, these authors suggest that "bullying research would now benefit from qualitative studies in which the interest is not in finding results that can be generalized to large numbers of people, but to shape our understanding of the phenomenon by focusing on the context" (p. 135).

By focusing upon the context, this study will explore the experiences of upstanders who have managed to act to stop bullying. *What meaning do students give to their experiences of acting in response to witnessing bullying?* By exploring this question, it may be possible to encourage more students, and even more community

members to act to stop violence and injustice. Research has shown that there is no longer a need to convince people that violence is wrong, but there is a disconnection between knowing that it is wrong and acting to stop it. The adolescent students who have participated in this study have found a way to act upon their convictions. As a human community, can we learn from them?

III. METHODOLOGY & METHOD

To believe and to understand are not diverse things, but the same things in different

periods of growth.   - Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Methodology

Philosophical and Theoretical Perspectives

I try to come to know the world by thinking of it as a shared understanding created between human beings. The existence of these shared understandings may be long or brief; the spaces they inhabit can be as physical as a handshake, or as ephemeral as a flash of insight. These understandings exist within and are bound by time and by culture. I think about language as the soul of these shared understandings. How often have I experienced the odd feeling of repeating a word one too many times, until it starts to lose its meaning? "Weeks, weeks, weeks." Until the sound 'weeks' no longer holds a connection to the meaning of weeks. These brief moments are themselves a flash of insight: illustrative of the degree to which meaning is made by people through time. Not only is the sound 'weeks' agreed upon as the symbol for the 7-day cycle of our culture, but the measurement of time is agreed upon as fundamental to being in the world.

This is my definition of constructionism. It is not near complete. I could repeat the words of others in an attempt to get at the meaning of this word: Crotty (1998) defines constructionism as the view that "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). However, Crotty takes twenty-four pages to explain what he means by this, and his explanation is itself bound by English, by the year 1998,

by his position in the world at that time as an academic, a father, a teacher. As are my explanations filtered through my language, my age, my gender, the combination of what I have had for breakfast and what I read in my first-year philosophy class. My experiences of research, my knowledge (both personal and professional) of bullying, and my beliefs about peace have shaped this research, that is not in question. How they have shaped this research and how they have interacted with the experiences and worldviews of the students who have participated in this study is a significant question that I will attempt to make clear in outlining my methodology.

Constructionism is the epistemological basis of this study. This means that when I take the role of a researcher, I understand knowledge as arising from a process of shared social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In contrast to other ways of knowing, my focus from a constructionist perspective is to gain a deeper *understanding* of this slice of human experience (Licoln & Guba, 2000). Crotty (1998) argues that constructionism is the middle ground between objectivism and subjectivism. Guba (1990) suggests that the "inquirer [subject] and inquired into [object] are fused into a single (monistic) entity" (p. 27). In other words, the subject and object are necessary for the existence of the other: for an object to exist, *as an object,* it must be perceived and given meaning by a subject; for a subject to exist, *as a subject,* it must be perceiving and giving meaning to an object or experience. In this sense, and in the way I approach this research, 'real' objects or experiences can exist, but they hold meaning only when meaning is constructed by conscious beings (Crotty, 1998). The creation of shared understandings does not mean that every mind interprets the same meaning, but that we understand one another through shared symbols with cultural and historical roots. Crotty also made clear that "different

people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon."

While these assumptions form the epistemological basis of this study, I have drawn upon theoretical and historical perspectives to further guide my methodological choices. Crotty (1998) suggests that a theoretical perspective is embedded within any methodology, while an epistemological stance is embedded within a theoretical perspective. In outlining the theoretical and philosophical perspectives that shape my orientation toward this methodology, I acknowledge that human meaning-making is situated within a cultural and historical context. By this, I mean that I believe that human beings are introduced to the world through systems of culture, including language, that help us make sense of things. These systems of culture tell us what our everyday experience means and are communicated through symbols, such as words or metaphors.

In this vein, the philosophical perspective outlined by Blumer (1969) has shaped my entry point to this research – the research question. Blumer posited that a person acts in the world based upon meanings that they attribute to things in the world. These meanings arise from interaction with others and are mediated through interpretive processes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The focus of interpretation of meaning as the foundation of action is central to the question "*What meaning do students give to their experiences of acting in response to witnessing bullying?*" Embedded within this question are the assumptions that student participants are able to imagine the perspectives of others, that they do this through the use of shared symbolic structures such as language, and that they act based upon the meaning they have interpreted from the situation.

The philosophical perspective of hermeneutics also informs my approach to this study. The word *hermeneutics* has been traced to roots in the Greek word *hermeneuein*, which translates to mean *say* or *interpret* and the Greek god Hermes, who acted as the messenger of the gods – interpreting their messages and meanings (Moules, 2002). The word hermeneutics has also been associated with the search for hidden meaning (Crotty, 1998). Both of these meanings inform how I make sense of hermeneutics – understanding comes through means of interpretation, with the goal of making explicit those 'hidden' meanings which have been implicit.

The traditional focus of hermeneutic study has been sacred texts (McLeod, 2001), such as the careful study and interpretation of biblical texts. The focus of hermeneutic study has expanded to include all forms of public text, with the idea that all texts are written by authors who are situated within a certain culture and a certain period of time. When a reader from a different historical or cultural background comes to a text, she interprets the text using a different set of understandings about the world (Moules, 2002). This brings new meaning to the text. From a hermeneutic perspective, these *pre-understandings* are rooted to the historical and cultural position of the interpreter, and shape the way any person comes to any text.

In more modern hermeneutic philosophies, the idea of *text* has been expanded, so that social action has sometimes been thought of as a kind of text that can be read and interpreted (Ricouer, 1981). For instance, text has been used as a metaphor for the interpretation of everyday experience in hermeneutic studies of counselling psychology (McLeod). I appreciate the way Ezzy (1998) describes this potential:

Lived experience, like a text, has no intrinsic meaning. Lives and texts are

not configurations "out there"; rather, they become completed

compositions in their reading. Interpretations are enabled and constrained

by the text, but they are also anchored in the imaginative world of the

reader. It is therefore a mistake to assume that lived experience is in some

way separate from its narration – as if one were reality and the other

fiction. Action is always symbolically mediated, with symbols acting as a

quasi-text that allows conduct to be interpreted (p. 244).

Hermeneutics informs my approach to this study as a search for understanding. The meaning of the word *understanding* becomes clearer to me when it is contrasted with the word *knowing*. Knowing has often been associated with the idea of mastery – the idea that a person can show and substantiate their claims. In contrast, understanding can be thought of as the quest to comprehend the meaning of something, an answer to the question, "what do you make of that?" rather than "what do you know about that?" (Schwandt 1999, p. 452). Inquiry that is informed by hermeneutics aims to construct a deeper understanding of the text than perhaps even the author's own original understanding, as the author's meanings and intentions are oftentimes implicit (Crotty, 1998). It is my hope that interpreting my conversations with participants will allow for a deeper understanding of implicit meanings, both for myself and for the participants.

My aim in this study is to engage in the process of understanding the meanings that participants give to their experiences, using the idea that these experiences are socially constructed. This is a relational and dialogical process (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), and involves interpretation on the part of myself and the participants. For my part, I will

attempt to engage in interpretation that is both open to hearing the perspective of the other while at the same time recognizing my own perspective as situated within a cultural and historical context. Schwandt describes this process as "living in-between" (p. 458).

Basic Interpretive Qualitative Inquiry

I use the words basic interpretive qualitative inquiry to describe the methodology I have chosen for this research because these words situate this research within the inductive tradition of qualitative research, and the hermeneutic bases of all forms of interpretive inquiry (McLeod, 2001). Also referred to as generic qualitative research (McLeod) or simply interpretive inquiry (Ellis, 1998), basic interpretive qualitative inquiry as defined by Merriam (1998) has as its purpose the discovery and understanding of meaning-making from the perspectives of the people involved. The term *basic* refers to the fundamental or central place that interpretive inquiry takes within the tradition of qualitative research.

Central to this methodological framework is the recognition that each researcher is faced with multiple choice points when constructing a study. For instance, as I have constructed this study I have made the choice to situate myself within an epistemological and theoretical perspective, to use certain methods, to utilize certain strategies for interpretation and to construct particular guidelines to judge the usefulness of the final product of this research. Hammersly (1999) likens the qualitative researcher to a boat builder, who is able to repair a boat on the fly by taking a pre-existing structure, and replace elements a piece at a time, ensuring that each new piece fits together within the frame of the boat. Using this metaphor, Hammersly stresses the importance of ensuring that the chosen 'pieces' fit together within the same epistemological and theoretical

framework. In piecing together my chosen methods and systems of representation, I have been informed by Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) concept of *bricolage*, particularly the idea that the result of research is "a complex, dense, reflexive, collagelike creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis."

I have chosen the methodology of basic interpretive qualitative inquiry because it is best suited to the purpose of this research undertaking – to gain an understanding of the meaning participants give to their experiences of acting when witnessing bullying. What differentiates basic interpretive qualitative inquiry from other methodological frameworks is that the sole purpose of this methodology is to deepen understanding. This contrasts with the purposes of other methodological frameworks that may have additional or alternative purposes such as enacting change or building theory. I hope that the findings of this study will be used to add to existing theories, and to better programs and policies aimed at creating more peaceful schools and communities. The purpose of this study is to deepen our understanding of how students have found the ability to act when in the role of a witness. I hope that this research will leave participants, readers, and myself engaged, looking at the world in a different way and ready to apply these new understandings to useful theoretical and practical purposes.

There are distinct advantages to adopting the methodology of basic interpretive qualitative inquiry. For instance, this methodology allows the researcher increased flexibility. This methodology also strengthens the rigor of the study because basic interpretive qualitative inquiry does not follow a pre-determined set of procedures, so researchers are more likely to think about and justify their actions at the various choice

points they face (McLeod, 2001). In preparing to carry out this research, I have been attentive to the various choice points encountered. I have attempted to document my choices by keeping a journal of the personal experiences of preparing for this research. I have also used this journal as a place to reflect upon my own assumptions about the nature of knowledge, understanding, and research, and my pre-understandings about bullying, peace, and social action. Parts of what I have written in this research journal have made it to the pages of this document, particularly in the reflective pieces meant to be windows to my experience as a researcher. In expressing my pre-understandings as 'windows' of italicized text, it is my aim to allow you as the reader, to interpret these words, finding implicit meanings that undoubtedly influence the position I take toward this research.

I am a counsellor. How does this impact my research? I am a woman. How does this impact my research? I am white. How does this impact my research? I am just starting my career. How does this impact my research? I have a deep sense of outrage at injustice. I have been bullied. I have witnessed bullying. I have seen bullying as a child and as an adult. I believe in the power of change. I hurt when this belief lets me down. I understand the world as a complex web of individual meaning. I don't understand the world at all. How do these experiences influence my research? Are they pre-understandings? Are they beliefs? These experiences are the embodied and intuitive knowledge that exists before the focus of my mind turns them into explanations. I think. And then I think, maybe I'm wording myself to death. Maybe so. And then again, maybe I can trust whoever reads this to make up their own minds. And I feel the release of a sigh. I continue to write although it is a constant struggle to find the boundary between what

should be left out and what should be written in. And what leaks in, between the spaces between words?

Method

The methods I used in conducting this research were pieced together at a number of choice points along the way, from completing my proposal as an act of imaginative rehearsal (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003), to the iterative process of interpretation and writing. It is my aim to make these choice points transparent as I outline these methods.

Participants

Nine junior high school students in the Edmonton area took part in this research. Multiple purposeful sampling strategies were used to find students who had tried to stop bullying. In order to provide information about the study, I created a website, poster and brochure (Appendix A)[1] and attempted to reach students through the school system and by other means. Outside of the school system, I partnered with community groups who agreed to post my information in their centres or on their websites. In the hopes of reaching prospective participants, I also conducted media interviews where my contact information was published. One of the participants discovered the research in this way, and contacted me by telephone for information about the study.

Within the school system, I contacted schools in the Edmonton Public School District. Although many studies exploring the phenomenon of bullying make use of peer nominations to identify participants (e.g., Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000; Rigby, 2001), I chose not to use this technique because it requires students to label one another, an activity I consider ethically problematic, because I would be asking students to engage in

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[1] Although these materials refer to the potential to participate in a focus group, for practical reasons, this was not possible. Participants were informed of this as the research progressed.

an activity that could be potentially harmful to relationships. Instead, I made use of principal nomination. The principals I contacted expressed that they knew of students who had tried to stop bullying and that they believed the students would feel most comfortable being introduced to the research by a school staff member. Six of the participants discovered the research in this manner. In one school, the principal made an announcement that any student who had intervened in bullying could talk with her personally about being part of the research. Two of the participants came from this school. These eight participants were introduced to me at their school by the school principal.

Many of the schools were from areas that were less socio-economically advantaged. Initially, I had not thought much about this. More questions arose after I was graciously invited to a meeting of principals and community groups in one of the communities focused on the issue of bullying.

Today, I really began to wonder about how the community of some of these schools impacted the discussion today. The socio-economic condition of the community seemed to be an undercurrent in much of the discussion, with allusions to students feeling unsafe walking home from school, or having to deal with more than just bullying. An incident of highly publicized sexual violence within an area school was also referred to. The question "how do we change the community?" came up more than once. And I started thinking about how this question is not asked in every community, or at least not with such urgency. I wonder if all school principals are this focused on issues of bullying and other community issues. I wonder about the young woman running the community program, and how she got involved in the schools. I can feel that sense of being an

outsider, having to try harder to catch on to what is really being said. I realize that apart from my year working as a counselor at an inner-city school, the last time I have been a part of a school was when I was a student. I wonder what students would think of this conversation on bullying and community. Would they agree with the portrait being painted of their community? Would they consider bullying to be an important issue?

I began by thinking of the students who would be participating in this research as experts. My reasoning was that they would have more first-hand experience with the phenomenon under study than most people, including academics. As I met these students and talked with them, I realized that this was the case. Academics are not immersed in schools and can never be wholly privy to the knowledge of what certain looks, words or actions really mean.

The students who participated in this study have all been given pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity. Upon beginning participation, all students provided their age and grade level. I have chosen to state the cultural background of the participants using their own words; however two participants chose not to state a cultural background. Taking part in this study were: Ani, age 12, grade 7, (East) Indian; Ashley, age 15, grade 9; Brandon, age 14, grade 9, White; Daniel, age 12, grade 7; Canadian; Erin, age 12, grade 7, White; Jenna, age 13, grade 7, Scottish Canadian; Nicole, age 14, grade 9, Ukranian; Rachel, age 14, grade 9; and Sarah, age 15, grade 9, Canadian.

I had two interviews this afternoon at the same school, and I couldn't help but be struck by how different the students were from each other. The school is interesting, I have visited it three times now and each time I enter I feel intimidated by the large, open foyer and bustling activity no matter what the time of day. My first interview was with

Ani. He came smiling through the office doors, small and alert. We were granted use of a teachers office, the counsellor I think. The room was cluttered but quiet and I had all three of my recorders out in full use. Ani wore a zip up sweater that was too big. He struck me as a child who might get bullied himself, and once we began talking, he told me that he had indeed been bullied – enough to make him change home rooms twice. His speech was hard to understand at times, but the intense smile on his face when he talked about his pride at stopping bullying was arresting. Hearing his stories touched my heart and also made me feel angry once again about the senselessness of bullying.

In the bustle of changing recorders and organizing the room, it seemed like a blink until the next interview. Ashley was a friendly and engaging grade-sevener who was wearing fashionable clothes. She talked to me about her friends, explaining that they had all wanted to talk to me, but the others had not got their consent forms signed. She eagerly described situations in which she had acted to stop bullying and described herself as the person to whom friends came for advice. Ashley described an extreme example of bullying and I found myself scared by some of the threats of physical violence she reported, but also feeling hopeful that Ashley was making a difference in the issue of bullying.

In thinking about why the differences between these participants surprised me, I realized that I had been operating with a picture in my mind of the type of student who would intervene in bullying. I had thought of this student as someone who had friends and was a leader in the school, perhaps on student council. I realize that these expectations came from my own experiences as a student in school. The sting of being hurt by remarks from some 'popular' students still hurt. And without realizing it, I had

thought that these students would probably not be severely bullied themselves. Yet, Ani

was a student who was on student council, and was still experiencing the effects of

bullying. In contrast, Ashley seemed just like the kind of student from whom I remember

those stinging words, but she was sitting in front of me, a caring student who clearly

risked her own safety to intervene in bullying. I wonder what other surprises will be in

store...

Interviews

The process of interviewing can be considered a relational act (Weber, 1986). I

view the interview as the process of co-constructing meaning within a relationship. In the

role of the interviewer, I recognize that the content and structure of my questions guide

the responses of participants. Likewise, in the role of an interviewee, the participants'

responses will shape and refine the form that subsequent questions will take. But the

process of co-construction goes deeper than this. The slightest smile or lift of an eyebrow

by interviewer or interviewee has an impact upon the other. In this sense, it is impossible

to separate the outcome of the interview from the process of the interview, the result is a

story that never would have been told by either individual alone.

I recognize the imbalance of power inherent in these interviews. Not only am I in

a position of power simply due to my age in relation to the age of the participants, the

position of interviewer is laced with the understanding that the person in this role has the

power – the power to control what will be discussed, where it will take place, and for

how long, and the power to determine how the interview will be used. Some interviewees

may be worried about giving the 'right' answer or about how their answers will be

interpreted. I recognize that I cannot create an equal balance of power, but I will attempt

to be cognizant of how the power inherent in the role of interviewer may be impacting the interview. I have also attempted to create opportunities for the participants in the role of interviewee to have some control over what is discussed, how it will be used, and what we can both learn about each other.

Before each interview, I made space to remind myself of the purpose of the research, the need for an open attitude of discovery, and the privilege of being allowed into the world of another for a short time. During this time, I went over the questions, reminding myself of my intentions in writing them, and then put them aside to try to become open to whatever was about to present itself in the interview. In this way, I prepared myself to listen with one ear to the story being told and to listen with the other ear for the surprises in every interview that were to open up a new perspective or understanding.

I interviewed eight of the participants at their own school. Before the interview, both the student and one of his or her parents were given an information letter and parental consent form, which was signed and returned to the school. I interviewed the ninth participant in a neutral location on the University of Alberta campus. She and her parent were provided initial information about the research over the telephone and were both present in person for her parent to sign the parental consent form; her parent then left the room so that we could discuss the particulars of participation in the study. In first meeting with each participant alone, I discussed the implications of choosing to participate in the research. I discussed the points on the consent form and student assent form (Appendix B) and invited questions from the students. Each participant signed the

assent form, completed brief demographic questions, and provided their contact information in writing before proceeding with the interview.

I started the interviews informally by introducing myself and my interest in the research topic, and talking with participants about how I expected the interview to progress – questions about specific incidents, memories, feelings and opinions. Then, I asked participants to tell me a little bit about themselves and asked questions related to this, inviting them to share information about their interests, families and schools, while also sharing some information about myself. In addition to the interview guide, the interviews took a conversational turn, with new questions emerging from both myself and participants. As an effort of open and creative discovery on my part, I deviated at any time from the interview guide whenever appropriate.

In general, the interview guide (Appendix C) was written to first make use of critical incident interviewing techniques (Byrne, 2001; Flanagan, 1954) which invites participants to share their experiences of an incident that stands out in their minds when they witnessed bullying and responded to stop it or to signal their disapproval. I asked participants to describe the incident in as much detail as they could remember and to describe their own actions in response. Although we generally focused upon one incident to discuss in detail, most participants talked about multiple incidents of bullying to which they responded by intervening. Second, the questions on the interview guide are designed to focus on the meanings that participants gave to their experience of action by exploring their thoughts, feelings, and bases of their actions. After the first interview, I added a question to the end of the interview guide related to how students think about the idea that one person can make a difference in issues such as bullying. This was the only

question added to the interview guide, although I freely asked questions related to the content of each individual interview.

The interviews generally lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. I recorded the interviews on audiotape and digital audio recording and personally transcribed each interview verbatim. To provide some richness of detail, as I transcribed the interviews, I attempted to capture major nonverbal communications such as pauses or emotional expressions not captured by sound by using asterisks. During and after the interviews, I also took brief notes recording my observations and thoughts. The purpose of these notes was to describe the interview process, my experience of being with the participant and my initial reactions as the researcher and interviewer. These notes provided context to the transcribed interviews, and served to remind me about salient aspects of the interview which were not always verbally depicted.

The decision to stop interviewing participants was based on reaching a depth of understanding that both reflected everyday understandings of this phenomenon and added dimension to these everyday understandings. In the beginning, I had expected to interview between 6-8 participants. At the conclusion of the eighth interview, this sense of having found a new dimension to the everyday understanding was beginning to feel complete, but I was still ambivalent about whether to continue interviewing new participants. I sat with this feeling for days when the final participant contacted me. Her motivation to be a part of this research was striking and led to my decision to conduct a ninth interview. While reading the transcript of this interview, it became clear that I was making sense of what she was saying by referring to a set of applicable ideas from the

other interviews. It was at this point that I reached a feeling of completion to the interviews.

Interpretation

Hermeneutics and the process of interpreting. The act of interpretation has been described as a fusion of horizons – the meeting point between the world of the text or participant and the world of the reader or researcher (McLeod, 2001). It is where two worlds bound by the experiences of culture, language and history converge. During the process of interpretation, "understanding is always from a perspective, always a matter of interpretation. The researcher can never be free of the pre-understandings or 'prejudices' that arise from being a member of a culture and a user of language" (McLeod, p. 56). From a hermeneutic perspective, it is possible to consider the experience of action by witnesses of bullying to be a cultural text. There is a shared, although loosely articulated, cultural sense of what it means to act in response to bullying. This shared sense is constructed in the spaces between individuals within a shared context – suggesting that there exist common threads of meaning across these individuals. The students participating in this study have a unique understanding of these meanings, as they have expert and embodied knowledge of the meaning in action.

In attempting to share the understandings of the participants in this study, I drew upon the idea of the hermeneutic circle, in which understanding is deepened through the alternating process of engaging with the specific and the general – a "back and forth movement between the part and the whole, a movement which has no natural starting or end point" (Ellis, 1998, p. 16). Using the hermeneutic circle to inform the course of interpretation, I engaged in the process of the 'forward arc' which involved drawing upon

my own experiences and pre-understandings of this phenomenon, and the 'backward arc' which involved attempts to discover hidden meaning that may have gone unseen. After engaging with the text using the forward arc, engaging with the text using the backward arc allowed me to approach the research process and the text again, after seeing it through my own pre-existing perspective, re-examining the texts for "contradictions, gaps, omissions or confirmations of [my] initial interpretation" in a process of "trying on" alternative interpretive frameworks (Ellis, p. 27). In order to engage in this process I used journal entries to log my expectations and elements of the research that I found puzzling or surprising. Specific to the backward arc, I attempted to gain space from the text and then look at it again in order to "see what went unseen" (Ellis, p. 27). To do this, I primarily used lists of categories and codes, trying different groupings and names. During this process, I often felt unsure and stuck, not knowing the right way to proceed. Sometimes, when I felt that I saw a pattern that I had not previously noticed, the understanding seemed to elude words at first. In some cases, I used images, a poem, or my own drawings to help bridge the gap between the felt sense of this new understanding, and the words to make it known to myself and others. During this process, Merriam's (2002) words offered affirmation that I was not alone

> There is little doubt that the process is highly intuitive; a researcher cannot
>
> always explain where an insight (that may later be a finding) came from or
>
> how relationships among the data were detected (p. 156).

As a result of this process, common elements of experience have arisen and I have chosen to name these common understandings themes. In completing the thematic analysis, I was also struck by how this interpretive framework left out some of the details unique to the

story of responding to bullying. In response, I also chose to write narrative vignettes that capture the context of the individual action of responding to bullying.

During the process of interpretation, my life was wonderfully changed by the birth of our first daughter. This changed many of my perspectives on the world, including the way that I approached this research. While writing the proposal for this research, I was fully immersed in reading and writing about bullying, psychology, and qualitative research. I was even having dreams about the Greek god Hermes! After the birth of my daughter, this research necessarily and happily took a back seat. I was able to put aside one or two days a week to work on interpretation and writing, and outside of these days, I thought little about the research. To my surprise, this was very helpful in engaging in the process of the backward and forward arc. When I left the work at the end of a day, I was generally feeling like I had made sense of something, or integrated some pieces of the text into a general understanding of what it means to witness and respond to bullying. After the space of a week, I would find myself coming back to the interpretive work with what felt like a mild amnesia. Having 'forgotten' some of the reasons for including a code in a certain category, I was forced to try to re-understand the codes and categories in the process of formation. The space of a week between work on interpretation led to a natural engagement of the backward arc, in which I would look to make sense of the current organization and was sometimes surprised by a new meaning which I had not seen or remembered from the previous week.

