

**St. Patrick's College,
Dublin City University**

**Homophobic Bullying and School Leadership: An
associated view**

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctorate in Education (EdD) is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigated whether or not homophobic bullying occurred in Irish primary schools and the response of school leaders to the issue. Principals, deputy principals and those that were acting in either role (n = 283) completed a questionnaire that investigated:

- the frequency with which they had dealt with homophobic bullying during the academic year 2012-2013;
- the nature of the homophobic bullying they encountered;
- if their school's anti-bullying policies made reference to homophobic bullying as a specific form of bullying behaviour;
- the role they played in addressing homophobic bullying, and how they perceived the role of other stakeholders in helping them address homophobic bullying;
- their emotional response if dealing with incidents of homophobic bullying;
- if their school's Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme made reference to teaching about sexual orientation;
- their attitudes to teaching about sexual orientation in the primary school.

The evidence analysed suggested that some school leaders had dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying and that these included incidents of physical abuse, exclusion and homophobic cyberbullying. The data also revealed that pupils had used homophobic language towards each other and to express feelings about things they didn't like. It was apparent that some incidents where homophobic language was used were not regarded as homophobic bullying by the school leaders.

The majority of respondents claimed that their school anti-bullying policies made no specific reference to homophobic bullying. In addition, many implied that they responded to incidents of homophobic bullying in an informal manner. It was evident from the data that most recognized the significant emotional damage suffered by victims of homophobic bullying and acknowledged the importance of emotion in their own decision making when dealing with the issue.

The data indicated that while the majority of respondents had adopted an RSE policy in their schools, these policies did not generally refer to teaching about sexual orientation. Many respondents revealed that they were not comfortable discussing sexual orientation with either staff members or with pupils.

The implications for this study, addressed in the final chapter of the thesis, are discussed in light of the recently updated anti-bullying guidelines (DES, 2013).

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This has been a very long and arduous road. This thesis has culminated in a long period of study over a number of years which has been well worth the effort and the heartache. I feel it says something to my own colleagues in positions of leadership and the wider world of education about the importance of understanding homophobic bullying and the need for increased awareness around this sensitive issue in schools.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background and context

This thesis presents a quantitative study on the topic of *homophobic bullying* in Irish primary schools. The main aim of the study is to use questionnaire data to explore the extent to which school leaders are aware that homophobic bullying is present in the context of the Irish primary school. For the purposes of this thesis, the term school leader is used to refer to people in the position of principal, acting principal or deputy principal. More specifically, the study examines 1) the frequency with which school leaders dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying during the 2012-2013 academic year; 2) the extent to which school anti-bullying policies identify homophobic bullying as a specific form, and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) policies refer to teaching about sexual orientation; and 3) school leaders' perception of their role and their level of emotional response in addressing homophobic bullying. The thesis further considers 4) how school leaders feel in relation to the issue of homophobic bullying and the sexual orientation of other school personnel including themselves, and 5) the extent to which school leaders garner support from other stakeholders in addressing homophobic bullying. These stakeholders include parents, teachers and children, and education bodies such as parents associations, boards of management (BOM), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

The prime reason why this thesis is important relates to the fact that there has been no research to date focusing on homophobic bullying in Irish primary schools. Research conducted at post-primary level indicates that homophobic bullying is prevalent within the Irish secondary school system (O'Higgins-Norman, 2005, 2008, 2009; O'Higgins-Norman & Galvin, 2006). This suggests the possibility that sexuality and issues pertaining to this may be regarded by school leaders and other staff members, as being confined to the secondary school setting and accordingly that homophobic bullying has no relevance to primary schools. Research in other jurisdictions however, would indicate that homophobic bullying is an issue in primary schools (Renold, 2002; Shai, 2011). As a result, this study considers the possibility that because sexuality may not be regarded as being a relevant construct within the primary school setting, then homophobic bullying may also not be considered relevant.

