INTRODUCTION

The common way to define bullying acknowledges it as ‘repeated negative behaviour intended to harm a person in an interpersonal relationship where there is an imbalance of power’ (Slee & Skrzypiec, 2016, p. 109). Despite efforts made to counteract bullying in schools, it remains a problem in Sweden and elsewhere. One reason is that bullying research has dominantly focused on individual cases and
characteristics rather than the social dynamics involved in bullying. This has affected the ways bullying is understood and dealt with (Horton, 2016).

While one issue of social dynamics, power imbalance, is recognised as important for understanding bullying, there have been few discussions of this relationship. One important contribution to this discussion is raised by Vaillancourt et al., (2003), who differentiate between two different kinds of social power: ‘implicit and explicit social power’ (p. 159). Whereas explicit social power refers to strength, size, and aggressive behaviour, implicit social power refers to high social status and/or competence (Vaillancourt et al., 2003). By making distinctions between explicit and implicit social power, Vaillancourt et al., (2003) point to the importance of social relations and social positioning, which in turn addresses how social power circulates and is constituted in ongoing interaction (Horton, 2019; Pascoe, 2013) that always involves inclusion and exclusion processes (Horton, 2019). Indeed, more recent contributors investigate bullying from a broader perspective evolving from a complex interplay of factors (Horton, 2016; Thornberg, 2015) and recognise bullying as a group phenomenon (Lyng, 2018; Thornberg, 2015). Different group dynamics such as normativity and deviance processes based on gendered heterosexual discourses (Forsberg, 2017; Page et al., 2015; Ringrose, 2008); labelling, stigma and social hierarchy processes (Forsberg & Thornberg, 2016; Lyng, 2018; Strindberg et al., 2019; Thornberg, 2015); and processes of social exclusion anxiety (Lyng, 2018; Søndergaard, 2012; Strindberg et al., 2019) are found to be important in bullying processes. Social exclusion anxiety can be viewed as a driving force in bullying (Lyng, 2018; Søndergaard, 2012), addressing how humans strive to socially belong and how bullying can emerge in all groups when social belonging is threatened in one way or another.

From these broader perspectives, bullying is viewed as connected to wider social practices and processes such as regulation of social difference and normative gender expectations (e.g., Pascoe, 2013; Payne & Smith, 2016; Rawlings, 2016; Ringrose & Renold, 2010; Walton & Niblett, 2013). Not fitting in to these normative gender expectations or other normative social categories opens up the possibility for rejection, harassment and bullying (Lyng, 2009; Payne & Smith, 2016; Rawlings, 2016; Warrington & Younger, 2011) and thus limits the ways to perform the social self (Lyng, 2009; Viala, 2015) by enforcing students to conform and perform certain social categories that enforce a normative moral order (Ellwood & Davies, 2010; Forsberg & Thornberg, 2016). It has, for example, been established in previous research that students who fall outside of binary gender and sexuality norms may run the risk of experiencing more bullying (Berlan et al., 2010; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005).

Processes of social categorisation are of importance among young people enforcing processes of trying to fit in and ‘being normal’ (Rawlings, 2016; Warrington & Younger, 2011), and therefore bullying, is not neutral, but connects to social difference in numerous ways (Walton & Niblett, 2013). Rawlings (2016) views this as a social curriculum in schools where young people learn about their and others’ social status and live under constant pressure to perform in accordance with normative standards. Furthermore, young people’s perspectives on bullying reveal that they might define incidents in different ways, as drama instead of bullying, or as diffuse meanness (Forsberg, 2019), normalising certain incidents embedded in social prejudice (Walton & Niblett, 2013) such as gendered biases and normative identity positions (Pascoe, 2007; Ringrose & Renold, 2010). Those subjected to bullying may seek to avoid being positioned as a ‘victim’ by not disclosing what is going on (Bjereld, 2018), by reframing and distancing themselves from the incident so that they are not positioned as ‘victims’ (Bouchard et al., 2018) or by positioning themselves in different ways so that they can escape or overcome this position (Forsberg, 2017; Horton et al., 2015; Viala, 2015). It is commonly found that persons exposed to bullying are viewed as odd or deviant (Forsberg et al., 2014; Strindberg et al., 2020; Thornberg, 2015, 2018) and when becoming bystanders to bullying, different social aspects such as social hierarchies, social relations and emotions (Forsberg et al., 2014) and protecting themselves
from becoming victims of bullying might affect whether young people intervene or not (Strindberg et al., 2020).