What is a theme? In my mind, the word theme brings with it the suggestion that we make sense of the world through stories. All good stories have a central theme or themes, connecting the pieces together into a unified whole. In the words of DeSantis and

Ugarriza (2000), a theme is "an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole" (p. 362). Articulating a theme involves putting into words what is already present, but implicit. Morse and Field (1995) describe the process of articulating common elements in interviews as themes:

> [It is] the search for and identification of common threads that extend throughout an entire interview or set of interviews. Themes are usually quite abstract and therefore difficult to identify. Often the theme does not immediately "jump out" of the interview but may be more apparent if the researcher steps back and considers . . . The theme may be beneath the surface of the interviews but, once identified, appears obvious. Frequently, these themes are concepts indicated by the data rather than concrete entities directly described by the participants. . . . Once identified, the themes appear to be significant concepts that link substantial portions of the interviews together. (pp. 139-140).

In my mind, this description of the researcher coming to articulate a theme closely resembles a process I use when in the role of counsellor. As a counsellor, I often listen intently to both the content of my client's words and the meaning that this group of words appears to hold for the client. At points, I will try to reflect back my understanding of the client's experiences, sometimes condensing or summarizing these experiences. Clients often signal when I am on the right track by saying "yes that's exactly it." The act of articulating what is implicit can bring a strong feeling of relief or a new perspective to the same experience, and this alone can sometimes bring about change. This process is not

linear. Rather, I believe that just as counselling can deepen and change the experience of meaning, so too can the interpretation of text in qualitative research add a richness and depth to the meaning held within that text.

For instance, I struggled with the name and inclusion criteria for the theme that I eventually named *Feeling Sensitive to Bullying*. When first beginning the process of identifying and articulating themes, I had a loosely grouped set of categories that seemed to describe the individual who chooses to intervene in bullying. In searching for the name for this group, I was using the word *Characteristics* as a placeholder because it seemed to capture the idea that there was something fundamental about the person who intervenes. I was using words such as *moral, thoughtful, empathetic,* and *sensitive* as part of the names of the codes and categories in this grouping. However, I was bothered by this set of categories. It didn't feel right. It felt like a puzzle for which I was unable to get the pieces to fit. After rearranging the categories, and sometimes renaming and reorganizing the codes themselves, I had a different set of information in this grouping that I was calling a theme, using the word *The Intervenor* as a name[2]. Yet, the theme still felt flat, as if it were part of a textbook description. It was not until I re-read the above quote by Morse and Field (1995) that I realized that a sub-theme I had labeled *Feeling Sensitive* was in itself the entire theme. Once I named this theme, some pieces of the puzzle seemed to fit naturally here, and I realized that other pieces actually fit better elsewhere. Just as when I hit upon the 'right' way to paraphrase a client's experience, when I named this theme, I experienced a sense of relief and a deeper understanding of what it can mean to choose to intervene in bullying. At the point of putting complete names to the themes, I arrived at

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[2] At this point in time, I still had not yet discovered the word *upstander*.

the sense of the feeling "yes, that is exactly it" and I felt that I was able to see the phenomenon from a new perspective (Wiklund, Lindholm & Lindstrom, 2002).

Process of interpretive analysis. Interpretive analysis was begun at the outset of this research, as I explored research questions and examined my pre-understandings of the phenomenon. After transcribing each interview, I spent time with the text, reading and re-reading each interview in its entirety in order to get a sense of the text. During this time, I also made margin notes and journal entries documenting my thoughts and experiences. After all interviews were completed and transcribed, I also went through the texts as a whole, again making margin notes and highlighting sections that were surprising or that captured a sense of the general understanding. In beginning the thematic analysis, I was informed by the idea of the constant comparison process described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and other descriptions of thematic analysis (McLeod, 2001; Merriam, 2002; Morse & Field, 1995). I began by breaking up the interview text into meaning units and coding these units. I then grouped the codes into categories, then into sub-themes and finally into themes. This process was iterative, and I often moved back and forth between the process of coding, categorization and grouping sub-themes and themes. Ellis (1998) argued that when a researcher is fully engaged in the hermeneutic circle, particularly the backward arc, there is a sense of discovery, in which new ideas or questions emerge and there is a feeling of being changed by the research. Crotty (1998) depicted a similar process of understanding:

> Understanding turns out to be a development of what is already
>
> understood, with the more developed understanding returning to
>
> illuminate and enlarge one's starting point (p. 92).

In order to fully engage in this process, I acknowledged at the start of the research that my understandings of bullying, bystander behaviour, and witness intervention are formed from an interaction of my personal experiences with these things, a familiarity with research and literature, and the shared culture, context and history in which these ideas are situated. Throughout this research, I have attempted to identify these understandings as they developed, applying a "thoughtful, conscious self-awareness" (Gearing, 2004, p. 1445) and providing the reader with glimpses into my developing understanding. In this way, previous understandings, "rather than being viewed as a distortion of reality and thereby a threat to be guarded against, become the background from which all further understanding springs forth" (Angen, 2000, p. 390). That being said, I attempted to engage in the interpretive process with an intentional openness to discovery. In engaging with the text I attempted to allow myself to accept uncertain, vague or messy understandings in order to engage with new interpretive frameworks. Sometimes this meant purposefully trying to read the text from different perspectives, imagining I knew little about bullying, or that I were a student in school reading the transcripts. I also attempted to look for contradictions to my present understanding when returning to the text.

An illustration of this process is my developing understanding of empathy as it relates to the experiences of participants. Before beginning this research, my understanding of empathy was primarily related to the field of counselling, particularly as a vehicle through which therapists come to know the world of their clients. In this world, I thought of empathy as a tool, and as a necessary condition of therapy. I had read articles about empathy in therapy, and was introduced to the idea that empathy means not only

putting oneself in another's shoes, but experiencing what it is like to be the other in their

own shoes. In my values and beliefs, I thought of empathy as creating a connection

between people, and I viewed this as a positive thing. In familiarizing myself with the

literature, I also came to think of empathy as being tied to the act of bullying. As I

outlined in the literature review, research has suggested that feelings of empathy are

linked with lower levels of participation in bullying and the intent to intervene to stop

bullying. I also believed that empathy was related to altruistic acts.

In initially engaging with the texts, I wrote "empathy" in the margins of some of

the transcripts, although the participants had not actually used this word. I was seeing

descriptions of what I understood to be empathy: seeing the world of the other. When

creating meaning units, I initially began with one code for empathy which described

participants' descriptions of determining the feelings of another. However, after three

interviews, I started using two codes, *empathic* and *empathy*, as I began to notice

instances where the participants described being concerned for others in general. This

caused me to go back to my previous understanding of empathy to search for a distinction

between empathy as an individual characteristic versus empathy as state which could

come and go. I realized that I had not previously wondered about whether empathy was a

trait or a state, or some combination of the two. This added some subtlety and complexity

to my developing understanding of empathy as it relates to intervening in bullying.

As interpretation continued, I also noted distinctions between empathy as a way

of being, and empathy as a motivation for intervening in bullying. While grouping codes

into categories, I noticed that the experience of guilt also overlapped with what I had

been calling empathy, and I also noticed that participants were citing empathy as a reason

for intervening in bullying. At this point, I felt like I was no longer certain of how I understood empathy, and I wrote about my confusion in my research journal. In the act of writing about empathy, I also came to the realization that there were instances in the text where participants described knowing how the other felt, which differed from descriptions of actually feeling pain in response to witnessing the pain of another. I began searching for contradictory cases of empathy. While I did not find an incident where a participant described feeling nothing for a target of bullying, I was surprised to find cases contradictory to some of my assumptions about empathy, a) that it was always a positive thing for the person experiencing it, and b) that it motivated altruistic acts.

The process of engaging in the forward arc, where I projected my own understanding of empathy onto the text, and the process of engaging in the backward arc, where I made sense of a previously unseen aspect of empathy, was sometimes natural, as I made realizations in the process of coding and categorizing. At other times, this process was more intentional, as I struggled in my journal to incorporate new recognitions into a previously understood version of empathy, and as I examined the text for contradictory cases. In the end, I believe that my understanding of empathy has changed, allowing for a richer and more nuanced version of what it means to experience empathy. In this new understanding, there is room for empathy to involve a sense of responsibility, to wear down the person who experiences it, and to motivate actions that may not be entirely altruistic. In this new understanding, there is also a distinction between empathy and sensitivity, a contrast which helped me to better understand each concept. These new understandings prompted the use of the words *empathy, feeling sensitive, caring can hurt,*

and *feeling the pain of others* presented in the findings chapter as versions of this changed understanding of empathy.

Vignettes. As the process of interpretive analysis proceeded, it became clear that when presented only as themes, there was something of the experience of responding to bullying that was missing. The interviews were based partially on the critical incident technique, and therefore they unfolded very much like stories. The nuances of these stories, the glimpses into what it might be like to be behind the eyes of the student witnessing bullying were lost when presented solely as themes. Therefore, I chose to present vignettes of five participants. These participants were chosen because the vignettes of each captured the whole of the ideas discussed in all nine interviews.

These narrative vignettes can be conceptualized as "portraits" of the participants' experience of acting to try to stop bullying. In constructing the narrative vignettes, I used the words of the participants. The process of interpretation was in the editing. As the author of these vignettes, I changed the order of words, cut duplication and omitted aspects of the interview that were not pertinent to the story being told. I also added joining words and phrases at the beginning of sentences and paragraphs. Spalding and Phillips (2007) discuss the use of vignettes of this fashion as an adjunct to other forms of representation – "through their constructedness they can signal to the reader that they are a version, an interpretation" (p. 961).

Information management. Throughout the process of interpretation, I kept paper copies of the transcripts in a binder. The transcripts were formatted so that half of the page could be used to pencil in margin notes. In addition, I used the computer program *ATLAS.ti* to store and organize the electronic text as well as to make electronic memos.

ATLAS.ti was used to organize text for the initial coding and categorization of text. The completed codes were then printed, and I created a paper copy of the code book. To create sub-themes, I used scissors and paper to arrange and re-arrange categories. This process also impacted some of the coding, which was then changed in *ALTAS.ti*. I then created sub-themes or families in *ATLAS.ti* to store the completed analysis. The process of grouping sub-themes into themes was accomplished primarily using word-processing software, as this process also involved descriptive writing.

Representation

After returning to my office from a supervisory committee meeting, I found that my head was still a jumble of ideas and thoughts. I recognize that some of my ideas are idealistic, especially after receiving feedback from my committee, but it is still so important to me that this work is read beyond my committee. My hope is to have this work published in a way that is accessible to junior high school students. I would like this to be possible in its academic form, although after this meeting, I began to have doubts about how this would impact its acceptability as academic work. In this meeting, it was suggested that I could work with participants to form a comic book depicting their experiences. This idea was exciting and encompassed my thoughts for several weeks. I had made plans to incorporate it into a planned focus group with participants. Having to let that idea go for practical reasons was hard and painful. I found that this disappointment actually stalled my work on interpreting the text. I still believe that academic research can and should be made available in a form that is at least readable to people beyond academia and that is why I believe that a research report's usefulness is one of the most important benchmarks for its credibility.

When writing stories of participants or quoting sections of interview texts, I have attempted to provide anonymity to participants by changing or omitting identifying details of their histories and reported incidences – such as the participants names, names of their friends, or very unique aspects of their life history. In continued correspondence with participants, I provided each participant with a copy of the themes and those five students with a copy of their written narrative vignette. Students were asked to provide feedback and to contact me if they wanted to review their specific quotes before they were published. One participant requested this and his individual quotations were sent to him by mail.

When representing the experiences of my participants, I have sincerely attempted to balance my voice as the researcher with the voices of my participants (Mantzoukas, 2004). Even the representation of findings can be considered a relational act (Tierney, 2002). In representing the experiences of participants, I recognize that any time participant experiences are represented in a way that is not a direct quote from our interviews, my voice as the author of the final work shapes the way participant experiences are represented. This is why I have included these self-reflective windows for the purpose of transparency, because I believe that understanding is co-constructed. This transparency provides readers an opportunity to better judge the usefulness of this work to their own lives.

Ethical Issues

I believe that a thoughtful and thorough exploration of the ethical issues that may arise during qualitative research endeavors is one of the most important ways of determining the 'goodness' (Tobin & Begin, 2003) of research. Indeed, Davies and Dodd

(2002) describe the rigor of qualitative work in terms of the ethical issues facing researchers. The idea of ethics in practice (Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002) meant that I was not able to predict every moment requiring ethical decision making. Instead, several "ethically important moments" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) occurred throughout the research process. For example, during one of the interviews, a participant disclosed very private details of her family life. At the end of the interview, I asked her if she would like for me to leave this section of the interview out of my research. She said that I could include it in the research. Upon further consideration, I decided to omit this section from inclusion in the research as it was not related to the research question and doing so would best respect the privacy of her family members.

In considering ethics in practice, I have been guided by the approach of Cutcliffe and Ramcharan (2002) and have approached this study with the attitude that consent and the establishment of trust are processes which must be attended to throughout the research process. Therefore I continually reestablished participant assent as I proceeded from interviews to representation. I have monitored my own intentions as this research continued, attending to the dignity of the research participants with each choice I have made as a researcher. I have also recognized participant choice about how they are represented and have been vigilant for evidence of harm to participants.

In addition to the above considerations regarding the emergent nature of certain ethical issues, I have also employed procedures to obtain consent and assent and inform participants and their parents about the risks and benefits of participating in the research. Before participating in the interviews participants and their parents were informed about

the nature and duration of the research in printed information sheets (See Appendix B)

and conversation which covered the following topics:

- The nature of the interview process, audio-taping, and transcription.

- The time commitment involved in participation.

- The voluntary nature of participation, such that participants and their parents have the right to withdraw participation at any time or withdraw permission to use their information at any time prior to publication of the study.

- The nature of confidentiality, anonymity, and consent. Participants and their parents were informed that the information shared in interviews would not be reported to parents, teachers or peers unless there was a significant reason to be concerned about the welfare of a child or concern about harm to another person. Participants and their parents were informed that the information provided would be shared in such a way as to preserve the anonymity of participants.

- The potential for the finished research document to be published in the form of a publicly available document such as a dissertation or published book, and their right to review their information prior to the finished document.

Once this information was presented to the participants, questions and concerns were

invited. When it was clear that the participant was comfortable participating in the study,

the recording devices were switched on and the interview began. I will keep all electronic

and hard copy text related to this research in secure storage for a minimum period of five

years.

Evaluating This Study

The implicit concept of bricolage incorporated within this basic interpretive qualitative inquiry methodology also supposes that as the researcher, it is my responsibility to articulate the best way to evaluate this research design. I believe that this is one of the strengths of this methodology, requiring me to think about each choice point when constructing the methodology. McLeod (2001) argued that researchers adopting the methodological framework of basic interpretive qualitative inquiry are offered the opportunity to become more immersed in the philosophical influences upon their methodology, thereby increasing the quality of the study.

In thinking about evaluation of this research, I am informed by the concepts of *articulation* and *congruence* as outlined by Caelli, Ray and Mill (2003), meaning that it is the researcher's responsibility to articulate assumptions and definitions and ensure congruence between the various elements of research design. I have also been informed by the concept of *transparency* which places emphasis on the role of the reader in evaluating qualitative work, so that researchers must attempt to provide a sense of transparence to their writing, allowing readers to 'see through' to the human being authoring this work. In this study I have attempted to articulate the philosophical and theoretical perspectives underlying this research, the methodology and methods used, the way in which the research is used, and my own journey to the research question. In my attempts at articulating these elements, I have also tried to be transparent about my own thoughts, with the intention of allowing the reader the ability to make decisions about the quality of this research. Embracing the metaphor of methodology as boat-building (Hammersly, 1999), I have tried to ensure that the elements upon which this study are

built are congruent with one another. In the final evaluation of this study, I believe it is the readers' interaction with the text that is most important, and I aimed to have provided enough information for this study to be evaluated thoroughly by each reader.

In addition to the criteria above, the intention in this work that is closest to my heart, and by which I would most like readers to judge the value of this research, is its *usefulness*. Will this research study be useful to others? One of my main intentions in undertaking this research is the hope that it can be used to enhance or change an understanding of action by witnesses to bullying. Maybe it can be used to make changes to policy, or prevention, or intervention, or maybe its readers can find ways to apply it to new situations involving other forms of violence or injustice.

Eisner (1991) describes usefulness as the ability for research to help understand a phenomenon that would otherwise be confusing or enigmatic (p. 58). The goal is for a study to be applicable to situations outside or beyond the small group of participants involved (Morse, 2002). I believe that this can be done by linking research to theory, such as Morse suggests. I also believe that good qualitative research can be useful by acting as a road map to the future, calling attention to aspects of the situation that might otherwise be missed (Hoepfl, 1997). In this sense, the research acts to create both a 'smile of recognition' in the reader while at the same time engendering new connections (Angen, 2000).

In evaluating this research, I employ questions such as: Is the research question guiding this study *useful*? Can the final product of this research be *used* by others? In order to do this, I believe that it must reach others. It is important to reach readers physically, by ensuring that this research is read by others, and it is important to reach

readers personally so that the product of this study both reflects and deepens their understandings – acting as a bridge between everyday experience and a novel perspective. In the end, I am not striving for generalizability as it is sometimes defined ("I have found x, y, and z, and I can reasonably assume they are present in other situations"). What I am hoping for is a shift in understanding. If readers walk away from this research thinking slightly differently about their own or others' experiences of action, or if readers notice a slightly different set of feelings when next faced with an instance of bullying, or violence, or injustice, then I will consider this research useful.

On a personal level, at the time of writing my proposal, this research has already been useful. Engaging with this topic has changed me. In the two years since I have started this journey, I have begun to think differently about bullying, about peace and about my role in these areas of life. More startling, I have begun to act differently. All at once, I have realized that within the last two years I have joined volunteer groups on human rights, participated in demonstrations aimed at ending structural violence, written letters to government, handed out petitions, become a global parent with UNICEF, stood up to workplace bullying, spoken up when witnessing structural injustice, and advocated much more often on behalf of clients in counselling. I have found myself thinking more about my role as a citizen, and about what can be done. I have found my first surprise. Just acting even in the smallest way, has made me feel less hopeless; just doing something *has given me the motivation to do more. The process of putting together the proposal for this research has changed me, and for the better, I believe. And for this I feel grateful.*

IV. FINDINGS

"Just stick up for people and know it's wrong, and just try to eliminate bullies"

- Nicole

Introduction to the Themes

What meaning do students give to their experiences of acting in response to witnessing bullying? Five themes emerged as I searched the text for answers to this question. The first theme, *Feeling Sensitive to Bullying,* speaks to the sensitivity of the participants, both in noticing bullying when others may not and in their personal responses to witnessing bullying. The second theme, *Deciding to Face the Risks,* describes elements of the participants' experiences of making the decision to risk trying to stop bullying once having witnessed it. The theme, *Knowing What to Do,* encompasses the students' descriptions of what they did to try to stop the bullying, and what it means to know how to take action when faced with the decision to get involved. The theme, *Thinking About the Bigger Picture,* illustrates the participants' ideas about how their school can and should be involved in stopping or preventing bullying and their descriptions of how action to stop bullying can happen beyond the school setting. The final theme, *Questioning "Does it Make a Difference?"* speaks to the question lingering in the background: participants discussed both their doubts and their confidence that their actions to stop bullying have an impact. Each theme and its sub-themes are described using the participants' words as much as possible.

Table 1

Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme	Sub-Theme
Feeling Sensitive to Bullying	Hating bullying Feeling the pain of others Caring can hurt
Deciding to Face the Risks	Reacting to danger Freezing for a moment Putting myself on the line Explaining why I got involved Believing in myself Feeling good about it
Knowing What to Do	Trying different strategies Knowing how Learning intervention skills
Seeing the Bigger Picture	Seeing what the school needs to do Seeing beyond the school
Questioning "Does it Make a Difference?"	Getting different results Feeling ambivalence about the impact

It is coincidence that there are also five narrative vignettes that paint a portrait of the experiences of these students. However, this coincidence has allowed me to preface the description of each theme with a narrative vignette. The narrative vignette is not meant to be an example of the theme to follow, rather, it is meant to be a way to continue to expand the reader's picture of the participants' experiences of witnessing and acting to stop bullying.

In addition to the findings presented here, I have also created a webpage and public group on a social networking site (Appendix D) in order to share the findings of this research with a wider audience. In so doing, it was my hope to increase the

usefulness of these findings, and to engage in a dialogue with interested parties through the posting of questions and experiences on a discussion board. In this way, it was my intention to use technology to invite "readers to become writers" (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). For instance, at the time of posting the discussion board, I was referring to upstanders as *non-bystanders*, while hoping to find a better descriptor, one that referred to a quality that was present in the students rather than one that was absent. I posted this request on the website and on the discussion board in the group on the social networking site. Although the responses were not overwhelming, readers suggested the terms *intervenor*, *defender*, and *preventor*. One reader also suggested the term upstander, and this was how I was initially introduced to this word.

Erin's Story

Bullying is like a really big thing for me. I don't let anybody do it, like not my friends, not people around me, nobody. I hate it when people bully. It just drives me crazy. In the past, I've been all three. I've been a bully, I've been a victim and I've been like the bystander. But now I stick up for people. It hurts me inside when I hear that people have been bullied and I could have done something about it but I wasn't there. I stand up every chance I get because nobody deserves to be treated that way, no matter who they are.

I got bullied pretty bad when I was in grade five. I have a large forehead and I know it, and I'm proud of it – its Smith genes – but I used to get made fun of for it a lot. They were making fun of me one day and I stood up for myself. I thought to myself "I'm not just going to let them sit here and make fun of me anymore." And they beat me up. They like stomped me until I couldn't move. I actually have medical problems from it still. Like not just that I kind of suffer from depression from it, but I also have this rib problem and it still sometimes hurts for me to breathe because of it. Ever since then I have been totally against bullying and I always stand up for people when they're bullied because I know what it feels like and no one deserves to feel that way. It happened so long ago and it's hard to believe that it's still affecting me now, but it still is. It will probably affect me for like ten, fifteen, twenty years. Like, it will always be there. No one deserves to feel like that.

There's so much drama in this school. It's our entire school, everybody knows everything that happens. There are no secrets here. Every day there's a fight of some sort. If it's not physical, it's verbal. It's crazy. Yesterday there were three fights, today

already, there's been one, maybe two. I can think of one just the other day. There's this girl in grade seven and the grade eights pick on her all the time. I don't know why, because she's really pretty and she's really nice, she's just like all around a really great person. They are just always like really rude to her and make fun of her constantly. On Friday, there was a pair of dirty underwear on the floor in the bathroom and they picked them up, and they walked up to her locker and they threw them at her and they were like "You forgot your underwear in the bathroom." And they weren't even hers. I could not believe it when I heard it. I wasn't there when it happened, but when I heard about it, I was like freaking out because it was so rude.

So like, the next day I went up to the girls in grade eight that did it and I was like "Why would you do that? Like, honestly." It was me and my friend Mandy. We're always together and we always do things like that together. And I just gave them an earful. I wasn't being rude, but I was like "How could you do something like that? Why would you throw underwear at someone? Would you like it if someone threw underwear at you? You have to think about it that way. Like what you're doing to her, if someone did that to you, would you like that? Honestly, if I threw underwear at you, would you just sit there and take it like she does?"

I was like "That's really rude and immature, you need to grow up. You need to get past that, because that's crap."

I was just so mad I could not believe they did that. I was just like shocked. And then I found out today that one of the girls that did that also like took her lunch during lunch hour, ate half of it, then spit in it and gave it back and didn't tell her that there was spit in it. So she ate it.

It was so rude. And I was like "You ate her lunch, spit in it and gave it back?!" and she was like "No, I didn't." And I was like "You don't need to lie to me. I know you did it."

And I said "I can't believe you'd do that, after all the times that I've stood up for people and talked about it and like even told you when it happened to me. And you're going to do that to other people? I don't understand."

Like, I don't understand. Why? It's weird. It makes me kind of angry. I was so angry, like my first thought was "I'm going to beat them up." But then I decided I wasn't going to stoop that low. And like just the whole memory of what happened to me came back into my head, and I really felt for her because I know what its like. Just the pain that I felt when I heard it, I just wanted to drop. I was like shocked and in pain. It was just like this big cloud of emotions, I was probably feeling like eight different things at one time. So then I stood up for her because, you know, every time I see someone getting bullied or I hear about it, I just think about what happened to me and I have to like re-live that event again and again and I just don't want to re-live it anymore, so I try and stop it.