This thesis is also important because it seeks to extend our knowledge about a specific type of bullying within primary schools in Ireland. Bullying is a form of behaviour which is particularly difficult to define. Frisen, Holmqvist and Oscarsson (2008) state that "since the problem of bullying was first given attention in the 1960s, one major concern among researchers has been agreeing on how to define it" (p105). The main reason for this is, because bullying behaviour is multi-faceted, it is open to interpretation about what actually constitutes bullying. Definitions invariably refer to six different strands of behaviour which are associated with the phenomenon. These strands include the intentionality behind the behaviour, the level of hurt involved, the degree of repetition and the duration of it, the imbalance of power between relationships and the

level of provocation. There are many different definitions alluded to within the literature, all of which refer to elements of the above strands in varying degrees (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 1997; Roland, 1989; Smith & Thompson, 1991; Stephenson & Smith, 1989). These strands are invariably combined to create a definition which is subsequently used as the basis for carrying out research into the phenomenon of bullying behaviour; used for the purpose of academic writing, or in providing a basis for the creation of support materials for schools. Irish primary and post-primary schools refer to a definition and policy template provided within the recently updated Department of Education guidelines (DES, 2013) in order to create their own anti-bullying policy. The DES (2013) defines bullying as “unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons), and which is repeated over time.” (p.8).

The fact that bullying is so difficult to conceptualise, increases the possibility of bullying instances being missed or misinterpreted by members of staff in a school situation, even school leaders. Research conducted by Hazler, Miller, Jolynn, Carney and Green (2001) identified that staff members in schools often failed to recognise bullying situations, particularly those of a non-physical nature. This thesis seeks to investigate the perceptions of school leaders regarding homophobic bullying behaviour, and how they understand it within the context of the primary school. As one of the key educational stakeholders in Irish primary schools, the principal/acting principal/deputy principal, acting in their role as school leader, is responsible for ensuring that the school has a comprehensive and effective anti-bullying policy. The DES (2013) guidelines state that

“the Board of Management of each school in developing its anti-bullying policy must formulate the policy in co-operation with both teaching and non-teaching school staff under the leadership of the principal, and in consultation with parents and pupils.” (p.15). Therefore it is important to examine the possibility that there might be a link between the lack of consensus in defining bullying behaviour and school leaders’ understanding of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, this research is important because in the context of the difficulties defining bullying, homophobic bullying could be a form of behaviour which is even less likely to be acknowledged within the primary school system, as evidence from research in post-primary schools in Ireland suggests, that principals and teachers often fail to recognise homophobic behaviour as bullying (McCormack & Gleeson, 2010). This thesis sets out to examine whether school leaders perceive that such a form of bullying is present in primary schools in Ireland. The researcher suggests that a possible lack of consideration given by parents and teachers alike to teaching young children about sexuality within the context of the primary school, leads to the likelihood that such bullying behaviour is ignored, or at least misunderstood. Wallis and VanEvery (2000) conclude from their research in primary schools that “as long as primary schools are believed to be asexual environments we will not be able to provide real protection (from sexual abuse, from bullying, from self-hatred, from discrimination) for all the children who need it.” (p.420).

Further to this, the possibility that discussion and the relaying of information about different sexualities within Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is very limited, may lead to denial that homophobic bullying is occurring at all. Neary (2012) identifies how no initiatives have been introduced at primary level in Ireland to teach about sexualities other than heterosexuality, and that some teachers who identified as being gay were afraid to engage in discussion about sexuality, whilst they also believed that the use of homophobic slurs was unchallenged. The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum documents (Government of Ireland, 1999) refer to the fact that children should be enabled to discuss birth and new life as part of the growing and changing strand unit. This includes sexual intercourse and conception, and is the only reference made to issues of a sexual nature. No explicit reference is made to homosexuality within these documents, therefore schools and their management bodies are left to interpret this part of the curriculum as they wish, possibly choosing not to refer to alternative forms of sexuality. There may also, as a result, be an interpretation amongst school leaders that children's use of derogatory sexual language is not consciously homophobic because of the perception that they don't fully understand the connotations of the language they are using. Renold (2002) found in her research, that primary school children use heterosexist and homophobic language with a clear understanding of meaning.