One way forward in bullying research is to start with ‘interaction itself, attend to the social contexts in which bullying occurs, ask questions about meanings produced by such interactions and understand these interactions as not solely the province of young people’ (Pascoe, 2013, p. 3). In this article, I contribute to these broader perspectives on bullying by analysing six young people's perspectives and fluid positions in bullying and a particular bullying case in their class. This in-depth case analysis can expand our knowledge on how bullying is framed from different positions in bullying. The study can also provide an insight into how social dynamics affect pupils' positions and perspectives on bullying. Their perspectives on bullying are understood from a symbolic interactionist perspective that emphasise perspectives and positions as ongoing and constructed in social interaction. From such a perspective, bullying is understood as a group phenomenon moving the focus away from more individualistic explanations and instead addresses the importance of social norms and social processes in bullying. In this way, this study puts attention on how issues of social difference, group norms and implicit social power are part of the social context in which bullying emerges.

**METHODOLOGY**

The findings in this study stem from six interviews with young people from a sixth-grade school class (i.e., ages 12–13 years). These interviews were part of a larger study with 40 children from fourth to eighth grade, 10–15 years old, focusing on young peoples' perspectives on bullying. These six participants came from the same school and sixth grade class. The school was located in a smaller Swedish village with 7000 inhabitants. In their class, 14 students participated (10 girls and 4 boys). This class was the only school class from this school participating. These six interviews were chosen as cases because they provide the opportunity to explore how the participants talk about their involvement in bullying from different yet changing positions in a specific bullying case in their school class, along with analysis of their views on bullying more broadly. Before conducting any interviews, ethical approval was granted by the institutional board. All children and caregivers were also given information, and consent letters were obtained prior to all interviews. Participants and their caregivers were informed about the study that it was voluntary to participate and promised confidentiality; meaning that no information on names, places or schools would be mentioned in the study. Hence, all names used are pseudonyms. All interviews were held individually and in rooms with closed doors at their own schools. Interviews were also designed to be held individually due to the potentially sensitive nature of interview subject matter around bullying. My research methodology was informed by the sociology of childhood (Corsaro, 2011), in which a nonjudgmental and open approach to learn from the participants perspectives guided me. The participants were also viewed as expert commentators of their social worlds. It was not known beforehand what perspectives or experiences the participants had, rather, all pupils in every participating school and class were invited to participate in the study because the area of interest was pupils' perspectives on bullying in general. A semistructured interview guide was used that included questions such as how they view bullying, how they and others respond to bullying and if they had seen any bullying taking place. Probing questions were used to actively explore young people's perspectives on bullying. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

In relation to exemplifying whether they had seen or experienced any bullying, this bullying episode was brought up by these six participants themselves during the interviews. When later analysing the data more closely, it also became clear that they ascribed to different positions in this bullying case. This made this case interesting to explore in more depth as it holds analytical potential for
theoretically expanding how bullying can be viewed as a group phenomenon and what social processes young people consider to be crucial. In terms of the case, we have the person exposed (Jarl), the ones positioning themselves as doing the bullying (Max and Carl), two intervening bystanders (Ana and Jess), and one onlooking bystander (Sara). When viewing bullying as a group phenomenon, these roles or positions are commonly present in bullying (Salmivalli et al., 1996). It is crucial to note that the participants themselves ascribe to these positions in the Jarl case. However, these positions were not constant, but rather fluid according to the social situation, as will be revealed in the findings.