It's not really helping anymore because people don't listen. But I keep doing it because there's no point in giving up. Quitting is for losers. The girls that had done it got in-school suspensions for it, but like, I thought that maybe hearing their friend, or a peer they look up to, who was shocked at what they did, would make them realize that what they did was wrong. But I guess it didn't because they're still bullying other people. I thought they would understand, but I don't think they did because I don't think they've ever been bullied like I have, so they don't understand. They can't see both sides of it. Either that, or I'm just really understanding. Maybe I just see it differently from them

because I'm different, but I think everybody should see it. It's like right there in front of you. You know you wouldn't like it if someone was doing it to you, so don't do it. When I talked to them, they were kind of shocked. They were like "You think this is rude? I thought you thought it was funny." I was like "Funny? It's not funny to throw dirty underwear at someone." Hopefully it had some effect because I don't want that to happen anymore.

I have yet to find out if they think it's wrong. It seems like they just need someone to pick on, to feed off of. How am I supposed to look at them the same again after I hear the stuff they say to her? Like, what are they saying about me? So I don't know. I just, I still stop it even though they're my friends, because it's not right no matter who you are. So, I'll stop it for the time being, but it will just happen again, and then I'll stop it again. I have like the hope that it will stop happening. Because when it happens, I re-live my memories and no one needs to re-live memories or even have it happen to them. Ever. It's not meant to happen. We weren't born on the earth bullying people, we shouldn't be doing it now. It just drives me crazy. I just want to like cry like every time because I feel their pain and then I feel my own pain and then I just feel like "Oh, this needs to stop."

I did presentations to a couple of the classrooms in our school about bullying and why you shouldn't do it and like my experiences with it. They were all really shocked that I like came out and told them that. And then, I know it stopped for a while. But then it started again, so I was kind of mad. I was like "I just went up there and wrote this big long speech and told you guys my personal stories, and here you are doing it again." Like, that's not cool.

I just find myself trying to defend someone at some point during the day. I kind of

don't want to say anything sometimes, so I won't get involved in the drama. But it's really hard for me to not say anything so I always end up getting involved any way. Always. I go home exhausted. So every day I have me-time – it's like time where I just stay away from the phone and the computer, anywhere where drama can get to me. And I just do things that I love to do for as long as it takes until I feel better. If I didn't have my me-time I'd just go crazy.

Thinking about it is hard because it brings up my own painful memories. But it kind of makes me feel like a good person because I did something to help someone. Even if it didn't help them right away, it'll help them in the future. Like as soon as they realize what I did for them, then they can take out the good in the situation.

I have this really strong belief that everything happens for a reason, and that in everything that happens, there's a good and a bad. You can either take the bad, or you can take the good away from it. So from my own experience when I was bullied, I took the good away. Like, in a way, I found out that those people were not my friends. I found out who my true friends were that day. And I realized that for all the time I had been a bully, exactly what I had been doing to other people. It was like this big epiphany for me. I was like "Whoa." It happened when I was in the hospital getting my bloody nose fixed. I'm sitting there, and I'm like "You know what? This is a good thing. Sure the pain's going to hurt for a while, but you know what? This is good." And my dad is looking at me, and he's like "What are you talking about?" I wasn't going to explain it because I'd be sitting there forever, so I'm like "It's just a good thing, dad, this is a good thing." He's like "Yeah, you have a concussion. We need to get you checked quick." Ever since then I've seen the world a whole different way and I take the good out of every experience I

have, bad or good.

I guess what I want people to know is that it's ok to stand up for other people. I know people are scared that their friends are going to turn on them, or that they're going to be bullied, so I want people to know that it is ok to stand up. I know a lot of people in my school look up to me so when they see me doing something good I'm hoping that they're going to be thinking "Oh, Erin does this, so I can do it too." If they're going to follow me, I want them to follow me in a good way.

I had someone call me heroic once. I was talking to my friend about this stuff and she said "That was really heroic of you." I was like "Heroic? That doesn't make sense." Then she was like "Yeah, you were like a hero because you saved that person from being bullied more." I don't know, it's not heroic if it's something that anybody can do. Because it is something anybody can do. Anybody can stop bullying from happening. Anybody can stick up for someone, even if they don't know them. Like, I remember one time when I was on the bus, and there was this guy who was mentally handicapped. He was sitting in the back of the bus, rocking back and forth in his seat and singing, and people in the back of the bus were just completely making fun of him. Then, this lady who was standing by the door said "You think you're funny making fun of someone who can't defend themselves?" And then I said "And who can barely understand what you're saying?" And she said "Yeah, real funny." Then they stopped. If you can do that with a whole bunch of strangers, I don't know, that's just so courageous. That just like made my day and I remember thinking "Whoa." That's the kind of person I want to be.

Feeling Sensitive to Bullying

Participants described a sensitivity to bullying that surprised me. They clearly felt very strongly about bullying. This sensitivity to bullying was demonstrated through descriptions of the impact of bullying on the target, other students, and the school, and through participants' thoughts about how and why a student may end up bullying someone else. Each participant described feeling sensitive to the hurt felt by the target of bullying, with some even expressing that they felt the pain of the student who was being bullied. Indeed, some participants were so sensitive to bullying that they described times when they took on too much and found it overwhelming to have to continually notice and respond to the problems of others.

Hating Bullying

All participants described extremely negative reactions to bullying, particularly when witnessing it occurring. Most participants depicted a moral element to the way that they experienced bullying, using words like 'right or wrong' and 'should' or 'shouldn't.' For instance, Erin said that bullying is "not meant to happen, like we aren't born on earth bullying people, we shouldn't be doing it now." Ani also used similar moral terms when describing bullying, "then the bullies, I don't feel right 'cause they were being wrong, they weren't letting her go up. I don't like that."

Participants also described being personally impacted by witnessing bullying. I chose the name of this sub-theme based upon Erin's words "I hate it when people bully." Reading through the interviews, it became clear that these students felt very strongly about this issue. Rachel described wanting to help as "my passion." Brandon also described how bullying not only impacts him, but it harms a wider circle of people.

> It bites though. It bites real hard. Because you have like two friends like
> fighting who like two different people -but they're actually hurting you
> cause, well they're hurting everyone, depending on where you are. In
> gym, they're ruining your game, if its in class, the whole class gets a D.T.

Daniel also talked about his dislike of bullying in terms that describe the hurtful

impact on anyone involved.

> I uh didn't want that to happen to anyone because it hurts, it bites, uh it
> just really makes you feel like you want to just die and disappear, just
> vanish.

Although all participants described adverse reactions to bullying, the issue of

seeing and noticing bullying also arose. Interestingly, Nicole said at the beginning of our

interview that bullying did not occur in her school. She indicated that she is bothered by

bullying "I think it's horrible because you know, it makes people feel really crappy."

However, she also described her school as not having this problem, "there's not much

bullying here like not that I've noticed like 'cause we're all pretty tight." Even though

this participant was nominated by her principal for stopping bullying, and her name was

mentioned by another participant as an exemplar for students who take action to stop

bullying, she did not initially use the word bullying for what occurs in her school.

Instead, I asked her about instances when she stood up for someone else or her actions to

stop instances when students were mean to others on purpose. Although she did not

always refer to these incidences as bullying, I included her interview as part of the study

because her description of these instances corresponded to what many others would

consider bullying. In addition, her actions to stop these instances and her description of

her experiences were similar to those of the other participants. Interestingly, as our

interview progressed, Nicole came to refer to some of the instances as bullying.

Although Rachel spoke about her ability to notice bullying and act upon it, she also commented on her own failure to notice past instances of bullying in elementary school.

> We had this program in elementary it was called Bully Busters and um obviously there was more people being bullied than here if we had to bring that program in but I didn't notice any of it.

Rachel's description of a time when she didn't notice bullying is an exception that sheds light on the lack of importance that participants paid to their own ability to notice bullying. Instead of talking to me about how they were aware of bullying, this was implied in their descriptions of their negative reactions to bullying.

In addition to hating bullying, participants also described that doing something about bullying was important to them. For instance, Brandon began talking about his own actions by saying that "it's one of my favorite stories to tell." Daniel also talked about the importance of bullying to him in terms of his wanting to do something about it.

> I feel bad that I couldn't have helped more people um I've seen some pretty cruddy situations where kids have been uh dropped out of school because of it. I've seen situations where kids have just left uh the province because of it uh there's some pretty nasty things going on in schools.

Feeling the Pain of Others

All of the participants said that they had been the target of bullying in the past or present. They also all expressed that this experience has made them more sensitive to the experiences of students who are being bullied. As Erin described, "I feel their pain." Sarah talked about how her own experiences as the target of bullying in school sensitized her to the experience of another student who was being bullied.

> I know how it feels to be bullied, I know how it feels to be pushed into lockers and you know it doesn't feel good, so, and then I seen her, I seen the look on her face, she was, she looked scared, she didn't really look

very happy so, and that made me feel really bad and like made me want to help her so I just decided just to help her 'cause I know how it feels.

Surprisingly, many of the participants described taking something positive out of these experiences. For instance, Daniel told me about a very tough time dealing with bullying in elementary school

> I don't really know what to say how I got through it, it was really tough. Um, sometimes I it just built upon me so much that uh I just kind of broke down into on my bed when I was falling asleep. Uh I cried myself to sleep so many times that I'm surprised there's still water in me ...there were times at school where I was really put into a corner, I was bullied, I was harassed, I was you name it. It was going on for six years, um I didn't handle it too well in grade three or two because I didn't know what was happening, they, they just kind of started forcing it upon me uh I didn't mind, I was just oh well. And ... fortunately it struck me in grade six that I was being wronged and since then I've been uh trying to stop bullying.

Erin also described an ability to take something positive from being bullied. As illustrated in her story, she describes it as a life-changing event. In her own words,

> Like, in a way I found out who, who were the people that are not your friends and are going to turn on you at any chance they get. Who, I found out who my true friends were that day and I realized that for all the times I had been a bully, what I had been doing to other people and I was, it was like this big epiphany for me, cause I was like 'whoa' and ever since then I've seen the world a whole different way and I take the good out of every experience I have, bad or good, so.

Participants described feeling sensitive to the feelings of others, whether they were targets of bullying or not. For instance, Daniel talked about having to be thoughtful about making a joke.

> Sometimes you can turn it into a joke, that's one of your last resorts because you don't want to be laughing at someone else's pain, laughing at someone else's suffering

The participants also described feeling sensitive to what might be going on for the student who is bullying. Sarah described her attempts to try to understand why a student would choose to bully.

> Maybe those bullies need help, maybe they have um problems at home, problems at school and then those people could find out maybe who the bully is and talk to them about it and then help

Ani also described his hope for the student who is bullying, that standing up for himself could also be good for a student who was bullying him.

> I think if someone gets bullied they should go to the office and talk cause then that bully could get some help. Like, I knew this bullying thing, and then I told, 'cause he keep on bugging me and then he tried to get help from the principal (The bully tried to get help?) Mmm hmm. And now he become a better student now. I'm in his homeroom now and he became a better student.

Caring Can Hurt

Certain participants described being so sensitive to bullying that they were sometimes overwhelmed by feeling too much for those students who were bullied or feeling responsible for trying to stop all of the bullying in their schools. These students described having to learn how to cope with these feelings by taking specific action for themselves. For Erin, the responsibility to intervene in bullying every day at school was wearing. She described how she was able to spend some time on herself at the end of the day.

> Oh my goodness, there's so much drama here, its everyday there's a fight of some sort, if its not physical its like verbal and its crazy, yesterday there was three, today there's been one, maybe two, and its like, I just find myself trying to defend someone at some point during the day. (Wow. That's kind of tiring.) It is, I go home exhausted. *laugh*. (How do you take care of yourself?) Um, kind of just, like every day I have me time and if I didn't have my me time I'd probably die, but like its like where I just do everything I love to do and I have to have that every day or else I'd just go crazy. And like I stay away from

the phone, I stay away from the computer, like anywhere where drama can get to me and I just like me for however long it is until I feel better and then I go back to reality.

Jenna describes how she became known as the one who fixes conflicts in her school. She talked about how this became so overwhelming that she found herself snapping at her classmates.

Well, yeah its, last year I just had a total overdrive, it was like May or something, by the end of the year and everyone was just asking for advice, what should I do, can you talk to this person for me, it was always, can you tell him this for me. I was always the messenger, always, because I could make things seem nicer or stuff like that and I freaked, I flipped out, I couldn't go to school for a week because I couldn't, I was like "I'm not listening to your whining anymore" and I freaked out at them and they didn't get it because I always seemed there to listen and I was like "Oh yeah, sure, sure" and it was my own fault, I shouldn't have freaked out at them or anything but (And that was a lot on you?) Oh totally, and that's, before I help my friends with their homework, I finish my homework, like that's just, down to it, bottom line is, you can't help everybody unless you help yourself and you can't even help everybody anyways, I have to realize that because trying to make everybody in the situation happy is impossible and if you're not happy with it then you have to make yourself happy with it and then fix two out of three people.

Jenna described a change in thinking about the need to put herself first, even when there is a need to help someone else. In order to protect herself, she also had a rule about getting involved in bullying after-the-fact.

I don't confront people unless I was there and I saw it exactly because what if the friend was lying and she made up an entirely different story and that gets myself in trouble.

Part of a shared experience of witnessing and responding to bullying appears to be a sensitivity to the issue of bullying. Although not expressly discussed, all participants were aware of bullying in their schools. They also felt very strongly that the issue was important and had a negative impact on those directly and indirectly involved. These

students were often also very sensitive to the feelings of other students who may be

involved in bullying, and for some, their sensitivity could be personally overwhelming.

Sarah's Story

My friends and I, when we first came to this school, the bullying started like really early in the school year. Mostly, I like school. I like to read and I kind of even like homework because it gives you something to do. But when I was being bullied my parents would notice that I was sad. I wasn't like depressed, but I wasn't my normal self. Usually I'm like hyper and all energetic and everything and they would notice that I would be home from school, not saying anything, just going to my room and just sitting there. It was race. The ones who were bullying us would be racist to us because we have a different skin color or we speak a different language than them. Or they would just do it because they thought it was funny. Finally my parents kind of asked "Is everything ok?" Well no. It wasn't. I had to tell them but I was scared to tell someone because I thought that it would get worse. But my mom called Mr. Daniels and we talked to him and he helped a lot. He talked to the kids and he took action, some kids got expelled and some got suspended. Now that those kids are gone its kind of like bullying isn't fun anymore, its not cool, you know. And now my friends and I have actually become closer because we've stood up to it and we've become stronger. We just hold our heads high now and know how to handle it.

Basically my friends mean the world to me, and if I see someone picking on them it really ticks me off and makes me want to do something to stop it. One time, walking back to our lockers from lunch, I looked up and one of my friends got pushed by a couple of guys into a locker and she hit her eye. I was with a couple of my friends, but I don't know if they saw it. When I saw it, I was kind of scared and thinking "Well, what if he did something to me? What if he pushed me and hurt me too?" I was hesitant and I didn't

really know what to do. So I just kind of thought "Well, should I go over there and help her, or should I just stay here and pretend like it didn't happen?" I couldn't do that because then I would feel guilty and it would be picking at me for the rest of the day. I know how it feels to be bullied, I know how it feels to be pushed into lockers and you know, it doesn't feel good. And then I saw the look on her face. She looked scared, she didn't really look very happy and that made me feel really bad and like made me want to help her. So I just decided I might as well go over there and help her 'cause I know how it feels.

But I was definitely very angry. I was really upset and I really wanted to punch him out and, you know, just get him back for what he did. But I knew retaliation isn't a very good thing because I can get into trouble for it just as much as they got in trouble for pushing us and bullying us, so I just kind of calmed myself down. I thought it through and decided "What would be the point of pushing him back when I can get in trouble for it. Why don't you just talk to someone about it and make sure he doesn't do it again?"

So, I went over to her and I'm like "Are you ok?" and then I turned to the guys and was like "What was that for? Why did you push her?" And they kind of started picking on me, they just started calling me names and yelling. They started calling me gay or something because I was sticking up for another girl. It just doesn't make sense, it's retarded, I think, that they would start picking on me too. Then they said "Oh, we're going to push you." They were just being really rude and disrespectful. I just didn't really know what to do. I talked to the girl and said "Well, do you want to talk to Mr. Daniels about it?" Because he was the one we would talk to. He was the assistant principal, and we couldn't really talk to the principal because he didn't really do

anything. So we just went to Mr. Daniels and talked to him about it and he took the names and talked to those people and whatever happened, happened. I think they got suspended or something.

I really felt kind of bad to know that this was happening to my friend. Like, why does it have to happen to us? I mean, I don't want it to happen to anyone else, but why does it have to happen to us? Why did they choose us? I guess I was thinking basically anything a teenage person would think when they're getting bullied. I don't really think it's fair how some people get bullied and the bullies think it's fun. Some people are different, and I think being different is ok and we should be happy about it and not bully because of it. I just think bullies need to learn more respect, and need to get over themselves basically.

And the teachers didn't really do anything. I know they see it happening, but they don't really say stop, so we kind of have to step in and try to help whoever's getting bullied. Sometimes I think that some of the teachers don't really care. Most of them do, but sometimes they just don't really notice that it's a bullying thing. Like sometimes people just play around with their friends and it may look like its just play-fighting, but it could be bullying. I think they need to realize it might be bullying and that they should take charge and say something and make it stop.

As for what I did, some people would say it was respectful to the person who was being bullied and some people would wonder why I did that or think that it's just rude to the other people. Some people think it's a good thing, some people think it's a bad thing that you want to stick up for people. I don't know, I would probably say it's a good thing because if it kept going on, she would have probably got more hurt and nothing would

happen, no one would notice it. But when I noticed it, I kind of thought "Well, maybe I should do something about it." So I did.

Deciding to Face the Risks

Moving from the role of someone who is witnessing bullying to an upstander who is intervening in bullying is not without risk and the participants described the process of deciding to take action to stop bullying. This theme portrays the participants' acknowledgement of the risks involved in deciding to respond to bullying, and the reasons why it was important for these participants to make this choice despite the risks. The students who participated in this study acknowledged the feelings of arousal upon first witnessing bullying. Many debated about whether or not to get involved at all. All participants described potential risks to getting involved, and explained their reasons for accepting these risks, from the sense of responsibility of belonging to a group, to the sense of confidence that they would be able to do something about it.

Reacting to Danger

Upon noticing bullying as a witness, participants described an intense physical and emotional response. Many reported initial feelings of fear and anger, For instance, Daniel said he initially felt very angry, "I had a lot of hatred against this guy, uh vengeance, he beat me up many times before, I had lots of vengeance and hate," while Ashley reported feeling scared, "it was like it was cool but it was also scary because we didn't know if they were going to hurt us or something." Brandon summed it up in one word describing his strong initial response to the perception of danger, "it's like um, what's that word? Adrenaline. Adrenaline." Whereas for Jenna, the experience was completely physical. She described responding to many incidents of seeing bullying in the following way,

> I get this tension in, like this feeling in my muscles, yeah, totally, just right
> here *points to arms* and then I had to put my hands behind my back or

else I'd probably punch them out because I'm like you have to stop and sometimes like if I'm sitting on the bus when it's happening, I sit on my hands because my hands start to sweat, my knees start like, things like that just, not nervous or anything, it just ticks me off and I have to do something about it or else I'll be ticked off with myself.

Freezing for a Moment

Many of the participants described a moment of inaction, when they debated whether or not to get involved in trying to stop the bullying. For instance, Sarah described her process of deciding what to do

> Um, I was kind of I was hesitant and I didn't really know what to do so I just kind of thought well should I go over there and help her or should I just stay here and pretend like it didn't happen and I couldn't do that because then it would make me feel guilty and then it would be picking at me for the rest of the day so I just decided I might as well go over there and help her.

For Sarah, this debate ended in her decision to get involved. However, not every debate resulted in the decision to act immediately. Rachel described this inner debate for a situation where she did not stand up for a classmate. Although she later intervened when this peer was bullied, Rachel described her decision-making process at the time,

> Just the girl in every class who no one likes and we would just all bug her right. And I did it too, like I'm not saying I didn't but um you just sit there and after a while you start feeling sorry for her, she had no friends she just was the victim of the school and after a while you start saying like I feel bad for her like what can I do but I don't want to be nice to her and then be the one who's going to be victimized after her because you're being nice. So you just sort of shrug it off and be like ok well she's dealt with this with it for this long, can't she deal with it for longer?

However, another participant, Daniel, described an exception, reporting that he did not have this moment of debate before taking action. At the moment of witnessing bullying, he noted "I was thinking, I didn't have many thoughts."

Putting Myself on the Line

Participants described being aware of bystanders who did not get involved to help bullied students and recognized that this was likely due to the risks of getting involved. They discussed the potential risks that might deter these students from intervening. For instance, Ani talked about the risk of physical harm, "I'm the only one who stand up because they didn't want to get involved in anything, they could get hurt." Participants also recognized that students might think about the risk of being bullied themselves. Brandon noted, "if someone doesn't do it, they're thinking like, they'll start bullying them, that's what they're afraid of, that happened to a couple of my friends." Erin also described the risk of losing friends, "I know people are scared 'cause they're scared that their friends are going to turn on them or they're going to be bullied." In addition, these students recognized the real risk of being isolated from their peer group for standing up to bullying. Daniel describes it in this way,

> Because people think oh you're sticking up for them, oh they're weird
> and they're, because the people that are being bullied are exiled and if
> you stand up for them you're being just like them

Apart from the risk of being physically hurt or having their own relationships or status in school damaged, participants noted a risk that could come from teachers or school administrators. For instance, Ashley described the risk of having a teacher or the principal perceive that any involvement in bullying is negative, even if the intention is to stop the bullying.

> Sometimes like if I'll see somebody bullying and they may be bigger than
> me or something I just feel like I shouldn't get involved because it might
> be too big for me to handle and that um if I do, I might get in trouble from
> somebody, like the principal or from Miss Jackson and Miss Peacock or
> something. (You might get in trouble?) Yeah. (They wouldn't understand
> what you're trying to do?) Yeah, they wouldn't kind of understand that
> like I'm not trying to get involved, well I am, but not in the bad way.

These risks are not always small, as Daniel gave an example, "my friend has been suspended for that, for defending another person."

While participants described understanding the risks of getting involved in bullying, they also talked about accepting these risks to themselves and putting themselves on the line to stand up for someone else. Brandon talked about this risk of being hurt as something that is his responsibility, once he decides to get involved

> Ya, its like, if I get hurt, its my fault, no one elses. (If you get hurt getting involved, you mean?) Yah. If someone winds up punching me.

Daniel said that if he was physically hurt as a result of trying to stop bullying, it would be something that he could live with, "yeah, pain hurts but only for a minute, physical pain you can get over." Confidence in being able to handle the risks was also discussed. Nicole laughingly said "and if you do that, you could just get picked on too, yeah, but if they want to bully me, that's ok, I'll just tell them to stop too."

Even though the participants in this study could easily recognize the risks of stepping in to try to stop someone else from being bullied, they overwhelmingly thought that it was important to do something and this appeared to outweigh the risks. For instance, Daniel said

> I was just thinking, this is wrong I have to stop it, I don't care about my status in school, I don't care if I'm hated by everyone, I don't care if I have only one or two friends left, I just want to end this.

Erin also recognized the risks to her friendships but declared that standing up to bullying was worth the risks

> I could be putting all my friends' friendships, well like the one's that I don't know if are true friends, on the line, I could be putting, I could be potentially make it worse, if I said something I wasn't supposed to during it. So like I'm putting a lot of things on the line when I stand up for

someone but like in the end it's the right thing to do so um it's worth it definitely.

Explaining Why I Got Involved

The students discussed several reasons why they took action to stop bullying. In organizing this sub-theme, I have chosen to describe their explanation of the reasons for intervening in four central groupings that emerged directly from the categories, citizenship, feeling for the target of bullying, friendship and a sense of being able to handle it.

Citizenship. Participants described their actions as the action of someone who is part of a larger group or society. As a citizen of this group, the participants described having a responsibility to act, or a desire to motivate others within the group. For example, students talked about being part of their school. Brandon said "'cause I don't want to see it happen. If you want to fight, like, go somewhere else and fight. This is a school." Ani also talked about his school, and wanting to be a leader, "so I thought I could stand up and be a leader 'cause I'm on the student council." Daniel discussed his desire to motivate others

> Um, I hope I left my mark in that school to try to stop bullying, um, I just hope bullying stops in that school because I known a pretty horrible time especially for little kids that are going there now.

Participants also talked about their actions to stop bullying as the responsibility of someone who is part of society. For instance, when I asked Erin what she thought other people needed to know about her experiences, she replied,

> That it can happen to them, it's not just something that like for bystanders it's not just something that they watch it's definitely, it could happen to them at any time. Like I didn't think it was going to happen to me and then there I was bleeding on the ground you know.