Through the apparent limitations of the RSE curriculum, there could be a lack of opportunity to explore issues pertaining to sexuality. Consequently, the associated feelings relating to this type of bullying may also not be discussed. O'Higgins-Norman

(2005) found in his research that RSE policies adopted in second-level schools in Ireland, did not necessarily allow for discussion to take place regarding issues pertaining to sexuality. Further to this O'Higgins-Norman (2008) identified over 30% of second level schools that had not introduced a policy on RSE. At primary level education in Ireland, while the apparent lack of extensive research makes it unclear the extent to which human sexuality is discussed within RSE, research by Mannix-McNamara, Geary and Jourdan (2010) confirms a reluctance on the part of male teachers at least to engage in discussions about sex and sexuality with primary school children. McCormack and Gleeson (2010) argue that because children as young as 10 are using derogatory homophobic language in Ireland, these issues should be formally discussed within RSE. When bullying occurs and the language used is of a derogatory sexual nature, it is conceivable that the serious nature of the behaviour is dismissed or diminished by school leaders and other staff members, in order to prevent any discussion taking place which relates to sexuality. DePalma and Atkinson (2010) from their research conducted in primary schools in the UK, state that "while many teachers reported that they were willing to respond to homophobic bullying, such as reacting to homophobic language, very few were willing to engage in curriculum based work" (p.1671). This thesis therefore seeks to investigate how school leaders respond to such situations when they develop, and to what extent do they encourage discourse relating to sexuality within the curriculum and outside curriculum time.

Rationale

This research seeks to determine if homophobic bullying occurred within Irish primary schools during the academic year 2012-2013, by asking school leaders to report on their perceptions of the issue. Due to the fact that homophobic bullying has not been well researched at primary level in Ireland, it is crucial to ascertain whether school leaders have had experience of dealing with this type of bullying, whether they believe it is an issue or not, and what they perceive their role is in relation to addressing homophobic bullying, including the level of support they garner from other stakeholders. The fact that no work of this nature has been undertaken in Irish primary schools is significant as it suggests the possibility that homophobic bullying might not be an issue within primary schools in Ireland; or alternatively that it is an issue that has been ignored, misunderstood, or about which little is known.

It is important to note that this thesis seeks to investigate that homophobic bullying is relevant in the context of primary schools in Ireland. In so doing, it aims to challenge the status quo within primary education in terms of opening a discourse about sexuality. This includes homosexuality and issues pertaining to bullying behaviour and how it is addressed. This thesis also seeks to challenge school leaders and other stakeholders to consider the possibility that the concept of homosexuality or “different types of love” (Government of Ireland, 1999; p.58), as identified in the curriculum documents, can be explored within RSE.

Significance of the study

The aim of this study is primarily to make an original contribution to the way in which homophobic bullying is perceived by stakeholders within the Irish primary school system. The views of school leaders are considered because of the critical role they play in policy formation and school organisation. The DES (2013) guidelines for countering bullying behaviour state that:

The Principal in particular has a key role in dealing with bullying behaviour in school because he/she is in a strong position to influence attitudes and set standards in dealing with such behaviour. Principals and other leaders in the school, including all teachers, should strive to engender an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable. All who are identified as leaders within the school community can ensure that practical steps are taken to challenge and respond to bullying. (p.23)

This recognition highlights the importance of the consideration which must be given to the many other stakeholders within primary education, whilst also illustrating the critical role of the principal/deputy principal as school leaders. This study therefore seeks to understand the role played by school leaders in dealing with bullying, but in particular, it explores their views in relation to homophobic bullying; whether or not they think it is an issue for them, their understanding of the term, and the relevance of this defined phenomenon within the context of Irish primary education.

The fact that no other study has considered homophobic bullying, specifically in the context of the primary school in Ireland is significant, particularly as international research has highlighted the fact that young children experience verbal and physical harassment with regard to gender and sexuality (Denver, Sorenson & Broderick, 2005; Renold, 2002). This thesis considers the possibility that some children who attend Irish primary schools are the subject of such forms of abuse. This study hopes to impact on the way bullying behaviour is understood within Irish primary education and to inform policy within the DES and schools across the country. It is hoped therefore that this study can open up a debate about bullying in schools, but in particular homophobic bullying which makes reference to sexuality, and the notion that there should be discourse about sexuality as an issue within the Irish primary education system.