In the analysis, I have explored how they make sense of a particular bullying case, but also other perspectives taken on bullying in general. To analyse the data, it seemed fruitful to use thematic analysis to explore and identify what themes could be found. The analysis was guided by the six phases of thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006): (a) familiarising with the data by reading it repeatedly and identifying initial ideas; (b) preliminarily coding the data by marking segments of it with a name and a colour code; (c) searching for potential themes and sorting the data accordingly; (d) reviewing the themes by relating them to the codes and the data as a whole; (e) defining and naming the themes; (f) selecting relevant extracts in order to form an analytical story that is reflective of the data. Three themes were conceptualised: social status, powerful positions and fragile positions. In the process of forming an analytical story of the data, a symbolic interactionist perspective was adopted (Blumer, 1969).

**FINDINGS**

From the analysis of the participants' perspectives, different social dynamics appears to be at play in bullying, reflecting the social landscape in which young people navigate. The social dynamics point at issues such as social difference, group norms and how social positions in bullying are fragile and in process. In the participants' responses, the social processes seem to involve a construction of difference connected to gender and questions of social status and belonging in the group, which affects their responses and positions in bullying. While the participants talk about the bullying of Jarl and the positions taken in this incident, they also address how these positions are not constant, but rather fluid and in process, as they address how their own position can vary and is negotiated dependent on the situation. This negotiation of positions connects to group processes such as social hierarchies, peer pressure, social norms and social exclusion anxiety.

The perspectives on bullying, as being put forward by the participants, are conceptualised with the use of a symbolic interactionist perspective, viewing their perspectives as angles from which young people approach and make sense of the world (Blumer, 1969). Perspectives are constituted through social interaction and can be shared and nonshared, as well as changing according to the situation. Furthermore, the participants are viewed as reflective and social interactional actors, interacting with others and with themselves, and as acting towards objects in the world (e.g., things, people, places and selves) according to the meaning it has to them (Blumer, 1969). Pointing to how these perspectives are ‘not solely the province of young people’ (Pascoe, 2013, p. 3), symbolic interactionism highlights the concept of ‘generalised other’ (Mead, 1934) that acknowledges how attitudes of social groups (e.g., peer group, school, larger community and social categories such as gender) influence the perspectives taken. What is striking in the participants' descriptions is the ongoing negotiations affecting their positions in bullying episodes and how this connects to their social landscape. Indeed, the social landscape in which they navigate appears to construct very fragile positions that are affected by the attitudes of their social groups. The participants' perspectives point to how positions can change and how implicit social power seems to circulate as it is constituted in an ongoing interaction (Horton, 2019; Pascoe,
2013) but always involves inclusion and exclusion processes (Horton, 2019). The findings focus on what social dynamics the participants disclose and how social positions change and are fragile due to the same. We will now turn to the three themes conceptualised in the analysis.