Daniel also talked about the duties of a citizen, comparing it to the responsibilities of a

soldier or warrior, to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

> my dad, uh since he was a soldier he uh really understood the meaning of
> honor, respect, duty. One of my titles for my game in EverQuest is 'May
> my lord protect me or death take me.' And uh I really stand by that and I
> uh will not let the helpless be stepped upon and crushed, I will stand up to
> them I will uh grab my weapons and defend them I won't just uh, I, two of
> the things in movies uh 'my wrath undoes the wicked' 'my blade defends
> the helpless' and uh stuff like that, and that has kind of encouraged me and
> it was powerful in my life it helped me uh choose a different path, a better
> path

Feeling for the target of bullying. Just as participants described feeling sensitive

to the issue of bullying, they also all had empathy for the target of bullying, citing this as

one of their reasons for trying to stop bullying. Participants described the desire to

prevent the target from getting hurt as a reason for intervening. Ani noted

> I felt really sad for her because I didn't want her to get late. Like, I want,
> like the people that are handicapped, there's nothing wrong with them,
> they're just like us only different. That's why I stood up for her.

Erin also articulated that she wanted to help reverse the effects of bullying by trying to

make the target of bullying feel better.

> Like even if I was deathly afraid of them and *sigh* it just its all worth it
> to help somebody make someone else feel like they're wanted you know
> cause most people who are getting bullied are like they're getting bullied
> because they're not cool or not, they don't have this or they don't have
> that or whatever so to have someone stand up for them its like they feel
> like they're wanted so they feel like better about themselves so that they
> can keep going. So, yeah *sigh*.

Friendship. Friendship was also named as a reason to intervene when witnessing

bullying. In some of the instances described by participants, they chose to get involved

because they were friends with the target of bullying. For instance, Ashley described her

reason for getting involved

> I think its because Lindsey is like one of our really good friends and we just didn't want to leave her there to get hurt if she did get if she was going to get hurt and so that just made us like decide to go get her parents and stuff like that.

Sarah also put it succinctly, "I stand up for my friends."

Participants also explained that one of the reasons they were able to intervene was that they had a supportive group of friends who are encouraging of this kind of action. Jenna described how her friends encourage her to take action, for both bullying and other activities.

> Yeah, totally I think everybody needs a group of friends to encourage them to get involved in things and like my friends are like the friends I'm comfortable with, they're always telling me, oh yeah you should go like cause I do like a lot of volunteer work and stuff like that, like at the senior's club and stuff and some of my friends would never imagine of doing something like that but they're ok with me doing that because it, I feel good about myself when I help someone else so yeah.

However, friendship can become a complicating factor when the student is friends with both the target of bullying and the person doing the bullying. Erin described her feelings of being caught in the middle

> And like I'm friends with both sides, I'm friends with the victim and I'm friends with the bullies and I'm like whooo, I don't know who to comfort here. Like, of course I'm going to go to my friend that's the victim because she's the one being picked on but then what happens to the bullies like how am I supposed to look at them the same again after I hear the stuff they say to her, like what if they're saying that about me? So I just, I don't know, its, I still stop it even though they're my friends because it's not right no matter who you are.

I could handle it. Participants also explained that they made the decision to intervene based upon whether they could handle the situation. For instance, participants described feeling that they could get involved if the bullying students were in the same grade or in a grade lower than themselves. Ani said

> I can't really interfere in grade nine and grade eight bullying, I'm not that good or skilled yet. All I can do is stop bullying in grade seven. I try to focus on the things I can achieve. And when I think I can achieve others I strive for that.

The size and ability for the student who is bullying to harm the student who intervenes was also important. Ashley described, "well I wasn't really scared because I knew they couldn't do very much to me." She also talked about how this would impact a decision not to get involved

> Sometimes, like if I'll see somebody bullying and they may be bigger than me or something I just feel like I shouldn't get involved because it might be too big for me to handle.

In a similar vein, students said that the seriousness of an incident was also a determining factor of whether or not they felt able to intervene. Nicole drew the line for herself at verbal bullying.

> Well there was like no physical fighting or pushing around, it was just words and stuff. (Yeah, that would make a big difference.) Yeah, don't want to come out with a black eye or something.

Believing in Myself

When describing their own actions, participants often illustrated a belief in self. When participants talked about the risks of getting involved in bullying, they often noted that they were less affected by what their peers thought about them. Many participants commented on the importance of not being afraid to be different. Nicole remarked on how this can make her different than other students

> There's always lots of people around and they never really try to stand up 'cause they're scared that they'll think they're fringe or something and I'm not, I don't care what people think of me.

Rachel also commented on how this confidence to be different overcame her when she decided to get involved in stopping bullying

> I've always been the person sort of to follow along with my friends,
> what they're doing, but I also like to have my own say in whats being
> done and that was the day that I said this can't go on, this has to stop,
> this isn't fair, this isn't right, and it has to stop, just that one day that one
> feeling that you get.

Jenna also gave an example of what she says to students who degrade her to others for

getting involved in bullying

> "well, if you're not going to say it to my face, then don't say it at all,
> because that's a waste of time, and you're just like pleasuring yourself
> because it doesn't, it just goes right over my head, like it doesn't make a
> difference to me."

Participants also described standing up for themselves when they needed to, even when

they were being bullied. For instance, Daniel described standing up to a student who was

bullying him

> he came to me and he was uh bullying me and so I just said 'why do you
> feel this way? Why are you acting this out?' and he just kinda said 'I
> dunno.' (He said that?) Yeah. And uh ever since he's changed

Jenna also talked about the importance of standing up for herself when she was bullied

through the notes of other students

> I didn't write back, I told them at school, I was like, 'do not, never say
> something like that to me, it's too late now, but if you ever do that to
> anyone else I'm gonna say something.'

Feeling Good About It

Participants said that it made them feel good to do something to help another

person. This sense that it will feel good can help with the decision to face the risks

involved in intervening. Brandon described himself as having fun, "I just walked in there

and pushed them both away, I had a good time." Other participants described a sense of

pride knowing that they did a good deed. Ani noted "it makes me feel proud of myself

because I am helping someone." Rachel described it similarly, "I don't know, the feeling

you get from helping people made me want to do it. I love helping people." For others, the positive feeling was more like a sense of relief, taking action meant that they did not have to witness violence. For instance, Nicole describes her feelings in this way, "I sort of feel more relieved, 'cause like they will probably stop so I feel better."

Participants were fully aware of the risks involved in trying to stop an incident of bullying, attributing the inaction of other students to these risks. Participants could keenly feel these risks and described initial reactions to witnessing bullying that involved a feeling of adrenaline, fear, and anger. However, they were able to overcome the perceived risks and did intervene in bullying, citing reasons such as citizenship, empathy, friendship and a feeling of confidence in their abilities. These students noticed that they are different from other students in that they are not as afraid to be different. This freedom has allowed them to make the decision to intervene.

Ani's Story

I really don't like bullying. I was bullied a lot since elementary school and in this school I had to switch my home room two times already. People were calling me gay, making fun of me, kicking me, that kind of stuff. I just sort of take it in, but after, when I get bullied too much, I just feel like I can't take it anymore and I just want to get out of there. I have friends here, one of my good friends is Shannon, well she makes fun of me, and I laugh back. At lunch, she goes where she wants and I go where I want, so at lunch we don't meet up that much. For something to do at lunch, I like to go to the library to get books out or go on the internet. But, my new homeroom that I just switched to is better, I know everybody and they kind of bully me but not that much.

So I want to help out more kids who are being bullied. I don't want them to get really mad and kill themselves. Because I know from the news that some kids got bullied and had a shooting rampage in their school. I don't want that to happen in our school, or in another school, so I want to do something about it.

So this year was my first incident that I stood up. I saw someone bullying this girl. She was in a wheelchair and she was in the elevator at school and he kept on being mean. She was trying to get the elevator to go up, but he kept on hitting the doors so they wouldn't close and she couldn't go anywhere and she ended up being late for class. They were all just laughing at her. Some other kids were around but they were just ignoring it, they didn't want to get involved in anything because they could get hurt. I was the only one who stood up. I felt really sad for her because I didn't want her to be late. Like, people who are handicapped, there's nothing wrong with them, they're just different. That's why I stood up for her. 'Cause the bullies were being wrong, they weren't letting

her go up. I don't like that, it made me feel mad. When I stopped, I went up to him and said "Stop it. What's your problem? She's just like us, but she's different."

Well, they started calling me some names but I stood up to them and they kind of just stepped back. I said "What's your problem? Like, you guys were just being mean to her." They kept on doing it until the bell rang and then they ran. She did end up getting late but I think she told the teachers. I think she was happy that someone was helping her because she started smiling. She wasn't there by herself or anything. Afterward, I felt really good inside myself. It made me feel proud of myself because I am helping someone and not just standing there being a bystander.

I thought I could try to stop the bullying 'cause they were only grade seveners. So I thought I could stand up and be a leader. I'm on student council, so I want to try to be a leader. In student council we saw a bullying talk, started a bullying club and even made cookies for bullying. So I was thinking about how to solve it when I saw her getting bullied.

I think the bullies have like a problem in their household, like maybe the person is going through divorce or something like that. Maybe they won't tell anyone, they won't go and get help, so now they take it out on other people. I think that if someone gets bullied they should go to the office and talk because then the bully could get some help. Like, when I was getting bullied, this guy kept on bugging me and I told, and then he tried to get help from the principal. I'm in his homeroom, and he's become a better student now.

In my locker I have all these messages from the bullying talk, like "Bullying Bites" "Hug someone today" "Turn a frown upside down" "Don't stand by, stand up"

and "Kindness is cool." Even being kind to people is about bullying because then they won't be mean to the person, they will try to be nice. They won't go up to the person and start laughing at them, they will think "How about if someone did that to me?" Because when someone's being mean to you, you feel like you've been put down, like you don't belong in the school.

Knowing What to Do

After making the choice to do something about bullying, participants took action.

I was surprised by the sheer number of ways that these students described intervening in

bullying and by their knowledge and expertise in taking action. This theme portrays the

participants' knowledge of different strategies used to intervene in bullying as well as the

skills and knowledge of how to intervene in ways that were likely to make their efforts

more successful. Participants intervened both directly in an incident of bullying and

indirectly. They also illustrated in-depth knowledge of how to make judgments about an

incident of bullying and determine an appropriate course of action.

Trying Different Strategies

The participants described many different strategies that they have used to try to

stop bullying. Often, they reported using multiple strategies for a single incident. For

example, Sarah described using three strategies for one incident of bullying. She first

went to check on the target of the bullying, then she confronted the bullying students, and

then she assisted the target in getting adults in the school involved in the incident.

> I went over then and I'm like 'are you ok?' and then I turned to the guys
> and was like 'what was that for? why did you push her?' and they just you
> know they just started calling me names and yelling and just and then so
> then we took it to the office and told them what happened.

Participants noted using several strategies, and I grouped these strategies into five

categories based on the intended audience of the strategy and the type of intervention

used. These five categories were: directing interventions at the student who is bullying,

directing interventions at the student who is targeted, refusing to participate in bullying,

involving an adult, and preventing bullying.

Directing interventions at the student who is bullying. Many of the participants intervened in bullying by using strategies directed at the student or students who were bullying. For some participants, this meant directly confronting the bullying student about his or her behaviour. For instance, Erin described her direct approach

> there's this one day and they were like, she wasn't there but they were all talking about it and then they were like 'k, I bet you she doesn't even really like him, because she's just dating him cause he buys her stuff.' And I was like 'hey guys can we not talk about this, do we have to bring her into every conversation we have?' I was like 'can't we talk about something else?' And then we started talking about, well, boys, and then she came up again, and she was like 'k, she's dated every guy that I've ever liked, blah blah blah' I'm like, 'uhhh, can't we just keep her out of the conversation cause I really don't want to talk about her.' I was like 'can't we talk about something that doesn't involve her?' And then they were like 'she's everywhere.' I was like *made face*.

Rachel also described her method for trying to stop a group of her peers from bullying someone

> Just saying to people like 'why, why, she didn't do anything to you; why would you bother doing anything to her?' Like sure, even if she did do something to you, what gives you the right to do it back.

Nicole talked about how she confronted bullying students about their behaviour in a less confrontational way, using humour, "it was more like 'that's not cool you know' or cause like my acting's good, I would just tell them in a gangster way, just don't do that, its not cool."

Participants also described getting physically involved in bullying. None of them described using violence, but both male and female participants described getting between a bullying student and the target, or even restraining the bullying student. For instance, Jenna described

> then another guy cause Mike he's got an anger management problem or something because he could just like go at it and stuff and I honestly had

to pick Mike up by the arms and sit him down and he was honestly trying
to get away and I was like "Mike, you have to breathe and stuff."

Another strategy directed at the student doing the bullying was to try to help him

or her to see that what they are doing is bullying and that it is hurting another person.

They reasoned that this might help make students who are bullying more sensitive to

what they are doing, and then make him or her less likely to do it. Daniel described it as,

so one person can go up to someone like that and say 'why are you like
this, look at what you're turning into' like show them a mirror, and make
them look at who they are, look at what they're doing to themselves.

Sarah also hoped that her actions could show bullying students that they are

hurting someone else, "if you have a group like that maybe they could, the bully

could see that um its not right and its not fair and it makes you feel horrible about

yourself."

Brandon referred to one incident where he used a strategy that involved

intervening with both the bullying student and the target of bullying at the same time,

"take one kid, but put him, move him away and like take the other one, move him away

and then go talk to both. That's what I did. You know, that works." In all of the other

incidences discussed, students referred to interventions directed at either the bullying

student or the target separately, even if these strategies were used one after the other.

Directing interventions at the student who is targeted. Another approach was to

direct the intervention strategy toward the student who was the target of bullying. Ashley

described how she gave advice to another student who was being targeted, "I just told her

like stuff on MSN to talk to him and I told her that if he didn't quit I'd come and talk to

him and tell him to leave her alone and stuff like that." Rachel discussed her feelings of

how important it can be to pay attention to the target of the bullying and gave an example

of how this impacted her when she was being bullied.

> Um, just one person can talk to a person and just say 'are you ok? whats
> going on?' and if the person says 'ya I'm fine' you know that 'I'm fine'
> thats that you're not ok. So just having someone to talk to, having a strong
> person you can talk to, you can let all your feelings out, everything that's
> been going on you can let it all out. I know um, I don't know who I let,
> after I was being bullied, who I told it to, probably I think it was my best
> friend's mom and um then she called the school and that's when stuff
> started happening right. So just having someone you can talk to, just one
> person.

Sarah also noted her strategy for involving the student who was the target of bullying in

the intervention, "I talked to her and then I said, 'well do you want to talk to Mr. Daniels

about it?'"

In addition, Daniel described his strategy for becoming involved in bullying as

trying to create friendships with students who are being bullied.

> and I so I went up and told him and said 'here you can come and play with
> me, I will protect you, I don't care if you're tiny, don't care about skin
> colour, uh you're someone thats been deserted by your friends like me.' I
> just uh kinda helped him through it.

Refusing to participate in bullying. Many participants described a refusal to

participate in bullying. In one instance, this was linked to a particular incident of

bullying. Ashley said that her response to an episode of bullying was "we just told them

to stop and we walked away from it." In this case, walking away was different from

ignoring the bullying, in that it was meant as a signal that she and her friends felt that

bullying was wrong and would not be witnessed by them. Other participants talked about

strategies that they used which were not linked to a particular incident, but which seemed

more like a part of a personal code that they used to respond to bullying. For instance,

participants talked about their decision to not be a part of gossip in their school. Erin

described her decision to stay out of gossip.

> Like, I don't want to be there I don't want to listen to it I don't want to see
> it I don't want anything to do with bullying like if I'm going to have
> something to do with bullying it's going to be sticking up for the person
> who's bullied cause there's no reason you should be anything else. I just,
> it's hard when they're talking about my friends and they're making fun of
> them right in front of me, and like even if she isn't there getting bullied
> she kind of is in a way cause she'll find out about it.

While Jenna talked about her policy not to be involved in passing notes about other

students, "that little gossip girls and note passing, my goodness I stopped passing notes

because people find them," other participants have described how their decision not to go

along with bullying has meant a change in friendships. Erin described it as, "I don't want

anything to do with them" and Daniel said

> I wouldn't just follow him, I wouldn't be his friend much anymore...
> Uh, although that sounds like a passive thing that's not stopping
> bullying, it's one less person being bullied, one less target and if you
> get more people to follow you and do better he won't have a target.

> *Involving an adult.* Many of the participants said that they had involved an adult

in some cases of bullying, particularly if it was serious. Ashley describes a situation

where she physically went to get the parents of the target of bullying.

> Yeah, and so then we decided to go get her parents and when we came
> back they were still threatening her and stuff like that and she said that we
> said where'd your little friends go and stuff like that and so yeah (What
> did your, was she ok with you getting her parents?) Yeah, she she she's
> like thank god you got my parents I mean I probably would have gotten
> hurt right there.

In another example, Daniel described getting the principal of his school involved,

even though he had to wait until the following day to do it.

> And uh so I was going into the principal the next day after they said uh
> we're going to beat her up and if you tell the teacher, they will *shows

punching* and uh, I said, I don't care what my status is in the school, I want to stop this, this is wrong. So I went to the principal the next day cause they were blocking the breezeway so I couldn't come in and uh so the next day I went to the principal and said 'I have a crime to report' so it was stopped and other than that uh yeah, it stopped for now.

Preventing bullying. In addition, the participants talked about other strategies that were above and beyond responding to a single incident of bullying. Instead, these strategies focused upon trying to prevent bullying. Some of these strategies were part of larger school programs to prevent bullying. For instance, Ani described his involvement in spreading the word about bullying

> Well we made the cookies, they had messages like bullying bites, stand up and stand proud. I really liked it because it proved that it is not a matter of about the cookie, it matters about the message, trying to give to the person.

Rachel described her involvement in a program in her elementary school aimed at preventing and responding to bullying.

> Um, they just sort of talked about other people's stories and we had a BullyBuster patrol who were the eyes and the ears for the teachers outside and when we saw bullying we had to go find a teacher and tell them. (So you were on the patrol?) Yeah so thats another place you saw the bullying happening and then if you saw it well we didn't do anything about it, we just told the teachers.

Some of the participants also tried to prevent bullying individually. Erin talked about her decision to tell her story of being bullied as a way to try to get students to stop bullying others.

> Yeah, like I did presentations to a couple of the classrooms in our school about bullying and why you shouldn't do it and like my experiences with it and they were all really shocked.

Daniel also described his idea to pay it forward, asking a student who he helped with bullying to promise to help other students who are being bullied.

and one of my friends that was really close um he said before you leave I wanna, said he wanna promise you one thing 'you name it' I said 'just whenever you see bullies, try and stop it.

Knowing How

The participants described having a sense of how to intervene when they witnessed bullying. Sarah discussed this feeling in contrast to instances when she didn't intervene in elementary because she "didn't really know what to do." Whereas she comments about her ability to intervene now that she is in junior high school, "I know how to handle it now so its definitely better."

Participants also seemed able to determine when to get involved. Brandon described how he knew when an incident was serious enough for him to feel that he should intervene.

> I think Mark just like went over the line. There's a line you can not cross. (How do you know when people cross the line? How can you tell?)When someone, when someone like walks away or like stops talking or like just like seems mad.

Jenna described her sense of knowing that an incident of bullying was serious enough to warrant intervention and her ability to choose the intervention that best suited what was happening

> there was no teachers around and I like, like what, nobody had the sense of like what to do and I was like 'okay, we have to go tell somebody' like this should be supervised, these kids obviously needs help so we went and talked to the teacher.

When they had decided a staff member should be involved, these students were also aware of who to get involved, knowing which staff member would take bullying seriously. Sarah said that she knew which teacher would do something about bullying,

> because he was the one that we would talk to because he was you know the assistant principal but we couldn't really talk to the principal because

he didn't really do anything so we just went to Mr. Daniels and talked to him about it and he and then he took the names and he talked to those people and then whatever happened, happened and I think they got suspended or something.

As a part of knowing how to stop bullying, participants talked about trying to intervene without wanting to increase the violence. For instance, Ani proclaimed, "so yeah uh use conversation not confrontation." Erin also talked about how she overcame the initial urge to hurt those students who were bullying, "my first thought was I'm going to beat them up then I was like no, I'm not going to stoop that low, then I was like I'll just think those thoughts in my head *laugh*."

In a similar vein, Ashley described feeling regret that a threat was used to try to stop bullying.

> I would do it again, but maybe like take back like the guy named Justin said to the girl in grade six now and like maybe like just tell him not like not to say that because we don't want to get in a fight and stuff like that. (Mmm, and what did he say again?) Um, if you keep bothering her I'll beat the shit out of you. (Oh so to have him not be that kind of.) Yeah cause thats not, inappropriate in my opinion, stuff like that. (Why is it inappropriate?) 'Cause I don't think that people should be expressing themselves by beating somebody up, but by talking with someone.

Jenna was able to explain to the students who were bullying why their behaviour was inappropriate without outwardly blaming them. For instance, even though she said that she felt angry, she explained why it was not ok to bully a girl with Down's Syndrome for dancing on the bus, "and with the girls bugging the Down Syndrome girl I had to say 'she can't help it, you can't make fun of her for something she can't control' and they said 'ok I get it.'" She described her way of intervening, making it clear that she chose her words carefully to convey the message that it is bullying.

> You have to be completely clear, you can't beat around the bush about anything or else people, will, like if people ask, even teachers, why would you say that, well somebody said that its out of line, that's not what you

meant, you meant to say "Don't do that its wrong because..." and you have to explain it because people just don't get it.

As another piece of knowing how to intervene, all of the participants spoke of the importance of intervening with a friend. For some participants this was an issue of safety. Having friends close by made the participants feel more secure while trying to stop bullying. For instance, Rachel described her ability to intervene more often now that she has friends who support her actions

> Just there's no reason, well there is, if you're scared you're going to get hurt or something in it, just you have to have friends behind your back who won't let that happen. 'Cause I know I did right. Um, not so I had friends in elementary but they were sort of the ones bugging her and I they just sort of I don't know I just sort of said by myself you can't do this. But now with my friends behind me because I was doubting myself in elementary but now I wouldn't be doubting myself because my friends are right there. So you have to have a strong support line with you.

Jenna also talked about her conscious choice to involve her friends in an intervention so that she is less likely to stand out for intervening

> like if I do end up having to tell a principal or teacher or something, I take three other friends that agree with me and we just go talk to him about it and cause if you go by yourself then people think "shh, like why is she doing that, like that's just stupid and stuff."

Other participants describe intervening as another activity that they like to do with their friends who share similar interests or priorities. For instance, Brandon talked about his friend, "me and my friend Jake, we're like really good because me and him blocked fights while we're doing a run ... last year, me and him would always be like splitting up fights."

However, participants still spoke of being able to stand up to bullying when they are by themselves as well. Ashley noted, "sometimes I've just stood up by myself."

Daniel said that he has only intervened by himself, but that this is not by choice, "I hope to stand up with more people, not just myself."

Learning Intervention Skills

As a part of knowing what to do to stop bullying, participants described how they learned to get involved in bullying. Some participants described learning about intervening from their school. For instance, Rachel described a teacher, "we had an amazing teacher, right, and she just wasn't going to stand for anything so I just sort of followed along her lines and said 'this can't continue.'" Jenna also talked about a program brought in to her school to deal with bullying

> yah, like they always have programs come in our school and stuff and I think this year there was one and that was the only one that was like really good and that actually helped us and stuff and it was called Real Power and um at one point we all like, all the grade seven classes stood in a circle and said sorry to everybody, like everybody for everything and it took like two hours. (Wow.) And like they went around the circle like I can't believe how many times I had to say sorry to like so many people and you just like think of every little fight you had with a girl or every single time you pushed a guy or like anything like that. So, and that was pretty much the only one that actually like helped us.

In addition to learning about intervening from school, other participants talked about being motivated to get involved in bullying from family or friends. For instance, Daniel discussed his father as someone who has helped him learn about intervening in bullying

> like in my family, we uh, at dinnertime, when we all finish our dinner or some of us are, my dad sits at the head of the table, starts bringing up subjects about the war in Iraq if its right or wrong, the uh bombs in Hiroshima, and bullying, all that stuff. I've learned how I think from him, he's been a very great help to me.

It is clear that the students who participated in this research have skills for intervening in bullying. They described a knowledge of how to get involved in an incident of bullying, how to determine when to intervene, what to do and who to get

involved, and they described knowledge of what is likely to make their actions more successful. Although some of their success may come from their personality or intuition, it is also clear that some of this knowledge was learned.

Jenna's Story

I've always been a little different than all my friends. I'm like very strong-minded and I always have an opinion. I dunno, I was a lot quieter before my parents divorced, when I was about seven. I was really shy. I'm still shy at home but at school I'm always the one that's outgoing and talks to everybody and stuff. But before, I used to be very mean, I used to pretty much be a bully. When my parents were going through the divorce I was rude, and I had no friends. Like, it's no excuse at all, you shouldn't have to rebel or anything but I realized, well, it's my fault, I brought it on myself. I just saw myself doing those things and said to myself "No that's not right." Since then, I've worked with any troubles I've had in my life. I've turned them around into something positive that I can like help my friends with. Like my friend, her parents are going through a divorce, and I could help her with that.