Layout

The thesis is laid out in 5 chapters, beginning with this introductory chapter, which has set out the context for this study to take place, identified the possible problem of homophobic bullying as an issue within Irish primary education, and provided the rationale for such a study to take place.

In Chapter 2, this thesis explores the literature relating to homophobic bullying and is divided up into three sections. Initially, the literature review examines bullying as a concept and the various definitions which are proffered about this form of behaviour, including the labelling connected with it and the social context it occurs in. Subsequently

the review then considers homophobic bullying and the pupils' use of derogatory language which is associated with it; homophobic cyberbullying and the effects of all forms of bullying. The literature review examines the theories and literature around this construct. In doing so the literature review explains how this form of behaviour is different and yet similar to other forms of bullying behaviour, and how it relates to primary education within Ireland.

Due to the gap in the literature in an Irish context, reference is taken from other jurisdictions around the world which have considered homophobic bullying in their own specific context, and an examination made of different research findings in section two. Further to this, the third and final section of the literature review considers the different responses school leaders make in relation to dealing with homophobic bullying. These leadership responses include reference to the role of school leaders, their style of leadership and the emotional responses which they make in addressing homophobic bullying. In addition, the literature review examines the role of school leaders in terms of creating a school anti-bullying policy and how it relates to homophobic bullying. Furthermore, this section also considers Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), and how schools could use this subject to explore same sex relationships to provide the platform for discourse in schools about sexual orientation and how it relates to dealing with homophobic bullying. Finally, the review acknowledges the role played by other stakeholders such as parents, in addressing homophobic bullying.

Chapter 3 examines the design phase of the study and explains how the questionnaire was formulated and distributed, including the pilot study which was significant. It provides justification for the general approach taken, including the reasoning for a quantitative study.

Chapter 4 presents a detailed discussion of the specific method of data collection and how the results were interpreted and presented. Discussion takes place as to the specific methods of data collection used for formulating and answering the questions. This chapter provides an analysis and interpretation of the results and explains the findings in relation to the conceptual framework and literature review presented in chapter 2.

Finally, Chapter 5 makes concluding comments and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Conceptualising Homophobic Bullying

Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter examines the key literature in relation to homophobic bullying in schools. It is divided into three sections:

- Section one conceptualises bullying and considers the different elements named within definitions of bullying. It subsequently conceptualises homophobic bullying, and the effects that all forms of bullying have on children.
- Section two examines research evidence in relation to homophobic bullying and its existence in primary schools in other jurisdictions, together with second level schools in Ireland.
- Section three examines the leadership response of school leaders in relation to addressing homophobic bullying in schools. This includes the specific role of the leader, their emotional response, the formulation of the school anti-bullying policy and RSE policy, and the role of other stakeholders in supporting school leaders in addressing homophobic bullying.

Section one: Conceptualising bullying

Defining bullying is a key feature of any research that is undertaken into the phenomenon. Lee (2006) perceives that a definition of bullying is invariably coined at the outset of a research project and included within the instructions and guidelines of a research instrument used for that particular study. By adopting this approach, there may be a danger that researchers will use definitions which reflect their own understanding of what constitutes bullying rather than what respondents perceive as bullying. Olweus (1993, p.11) argues that this approach is necessary however, to establish boundaries for respondents “to have a clear understanding of what they are to respond to.” In contrast, Lee (2006, p.63) argues that relying on such definitions assumes that those who participate in the study both understand and relate to the imposed definition and that their perceived experiences of bullying fit within the “pre-ordained framework that the definition offered.” As Cullingford and Brown (1995) also perceive, this method is problematic in that it begins with an assumption that the definition used is accurate and agreed with by the respondents.