Social status

The first theme focuses on how the participants talk about their and their classmates' bullying of Jarl. Throughout this theme, the participants talk about how this came to be a bullying incident. Independent of what position the participants ascribe to in this incident, this bullying case was addressed by all of the participants. One position was that of the peer supporters Ana and Jess, who were also intervening as bystanders. Some schools in Sweden have a system of selecting certain students to be peer supporters. A peer supporter is formally elected in their class to function as an observer during breaks and support students who are harassed or bullied and report such issues to the school staff (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). The two peer supporters describe that several or a lot of people were involved in doing the bullying and that the classmates' bullying of Jarl took several forms (e.g., name calling, physical aspects like pushing and cyberbullying after school). They also talk about this bullying as a past bullying event, no longer ongoing as the event is positioned in the past (e.g., 'A lot of people was really horrible. They said really bad things to him, pushed him, even after school. He said he was gay and then no one liked him,' Jess) or (e.g., ‘He was new and different from everyone, they called him mean names. He was really emotionally affected, lost self-confidence,’ Ana). Both the peer supporters and all the other participants connect the bullying of Jarl to processes of social difference (Walton & Niblett, 2013). In the above example, the peer supporter Jess ties this social difference towards the sexuality of Jarl as a reason for why the bullying happened. This construction of difference continues from all the participants, and it is striking how all the participants share a consensus in describing Jarl as different. The coming out as gay appears in several of the participants statements, even from Jarl who was on the receiving end, as a crucial aspect (e.g., ‘I came out as gay and then they bullied me and said it was gross,’ Jarl). Other accounts used in the participants' making of Jarl as different refer to how he was new in the class and because of his looks/gender expression. For example, Sara, at the time a bystander, describes Jarl in this way: ‘A boy in our class was bullied, he was new and different, not wearing the same clothes, using makeup.’ In a similar way to Sara, both Max and Carl, who were involved in the bullying of Jarl, talk about Jarl as socially different: ‘One boy in our class was bullied and I was one of those involved. He was wearing makeup’ (Max) or ‘He wasn't like other boys' (Carl). While there are some variations in the descriptions of Jarl, most of the participants focus on his sexuality and gender expression. These expressions reveal a use of normative gender positions where a certain type of gender performance seems to be expected in this social context among boys. What seems to be going on is a type of gender regulation (Rawlings, 2016). Gender regulation processes have been addressed as crucial for understanding bullying (Mishna et al., 2020; Pascoe, 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2010). These processes also point to issues of gendered biases and normative identity positions (Pascoe, 2007; Ringrose & Renold, 2010) that reveal in what sort of context bullying emerges (Allen, 2015; Pascoe, 2013) and how identity positions are constructed and which ones pass as normal. This makes it important to discuss how the normalisation of certain identity positions helps to position transgressors of normative positions as outsiders (cf., Ringrose & Renold, 2010) and the ways that the interactional climate intersects with bullying.

Besides these ongoing group processes of social difference, the participants also describe how other peer group processes relating to social hierarchies, status and peer pressure explain how this
could become a bullying incident. For example, the peer supporter Jess disclose how issues related to peer pressure are common in bullying processes.

It became like peer pressure. And it's really common that it turns out that way. If someone starts and someone else joins in and also starts to use mean names and tells it to others and they join in and so on

Interviewer: Why do you believe there was so much peer pressure?

Because it was those with a little higher social status that began to say things and it became a situation where others did not dare to protest, so instead they joined in (Jess)

Jess points to how it turned out to be a situation where a lot of peer pressure took place and how others joined the bullying, relating this to the social status of the person initiating the bullying.

What is also made visible is the emotions involved, where bystanders to the event are scared to intervene. In previous studies, this fear connected to not daring to intervene has been connected to a way of handling social vulnerability and not risking being bullied themselves (Strindberg et al., 2019) or, as put forward by Carl who ascribed to being one of the persons doing the bullying, bystanders did not want to be exposed and different themselves.

Interviewer: How come most of them joined the bullying?

Carl: They didn't want to get exposed themselves. I mean, they didn't want..., they wanted to be like everyone else, to not be different

As revealed, this addresses how young people might fear being singled out themselves if they side with the exposed person and how they fall under peer pressure to do the same thing as those who initiated the incident. This might highlight processes of social exclusion anxiety in the group (Søndergaard, 2012; Strindberg et al., 2019). The initiators of these incidents can be understood as those having the implicit social power to initiate such interaction (Vaillancourt et al., 2003). Having implicit social power because of their high-status position escalates fear in the rest of the group, stopping bystanders from intervening and instead making them tag along or not dare to intervene even if they wanted to. These issues are also pointed out by Sara who was in the position of bystander at the time.

It's a little difficult to help because you feel so unsure about how to do it. You try to intervene, but the bully might be someone older and then you don't dare to say anything, and you don't dare to say anything to the teacher and then it's good that we have peer supporters to go to that can intervene instead (Sara)

In relation to what Sara describes, it has been addressed elsewhere that social status, in this case connecting to age, might discourage bystanders from intervening. Different positions might also be tied to intervening possibilities or responsibilities (Forsberg et al., 2014), as is the case with the peer supporters in this class. Throughout this theme, the participants have emphasised how different group processes connects to bullying and the particular bullying case in their class. Social difference (Walton & Niblett, 2013) was of relevance for how they talked about the bullying of Jarl. They also talked about how peer pressure and social hierarchies (Forsberg & Thornberg, 2016; Lyng, 2018; Strindberg et al., 2019; Thornberg, 2015) affected their reactions. Their reactions were also affected by social exclusion anxiety (Lyng, 2018;
Søndergaard, 2012; Strindberg et al., 2019). The system of peer supporters seems to be of crucial importance, with a lot of the actions in bullying episodes tied to this position. This position will also be visible in the next theme, when the participants explain how the bullying of Jarl ended through their successful interventions.