I think that a lot of teachers and like parents and officials try to make it so they can understand bullying but they just can't understand it unless they're actually in the kid's position. Like, I can stick up for myself, but a lot of the kids can't, so that's where I come in. A lot of the time, it just completely comes into harassment. There's no other word for it because it just keeps going and going no matter what you say. I don't know why people are like that. Mostly it's just that if I can't do something about it and I can't help it, then I have to figure out a way because I just won't let it happen. I just feel responsible for telling people to stop 'cause when you're loud and obnoxious like me, some people just listen. I can't even let people that aren't my friends be bullied. Even people that I honestly don't want to be friends with because they're rude to me. I hate myself because I get involved even in that stuff and I'm like "Why am I doing this?"

There are people that hate me because I get involved with stuff. Like I've lost a lot

of friends over it. My best friend Anna hated me because I got involved in bullying and

she was embarrassed and stuff, but I was like "Hey, if you can't live with it then you can

go and do whatever you want." I will hang out with anybody as long as they're

comfortable with what I do. I know probably ninety percent of the grade seven

population. I could probably name you every single kid's name because I've talked to

them, whether it's a "hi" or I know their entire life story. I don't let gossip get to me but

it happens a lot more in junior high than it did in elementary. Like my hair is so short

right now because two months ago I shaved my head for cancer. I signed my name up on

the page at school or whatever. People would be like "Oh, you're not really going to

shave your head, people said you weren't," and I was like, "Well, yes I am." When I hear

rumours about myself I just go up to them and I'm like "If you're not going to say it to my

face, then don't say it at all, because that's a waste of time and you're just like

pleasuring yourself because it just goes right over my head. It doesn't make a difference

to me." And if you kill them with kindness it's worse 'cause they can't do anything back.

That's how I like to do things.

With seeing bullying, most recently, there was these guys in my class. Kyle is like

such a sweetheart, I love him so much, and he's very down to earth, and Dallas, he's

cocky, he's a good guy but he's got some issues he really needs to figure out. Dallas just

keeps calling Kyle fat and Kyle doesn't do anything. It's been going on all year. Like

even yesterday, we were watching a movie in class and Dallas just kept going on about

how overweight he was and the teacher's just sitting there watching it because teachers

don't do anything. Some teachers are perfect about it and they're like "Ok, if you do one

more thing you're going to the office and you're going to have to suffer the consequences." And that's like how it's supposed to be. They're supposed to know what's wrong and know the difference between wrong and right. But I couldn't believe that Madame Carter just sat there. Honestly, half the time, the guys are beating the crap out of each other and she doesn't do anything. Sometimes it's hard for teachers to intervene 'cause they don't know when to do it, but sometimes it's just so obvious. Like, in our school people make fun of Emos, even the teachers. In my drama class, my drama teacher made us do mime improvisation and we had to guess what the feeling was by a person's actions and stuff. The teacher made this girl pretend to be cutting her wrist because she was supposed to be like Emotional. And I had to say "No, you can't do that. Because what if there were Emotional people in our class? Like, that's just making fun and that's just mean." And she was like "Oh no, no no, there's nobody like that in our school." And I was like "Are you kidding me? Are you blind?"

Anyway, when Dallas started saying "Kyle, you're fat, Kyle, you're fat" and just kept calling him fat, I was like "Why? Why do you have to do that? Why do you have to go there?" And in the end the guys ended up beating on Dallas because it was just uncool. Afterwards, Kyle talked to me. I dunno, people just come to me for advice or talk to me about things. He was telling me "Oh, I am fat, and stupid, and stuff." And I'm like "Well, no Kyle, you're very athletic and stuff, and you're smarter." Kyle always gives me advice and stuff so I'm like "You'll be ok, you know" and I just talked him out of it.

And Dallas, he didn't know that Kyle was self conscious about it until I talked to him. Last night he was really upset because the guys were being so pushy. I talked to him on MSN. He's good to talk to when he's one on one and he's nicer when he's on MSN.

He was asking me "Why do they like beat on me and stuff?" And I was like "Well, a lot

of things" and he asked me why I was mad at him and I said "Well, Dallas, you can't do

that to Kyle." He's like "Well why?" And I said "You have to think of the words that

you're saying to Kyle, because he just sits there and he's like, oh, ok. He thinks that it's

true. He's not going to tell you that it hurts him. Guys don't come out about that." And he

says "Oh my gosh, I had no idea, I'm so sorry" and I was like "Ok, I think you have to

tell him that."

Sometimes you gotta be straight up with things or they won't get it. Dallas was

like "Why is this mean?" and you have to be completely clear, you can't beat around the

bush about it, you have to say "Don't do that, it's wrong because..."

For Kyle, he's not just fat, but that's all he was to other people. That's not all he

is. Now that people are being nice to him and stuff, he's actually doing better in school

and we found out that he's an amazing hockey player. You have to get to know people. I

want to know people, I want to be in people's lives. If people would just like take the time

to get to know you and get to know your friends, they wouldn't say those things to people.

It's just mean. It just blows me away.

It's just like when I see bullying, I get this tension in my arms that makes me want

to strangle them and I get this feeling like I can't handle this, I have to do something

about it. Like if I'm sitting on the bus when it's happening, I sit on my hands because my

hands start to sweat. I'm not nervous or anything, it just ticks me off and I have to do

something about it or else I'll be ticked off with myself. If I get involved and it's not fixed,

then the feeling doesn't go away until it's fixed. But then when it's fixed, it's a relief and I

can completely forget about it and move on. Sometimes I've even had to resort to being

forceful with it and grab someone's arms. I'm blessed with big bones and strong feelings and I just won't let it happen.

I'm always the one that's like comforting everyone in my family because I listen. But I realize that I'm supposed to be a kid. I'm not supposed to be fixing all of this. I finally realized that I have my own problems at school as you can probably tell, and my family doesn't always realize that I need to take care of myself before I can take care of them. And it happens at school too. Like last year, I just had a total overdrive. It was like May or something. By the end of the year everyone was just asking for advice – "What should I do?" "Can you talk to this person for me?" "Can you tell him this for me?" I was always the messenger because I could make things seem nicer or stuff like that. And one day I freaked. I flipped out. I couldn't go to school for a week. I was like "I'm not listening to your whining anymore" and I freaked out at them and they didn't get it because I always seemed there to listen. And it was my own fault, I shouldn't have freaked out at them or anything. But now, before I help my friends with their homework, I finish my own homework. The bottom line is, you can't help everybody unless you help yourself, and you can't even help everybody anyways. I have to realize that, because trying to make everybody in the situation happy is impossible. Those couple of weeks that I stopped doing stuff for people, it hurt them, and I felt bad about that. Then I had to fix about a million things. So, it's just like, don't ever overwork yourself. It can be very overwhelming. People just expect a lot out of me and I'm lucky because a lot of the times I can follow through. But it's hard. It's a lot of pressure. But I can live with it, it's good for me I guess.

My dad is a retired police officer and he always tells me that for criminals, everyone is innocent until proven guilty. But with bystanders, you're guilty until proven innocent. Like, I feel guilty unless I've done something about it, and then I can get an 'innocent' if you know what I mean. So I always think about that, you're guilty until proven innocent when you see bullying. Like the song by John Mayer, 'Waiting on the World to Change' – one of the lyrics is 'it's not that we can't, it's just that we're afraid that we'll fail.' Like everybody has it in them to do but we're just afraid. But you can't fail unless you give up. Honestly, you can't. Like I'm one of the only kids in my school that could have told Dallas. Like seventeen people could have told him "That's mean, that's mean, that's mean," but it didn't stop him. It had to take one person to tell him why it was mean, to tell him to stop in a comfortable way. Anybody can make a difference, whether you're talking about bullying or global warming. Anybody can, anything helps. And people think "Oh, ok, I can't do anything." Well, that's the oldest excuse in the book. It doesn't work anymore 'cause there's millions of ways.

When you experience so much in your life, whether it's with other people or your family, or yourself, a lot of people make that their life, that their life sucks. Well, I'm not going to do that. Life is short, and if you don't make a footprint on your life, then what was the point of living in the first place?

Seeing the Bigger Picture

This theme portrays the participants' ability to look at bullying as something larger than an incident occurring between individual students at school. All participants gave at least one example of bullying that departed from the student realm. Participants saw bullying as involving teachers and staff members, adults, and community members. Daniel gave an example of his experience of seeing the bigger picture

> Um, last year um I was, it kind of hit me really hard about the bullying. Like, I saw it more through a bigger perspective, what happened to my school, um, it it was kind of being torn about by bullying, just everyone there, the little kids were taking up horrible language, um acting extremely bad and so I was kind of astonished

Participants also talked about the role of the school in doing something about bullying, both in actively witnessing it and responding to individual episodes of bullying and in preparing prevention measures with students. They also connected it to bigger issues, drawing links between bullying and other forms of violence, and drawing links between standing up to bullying and other ways of standing up.

Seeing What the School Needs to Do

Participants were looking beyond the individual incidents of bullying and seeing that their schools had a role to play in bullying. Sometimes schools were seen as encouraging bullying or doing nothing to stop it, while at other times, schools were seen as agents of change. Participants saw their schools in various roles and saw the potential for a school to take action to help stop bullying.

Unfortunately, many participants described situations in their schools which appeared to cast the school in the role of a bystander to bullying. Participants described

some staff members who witnessed bullying, and did absolutely nothing to stop it. For instance, Jenna described the incident in her French class, in her own words

> And the teachers, like I couldn't believe that Madame Carter just sat there and watched it happening, and I'm like *facial expression*. (She didn't get involved?) Yeh, she didn't get in, and she's like, I'm like you're supposed to be able to fix this. And honestly half the time the guys are beating the crap out of each other and she doesn't do anything.

Some participants even had teachers who instigated an episode of bullying. Ani described a situation in which a teacher denigrates a minority group, spurring an incident of bullying targeted at Ani

> Like today, right after lunch, we have homeroom. I was saying that, and then this kid said, and my homeroom teacher said 'Oh no, the whole world's turning to gay' and then this kid said 'Its all starting with Ani.' And so I didn't really like that. I just took it in.

Participants gave reasons for why they thought that school staff did not get involved when they witnessed bullying, although it was clear that the students thought that teachers should be doing something. For instance, Jenna noted that in certain situations, staff members may not know whether or not they should intervene

> the teacher would not say anything, like what do you say cause its hard for teachers, cause they don't know if its ok to intervene in racy comments or like sexist comments and stuff

Sarah also noted that teachers may sometimes mistake a real episode of bullying for rough play or another type of activity that each student is willfully engaged in. She describes it as the job of students if school staff members do not take action

> I mean the teachers didn't really do anything I know they see it happening but they don't really say um stop so we kind of have to step in and try to help whoever's getting bullied. (Ok, so its like the students' job?) Yeah. yeah, basically, cause that sometimes I don't really think some of the teachers care but most of them do but sometimes they just don't really notice that its a bullying thing sometimes people just play around with their friends and it may look like its just playfighting but really it could be

bullying and I think they need to realize it might be bullying and that they should take charge and say something and make it stop.

Participants also saw the possibility for their schools to make a difference in bullying. When I asked about the strategies that they would like to see their school use in response to bullying, they discussed the importance of taking bullying seriously. For many participants, this meant an increase in supervision and responding to bullying with punishment for the students who were bullying. For instance, Brandon said schools need to "get more supervision" and that they should "start, you know, cracking down, like the hard core people, giving them big time D.T.s, suspending them, whatever it takes."

Participants were also clear that the students need to play a large and influential role in school programs aimed at decreasing and preventing bullying. For instance, Jenna remarked about the importance of student involvement in these programs because adults often do not understand the position of students.

> I think that a lot of teachers and like parents and officials and stuff they try to make it so they can understand it but they just can't understand it unless they're actually in the kid's position.

Even so, participants thought that schools could do something to get involved in educating or preventing bullying. Sarah suggested that there could be a place in junior high school for some of the programs that are used in elementary schools.

> Um, talking to your friends about it, maybe um, my friend her elementary had a bully busters group, maybe forming one of those, like a club maybe, like a club that could you know look out basically look out for the bullying and take action, and help those people who are being bullied. (Do you think students could do that?)Yep. I think so, I think it would help a lot and then the bullies would see that there are people watching and there are people noticing it and they would probably, I don't want to get caught, I don't want to get in trouble for it because I'm doing this for fun, and maybe those bullies need help, maybe they have um problems at home, problems at school and then those people could find out maybe who the bully is and talk to them about it and then help, I think it would help the

> whole school, and if someone needed someone to talk to then they could go to those few people and just talk to them about it.

However, it is clear that the students who participated in this study have been given many presentations or have attended assemblies about bullying, but most of them have not been highly impactful. Some participants suggested that it is important to show the entire truth of bullying. For example, Daniel discussed the difference between presentations he has seen and what he would like to be seeing

> Um, you just gotta give more information, you have to like show presentations of what the bullying does to a person and there's, uh, I've seen some pretty cheesy things in health uh they really should get some new movies for that. It doesn't show you much but uh yeah they have to show you what bullying is like, they have to get adults to act it out or something, have it serious, have it uh really uh emotional, have it uh in a way that they'll see what's going on, its not uh, we can't just hide it anymore from like the public is hiding the bad from the kids.

Participants also talked about the need for spreading the word about bullying in a way that makes students pay attention to what is being said and shows the true importance of the issue. They suggested that this is accomplished when the initiatives are peer-led or when the message comes from someone who is important to the student group. For instance, when I asked Erin what she thought the schools could do to promote less bullying, she was doubtful that there was anything that could be done by school staff alone.

> I don't think so, cause like during lectures, like even me, and like when we have people come in a lot of people don't listen. Unless they have like a presentation by someone where they're like 'whoa, she's cool' or 'whoa, he's cool' you know, then they're not going to listen. Like cause lots of the time its people who we don't really want to pay attention to and they're just sitting up there and they're droning on about something that we've heard over and over again, like we get bullying presentations a lot, and people still do it, like its not getting through. So I think that its more like a peer, when a peer says something to someone they're like *facial expression* what?

Seeing Beyond the School

As part of looking at the bigger picture, participants also saw how bullying could occur in situations beyond the student realm. For instance, Nicole saw that bullying could happen in her school towards teachers

> Um, well when we have subs and stuff, they always talk back and stuff, and I tell them to stop but then they just snap at you. That's one, yeah. That's sort of bullying too, cause they're bullying the sub.

Participants also noticed bullying in places other than their school, and with people who were not school-aged. For instance, Daniel also recognized that bullying can happen to adults, at work, or even with senior citizens, "bullying doesn't only occur when you're a kid, it happens in high school, um work, even when you're a senior sometimes." Jenna linked bullying to the issue of abuse in relationships

> Like this girl I know, uh, she was like abused by her boyfriend and she had to, like she wouldn't get it through her mind, she loved him, she loved him, she loved him, yeah its love but its killing you.

Some of the participants even linked bullying to larger social issues. For instance, Brandon discussed the idea that bullying had similar dynamics to a war. When I asked him what he thought about bullying in general, he responded, "I think its pretty crappy, its like the war, but smaller." He went on to explain

> You have people fighting for something. Another person starts a rumour. That's like how wars start. There could be a rumour out there about this one kid, its taken like this other kid wants to beat him up. With the bullying thing, you could just walk and think you're all that.... That's about it.

Jenna also described her idea that bullying can be linked to larger social issues, and that just as in bullying, people can get involved to make a difference

> anybody can make a difference, whether you're talking about bullying or global warming or anything, anybody can, anything helps, and people

just think "oh ok, I can't do anything" well that's the oldest excuse in the book, doesn't work anymore cause there's millions of ways that you can so sorry *laughs*

Just as Nicole intervened when her substitute teacher was bullied, other participants also intervened in instances of bullying that were outside of the student realm. For example, Erin described getting involved in situations of bullying outside of school with strangers

Yeah. Like even when people are making fun like random people if I don't know them or even if I don't know what's happening I'm just like k, that's not cool.

In addition, Jenna also intervened when she perceived a teacher was making remarks that could hurt students who identified with a particular group.

like people make fun of Emos, and even the teachers, like in my drama class, my drama teacher, because we had to do mime improvisation and we had to guess like what their feeling was and like actions and stuff and she made the girl pretend to be cutting her wrist because she was like Emotional. And I had to say "no you can't do that" because like what if there was Emotional people in our class?

Participants clearly looked at bullying as something larger than just an episode of harassment or violence between two peers at school. Many of the participants expanded their view of bullying to include situations outside of school, situations involving adults, and even teachers. Some participants linked bullying to bigger picture issues such as war or global warming. More importantly, these students also took action in many of these cases, trying to stop episodes of bullying on a slightly bigger scale.

Brandon's Story

School's school. I don't exactly like it. You come, you learn, you go home. That's about it. Well, there's basketball programs and stuff. Me and my friends go down to the gym at lunch and we just play basketball. In the past, in basketball, when people are like rough-housing and stuff, I would just kinda like say "back off" to them. Like last year, me and my friend Jake, we were really good because we blocked fights. We would always be like splitting up fights. And even in math class, the fighting would get so bad that a lot of people would become scared. Once, my teacher actually thanked me for splitting up one fight. I just walked in there and pushed them both away. I had a good time.

It's not like I've never been in fights. Me and this guy Jason actually got into a fight two weeks ago. Me and him were making fun of each other. He got mad. He made fun of my mother, so I thought of this one thing to say that made fun of his mother, his girlfriend and him all at the same time. He got mad, took his book and slammed it across my face, right on my nose. Well, then I got mad, so I walked up to him and just had my fist out, ready to punch him. But my friends were all watching, just like all people I had to go to class with. I don't usually do stuff like that so I just let go of my fist and sat back down.

The whole bullying thing is pretty crappy. It's like the war, but smaller. You have people fighting for something and another person starts a rumour. That's like how wars start. So there could be a rumour out there about this one kid and then it's taken and turned into this rumour that this other kid wants to beat him up. So it gets bigger. Its crappy. It'd be nice if it stopped, but it can't.

I've been bullied too. Grade six was pretty crappy. There was this kid, his name was Brody. He hated us. Every day he would come up and bug us, right? He would bug like almost all the kids. He was also getting his friends to help out and his friends could be doing it because they're scared that he'll turn around and start bullying them if they don't. Well, his friends helped out and then you got like chaos. We'd tell the teachers, we'd tell our parents, and well, nothing happened. It was crappy. He got suspended lots, like, a lot. Well, a lot of complaints started coming in. My mother always said, like always tell a teacher or whatever. Well, I did. I got beat up for it. I did. But then it happened again. I kept on telling the teacher. And I kept on getting beat up, and I kept on telling the teacher. And well, they finally got rid of him, which was the best thing. He got banned from the school, he wasn't allowed in. So, that was a whole bunch of kids who got beat up and there was a whole bunch of kids telling on one person. So a whole bunch of people go and start telling the teachers or telling their parents that it's important in the school. 'Cause half the time, the students don't come to the school with it, they go to their parents. Well, a whole bunch of complaints come in and the kid gets moved. But, off side to that, that there's still bullies. Maybe he'll bully at his new school or he could get bullied there or whatever. There'll always be bullies wherever you go.

One of the bullying things at this school stands out in my mind because both my friends were involved and it just happened so quickly. It happened back in September, or some time around there. I was with my friends Noel and James. My other friend Mark was walking over to us and he just walked up and started bugging Noel, just sort of joking around. Noel got a little mad so he walked away. So then, me and James started to go over to him to see what was wrong. Noel was walking away and Mark was still

bugging him, just like pushing him, joking. See, there's this thing, we make fun of other people's moms and stuff, just joking around. I think Mark just like went over the line with it. There is a line you can not cross. So they just started fighting. I was thinking, "These two shouldn't be fighting. Stop it." Then me and James were just trying to split it up. I just kinda think to myself that if I get hurt doing that, then it's my fault, no one else's. So, then a whole bunch of people came to help, and the principal got involved too. It's one of my favourite stories to tell. Everything just went well that day. And luckily they're friends again. But it was weird. They were just fighting over the darndest thing.

I got involved cause I don't want to see it happen. If you want to fight, go somewhere else and fight. This is a school, there's a line that's crossed. You know a line's been crossed when someone walks away or stops talking or just seems mad. And like there's a whole bunch of stuff you can do to just stop it. Like talk to the one that started it, or the other one, just ask him if he's alright. That's it. I just take one kid, move him away, and take the other one, move him away, and then go talk to both. That's what I do. That works. I might say like "Just try to calm down, alright? Tomorrow will be better." While you're doing it, there's like this nervous feeling, like adrenaline. Then, you just feel relief. Afterwards, I feel good. It bites though. It bites real hard. You have like two friends fighting or two different people that aren't friends – but they're actually hurting you, well, they're hurting everyone, depending on where you are. In gym, they're ruining your game. If its in class, the whole class gets a DT. There's times when they can be friends after. Or, people might just hate each other and it can go on and on and on, and then someone's going to get really hurt. Half the time people don't report bullying

'cause they're too afraid they'll get beat up or they think it's not going to help or whatever, but it really does.

Others just sit and watch it. So me and my friends, we just walk in and we just stop it. Not all my friends, I would say half my friends, well a couple of them anyway. I don't know what other people think about it. I guess they think highly of it. Like teachers and the principal. The principal asked me to go to this conference thing not too long ago where we had this person come into school and do this presentation on the whole confrontational thing. She was here to show you what you were doing wrong in a confrontation and then talk about what happened and what you could do different the next time. So I said, "Well, I was there, sure I'll go, I'll help out." If you volunteer and help out, then people think highly of you and then like they come for help the next time. But, you know, I would tell others that it's all right to do. It's ok to stop it. There's other ways of going about it other than splitting it up. You could go tell the teacher that like two people are fighting or you could go up and try to calm one down and try to calm the other one down. But you're not superman, you can't just go in there and ptchooo, get rid of war, just like that. It takes time.

What schools need is more supervision. Schools could start a whole group, like maybe in the gym or whatever. Everyone sits down and a discussion is started. Like have an assembly and just talk about it, or have one day where each class just hangs out and talks about it together, letting people know that they shouldn't be afraid to stick out. What the school should do is to get a whole bunch of people, who would want to, who would care, and like get together and talk and maybe help out around the school. People who would tell others to like shove off and go away. You start doing that and you're the

role models for the bullied kids, right? Little kids would come to school and see all this happen. They're not gonna get hurt and like they can start role modelling for the other children. And if a whole bunch of schools did it, then you could get like one big, big, big group of people to write letters to the government or something. That's what we're working on in social. Right now, we're trying to get this trip together, so we got people to write out letters. We go to the other students and then we give them to the principal, right? A whole bunch of letters, a whole bunch of people who want to go, and its just for us because we got a different program than the other kids in the school. Anyways, the school should be impressed because we wrote the letters, impressed that we took the time to do this, and the trip might end up happening.

Like maybe someday bullying will just, like, stop. You never know, it might just happen. But then again, you can't stop it. It's impossible – well, improbable. You just can't stop it. We don't have one man shows. One, plus all the people on earth? It ain't gonna happen. It's just too big, like one person can't make a difference. A group of people could make a difference, and like half a continent would make a bigger difference and so on. But I don't know how you would do it. It would be nice if it stopped, but...

Questioning "Does it Make a Difference?"

This theme pulls together the sense that there is a niggling question beneath the surface of the interviews. Although no participant asked the question in such a form, there was a sense throughout the interviews that participants wondered about whether their actions to attempt to stop bullying really made a difference. This question was lurking behind the descriptions of the mixed results achieved by intervening in bullying, by the mixed reactions of others, and by the sense that their actions seemed small compared to the huge problem of bullying in general. However, participants combated the discouragement that this question brought by a sense of hope and perseverance in the face of doubt.

Getting Different Results

Part of the question of whether intervening in bullying actually makes a difference, is the different results seen by participants. They described instances when their actions seemed to help the situation, and other times when they were doubtful of the impact of their actions on the outcome of the incident.

Many of the participants described having some success when trying to intervene, such as reporting that the incident stopped after they took action. Sometimes a participant was also able to perceive that the target of bullying was positively impacted by their actions. For instance, Ani described knowing that he was able to help someone else

> I think she felt happy 'cause someone is helping her. She wasn't there by herself or anything. (How do you know that she was feeling happy?) She started smiling.

Ashley also talked about knowing that her actions helped the target of bullying, when this person thanked her for stepping in, "she's like, thank god you got my parents I mean I probably would have gotten hurt right there."

However, sometimes the participants expressed doubt about whether their actions made a difference. For most, this was a doubt about whether their actions caused a change in the life of the person who was targeted for bullying. Sarah expressed her doubt about getting involved

> I just thought maybe that I said the wrong thing, that I shouldn't have said
> anything. (So you doubted yourself?) Yeah. But like cause nothing
> changed after that really. A little bit of people started being nicer, but still
> they weren't extremely nice, they were still rude to her.