In identifying a specific definition of bullying for the purpose of conducting research, Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) argue that only acts that conform to a particular definition are then identified and labelled as bullying. This underlines both the importance and difficulty school personnel are presented with in understanding and identifying what constitutes bullying. Duncan (1999) suggests the possibility that teachers can identify and have experience of many different scenarios that could be

construed as bullying, but they do not fit within any existing definition. Bullying behaviour is neither easy to define nor measure. As Lee (2006) suggests, in trying to “expedite greater clarity” (p.62), writers and researchers have also generated “degrees of confusion and inconsistency.” (p.63). Bullying is a complicated form of behaviour which both children and adults engage in, and takes many different forms. It is often categorised to include physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, social, racial or sexual bullying.

Within the many different academic disciplines, including amongst education professionals, there is no one commonly held definition of bullying behaviour; an assertion which Monks and Smith (2006), Munn (1999) and Madsen (1996) concur. Various well known academic figures, such as Dan Olweus in Norway, who pioneered much of the early research into bullying behaviour, have endeavoured to provide a definition which is all encompassing, and suitable for use when conducting research into the phenomenon. Olweus (1993) suggests that “a person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.” (p.14). Use of the Olweus self-report questionnaire with this pre-ordained definition of bullying contained within, has been used extensively in international research, including in Ireland (O’Moore et al. 1997). However, this approach can be criticised to an extent, because there are different cultural meanings and terminology associated with the concept of bullying. For example, Smith, Cowie, Olafsson and Liefhoghe (2002) allude to the fact that in Japan, the term ‘*ijime*’ is used as a bullying equivalent, but less importance is placed on physical violence and greater emphasis on social manipulation. In a similar

vein, in the US, the terms victimization and peer rejection are used to denote negative actions of peers towards others (Asher & Coie, 1990). The criticism meted out by Cullingford and Brown (1995) and Lee (2006) towards the approach recommended by Olweus (1993) may be valid. It assumes the definition used in research is accurate and agreed with by all respondents. Such an approach could possibly be regarded as value-laden and reflects the power of the researcher to define bullying. This has connotations for school leaders and other school staff members working in Irish schools, who are being asked to create a policy based on a pre-ordained definition of bullying, as outlined in the recently updated anti-bullying guidelines (DES, 2013). This may underline the need for there perhaps to be an agreed consensus between all stakeholders in schools, about what constitutes bullying behaviour, rather than a definition being imposed.

From within the realms of education research, school leaders and teachers in general have provided evidence that they differ in their understanding of bullying and how they perceive the phenomenon, in comparison to their pupils. Research indicates that both children and adults interpret behavioural situations differently in schools. For example, Boulton (1997) found that most teachers invariably defined bullying in terms of physical and verbal abuse whilst over half failed to acknowledge the more subtle exclusionary behaviours that exist between pupils. In addition, Hazler et al.(2001) also found that teachers were more likely to identify situations involving physical threat and abuse as bullying, and as more severe than verbal or social/emotional abuse. Some pupils on the other hand recognised different behaviours such as exclusion and psychological bullying, as the study by Guerin and Hennessy (2002) in Ireland found. Further to this, a

UK study by Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, Bettencourt and Lemme (2006), found that pupils compared with teachers, are also more likely to restrict their definitions to direct forms of bullying such as verbal and physical abuse, and are less likely to refer to social exclusion. In addition, they also found that pupils were less likely to refer to an imbalance in power between the perpetrator and the victimised child and the intent to hurt or harm someone, and girls were also twice as likely as boys to regard social exclusion as bullying behaviour. The fact that there are discrepancies between teachers and pupils, in how they perceive and define bullying, leads to the possibility that episodes of behaviour may be construed differently and even misjudged in the context of bullying. As highlighted in the next section, the wide variations in definitions of bullying point markedly to the reasons individual school leaders in schools may also interpret bullying differently.

Defining bullying

Definitions of bullying invariably refer to a combination of different aspects of behaviour together with one or more of the above categorised types of bullying.

Farrington (1993), for example, identifies six different aspects of bullying which serve as a useful model for examining and understanding definitions of bullying. The terminology used within definitions invariably include reference to what Farrington (1993) describes as 1) levels of intent, 2) hurt, 3) repetition, 4) duration, 5) power and 6) provocation.