**Powerful positions**

As the participants describe, most of their classmates either joined the bullying or did not see any opportunities to intervene due to the risk of themselves being singled out. However, they describe how the bullying of Jarl ended and how he came to be considered a normal boy and accepted for who he was. Max, who was involved in the bullying of Jarl, describe how he stopped bullying: ‘I stopped bullying, others stopped bullying too. Because he is a normal boy’. This theme highlights what action was taken to change the group process according to the participants, and again independent of the positions taken in the Jarl incident, the participants share a story of what went on. The process is described as initiated by the peer supporters Ana and Jess, who helped to change the process and the positions in the bullying incident because they intervened as bystanders. For example, the bystander Sara talks about the helpful actions of the peer supporters:

Interviewer: You told me about the bullying of Jarl, what happened with that situation?

Sara: Well, the peer supporters helped out and eventually he was accepted for who he was

The actions of the peer supporters Ana and Jess are described as stopping the bullying and making Jarl accepted. These actions are also raised by Ana and Jess, who described how they both intervened in the actual situation and how that, together with contacting the teachers and parents, is what ended the bullying.

I was sad, no one should be bullied so we helped him, when someone said something bad, we said good things about him. And without us I don't think things would have changed. We spoke to the teachers and they spoke to the parents of those doing most of the bullying. But we had to work a lot (Ana)

They started to talk with some of them and they felt ashamed and then the bullying became less and less. The teachers started to talk with some of the worst offenders and all of a sudden, the bullying started to end when they no longer had their leaders who had started the bullying. We as peer supporters told the teachers. I didn't feel good when this happened, he was an old friend of mine (Jess)

As described by Ana and Jess, they started to engage with Jarl like they are friends, because they are peer supporters and because they felt upset about the bullying. They put in a lot of work, starting a process of making Jarl accepted and him having friends. What is visible in the peer supporters’ statements is again the issue of emotions and how they reacted emotionally to Jarl being bullied. Indeed, a friendship norm and being emotionally touched have been found to affect bystanders when they intervene (Forsberg et al., 2014). Emotions are also put forward as crucial by the boys doing the bullying as a perspective on why they say they ended the bullying.
The peer supporters told the teachers. And the teachers brought it up with my parents and said that it was bad of me to bully, and then I felt it was wrong (Max)

Some girls started to protest, and the teachers talked about it. It's important to be nice and I wanted to be nice after a while (Carl)

According to Max and Carl, they address how the peer supporters were involved in actions that eventually led to them not bullying anymore. Max and Carl also state that it was a bad action, that they did not feel nice. It appears that, along with the involvement of teachers and parents, the intervention of the peer supporters might have exerted social pressure to stop the bullying and position the interaction of Jarl in another direction. This might resonate with Bachia and Bussey (2011) regarding how students and teachers might have a shared belief in their ability to stop the bullying. Previous research also addresses how both peer and parent social pressure might influence involvement in bullying (Pozzoli & Gini, 2012).

From Jarl's perspective, he talks about how the peer supporters—his friends—helped him out. However, he also states that he confronted the bullies and that he is not emotionally affected by the bullying.