Rachel also expressed her doubt about whether her actions had an impact on others. She described what happened after her intervention in bullying

> Just, there was no really negative response, just sort of a neutral response.
> More, not a change was happening but no nothing worse was happening. It
> was just sort of staying the same. Nothing happened to me particularly, but
> nothing changed for her. So my, with stuff that I did, didn't really change
> a lot.

In addition, the responses of other people to their actions were different. Participants described how other people viewed their actions to stop bullying and the results were often mixed. Some participants saw others as thinking positively about their actions. For example, Brandon described staff members as thinking highly of his attempts to intervene in bullying

> They think highly of it. Teachers, principal. Principal asked me to be at
> this conference, and I said 'well sure, I was there, I'll help out.' I volunteer
> and help out, and then people think highly of you and then like they come
> for help like the next time.

Rachel also said she thought others would think positively of her actions, noting that

other students might think her actions were "courageous… 'cause they weren't doing anything right, and well this girl she goes and does something, wow." Whereas, other participants described feeling that others perceived their actions in a negative way. For instance, Daniel described feeling that others would lump him together with the target of bullying, viewing both negatively. He thought other students would view his actions as

> Kind of wussy. (Would they?) Because people think oh you're sticking up for them, oh they're weird and they're, because the people that are being bullied are exiled and if you stand up for them you're being just like them

Sarah described getting different reactions from different people

> Um, some people would say it was very it was respectful to the person who was being bullied and some people would say well why did you that? Thats just is rude to the other people, why would you do that? And some people think its a good thing, some people think its a bad thing, that you do want to stick up for people

Feeling Ambivalent About the Impact

Between and within the interviews, participants expressed ambivalence about whether their actions made an impact on others. At times participants seemed assured that their actions can impact others. For instance, Daniel describes how this hope can keep him going even though it is difficult and dangerous for him to get involved in bullying

> Even if we get beat on, other kids will see that we stood up to that and although we had to sacrifice ourself, our sanity almost, and uh they will see that and they would stand up try to set a good example.

Others talked about the hope that their actions are part of a larger ability for anyone to make a difference in bullying. Erin captured this idea when she said

> Yeah, I was like I was talking to my friend about it and they're like 'that was really heroic of you' and I was like heroic? That doesn't make sense. And they're like, 'yeah you were like a hero 'cause you saved that person from being bullied more.' And I was like its not heroic if its something anybody can do. *pause* 'Cause it is something anybody can do.

> Anybody can stop bullying from happening, anybody can stick up for someone, even if they don't know them, even if they're just like 'k guys'

Participants also talked about how their individual actions could combine to mean something potentially larger than a single intervention in one episode of bullying. In response to the question I added to the interview guide, participants noted that the actions of a group of students may be compounded to create more powerful action. For instance, Ani said

> One person can make a difference. 'Cause if they stand up then more people start giving them and then it starts with one person and keeps on going on. And then a group can make a difference.

Brandon gave an example of how this actually happened in his elementary school

> So a whole bunch of people go and start telling the teachers, telling their parents that its important in the school. 'Cause half the times, the students don't come to the school, they go to their parents. Well, a whole bunch of complaints come in and the kid gets moved.

Yet, at other times, participants expressed doubt and distress that their actions did not impact others, or did not make enough of an impact. For instance, Brandon said that his actions were "just too little, like, one person can't make a difference." While Erin expressed distress that her energy and effort only seemed to impact others for a short period of time

> Yeah, like I did presentations to a couple of the classrooms in our school about bullying and why you shouldn't do it and like my experiences with it and they were all really shocked that I like came out and told them that and then I know it stopped for a while but then it started again, so I was kind of mad. I was like, I just went up there and wrote this big long speech and told you guys my personal stories and here you are doing it again, like that's not cool. (So it didn't last very long?) It lasted for like two weeks maybe and then she got a new boyfriend and it was someone that they liked and bang there it all started again and now everybody's doing it again so I don't know. I wish I could just live in a box where nothing happened.

Ambivalence about whether intervening makes a difference was also present from moment to moment within the interviews. For instance, Erin again said

> I thought that maybe hearing their friend, like shocked, at what they did would make them like realize what they did was wrong but I guess it didn't because like they're still bullying other people.

Yet moments later she offered her hope that maybe it did impact the students who bullied, "hopefully it had some effect because I don't want that to happen anymore."

V. DISCUSSION

"I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something."

- Edward Everett Hale

Who is 'the Upstander'?

Role vs. Identity

As defined earlier, an upstander is someone who takes positive action when witnessing something wrong or unjust. The newness of the word begs the question of whether 'upstander' is a character quality or a role that one can choose in specific situations. According to the research on participant roles in bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996), the nine students who participated in this research would be labeled 'defenders' for taking action to stop a fellow student from being bullied, while bystanders would be labeled 'outsiders' for their role as silent witnesses. However, these labels do not take into account the idea that students can and do freely switch roles. For instance, Schwartz and colleagues (2001) discuss the 'bully-victim,' a student who is bullied by some peers and who also bullies others. It is likely that witnesses to bullying may sometimes step in, and in other situations, take the role of a bystander.

Most people have taken action in response to something that they feel is wrong or unjust, taking the role of an upstander without dedicating their lives to the cause. For some people, the role may become a part of their identity. Perhaps they are involved in something so life-changing that being an upstander becomes a way of life – such as people who acted as operators for the Underground Railroad, an informal 19th century slavery escape route in North America (e.g., Government of Canada, 2005).

For instance, when Ani discussed his actions to stop a peer from being bullied, he spoke of it as his first and only attempt to stop bullying. Ani had to make choices about when he was able to intervene directly in an episode of bullying based on the risks posed by larger and older students. He also worked to prevent bullying in his school. Ani could choose to take the role of an upstander when it was safe for him to do so. When Jenna described her actions and her sense of responsibility to stop any occurrence of bullying that she witnessed, she spoke as someone who might accept 'upstander' as a part of her identity. Further research focused on upstander experiences could explore questions of identity in relation to the upstander role.

The role of upstander is valued more highly than other participant roles in bullying (Dijkstra, Lindenberg, & Veenstara, 2007; Salmivalli et al., 1996). It may be interesting to discover the potential for interventions aimed at creating an upstander identity. By taking on the identity of an upstander, perhaps one would be more likely to act in ways concordant with this identity. Narrative theories of psychotherapy posit that identity is created through the stories we tell about ourselves (White & Epston, 1990). According to this theory, the simple act of interviewing a student about her or his experience of standing up for someone who was being bullied could be an exercise in strengthening this identity. Indeed, when the participants were asked about their experiences of taking part in this research, their responses allude to this process. For example, Rachel described feelings of confusion when looking back at the different roles she has taken in bullying. When I asked her what it was like to participate in the research she responded, "it's uh kinda weird, I don't know, just to think back, 'cause I've bullied, I've been bullied and I've witnessed it right, just, I don't know." Rachel may have started

to look differently at her own roles in bullying. For Ani also, the interview may have helped strengthen his identity as someone who intervenes in bullying. He responded to the same question saying, "it makes me feel proud of myself because I am helping someone. It wasn't like I was just standing there being a bystander, not knowing, not helping her."

Risking Self

Some of the participants noted that taking action to stop bullying is something that everyone can do. Yet most do not. What makes the students who participated in this research remarkable is the difficulty of their actions, the risks that they faced in intervening.

Researchers note that intervening in bullying poses certain physical or psychological risks to students or their social reputations (Olweus, 1993), and infer that these risks are what prevent student bystanders from acting to stop bullying. However, there is a lack of research on this phenomenon. The students participating in this research clearly note that they consider it risky to intervene in bullying, describing this as a main reason why other students choose not to intervene. They also discussed having a strong, sometimes visceral, reaction to witnessing bullying, supporting the idea that there is a perceived danger in getting involved. As participants described it, they had to put themselves on the line in order to become an upstander. Participants indentified risks such as physical harm, harm to reputation or relationships, and even the risk of getting in trouble for intervening. Indeed, I believe that there is a level of risk inherent in the role of upstander, and I offer an addition to the current definition. An upstander is anyone who

undertakes personal risk to take "positive action in the face of injustice in society or in situations where individuals need assistance" (Facing History, 2008).

Sensitivity

These students were sensitive to the issue of bullying and the experiences of others. This allowed them to notice that bullying was happening around them and gave them motivation to do something positive about it. If this study can be used to help understand upstanders, then it is clear that an upstander is someone who is sensitive enough to see that there is injustice happening around them and sensitive to the suffering of others. This also raises questions of how it is that these individuals have become sensitive to suffering and injustice, and whether this is something that can be taught. Participants attributed part of their sensitivity to bullying to their own experiences of being bullied, which allowed them to better understand what it feels like to be bullied, and to feel more empathy for the student who is being bullied. Yet there are likely other aspects or processes involved. Future research could explore these questions further.

The concept of sensitivity as evidenced by the descriptions of participants is qualitatively different from empathy, as it involved noticing incidents when intervention was required because of bullying or harm to others. Whereas empathy is concerned with feeling or knowing the experience of another (Miller & Eisenberg, 1998), the sensitivity described by participants also encompasses the idea of awareness and passion regarding social issues.

However, for some participants, this sensitivity to the feelings of others caused them to feel overwhelmed. They described feeling responsible for stopping all of the bullying around them. Erin and Jenna both talked about needing some time away from

the responsibility of helping others. These descriptions resonate with the literature describing vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue and burnout (Sabin-Farrell & Turpin, 2003), yet the experience is not entirely captured by any of these terms. In academic literature, these descriptions have been used to describe negative experiences related to working with those who have experienced trauma. For instance, a care-giver may experience emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction due to stressful working conditions (Lloyd, King, & Chenowith, 2002) or may undergo a secondary trauma, experiencing intrusive thoughts or vivid images as a result of empathically hearing about the other's trauma (Figley, 2002). Although Figley (2002) discusses the "cost of caring" (p. 1346), these phenomenon are discussed only in regards to the helping relationship associated with psychotherapy, and not the experience of caring too much for others with whom one may not have a significant relationship. For Erin and Jenna, the "helping relationship" is informal and short, although they too have felt empathy for another and taken the voluntary responsibility for helping someone. Although these students are not paid for helping others they may be just as likely to feel worn down over time by the stresses of this responsibility. Or, as described by Erin and Jenna, they may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility to fix the problem of bullying. This leads to an important question about the role of sensitivity, and whether it is possible to feel too sensitive or feel too much empathy, compassion or responsibility.

Just as helping professionals need to establish limits for what they are willing to do, participants discussed the need to actively engage in questions about their responsibility to others. For instance, Jenna described a period of emotional upheaval in

which she had to take a week off from school. From this, she spoke of learning about the need to care for herself first before taking responsibility for others.

Knowledge of Social Context

One of the surprising findings of this study was the richness and depth of the participants' social understandings. Based upon the descriptions of participants, an upstander has the requisite social knowledge to make appropriate judgments about the seriousness of bullying, and use correspondingly suitable intervention strategies. This allowed them to make decisions that were most likely to balance the risk of intervening with steps to protect their own well being. For instance, participants described the ability to judge when an incident was too serious for direct intervention. For students like Ani, this meant any bullying incident involving students from higher grade levels. When an incident was too serious for direct intervention, participants used their knowledge of the social world to get their friends to assist them in intervening, making the action socially safer. In addition, as Sarah illustrated, if a participant did have to involve a staff member, their social knowledge was refined enough to know which staff member would treat the incident appropriately.

<div align="center">Why Take the Risk?</div>

From Bystander to Upstander

The words bystander and upstander are defined by action: an upstander takes action in response to witnessing a negative event, whereas a bystander witnesses the event but takes no action. Essentially, all witnesses to an incident of violence such as bullying are bystanders until they take action. As noted in the literature review, Latané and Darley (1970) put forward a five-stage model of bystander intervention. According to

this model, for a bystander to intervene, she or he must a) notice the incident, b) define it as an emergency, c) assume personal responsibility to help, d) feel competent to help, and f) help. Latané and Darley used this model for adults in an emergency situation. Not all forms of bullying may be called emergencies, however, the model is descriptive of some of the processes described by participants.

It is interesting to compare and contrast the stages of this model to the experiences described by participants. Although stages a) noticing bullying and f) taking action to intervene, were performed by all students, as it was a requirement for participation in the research, it is still important to note the importance of these stages. Taking action is the most important stage in the model, and noticing bullying is a requirement of taking action. Yet many students fail to notice bullying at all. Even the participants in this study described the experience of failing to notice bullying. For instance, Rachel did not see all of the bullying happening around her until she experienced bullying as a target.

Stage b) defining the situation as an emergency, is not always pertinent to bullying, as some forms of bullying, such as spreading rumours would not necessarily be classified as emergencies. However, it is worth considering whether students need to define the situation as bullying in order to intervene. For instance, Blumen (2008) argued that being uncertain of whether an action is bullying results in a bystander being frozen, unsure of whether or not the incident requires action. When intervening, most participants did label the behaviour as bullying, however, one participant did not use this label for all incidents. Instead, Nicole used the word 'teasing' to refer to instances of peer aggression in which she intervened. She neither defined the situation as an emergency nor as bullying, yet felt compelled to intervene anyways. This adds complexity to any stage

model of bystander intervention in bullying and raises questions for future research. For instance, it is not known whether labeling an incident of peer aggression as bullying makes bystanders more likely to intervene. It is possible that using the word bullying for instances of social or relational bullying make those behaviours seem more serious and urgent because they are placed in the same category as physical violence. However, there is also the possibility that severe actions of physical or sexual violence may seem less serious if they are labeled 'bullying' rather than physical or sexual assault. Future research in this area is needed to enhance anti-bullying and safe school initiatives, which have increasingly focused on the role of the witnesses to bullying.

Stage c) accepting personal responsibility to help, corresponds to the experiences of these students, particularly those remarks captured by the category *citizenship*. Students discussed feeling a personal responsibility for taking action. Stage d) feeling competent to help, also corresponds to the responses of participants, both in their statements in the sub-theme *believing in myself,* and in the theme *knowing what to do.* Participants described confidence both in themselves and in their skills to handle the situation as an upstander.

Levine (1999) argues that this five-stage model of bystander intervention does not take into account the social and cultural norms and values associated with intervention, such as the acceptability of intervening. Peer groups may place different values on the acceptability of intervening in bullying, making it harder or easier to accept responsibility to intervene (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Although this model corresponds to the experiences of the students in this study, they did not articulate their decision-making process as having a linear step-by-step quality. Instead, many talked about having a

moment of indecision, unsure about whether to act, or what to do. In this moment, students seemed to engage in the process of weighing the very real and sometimes serious risks of intervening against their own internal reasons for wanting or needing to intervene in bullying.

Reasons for Intervening

The results of this study illustrate student motives for intervening. What follows is a parallel model for thinking about bystander intervention. Looking at the findings, it is possible to pull out five motivating factors for intervening in bullying. Participants described being motivated by a) empathy, b) a moral conscience, c) a sense of duty, d) confidence, and e) fulfillment. When making the decision to intervene, it is likely that upstanders consciously or subconsciously weigh their motives for intervening with the risks of intervening. The reasons for intervening do not always outweigh the risks. For example, some participants discussed choosing not to intervene when there was an increased risk to self. Others decided to intervene, but chose a less risky strategy, such as reporting it to a school authority. When deciding to intervene, the following reasons may have been motivating enough to overcome the potential risks.

Empathy. All participants said that they had experienced bullying themselves and that this allowed them to understand the pain involved in being a target of bullying. Their past experiences even led some participants to experience pain upon witnessing another student being bullied. Participants were also sensitive to the feelings of others. Some said that they intervened so that the pain of the bullied student would stop, or so that they would know that someone cared about what they were experiencing. These findings add

support to the theory that students are motivated to intervene in bullying by a feeling of empathy for the target of bullying (Gini et al., 2007; Rogers & Tisak, 1996).

Moral conscience. According to Menesini and Camodeca (2008) students who were nominated for being prosocial in bullying situations, were more likely to feel guilty when reading a bullying scenario. This is also reflected in the participants' statements about bullying as "wrong" and intervening as "the right thing to do." Sarah even talked about intervening because if she didn't, she would feel guilty, "it would be picking at [her] the rest of the day." This provides further support for the idea that a moral conscience can be a strong motivating factor for taking the risk to intervene in bullying. While morality is discussed in the literature, I was nevertheless surprised by how deeply these students felt about the moral issues of whether bullying and intervening were right or wrong. Participants were emphatic about their moral consciences.

Sense of duty. Participants explained that one of their reasons for intervening was that they felt compelled to stand up for a friend. Their responsibilities as a friend meant that they were obliged to intervene when their friend was being bullying. In addition, the category of *citizenship* emerged in the findings, illustrating that participants felt a duty to intervene as a member of a group. Participants talked about intervening because they wanted to show that bullying was not acceptable in their school. Some participants also gave the reason for intervening as wanting to be a civic leader within their school, leaving a mark on the school while they were there. Interestingly, being motivated to intervene by a sense of duty is discussed little in the bullying literature. A sense of duty is a new and unanticipated idea emerging from this research and something that could be explored

further in future studies examining motivation for intervening in bullying or other forms of violence.

Confidence. Students cited confidence on two levels as a motivation to intervene. First, they discussed confidence in their skills to intervene. This was evident in the category *I could handle it.* Participants described being able to intervene in bullying when they felt confident enough in their skills to handle the situation. This corresponds to Stevens and colleagues' (2002) finding that a belief in success predicts taking action to intervene. This level of confidence was different for each participant. In addition, participants described confidence in self. This feeling of self-confidence assisted their motivation to intervene in bullying. In the sub-theme *believing in self,* participants described a level of self-confidence that allowed them to intervene, regardless of what others might think. This is related to Tisak and Tisak's (1996) theory to account for their finding that extraversion is associated with the 'defender' role in bullying. They put forward that a more extroverted student will be less likely to care what others think, freeing him or her to intervene in bullying. Simona and colleagues (2009) found that empathy alone did not account for a student intervening to stop bullying: empathy combined with a high social status was needed to predict student intervention, particularly among boys. These authors, along with O'Connell and colleagues (1999) have suggested that social status may allow a student to be less vulnerable to social pressure, allowing them to intervene. Yet, there may be clear exceptions within this research. For instance, both Daniel and Ani were targets of bullying at the time of the research, yet both described that they were willing take action regardless of what others thought. Perhaps there are students who do not worry about what others think, regardless

of their social status, allowing them to intervene in bullying even if they do not have a high social status. Future research could explore this possibility and its potential implications for intervention within schools.

Fulfillment. Participants said that they intervened because it made them feel good. While Brandon actually enjoyed the act of intervening, others like Ani and Sarah said that they found it fulfilling to know that they had helped someone else. Others, like Nicole and Erin said that it was more like a feeling of relief in not having to continue to witness violence, or feel guilty for having done nothing. This reason for intervening means that students stood up for others out of motivations that were not entirely altruistic. These findings correspond with evolutionary theories of altruism (Barber, 2004; Staub, 2003). Staub and Vollhardt (2008) have put forward a theory of "altruism born of suffering," – that individuals who have suffered a traumatic event can develop an increased sensitivity to the suffering of others, feeling an increased responsibility to help. They note that in so doing, the individual may find that their altruistic actions aid in their own healing process.

What Can We Learn?

Three days ago, I witnessed a woman at Safeway screaming at her young child. She didn't hit her or threaten her, but she had the air of someone who was close to losing control. I felt really uncomfortable. And I froze. I was about 30 meters away from her and I stood there debating about whether I should do something, or what I could do. A few seconds passed and my opportunity was over. I felt guilty, and I remembered talking about a similar incident with a friend. I just couldn't come up with the right words. I still haven't found them. I think about this scenario a lot. I think that if a researcher would

have given me this scenario as a hypothetical vignette, I would have said that I would do something to intervene. I definitely would have said that a bystander should do something. Yet, in real life, I didn't do anything. I know that this is what happens when you move from the hypothetical to the real, where seconds matter, no one else is doing anything, and you are a little bit too far away. But knowing it doesn't make me feel better.

Today after meeting with a principal, I was left with the question of who we want our future citizens to be. He was worried that students only seem to get one message on how a witness should deal with bullying – 'tell the principal.' He talked about wanting his students to have translatable skills; skills that will take them into their adulthood. Then he said, 'You don't get to tell the principal when you're at Safeway and you see someone beating up their kids.' I don't think he knew just how true that statement rang for me.

School Strategies

Multi-focus, multi-modal, on-going efforts. This principal was discussing the role of schools as agents of socialization. Schools play an important role in shaping our future citizens. However, schools are not the only context in which bullying occurs. Therefore it is important that programs aimed at stopping bullying take into account the entire school climate, including families and communities (Greene, 2003; Pepler, 2006). In an effort to co-ordinate bullying research and practice efforts across Canada, Craig and Pepler (2007) noted that interventions need to focus on "supporting positive interactions, discouraging bullying, promoting empathy for victimized children, and encouraging children to intervene in bullying (p. 89)." Interventions promoting positive interactions and respect

for difference are targeted at the roots of bullying and promote a school climate that may serve to lessen the amount of bullying.

The students who participated in this study had strong advice for schools. Although they were wary of many "anti-bullying" programs, they all believed that schools had an important role to play in the elimination of bullying, and a portion of their intervention skills were learned in school. In particular, participants called for interventions that were peer-led or had a high level of student involvement. For instance, participants believed that assemblies and presentations could be effective, but they wanted the message to be powerful enough to reach students at an emotional level. Instead of lecture-style presentations or old videos designed to teach students about bullying, they wanted thoughtful conversations about students' and teachers' real experiences with bullying. Merrell and Isava (2008), the authors of a recent meta-analysis of 16 studies of bullying intervention programs, tentatively concluded that such programs showed positive effects but noted that there has not been enough research to date to allow for a statement of which interventions are the most effective (Merrell & Isava, 2008). Perhaps future research can examine questions related to peer-led interventions versus those brought to students from an adult source.

Students also commented on the need for continuous efforts at intervention, not just one assembly at the beginning of the year that is devoted to bullying. Current research also supports the idea that intervention efforts need to be on-going, as findings show that the impact of bullying intervention strategies fades over time (Stevens et al., 2000). Instead of a high-intensity one-day program to deal with bullying, Blumen (2008) suggests that interventions may be low-level, as long as they occur in everyday school

and classroom activities. In fact, the range of strategies that can be included could span the course of a school year. For example, these interventions could include direct learning and discussion of bullying, human rights education, peace education, the creating of positive relationships, the promotion of empathy, and discussions of moral conscience and duty.

Interventions aimed at upstanders. As part of whole-school bullying strategies, experts are calling for intervention strategies aimed at mobilizing students to intervene when witnessing bullying (Coloroso, 2002; Pepler & Craig, 2007; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). The findings of this research suggest key areas of focus when implementing strategies aimed at bystanders. First, in order to intervene, students must notice bullying; therefore strategies to increase awareness of bullying are warranted. Bystanders must also regard bullying as something worthy of action, meaning that it is important for intervention efforts to focus on awareness of the negative impact upon targets of bullying, evoking sensitivity and empathy for targets of bullying. Bystanders must also feel competent to intervene, meaning that a skills training program is warranted. In addition, the upstanders in this study felt responsible as citizens, were not afraid to stand out, and acted upon their own moral conscience. If schools can find ways to encourage and reward these qualities, the resulting school climate may result in students who are less accepting of bullying. However, this is no easy task, as encouraging students to act upon their own moral conscience means that at times students may act in opposition to following the rules. How schools choose to deal with this may depend upon whether they take a punitive or retributive approach to harm (Wachtel & McCold, 2004). In addition,

participants were also motivated to act by a sense of fulfillment, meaning that schools could focus upon promoting the rewards of intervening, both tangible and intangible.

While ideas for upstander intervention efforts are included throughout the discussion, I have also included a list of suggestions for potential intervention efforts. Appendix E provides suggestions for upstander intervention efforts arising directly from this research, as well as examples of potential exercises.

Skills training programs. Although a skills training program is only one part of a bullying prevention strategy focused on upstanders, there are useful implications for such programs within these findings. A key idea found within this research is the understanding that students directed their interventions at different individual roles involved in bullying: a) the bullying student, b) the bullied student, c) other bystanders, and d) adults. This suggests that upstander skills training programs can teach students a variety of methods for intervening, depending upon the role of the individual to whom the intervention is directed.

a) When intervening with students who bully, participants attempted to show them the impact of their hurtful behaviour, implying that they believed the bullying student could feel empathy for others if aware of the hurtful impact of their actions. Some participants were careful not to shame the bullying student. For example, Jenna was factual and direct in her interventions, explaining clearly that bullying is wrong and why it is wrong so that there could be no misunderstanding.

b) When intervening with students who were the target of bullying, participants showed concern and respect by asking about the welfare of the student or

suggesting joint action in response to the bullying. For example, Sarah showed respect for a bullied student by asking her what she would like to do about the bullying. Daniel also intervened by befriending bullied students.

c) Participants also intervened with other bystanders by refusing to participate in bullying. Their actions exerted social control, publicly showing that it is not acceptable to participate in bullying. For example, some participants described pointedly walking away from witnessing bullying, or refusing to participate in rumours and gossip.

d) Participants also directed interventions at adults, involving parents and school staff in their intervention.

These findings provide useful ideas for the creation of skills training programs. In particular, it is important to stress that every person involved in bullying should be treated with respect, regardless of their role. Apart from the idea that every person deserves to be treated with respect, students can be made aware that it will also likely increase their chances of success as individuals are more likely to respond positively to interventions that are not belittling or shaming. It is likely also important for skills training programs to underscore the idea that there are many strategies for intervening. Some students may feel unable to intervene directly with a bullying student for fear of reprisal. These students can be made aware of alternative strategies, such as directing an intervention at other witnesses, or befriending a bullied student. Indeed, befriending can be an exceptionally important intervention strategy as having friends can significantly protect students from bullying (Boulton et al., 1999).

No matter whom the intervention was directed at, participants also stressed the importance of intervening in groups. All participants talked about intervening with a friend or trying to get others to intervene with them. Classic research in social psychology research also shows that this can motivate others to intervene (Milgram, 1965). Intervening with peers is not only less psychologically risky, it is likely safer. For instance, Blass (2007) noted that when adult whistleblowers join forces, their corporation is less likely to respond with sanctions. This finding has particular implications for skills training programs. Such programs can stress that intervening with a friend may make a student more comfortable in intervening and may reduce the risk of harm to the upstander.

Training for school staff. The finding that participants were able to discern which adult to involve suggests that there are teachers who may not know how to handle an upstander's request for assistance in bullying. A key implication of this research is the need for teacher, school staff and parent education about the role of upstanders in bullying. Such awareness efforts may result in less risk to the upstander of being perceived as part of the problem. These awareness efforts could dispel myths that any student involvement in bullying is negative, or that bystanders should mind their own business. Adults may also need help learning and practicing intervention skills, as they may not know what to do when approached by a student trying to get assistance in stopping bullying.

Unfortunately, the descriptions of participants often cast schools and school staff in the role of bystander. School staff are not always aware of all episodes of bullying, and in response, participants said that more supervision was needed. This corresponds to calls

for increased supervision of free time activities such as lunch hour and hallway monitoring as an important method in preventing and responding to bullying (Olweus, 1993). However, participants also described incidents of bullying occurring in class, clearly witnessed by a teacher. Perhaps this is because teachers face the same obstacles to intervening as students. Participants wondered if teachers were not always able to tell bullying apart from good-natured teasing, or they sometimes lacked the confidence or skills to intervene. It is clear that if expected to intervene, teachers and other school staff also need to be provided with bullying intervention strategies and training, particularly those aimed at awareness and intervention strategies. Many of the same strategies that can be applied to student bystander education can also be used to provide school staff with awareness, skills and confidence to safely intervene in bullying.

Shockingly, students also described situations in which their teacher instigated bullying. When providing teacher training and continuing education, there is evidence that it is important to ask hard questions such as "how may you have contributed to bullying in your class?" or "have you ever bullied a co-worker or student?" Staff awareness of difference is also important, as participants described real and potential bullying created by careless comments of teachers regarding individuals in minority groups.

In addition, a very real risk of intervening was the perception that students may be punished by school authority, should school staff misinterpret the students' intentions. Perhaps some 'zero tolerance' policies on bullying overshadow the concept that students can be involved in bullying in a positive manner. Although the call for zero tolerance policies on bullying is still strong, it may be losing momentum. For instance, the U.S.

Department of Education (2008) warns against zero tolerance policies on bullying, noting that "severe punishments for bullying, such as suspension or exclusion from school, may discourage students and staff from coming forward with their concerns about bullying" (p. 20). Although it can often be hard to determine student roles in bullying, it is important for schools to be aware of the role of upstanders, particularly when disciplining students who are involved in an episode of bullying. To that end, students also need to be provided with ideas for how to intervene in nonviolent ways to reduce the risk of them being mistaken for provoking violence.

Peace Psychology

The students who participated in this study acted to stop another student from being bullied. When viewed through the lens of peace psychology, this action served to create a climate that was less tolerant of violence, if only for a moment. Some of the students were intentful about this consequence of their actions, wanting to inspire others or send a message that violence is not acceptable in their school. Others simply wanted the target of bullying to stop hurting.

From a peace psychology perspective, participants in this research were involved in both a nonviolent opposition to direct violence and in the promotion of social justice at a broader level (Christie et al., 2001). Intervening directly in an episode of bullying would be considered opposition to direct violence, whether this is to step in directly in the moment or report the incident to an authority. In this way, participants were involved in active peacemaking. In addition, many of the participants also reported joining existing bullying prevention projects in their schools or taking the initiative to try to prevent bullying on their own. This also provides evidence that schools can focus on prevention

efforts as a further way to engage upstanders in the issue of bullying. These actions would be considered peacebuilding activities, as they are aimed at the prevention of bullying and the promotion of a school climate that is less tolerant of physical, emotional or social violence.

These students also made efforts at nonviolent intervention. Although they reported feeling anger and thinking negatively about the students who engaged in bullying, none of the participants reported intervening in a way that was physically violent. In fact, Ashley described regret that she did not try to stop a friend from using a threat to stop bullying, expressing that she did not want to use violence to fight violence, "I don't think that people should be expressing themselves by beating somebody up, but by talking with someone." Jenna described her ability to keep her anger out of her intervention and instead explained why the behavior was inappropriate.

Some participants were involved in prevention efforts before attempting active intervention. For instance, both Ani and Rachel were involved in anti-bullying programs at their school before they attempted to intervene in bullying. Ani directly relates his ability to intervene to what he gained from being involved in the prevention program. In contrast, Erin was first involved in peacemaking – intervening directly in bullying – before this led her to speak to other students in an effort to stop bullying in her school.

These findings have implications for efforts at peace education. Those who develop and implement peace education programs can use examples of bullying, a salient and common experience for adolescent students, to highlight peacebuilding and peacemaking. They can also use examples of intervention in bullying to discuss nonviolent attitudes and actions. In addition, it appears that students can be encouraged to

make positive changes in bullying through both intervention and prevention. The path to becoming an upstander may occur in either domain, giving peace educators more flexibility and variability in their programs. In addition, programs such as *Facing History and Ourselves* (2008) use the word upstander in relation to social justice, violence and human rights issues. Students can use programs like this to become familiar with upstander exemplars and then be asked to apply this to common forms of physical, emotional and social violence such as bullying.

For instance, one could compare Erin's quote about her reasons why people should intervene in bullying

> It could happen to them at any time. Like I didn't think it was going to happen to me and then there I was bleeding on the ground, you know.

to Martin Niemoeller's famous poem about the Holocaust (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009).

> First they came for the Socialists
> And I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist.
> Then they came for the Trade Unionists
> And I did not speak out because I was not a Trade Unionist.
> Then they came for the Jews
> And I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.
> Then they came for me
> And there was no one left to speak for me.

Beyond the School

The participants in this study saw the bigger picture. They recognized bullying in situations outside of school. They also recognized that the actions taken to stop bullying can be translated to other social problems. In their article, '*The banality of heroism*,' Franco and Zimbardo (2006, para. 7) discuss the idea that "we are *all* potential heroes waiting for a moment in life to perform a heroic deed." They present the idea of nurturing

heroic imagination – imagining ethically problematic situations, and our own actions in response. These authors suggest that children should be provided strong examples of heroes – individuals who took personal risk to uphold an important ideal – to nurture the desire to become heroic oneself. In promoting safer schools and communities, the heroism of children and adolescents is often overlooked. Perhaps it is possible to provide students with examples of heroic deeds performed by young people and to engage students in activities designed to spark their own heroic imagination. Adults involved in the lives of young people can be reminded of the potential for heroism in any student. As evidenced by the participants in this study, there is no stereotypical upstander profile. Upstanders could be male or female, a student who is bullied or a student who bullies, someone from a majority group or someone from a minority group, a student on council or a student in a "learning differences" class, someone with many friends or someone with few friends, someone who excels academically or someone who struggles. Parents, teachers, administrators and program planners should treat every student as a potential upstander.

In this vein, perhaps it is also possible to engage the heroic imagination of adults. Movies provide examples of heroes who risk lives to save another. Yet ordinary people often do nothing in response to workplace bullying, discrimination, human rights abuses, and social problems. Perhaps it is also possible to inspire adults to be upstanders as well. We don't have a school to provide us with the same opportunities. Our communities are often wider and more spread out. Yet maybe we can learn from these students too.

Should We Encourage Individuals to be Upstanders?

Who is it For?

After discussing the results and potential implications of this study, there is a question remaining: should we encourage students to be upstanders? There are many people impacted by a single action to intervene. This raises the question of who would benefit from efforts to encourage individuals to become upstanders. At first glance, it is perhaps most obvious to think that the actions of an upstander benefit the target of violence or injustice. In bullying, we know that students report that they would rather have a peer intervene than a teacher (Rigby & Bagshaw, 2003) and that peer intervention is effective at stopping bullying half of the time (Hawkins et al., 2001). However, relatively little is known about this experience from the target's point of view. Although it is likely that the interventions are experienced as positive, there may be occasions in which a target of bullying experiences peer intervention negatively. There is no research on the experiences of students who have had a peer intervene in bullying on their behalf. Qualitative study of these experiences would be extremely beneficial in expanding our current knowledge of bystander intervention, and in increasing the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

When considering whether intervention should be encouraged, it is possible that the broader social group has the potential to be most positively impacted by the actions of upstanders. That is, if bystanders to bullying no longer existed, episodes of bullying would be dramatically reduced, creating a safer school environment for all students. Effectively encouraging upstanders also benefits school administrators, reducing the "bullying problem." Larger society may also benefit, as it is possible that the action of

helping another leads to more prosocial helping in the future (Goleman, 2003). Therefore, if students could be encouraged to assume the role or identity of an upstander, it is possible that this may make them more likely to intervene in other unjust or violent practices, positively benefiting society as a whole.

It is unclear how the actions of upstanders are experienced by the aggressor. In schools, students who bully are likely last on the list of stakeholders who would benefit from upstander intervention. If upstander skills training programs were used as part of an anti-bullying program, this manner of portraying bullying could easily paint the bully as a faceless evil-doer who needs to be stopped. Yet this is obviously not the case. Students can take many different roles in bullying, depending upon the situation (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Participants in this research felt empathy for the students who bully others, noting that they likely have problems in other aspects of their lives. Although some participants were also hoping to positively impact the bullying student, this was not a major motivation for intervening. However, if accomplished sensitively, an intervention could impact a bullying student positively. For instance, Jenna's intervention helped a bullying student to see why other classmates were responding negatively to him by explaining how and why his bullying behaviour was hurtful. It remains unclear how students who bully would be impacted by increased encouragement of upstander behaviour. Future research could focus on the experiences of students who were stopped from bullying by a third party. As well, in order to be effective and respectful, efforts to encourage upstanders need to be careful not to dehumanize those who are engaged in bullying or other forms of violence.

The actions of upstanders have a definite impact on other witnesses to violence or injustice. Participants also recognized this, citing it as a reason to intervene in bullying. The actions of upstanders are likely to benefit other witnesses, either in releasing them from the difficult responsibility to intervene, or in freeing them to intervene as well. For instance, Erin described being inspired to intervene in violence she witnessed on a city bus by the actions of another passenger.

Finally, in considering who benefits from attempts to encourage upstander behaviour, there is ambiguity about the impact on upstanders themselves. It is clear that all participants felt good about their efforts to intervene, and were even motivated to intervene by a desire for fulfillment. Yet, participants sometimes incurred bullying as a result of intervening. Some participants also reported being over-taxed by their sensitivity to bullying and the lone responsibility for putting a stop to bullying. Other participants described mixed feelings about the results of their efforts and questioned whether intervening made a difference at all. It is clear that most students value intervention in bullying as a moral choice, reporting that students should intervene in bullying (Rogers & Tisak, 1996). Intervening in bullying likely resolves an inner conflict, ensuring that one's actions are in accordance with one's values. Indeed, recent research grounded in the theory of cognitive dissonance supports the idea that people change their behaviour when made aware that it is not in accordance with their publicly stated beliefs (Stone & Fernandez, 2008). Yet, in encouraging individuals to take the role of upstander, we ask them to place themselves at risk – physically, socially, and emotionally.

In some situations, upstanders are lauded as heroes precisely because they have done something that no one would have been expected to do. As a result, students are

faced with public contradictions. For instance, police officials often suggest that a witness to a public attack should not directly intervene (e.g., Calgary Police Service, 2004). Yet when someone does intervene, the media heralds this person as a hero. Even when we know that intervening is the right thing to do, there remains the question of how much risk students should be encouraged to take in the role of an upstander.

Facing Helplessness and Uselessness

There is a lack of research on witness experiences of bullying. Those that have examined this experience have found that witnessing bullying is generally a negative experience, prompting feelings of fear and helplessness (Jeffrey et al., 2001). These are immobilizing emotions. Facing and overcoming helplessness can be extraordinarily difficult, and what waits on the other side is not always rewarding. The students in this study who faced feelings of helplessness and acted to stop bullying were sometimes left with questions about whether their actions made a difference to the student who was bullied. Sometimes the bullying did not stop. Sometimes the bullying would stop, but it would start up again after days or weeks. Sometimes the student who intervened faced bullying as a result of intervening. More often, they were left with questions about whether there was a point to intervening at all. Being sensitive to the issue of bullying made these students more aware of bullying. It also made them wonder if they really made a difference. In choosing to become an upstander, these students overcame the feelings of helplessness associated with being a witness to bullying. Nevertheless, once overcoming feelings of helplessness, these students faced feelings of uselessness and ambivalence about the meaning of their actions.

I did not go into this study expecting to find a sense of ambivalence about the impact of intervening. The degree of distress expressed by participants was truly surprising. Perhaps it is related to feelings of sensitivity to injustice, empathy for the feelings of others, and a sense of responsibility to act when a peer is treated with disrespect. It seems that there is more than just a physical or social risk to being an upstander, there may also be an emotional risk. Some students found it emotionally draining to be aware of and feel responsible for the bullying in their schools, and even when acting to stop it, they sometimes felt distress over the impact of their actions when compared with the seemingly relentless force of bullying.

If schools are to encourage upstanders, there may need to be a space for these issues. Although esoteric, they are important, and may impact the actions and worldview of upstanders. Being an upstander is not like being a member of an after-school club. It is not easy, and it is not always rewarding. Before deciding whether to encourage individuals to intervene in bullying, we may need to first face the question of whether it indeed does make a difference.

The last chapter has been the hardest to write. I have found it extremely hard to begin, and very hard to let go of. Throughout the writing I had a nagging uncomfortable feeling. I found myself asking the questions "does my work on this research make any difference?" and "is it enough?" It is hard to let go of this research because I wanted this research to do more than just get me a Ph.D., I wanted the voices of the participants to reach people and maybe even inspire people. Sometimes I feel like the rushing activities of everyday life have taken me away from that sense of purpose. I forget about it for days or weeks at a time. Right before writing this chapter, I tried to regain that

sense of purpose and reach out again. This is when I set up the website, putting a part of the research in the public domain. Sometimes I feel like it might reach people, and other times it seems like a small little raft bobbing in the ocean, reaching people only by chance. I know that I should be doing more. I'm not fully sure what is stopping me. Perhaps it really is busyness, but if I'm honest, maybe there is also a little bit of fear. Maybe it will make its way into the hands of a junior high school student or a parent or a teacher, and still not reach them, and still not be enough.

Part way through writing, I had a talk with my supervisor. As we talked, I realized that these questions are the same ones that the participants are asking of themselves. I know it seems obvious, but I really hadn't noticed it before. Just like them, I wonder if my actions here have made a difference. Just like them, I am left wondering if my actions are enough. When I really feel that, there is a sadness there that is different from my normal feelings of academic anxiety. It is quiet and deep. It is the part of me that whispers that the answer to these questions is 'no.'

But this isn't all there is. Just like them, I can hold doubt and hope at the same time.

How did these students respond to their own feelings of uselessness? Daniel provides his answer:

> Um, its almost like a hockey game, you have to come back, you have to keep shooting, you have to go for a goal, you can't just let 'em pile over you, a good instance is the Oilers currently, they have people pushed around, uh people with concussions, people not doing so well but they're getting back on their feet, they're really getting back out there. And that's what we, as a populace of kids need to do. We need to get back out there. We need to stop it.

Despite the doubt of each participant, their answers to one of my questions on the interview guide was the same. Near the end of the interview, I asked each participant if they would continue to step in when they witness bullying. Each student said that they would.

> *Yah, definitely.*
> *Mmm hmm.*
> *Yeah. I would in an instant right now.*
> *Um, yeah, yeah.*
> *Yes.*
> *For sure, for sure, I can't like not.*
> *Yep, definitely.*
> *Yeah.*
> *Oh of course, yeah. Always will.*

What does it mean to be an upstander? It means you are tireless leader. Not the kind of leader that gives speeches and tells others what to do; the kind of leader that leads by the way you live your life. It means making your voice heard when others are silent. It means knowing that something is wrong, knowing that changing it is hard, risky, and often unnoticed, but doing something anyway. Doing it anyway because you have to, because if you don't, then maybe no one else will. It means taking action because it could have been you. It means living with the doubt that your actions may not have made a difference. And it means facing a problem bigger than you, knowing that your actions are miniscule, but knowing that if enough people did the same thing, the tide would change.

Will enough people do the same thing?

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Appendix A: Information Materials for Prospective Participants

Poster

University of Alberta Bullying Research Study
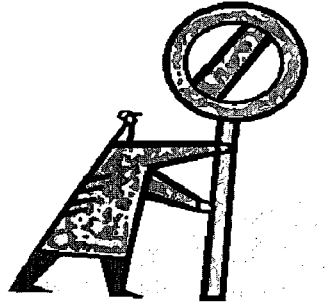
Have you ever tried to stop bullying?

*This is an exciting chance to be involved in research at the University of Alberta. You can teach us about your experiences of taking action to **stop** bullying.*

You can be involved if:

- You are a **junior high** school student

- You witnessed an incident of bullying

- You acted to **stop** the bullying or signaled to others that it was not ok

For more information call **Shelagh Dunn**

492-2483

bullying@ualberta.ca

www.ualberta.ca/~bullying

Brochure

Contact Information

For more information about the study or if you are interested in participating please contact **Shelagh Dunn** at:

Phone: (780) 492-2483

Email: bullying@ualberta.ca

www.ualberta.ca/~bullying

If you decide to participate, it will be important to let your parent or guardian know that you are interested in the study.

I really look forward to hearing from you!

University of Alberta Research Study

Have you ever tried to stop bullying?

Bullying Study

www.ualberta.ca/~bullying

Are You Interested?

This research study offers an exciting opportunity to be involved in research on the experiences of junior high students who *take action* to **stop** bullying when they see it happening.

I am hoping to hear from you if:

- You are a **junior high** school student

- You witnessed an incident of bullying

- You acted to **stop** the bullying or signalled to others that it was not ok

- AND you are interested in talking about this experience.

How Does It Work?

Interviews:

The interviews are about 1 hour long where I meet with each student to talk about their experiences (with permission from a parent or guardian of course!). In the interview, I hope to really learn from each person who participates in this research study. I also hope that it can be interesting for you to talk about your experience of trying to stop bullying.

Focus Group:

Students are also invited to participate in a focus group, a 1-2 hour get-together where you can meet other students and talk about your experiences, thoughts and ideas about bullying. This meeting can be a fun way to talk about your ideas for how this research study can help others put a stop to bullying.

For more information on this research study, please visit:
www.ualberta.ca/~bullying
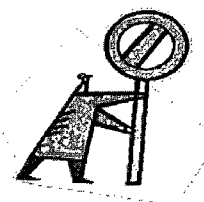
About the Researcher

My name is Shelagh Dunn, and I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. This research is part of my PhD degree in Counselling Psychology.

When I was in junior high, I witnessed a lot of bullying. The experience of seeing bullying happen on a day-to-day basis has stayed with me as a researcher.

I hope to understand more about this experience, so that we know more about how to take action to create less bullying.

Website

University of Alberta Bullying Study

Have you ever spoken out when you saw someone hurting someone else?

Have you ever tried to stop bullying?

This research study looks at the experiences of junior high students who *take action* to **stop** bullying when they see it happening.

Many students and adults don't like to see bullying, but only a few take action to *stop* bullying or other forms of violence or harassment.

Check out the links to the left for more information on this important and exciting opportunity to become involved in research at the University of Alberta.

Thank you!

University of Alberta Bullying Study

Taking Action

It can be extremely hard to know what to do when you see someone being hurt. And it can take a lot of courage to stand up for the person being hurt. But the actions of witnesses to bullying or other instances where someone is being hurt are very important. If a witness does nothing, it is like saying the bullying is ok. But if a witness takes action to try to stop the bullying, this can often stop it right then and there, and it sends the message that hurting someone else is not ok.

Stories of Action:

In this research study, I am hoping to hear the stories of students who have witnessed someone else being hurt and have *taken action* to stop it. I am curious about the experiences of witnesses who have taken action, their thoughts, their feelings and how they think the situation turned out.

Not sure if *YOU* have ever taken action?

If you have ever witnessed someone else being hurt, and you acted in any way to get involved and tried to stop it, then you have taken action. Check out these stories from witnesses.

University of Alberta Bullying Study

Stories of Action

Mikayla's Story

I always eat lunch with my friends in the same place every day. During one lunch, we were about to leave to go to our spot, when a new girl asked if she could come with us. I said, "sure." Then I looked around and noticed that most of the group was shaking their heads. My friend Sara, said, "Sorry, there's only enough room for us." My other friends nodded in a really snotty way and started to turn their backs. I couldn't believe they were being so mean, these were *my* friends. So I said, "Well, maybe there isn't enough room for me either then." And I sat with the new girl that lunch hour. It turns out that we became really good friends.

Ali's Story

We were all playing soccer in a field by my house, having fun. I noticed some high school kids hanging around the park. They started throwing sand at these kids who were just minding their own business. So I stood up and said really loudly, "Why don't you stop playing in the park, and leave those kids alone?" My friends started to join in. It was a little bit tense because the high school guys started talking back and then started to head toward us, but we just kept playing soccer, and eventually they walked away.

To submit your own story, click here.

University of Alberta Bullying Study

Are you Interested?

If you are interested in this exciting chance to take part in a research study at the University of Alberta, please contact me or submit your story through this website.

I am hoping to hear from you if:

- You are a junior high school student in Edmonton or area
- You witnessed an incident of bullying
- You acted to try to stop the bullying or signalled to others that it was not ok
- AND you are interested in talking about this experience.

The benefits of participating in this study include:

- The chance to learn more about your own actions to stop bullying.
- The opportunity to meet other students who have similar experiences.
- The possibility of having your experiences published.
- The chance to make a difference.

University of Alberta Bullying Study

More About the Research

To get at your thoughts and experiences of trying to stop bullying, this research uses interviews and focus groups.

Interviews:

The interviews are about 1 hour long where I meet with each student to talk about their experiences (with permission from a parent or guardian of course!). In the interview, I hope to really learn from each person who participates in this research study. I also hope that it can be interesting for you to talk about your experience of trying to stop bullying.

Focus Groups :

Students involved in the research will have the opportunity to participate in a focus group, a 1-2 hour get-together where you can meet other students interested in this issue to talk about your experiences, thoughts and ideas. This meeting can be a fun way to talk about your ideas for how this research study can help others put a stop to bullying.

For more information on this study, click here.

University of Alberta Bullying Study

More Information

Everyone who participates in this research study will be treated with respect.

- Everyone who participates has control over what they talk about.
- Participants who are interviewed have the choice to join a focus group or not.
- All participants have a say in how their story is written.
- I will respect the privacy of all participants. When I write about their experiences, I will give them a pseudonym (a fake name) to make sure their experiences remain private.

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Your Story of Witnessing Bullying

I am interested in hearing your experiences of witnessing bullying, how it felt, what you were thinking, and what you did (or didn't) do in response.

Sending me your story doesn't mean that you will be interviewed for this study. Sending your story *does* mean that you give me permission to **post** your story on this website or **publish** your story (or parts of it) in my research. If I do use your story, I will give you a pseudonym (a fake name).

To: bullying@ualberta.ca

Subject: My Story

Email:

Name:

Story:

[Submit Story]

University of Alberta Bullying Study

Contact Information

For more information about the study or if you are interested in participating please contact **Shelagh Dunn** at:

Phone:

Email: bullying@ualberta.ca

University of Alberta Bullying Study

About the Researcher

My name is Shelagh Dunn, and I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. This research is part of my PhD degree in Counselling Psychology.