I don't feel bad about it, some people do. I even asked the bullies why they say these things to me. But I want people to stand up and protest if someone says I am disgusting for being gay. My friend did. But it feels awkward if people feel sorry for me if someone says ‘fucking gay’ to me. I feel sorry for the bullies who have a problem with that (Jarl)

This statement by Jarl might resonate with previous research on how those subjected to bullying talk about this experience. It has been found that different ways of handling this experience exist, including distancing or reframing the incident to overcome or resist being positioned as a victim, one way being to confront the bullies (Bouchard et al., 2018; Forsberg, 2017; Horton et al., 2015; Viala, 2015). The ending of the bullying can also be interpreted as an example of how implicit social power circulates and is constituted in ongoing interaction (Horton, 2019; Pascoe, 2013). As revealed in Viala's (2015) case study on how to overcome the position of being subjected to bullying, the positions in bullying episodes can change, as they are ongoing yet bound to the contextual constraints. Indeed, in this social context, the opportunity to intervene also seems to be bound to the specific position of being a peer supporter. Being a peer supporter is what confers the opportunity and possible implicit social power. One reason for this is put forward by Sara, who was now a peer supporter herself: ‘This is why it is good to have peer supporters, like I am this year. And you try to help as much as possible, the things that the teachers don’t see’. However, there is also the issue of whether, besides holding this position, the peer supporters Ana and Jess might have been at a level in the social hierarchy of the group where they were perceived to have a high-status position (Forsberg et al., 2014; Thornberg et al., 2018) as only a few bystanders tend to intervene (Pozzoli & Gini, 2012; Salmivalli et al., 1996). According to all participants, the interventions to stop the bullying were rather successful. The two peer supporters Jess and Ana might have had implicit social power in the situation, which can explain the ability to intervene and thus affect the bullying process. Indeed, this seems to be suggested by Jarl when he talks about his friends as being cool (e.g., ‘I sort of hang out with those who are a little cool, but they are cool in a good way’). Hence, when exploring factors that affect bystander interventions, friendship, emotions and social status have been put forward as crucial but dependent on the situation (Forsberg et al., 2014). Throughout this theme, the participants address rather successful positions where all of them have been able to present themselves in a favourable way. We have the peer supporters Ana and Jess who were able to intervene and stop the bullying. Furthermore, we have Max and Carl coming to a realisation about their bad behaviours and ending the bullying. There is
also Jarl overcoming the bullying and the onlooking bystander Sara becoming a peer supporter. However, the last theme focuses on how positions in bullying are fragile and changeable due to the group processes.

Fragile positions

On the one hand, all of the participants were able to tell rather successful stories about the Jarl case, where social positions changed in their group throughout the handling of the bullying. When tuning in on which other aspects they address when talking about bullying more broadly, being a bystander as well as other experiences, social positions are revealed to be fluid and in process. For example, Max, who was involved in the bullying of Jarl, discloses how he himself was subject to bullying at one point.

Max: It was not funny to experience it every day

Interviewer: Did anyone else see this?

Max: Yes, but no one helped out

Interviewer: How come they didn't, do you think?

Max: They judged me as a person, as a bad person. Thinking I was an idiot and that they shouldn't help me out

As Max statement reveal, positions in bullying can be dynamic and constituted in interaction where positions can change (Pascoe, 2013; Viala, 2015). In relation to this, it is also interesting to note that Jarl who had been exposed to bullying, might come to take a bully position if the social situation plays out that way. In this way, Jarl also points to the fluidity of positions, peer group processes and social hierarchies.

Interviewer: How would you react as a bystander, do you think?

Jarl: It depends, to be totally honest, if it's someone I don't consider to be cool, I think I would join in.

Both Max and Jarl reveal how bullying connects to ongoing social processes and how the positions in one situation might not be the same in another situation, but rather depend on the situation (Forsberg et al., 2014; Thornberg et al., 2018). These social processes and positions are ongoing and fluid and might manifest how pupils try to protect themselves in the social landscape to secure their own position and not become excluded themselves (Strindberg et al., 2019). Even the peer supporters Jess and Ana talk about how there may be situations in which they might react in a different way ‘In the peer supporter group, I would react, but not on my own’ (Jess) or ‘If my best friends. If they started with peer pressure against me, then I would feel, I might not want to lose my friends just because of something. That would affect [intervening response]’ (Ana). In a similar way, highlighting how being a peer supporter is not necessarily a clear-cut path to intervening in all bullying incidents, Max stated that there are already some peer supporters who do not react ‘as they should’ but instead remain passive due to their social company.
Look, there are some peer supporters who don't dare to say anything or don't care at all. Probably because they hang out with a group who don't care about it or someone in their group is doing the bullying, and they hang out with those people even if they bully and they are peer supporters (Max)