When I was in junior high, I witnessed a lot of bullying. The experience of seeing bullying happen on a day-to-day basis has stayed with me as I got older. I hope to understand more about this experience, so that we know more about how to create less bullying.

I am researching the experiences of junior high students who have tried to stop bullying because I believe that this is such an *important* action. I know from personal experience that it takes a lot of courage to try to stop bullying - I think it takes an amazing person to be able to do it.

So I think I have a great job as a researcher because I get to know some pretty amazing people!

Appendix B: Consent and Assent Forms

ASSENT FORM

The purpose of this research study is to understand the experiences of students who have tried to stop bullying. You have been invited to participate because you are a junior high school student who has witnessed bullying within the last year, and acted to try to stop the bullying, and because you are interested in talking about your experience. If you choose to participate in this research, I think that your participation may lead to a better understanding of how to stop bullying. I also hope that your participation will benefit you by giving you a chance to explore your actions and meet other students.

As a participant in this research study:

- I will explain this research to you

- I will encourage you to ask questions at any time

- You will be asked to participate in at least one interview, lasting between 30 minutes and 2 hours. In the interview I will ask you about yourself, and about your experiences of acting to stop bullying.

- You will also be invited to participate in a focus group where you would meet the other participants of this research study to talk about what it was like to be involved in the research and your ideas for putting a stop to bullying.

- You may be invited to share other documents (writing, artwork, handouts from school) that can help me to understand your experience better. If you do share any of these documents, they will be returned to you after being photocopied for use in this research.

- Your interview and the focus group meeting will be audio-taped and transcribed, so that everything you and I say is written down.

- You have the right to a copy of the written transcripts of the interview and focus group and a copy of the final product of this research study.

- You will have a say about how your experience is included in this research study.

Your participation in this research study is **voluntary**. That means that you may choose not to answer any or all of the interview questions or participate in the focus group. Also, you can stop participating in the study at any time, and if you do, I will not use your information in this study.

If you do choose to participate in this research study, I will keep your identity **anonymous**, meaning that if I talk about or write about the information we discuss, I will not mention your real name, and I will change enough details so that your identity will remain private. This means that I will give you a pseudonym – a fake name when I write about you or talk about you. The only exception to this is if I use research consultants to help me with the study (and they will sign a privacy agreement), or if I become aware that yourself or someone else is seriously at risk of being hurt. This means that I will not share our interview conversations with your parents unless you give me permission, or you are at risk.

All information and documents that I collect from this research study will be kept **safely stored** in a locked facility. The interview tapes and written transcripts will only be accessed by myself (Shelagh Dunn) or my research supervisor, Dr. Derek Truscott, a professor at the University of Alberta.

The results of this research study will be **published or made public** in my doctoral dissertation, and may be published as a book, a journal or magazine article, or made public as a presentation. Before the results are published, I will give you a copy of the places where your experience is written (for example, in a story or in quotes from our interview) so that you have a chance to tell me if you are comfortable with the way your story has been written. In all cases, I will keep your identity anonymous.

If you have any concerns or questions about this research study, please contact:

Me, Shelagh Dunn at 439-8508 or my supervisor Dr. Derek Truscott at 492-1611.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751. This research, and any research consultants will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

Consent to participate:

I understand the information on this form. I have a copy of this information for my own records. By signing below, I agree to participate in this research study.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Researcher as Witness   Date

CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this research study is to describe and understand student experiences of putting a stop to bullying. I, Shelagh Dunn, am conducting this research study as part of my doctoral work in Educational Psychology. Dr. Derek Truscott, in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta will supervise this research study.

Your child has been invited to participate because he or she is a junior high school student who has witnessed bullying within the last year, and acted to try to stop the bullying, and because she or he is interested in talking about this experience. If you choose to grant permission for your child to participate, and if he or she also agrees to participate, I believe that your child's involvement in the study will help others to better understand what is needed to help stop bullying. I think that this information could help other students, teachers, schools, and researchers. I also hope that being involved in this study may help your child gain further insight into his or her own actions and may benefit your child through meeting other students who have similar experiences.

As a participant in this research study:

- I will explain this research to your child
- I will encourage your child to ask questions at any time
- Your child will be asked to participate in at least one interview, lasting between 30 minutes and 2 hours. In the interview I will ask your child about himself or herself, and about her or his experiences of acting to stop bullying.
- Your child will also be invited to participate in a focus group to meet the other participants of this research study to talk about what it was like to be involved in the research and your child's ideas for putting a stop to bullying.
- Your child may be invited to share other documents (writing, artwork, handouts from school) that can help me to understand this experience better. If your child does share any of these documents, they will be returned to him or her after being photocopied for use in this research.
- The interview and the focus group meeting will be audio-taped and transcribed, so that everything your child and I say is written down.
- Your child has the right to a copy of the transcripts of the interview and focus group and a copy of the final product of this research study.
- Your child will have a say about how his or her experience is included in this research study.

Your child's participation in this research study is **voluntary**. That means that your child may choose not to answer any or all of the interview questions or participate in the focus group. Also, you or your child are free to withdraw from this study at any time. If you withdraw, your child's information will not be included in the study.

If you do consent to your child's participation in this research study, I will keep your identity and the identity of your child **anonymous**, meaning that if I talk about or write about the information we discuss, I will not mention your child's real name, and will

change enough details so that his or her identity will remain private. This means that I will give her or him a pseudonym. The only exception to this is if I use research consultants who agree to keep this information confidential to help me with the study, or if I become aware that your child or someone else is seriously at risk of being hurt. This also means that I will only report the content of our interview to you with your child's permission, or if there is a risk of harm to your child.

All information and documents that I collect from this research study will be kept **safely stored** in a locked facility. The interview tapes and written transcripts will only be accessed by myself, Shelagh Dunn or my research supervisor, Dr. Derek Truscott.

The results of this research study will be **published or made public** in the form of my doctoral dissertation, and in potential other forms such as a book, a journal or magazine article or a presentation. Before the results are published, I will give your child a copy of the places where his or her experience is written (for example, in a story or in quotes from our interview) so that she or he has a chance to tell me if she or he is comfortable with the way the experience has been written. In all cases, I will keep your child's identity anonymous. If you have any concerns or questions about this research study, please contact:

Shelagh Dunn	Dr. Derek Truscott
Researcher	Supervisor
University of Alberta	University of Alberta
Department of Educational Psychology	Department of Educational Psychology
Phone: (780) 439-8508	Phone: (780) 492-1161

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751. This research, and any research consultants will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

Consent to participate:

I understand the information on this form. I have a copy of this information for my own records. By signing below, I consent to my child's participate in this research study.

Child's name: _____

_____
Signature of Parent or Guardian   Date

_____
Signature of Researcher as Witness   Date

Appendix C: Interview Guide

<u>Purpose and Plan of Interview</u>

<u>About Me</u>

<u>About You</u>
- School
- Fun/Hobbies
- Interests

<u>Bullying</u>
- Beliefs on bullying
- Personal experiences

<u>Critical Incident and Action</u>
Describe a time that really stands out when you witnessed bullying and acted. Try to remember what happened and what you did.

- Description and story of bullying (And then what happened?)
  - Surroundings
  - Other witnesses
  - Your experiences (thoughts/feelings) as a witness

- Description of action (What happened next?)
  - Decision-making
  - Your experiences (thoughts/feelings) of acting

- Describe the results of your actions
  - Bully/target/other witnesses
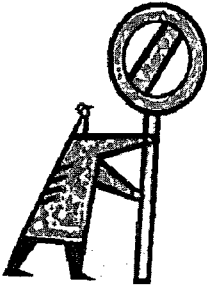 - Your experiences (thoughts/feelings) at the end of the incident

<u>Reflections</u>
Now, I'd like to talk about what this experience means to you.

- What its like talking about this incident
- What makes this incident stand out from other incidents of bullying
- Your thoughts on how you were able to act
- How would others describe your actions?
- Would you act this way again?
- What others need to know about your experiences
- What needs to happen about bullying in the future?
- What do you think about whether one person can make a difference?

Appendix D: Website and Facebook Group

Website

THE NON-BYSTANDER | ANYONE CAN STOP BULLYING

STORIES   ABOUT THE RESEARCH   ADD YOUR VOICE   RESOURCES   CONTACT

"*The world is dangerous not because of those who do harm, but because of those who look at it without doing anything.*"

Albert Einstein

University of Alberta Research Study

Welcome! This website presents the findings of a **University of Alberta** research study exploring the experiences of junior high school students who took action to stop bullying. These students took risks in order to become a non-bystander. Their message? Anyone can take action to stop bullying. It may not be easy, but it is possible.

Who is this website for?

- Anyone who is bothered by bullying they have witnessed at school, work, or in their community.
- Anyone who wants to intervene to stop violence or injustice when they witness it occuring.
- Anyone who is on the verge of taking action to make the world a better place.
- Students, professionals, and researchers.

This website is in progress. It will be updated as the research progresses.

Dedicated to the students who gave the gift of their time to this research. Thank you!

THE NON-BYSTANDER , ANYONE CAN STOP BULLYING

HOME   STORIES   ABOUT THE RESEARCH   ADD YOUR VOICE   RESOURCES   CONTACT

Erin's Story

Sarah's Story

Ani's Story

Brandon's Story

Jenna's Story

Stories of Action

These are the stories of action told by five participants in this research study. These five stories capture the experiences of what it was like to be a non-bystander to bullying. These students were interviewed about their experiences and their stories have been written by the researcher. As much as possible, the actual words of the students from their interviews were used. Parts of the interview were left out and sometimes a word or two was added or deleted to make the stories easier to read. The names of the students have been changed so that they will remain anonymous.

As you read their stories, ask yourself if you have had similar feelings or thoughts when you witnessed an instance of violence or injustice. What can you learn from the stories of these students?

For other research findings, **click here**.

"Be the change you want to see in the world" - Gandhi

THE NON-BYSTANDER ¦ ANYONE CAN STOP BULLYING

About the Research

Findings

About the Researcher

About the Research

Background:

Bullying is all-too common. In Canada, about 1/3 of students have been bullied at school, and most students have witnessed bullying1. Of course, bullying can have an extremely negative impact on the student who is bullied, but there can also be a negative impact on witnesses, leaving them feeling helpless and afraid2   Many people want to take action to stop bullying when they witness it occurring, but it can be extremely hard to do. Research has shown that only 10-25% of students who witness bullying actually take action to stop it, even though the vast majority of bullying episodes are seen by multiple witnesses3,4.

Silent witnesses create a climate in which bullying is acceptable because no one will stop it. Witness action is extremely important. It can be quite successful in stopping bullying3 and is the considered by students to be less risky for the target of bullying5. The action of witnesses is needed not only to stop bullying, but to impact a school's attitude toward bullying, and to prove that individuals do not have to stand by and watch violence.

How the research was done:

This research was qualitative, meaning that the goal was to explore the meaning of an experience, rather than to count how many people experienced something. To do this, nine students who had taken action to stop bullying in school were carefully chosen With a parent's permission, the students were all interviewed by the researcher. Interviews lasted between 50-90 minutes and audio-recorded. The researcher then listened to the interviews many times, writing down everything that was said and grouping ideas together into categories and **themes**. The researcher also created the five stories on this website, based on the experiences of five of the participants.

1 O'Connell, P., Pepler, D. & Craig, W. (1999) Peer involvement in bullying: Insights and challenges for intervention [Electronic version]. *Journal of Adolescence, 22* 437-452.

2 Jeffrey, L. R., Miller, D., Linn, M. (2001) Middle school bullying as a context for the development of passive observers to the victimization of others. In R. A. Geffner, M. Loring & C. Young (Eds.) *Bullying behavior: Current issues, research, and interventions.* (pp. 143-165) New York: Haworth

3 Hawkins, D. L., Pepler, D. J., & Craig, W. M. (2001). Naturalistic observations of peer interventions in bullying [Electronic version]. *Social Development, 10,* 512-527.

4 Atlas, R. S. Pepler, D. (1998). Observations of bullying in the classroom. *Journal of Educational Research, 92,* 1-46

5 Rigby, K. & Bagshaw, D. (2003). Prospects of adolescent students collaborating with teachers in addressing issues of bullying and conflict in schools [Electronic version]. *Educational Psychology, 23,* 535-546.

"Be the change you want to see in the world" - Gandhi

THE NON-BYSTANDER | ANYONE CAN STOP BULLYING

About the Research

Findings

About the Researcher

Findings: Five Themes

The following five themes emerged from the examination and interpretation of the research interviews. Each theme portrays a different aspect of the experience of witnessing and trying to stop bullying. In other words, "What does it mean to be a non-bystander?"

Feeling Sensitive to Bullying

The students who participated in this study felt very strongly about bullying. They used words like 'passion' and 'I hate bullying.' For these students, being a non-bystander meant that they were also sensitive to the feelings of other students. Particularly students who were being bullied, but also students who were bullying others. All of these non-bystanders had been bullied at one time. Some of the students could actually feel the pain of bullying when they witnessed it happening. This experience made them want to stop it from happening to others.

Facing the Risks of Intervening

All of the students said that they felt a strong initial reaction to witnessing bullying, like having the feeling of adrenaline, fear, or anger. They were able to recognize the risks of intervening, such as the risk of getting physically hurt, embarrassed, being bullied themselves or even losing friends. Yet, they all accepted these risks because they felt it was important to intervene. They said that they intervened because it was their responsibility, they felt

for the target of bullying, and it could help them to feel good knowing that they did something about bullying.

Knowing What to Do

Being a non-bystander meant knowing when and how to intervene in an episode of bullying. These students were able to decide when they were able to intervene, or if it was too serious for them to intervene without getting someone else involved. They tried many different strategies for intervening, from telling the bully to stop, comforting or befriending the student who was bullied, refusing to participate in bullying such as gossip, involving an adult, and working to prevent bullying. They also used strategies to make their efforts more successful, such as getting a friend to help them try to stop bullying.

Seeing the Bigger Picture

These students were able to see bullying in the bigger picture. They saw bullying happening outside of school, or between teachers and students, and even related it to instances of relationship abuse. They also intervened in these instances, trying to stop other forms of bullying or violence. These non-bystanders also linked bullying to bigger issues such as war or global warming. Perhaps they will be able to use their skills to intervene in global issues as well.

Questioning "Does it Make a Difference?"

Finally, being a non-bystander was not easy. It often meant that the student didn't know for sure if their actions made a difference. For the most part, they had reason to believe that they help to stop the immediate episode of bullying, although sometimes they were not sure. But, the students sometimes wondered if their actions really helped to stop bullying in

THE NON-BYSTANDER | ANYONE CAN STOP BULLYING

**About the
Research**

Findings

**About the
Researcher**

About the Researcher

My name is Shelagh Dunn, and I am a graduate student at the **University of Alberta**. This research is my doctoral dissertation for my Ph.D. in Counselling Psychology in the Department of Educational Psychology.

When I was in junior high, I witnessed a lot of bullying. Unfortunately, I also experienced bullying as both a student who was bullied and a student who participated in bullying. It is not something that should be happening. As an adult, I still remember what it felt like to see someone getting bullied and feel powerless to do anything about it. Sometimes I was able to try to stop the bullying, and sometimes I wasn't. Every day, I also witness violence and injustice that isn't labelled 'bullying,' like seeing a person who is being abused in a relationship, or a news story about civil rights abuses. I try to do something about these things when I can, even though it is sometimes really hard. That's why I wanted to know more about what its like for students who do take action. I learned so much from the students who participated in this research. Their honesty and hope has inspired me to be a better person.

I didn't want this research to be something that was only read by the few people who decide whether I should 'pass' and get my Ph.D. at the University. I sincerely hope that by putting the results of this research on the web, it will reach more people and maybe they will leave the website feeling a little bit differently about their choices when they witness bullying, violence or other injustice.

"Be the change you want to see in the world" - Gandhi

THE NON-BYSTANDER ¡ANYONE CAN STOP BULLYING

Add your voice

Add your voice

Discussion

Tell your story

Do you have thoughts about what it means to be a non-bystander? Have you had an experience of intervening to stop bullying? Here is your chance to make your voice heard.

Coming soon! A discussion board where you can post your thoughts directly. In the meantime, visit the group on **Facebook**, or **email me, the researcher,** directly.

Your thoughts are needed! Right now, I am in the process of trying to find a word to describe a 'non-bystander' - someone who witnesses an act of violence and acts to try to stop it. There doesn't seem to be an English word for this. What word or words would you suggest? Fill out the email form below.

To:	bullying@ualberta.ca
Subject:	New word
Email:	
Name:	
Text:	

(Send)

"Be the change you want to see in the world" - Gandhi

THE NON-BYSTANDER ANYONE CAN STOP BULLYING

Resources

"Be the change you want to see in the world"

Gandhi

Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities

b-free.ca

Bully Free Alberta

Bullying.org

PREVnet

Taking it Global

To suggest a helpful link please email Shelagh Dunn

THE NON-BYSTANDER ANYONE CAN STOP BULLYING

Contact

'Be the change you want to see in the world"

Gandhi!

For more information on this research, please contact the researcher,

Shelagh Dunn

bullying@ualberta.ca

6-102 Education North
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
CANADA

Facebook Group

⚎ Non-bystanders: Anyone can stop bullying
Global

Basic Info

Type: Common Interest – Beliefs & Causes
Description: The world is dangerous not because of those who do harm, but because of those who look at it without doing anything. -Albert Einstein

This group is dedicated to upstanders. People who refuse to be silent witnesses to bullying or other forms of violence. Please read the stories of students, like Erin, who have stood up to bullying, share your own story, and invite others to become a part of this group.

Excerpt from Erin's Story:

"I got bullied pretty bad when I was in grade five. I have a large forehead and know it, and I'm proud of it – its Smith genes - but I used to get made fun of for it a lot. They were making fun of me one day and I stood up for myself. I thought to myself "I'm not just going to let them sit here and make fun of me anymore." And they beat me up. They like stomped me until I couldn't move. I actually have medical problems from it still. Like not just that I kind of suffer from depression from it, but I also have this rib problem and it still sometimes hurts for me to breathe because of it. Ever since then I have been totally against bullying and I always stand up for people when they're bullied because I know what it feels like and no one deserves to feel that way." ---- see Posted Items to read more.

These stories were put together as part of a doctoral dissertation researching student experiences of standing up to bullying. These students refused to be bystanders to bullying and other forms of violence. Student names have been changed so they will remain anonymous. For more information, visit www.ualberta.ca/~bullying.

Be the change you want to see in the world. – Gandhi

Contact Info
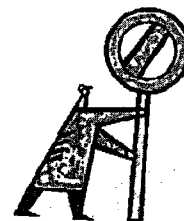
Email: bullying@ualberta.ca
Website: http://www.ualberta.ca/~bullying

View Discussion Board
Message All Members
Edit Group
Edit Members
Edit Group Officers
Invite People to Join
Create Related Event
Leave Group

|Share +|

Group Type

This is an open group. Anyone can join and invite others to join.

Admins

- Shelagh Dunn (creator)

Members

Displaying 8 of 136 members   See All

Displaying all 5 posts by 5 people.

You wrote

Help! In doing this research. I'm using the word 'non-bystander' for students who have stepped in to stop someone else from being bullied. I can't seem to find a word for this action. I'd like a word that is more active and not just someone who is not a bystander. Do you have any ideas?

Thanks!!

Reply to Your Post
Delete Post

wrote

The only thing I can think of is "intervener" - but maybe that doesn't portray the situation the way you want it to.

Reply to Donna
Mark as Irrelevant
Report
Delete Post

wrote

For students who have stepped in to stop the bullying: what about Olweus' term "Defender" - 'dislike the bullying and help or try to help the one who is exposed, the victim'

Reply to Alison
Mark as Irrelevant
Report
Delete Post

wrote

If you look at the website I gave   ...Facing History uses the term Upstander...I think that is useful..and when teaching it to students it is concrete.. they have many lesson plans around this topic also...

Reply to Moneka
Mark as Irrelevant
Report
Delete Post

wrote

Well, this may be a little silly, so feel free to reject with laughter, but what about flipping the term to 'standby' er ' Yes, this requires making up your own, but certainly gets at the idea of standing with a person who is facing bullying or oppression. Of course, it also makes me think of the movie Stand By Me. Or even simply a supporter or a champion, as both suggest that the individual is in solidarity with the bullied, but don't necessarily evoke violent styles of defense.

Those would be my rambling thoughts for the evening.

Reply to Brandy
Mark as Irrelevant
Report
Delete Post

Appendix E: Suggestions for Upstander Intervention Efforts

The following suggestions are ideas for adult stakeholders – parents, teachers, administrators, policy-makers and others involved in the lives of youth – who may be interested in developing an upstander intervention effort.

Encourage useful sensitivity to violence and injustice. One finding of this research is the sensitivity of students who chose to intervene in bullying. Schools may be able to show the incredibly negative impact of bullying using multiple modalities, such as during class, through media, music, or in extra-curricular activities. Participants in this study commented on the importance for efforts to be on-going, with a high degree of input from students. However, it is clear that a balance is needed, as some students are already very sensitive to these issues, to the point of possibly caring too much. Other students may become desensitized to bullying if it is not carefully chosen and thoughtfully portrayed.

Work to see the roles and intentions involved in bullying. The students who participated in this study described school punishment as one of the risks to intervening in bullying. It is important for school staff members and policy makers to engage in dialogue with students to help piece out the different roles involved in bullying so that students are not deterred from intervening for fear of being punished. In order to help accomplish this goal, it may be useful to provide training to parents, school employees and policy-makers. Adults can also work to acknowledge upstanders and attempts at standing up, even if they are not always successful.

Provide space for conversations about citizenship and moral conscience. Participants in this study were motivated to intervene in bullying by a sense of duty. Perhaps it is possible to encourage or strengthen these attributes either as part of a formal intervention or as part of classroom discussions about literature, history or scientific ethics.

Encourage difference. The participants in this study were not afraid to be different from their peers. Celebrating difference may not only assist in decreasing a root cause of bullying, it may be useful in helping to free students from conformity. A student who is not afraid to be different is more likely to go against the norm, which at the moment, is to remain silent when witnessing bullying.

Encourage an upstander identity. For some participants, being a person who stands up to bullying was an integral part of who they are. It may be useful to encourage students to strengthen their own upstander identity. This could be done by asking students to talk or write about a time when they stood up for another person or an ideal. This story could be strengthened by relating it to other times that the student has acted in a courageous way or in a way that was different from others. Strengthening an upstander identity could have particularly important implications for students who have bullied or who have been bullied as it provides evidence for an alternative role in bullying. Additional exercises could include asking students to tie these actions to issues of importance other than bullying, such as human rights or the environment, or having conversations about upstanders in history, and discussing what it means to be a hero.

Teach concrete skills. Study participants described having the skills necessary for intervening in bullying. It may be possible to encourage upstanders by providing training to students and adult stakeholders. Such training programs could utilize basic elements of workplace training workshops, such as:

1) Helping individuals recognize bullying or other forms of violence and harassment requiring intervention.

2) Providing individuals with multiple examples of ways to intervene and targets of intervention so that they have options for different situations. This may prevent "freezing" when witnessing bullying and could include exercises such as having workshop participants memorize a favorite example from a list of stock phrases that could work in many situations. For example "This is bullying, and it isn't ok" or "This is wrong, what do you think we should do about it?"

3) Encouraging practice through role-play. In addition to providing a chance to practice standing up to bullying, having individuals role-play a bullying scenario could provide them with the experience of taking the role of the bullied student or bullying student, showing how a respectful intervention may be more likely to be effective.

4) Teaching ways to make an intervention more effective, such as involving the target of bullying, avoiding violence or threats, intervening with a friend, and providing the bullying student with options so that they don't feel cornered by the intervention.

5) Discussing the importance of determining the seriousness of a bullying incident and recognizing when adult or formal assistance is needed.

6) Discussing the knowledge that they already bring to the table, such as past examples of standing up for something.

Acknowledge questions about making a difference. Participants expressed ambivalence about the usefulness of their interventions. It may be important to ask about student ambivalence and talk about feelings of helplessness at making a difference. It may also be important to encourage adult stakeholders to acknowledge their own feelings of ambivalence about making a difference. Sharing these feelings with students may be a powerful exercise and could encourage both groups.

Resist uselessness with inspiration. Some participants described feelings of despair related to the responsibility to intervene or the questions of whether their actions mattered. In order to provide students and adult stakeholders with continued motivation to intervene it may be important to engage in purposeful activities of inspiration. For instance, upstander intervention efforts could involve exercises such as having a student write down something negative that they have witnessed, and brain-storming the smallest action possible that could be taken in response. Schools could also create an inspiration wall where students are encouraged to post examples of how an upstander has impacted their lives. Individual students or adult stakeholders could also be encouraged to keep track of their own successes or stories of others who inspire them.