As put forward by Max, the question of whether some peer supporters dare to intervene is affected by their social company, because they hang out with someone who does not care about bullying or even acts as a bully themselves. Hence, this again points towards issues of social status and who has the implicit social power to intervene. Issues of peer pressure and fitting in to their peer group seems crucial. Previous studies point to how issues such as securing friendship, fitting in to the peer landscape and protecting their socially vulnerable selves are crucial for young people and connected to bullying processes (Forsberg & Thornberg, 2016; Strindberg et al., 2019; Thornberg, 2018). Or as put forward by Rawlings (2016), the social curriculum in school is built on processes where young people try to fit in and be normal and learn about their and others' social status, living under constant pressure to perform in accordance with normative standards. As highlighted by Max, who had been both involved in bullying and experienced it himself, the reactions of his peer group will affect his response as a bystander.

I think I would intervene, but it depends, if someone joins in, I mean if no one in my gang cares I don't know if I would [intervene], but if I had been alone or if someone in my gang had wanted me to, I would have approached and intervened (Max)

Even Sara, who was in a peer supporter position at the time of the interview, is a bit careful in her expression of how she would respond to bullying, talking about how she probably would intervene.

If I saw someone being bullied, because I am a peer supporter, I would probably bring it up and try to do something about it. I think I would talk with the other peer supporters and see what we can do. Even if it was older students I would because it is my task to do so, that's why I am a peer supporter because the others think I can do a good job, and then you have to (Sara)

According to Sara, being a peer supporter comes with expectations on how to respond, and several of the participants seem to put forward this responsibility. However, the peer supporters are also part of the social landscape and might come across situations where they face risks from intervening and an inability to intervene due to the way that implicit social power circulates in different situations. Although all the participants were able to share a story of success with the bullying of Jarl ending, there were indeed some cracks in the facade as Jarl was sometimes still exposed to bullying and harassment, but from people other than his classmates. For example, Carl who had been involved in the bullying of Jarl, stated ‘Nowadays there is no bullying of Jarl, not in our class anyway’. In a similar way, Sara, who was now a peer supporter stated ‘Even today some people can say mean comments to Jarl. But he doesn't care that much anymore’. These actions are also raised by Jarl, who described a recent incident: ‘Recently a boy wrote me a comment on Facebook but a lot of girls, and some boys, protested and he gave up. It felt good, he was “owned”’. Overall, this theme addresses fragile positions and the importance of peer group norms and the social vulnerabilities involved in bullying. The continuing comments that Jarl experiences are still connected to issues concerning his gender expression, pointing to the way interactions involving gendered and homophobic aspects in bullying are produced and connected to larger societal structures.
CONCLUSION: SCHOOL BULLYING AND THE ONGOING SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Despite the small number of participants used as a case to analyse young people's perspectives on bullying, this study contributes insights on the importance of group processes in bullying and how young people navigate in their social landscape, taking different perspectives on bullying and responses to bullying according to what they perceive to be important angles in different situations. The participants point to how positions in bullying are fluid, but also bound to the social order, where a set of positions exists if they want to belong to and fit in to their peer landscape and be understandable within that context (Viala, 2015), meaning that they constantly have to perform in accordance with normative standards (Rawlings, 2016). Furthermore, they disclose how different intertwined social dynamics in their social context affect bullying, including the construction of difference and issues related to social status, peer pressure and social exclusion anxiety. This can be understood with the help of the ‘generalised other’ (Mead, 1934)—meaning attitudes in their peer groups, social categories based on normative identity positions such as gender and sexuality and hence societal norms influence the perspectives that they adopt. As previously pointed out, bullying can be conceptualised as a contextual social process, with previous research highlighting how group mechanisms and social dynamics are important in bullying processes. Lyng (2018) explores how different group mechanisms are central in bullying processes, but also how there might be a variation in the type of process that is made relevant. This means that the change in the process of bullying Jarl and the positions that the participants ascribe to throughout the Jarl case might have looked different in another context, as types of processes and positions might be going in other directions. However, this fluidity of positions can give hope that bullying processes can be changed, challenged and prevented. It is therefore crucial to address the fluidity of these positions and the social dynamics involved in bullying. This is important, as the dominant perspective on bullying has long focused on the individuals involved and as being representative of specific positions and characteristics, rather than focusing on social processes and the ways that these are fluid and contextual. Or, as put forward by Horton (2016), we must attend to the fact that children are not monsters but rather ‘ordinary children attempting to navigate a range of power relations in social, institutional and societal contexts over which they have little control’ (p. 10). If we see monsters, we might miss seeing the complex social dynamics involved.

However, the Jarl incident happened in a context where different norms related to gender, sexuality and other social categories and group processes were part of their interactions. This is why the bullying is framed in the ways that it is. The issues expressed by the participants are influenced by societal norms and interactions, as addressed when connecting the bullying of Jarl to social difference processes. This was also a reason why so few classmates intervened according to the participants—they themselves did not want to become the socially different person. This resonates with previous research pointing to issues of normative identity positions (Mishna et al., 2020; Pascoe, 2013; Rawlings, 2016; Ringrose & Renold, 2010) and reveals how identity positions are constructed and which ones pass as normal, thus addressing the need to relate bullying to issues of social difference (Walton & Niblett, 2013).

Another issue raised in this paper concerns issues of peer pressure and norms related to how young people have an aim of being socially presentable. If that involves at times being involved in bullying or looking away when it happens, this is just an expression of trying to navigate in a socially fragile landscape (Forsberg et al., 2014; Strindberg et al., 2019). Moving between different positions and the ways these positions are tied to the social processes shifts the focus away from individuals with characteristic traits and instead addresses the importance of focusing on what norms are used; how normativity and deviance are constructed. Addressing issues of peer pressure and how these issues
need to be accounted for in young people’s social landscape suggests the importance of processes of social exclusion anxiety, where positions are possibly considered to be challenged when a new member comes into play (Søndergaard, 2012). Social exclusion anxiety and securing their own social position also seems to affect the ways in which they respond as bystanders (Strindberg et al., 2020). As the positions are open and fluid and attend to how implicit social power circulates (Horton, 2019; Vaillancourt et al., 2003), this might contribute to social exclusion anxiety in the group, as there are many ongoing social threats out there.

In previous research, the perspectives adopted by bystanders influence how they respond to bullying (Forsberg et al., 2014; Gini, 2006; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004) and when actions in defence of the bullied are performed, levels of bullying may decrease (Salmivalli et al., 2011). The participants all share a story of the bullying of Jarl ending, which might resonate with Barchia and Bussey (2011) and their discussion of collective efficacy, which refers to how students and teachers have a shared belief that they can stop the bullying. This process also seemed to involve parental pressure, which has been found to affect bullying processes (Pozzoli & Gini, 2012). However, this study points to how the bystander interventions in this social context are fluid and dependent on the social situation. It also adds how someone who was bullied at one point might bully in another situation, thus pointing to implicit social power as constantly constituted and bound to the social landscape where young people navigate, with inclusion and exclusion as ongoing processes (Pascoe, 2013). This creates a need to target issues related to social dynamics and group norms, normative positions of gender and sexuality, plus other social positions and hierarchies among young people, along with working towards shared beliefs and norms concerning how to respond to bullying. Although the findings in this study give us an insight into how the participants talk about bullying and processes in bullying, we cannot know for sure what processes and actions were taken or how the participants would respond in upcoming situations. However, this small study and the perspectives of the young people resonate with research from those taking a broader perspective on bullying, relating it to social difference, group norms and social power. Bullying processes can change and be contested, but without the focus on the ongoing social dynamics, bullying processes lurk beneath the surface.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Research data are not shared.

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