Examining each one here helps to underline the need for careful consideration to be made of what constitutes bullying behaviour within individual schools.

The level of intent required to define behaviour as bullying forms a key part of many definitions of bullying. The use of the word intent implies that the behaviour is pre-meditated and terminology such as deliberate, wilful and conscious are associated with various definitions of the behaviour, such as the one proffered by Tattum (1989), who states “bullying is a wilful, conscious desire to hurt another person” (p.10). The problem with using such a definition is that it is too broad, and allows the perpetrator to deny intent. Rigby (2002) criticises this type of definition saying that “to be a bully, then, you don’t have to do anything,” (p.28) and “a desire to hurt someone is enough to make you a bully” (p.28). This implies that a principal/deputy principal teacher or staff member in school when faced with an alleged bullying situation, may judge the particular behaviour in terms of a child’s intent to hurt another. The problem with relying on intent as Lines (2008) perceives, is that it is open to misinterpretation and misjudgement by adults.

In a similar vein to intent, the level of hurt required to define behaviour as bullying is also a key part of many definitions. For example, Smith and Thompson (1991) defined bullying as “a subset of aggressive behaviour. Bullying intentionally causes hurt to the recipient. This hurt can be both physical and psychological. It can be carried out by one child or a group” (p.1). The level of hurt is however, very much open to question. As Lee (2006) observes, a small number of children can deliberately and actively provoke others into attacking them verbally and physically, and then claim they have been hurt. In addition, the victim of one bullying incident may, for example, perceive the level of hurt very differently to a victim who has been on the receiving end of such actions over a very long time. In the first instance, the victim may claim a level of hurt caused that is real and

substantial. However, in the second instance, there may be an even greater level of hurt which is just as real, but as Lee (2006) states, “victims of bullying often find it hard to report hurt experienced” (p.66). The victim in this instance may choose not to say anything. This is further underlined by the fact that research conducted in Ireland indicates that children are reluctant to tell adults in the first place that they are being targeted or hurt by others (O’Moore et al. 1997). The implication of this for school staff is that they are faced with the difficult task of identifying the level of intent of others to cause hurt, and to recognise the hurt caused to the victim of such actions.

The fact that the behaviour has to be repeated is a key feature of many different definitions of bullying. For example, Besag (1989) in proposing a definition of bullying states that “it is necessarily a repetitive attack which causes distress” (p.4). Further to this, Besag (1989) asserts that the prospect of future attack also causes further anguish. However, some academics such as O’Moore et al. (1997) argue that bullying can be a one off experience, and their research gave consideration to this possibility. It may be possible that a particular individual engages in behaviour that is extreme, or that a perpetrator of bullying is targeting a particular child for the first time because of a characteristic they possess, whilst also engaging in similar behaviour over a long period of time, directing it at a number of children. In this way, as Lee (2006) suggests, there has to be a distinction made between a single bullying action that fits the definition of bullying, and the notion of repetitive bullying actions which lead to a ‘bullying relationship’ between individuals. This has implications for how school leaders and other staff interpret bullying behaviour, and when and how they intervene. For example, when

an individual child is labelled with homophobic pejoratives, it may have happened once or many times. There is a danger that because teachers and non-teaching staff feel the behaviour has happened too infrequently, they may ignore or dismiss it, but whether it is a single act or repeated, it still damages feelings and self-worth.

The duration of time particular forms of behaviour are exhibited and displayed towards others form a key feature of many definitions of bullying. The decision about how long a behaviour has to last for it to be interpreted as bullying makes defining bullying even more complex. This decision is often made by teachers and principal teachers in schools, where the child's perception of how long the behaviour has lasted, may be very different to that of the staff in school. Often definitions of bullying refer to the fact that the behaviour has to be on an on-going basis for it to be regarded as such. For example, Roland (1989) defines bullying as "longstanding violence, physical or psychological, conducted by an individual or a group and directed against an individual who is not able to defend himself in the actual situation." (p. 143). The use of this type of definition underlines the degree to which subjectivity plays a part in understanding bullying. Adults, namely the principal teacher and other staff, are asked to judge whether behaviour is bullying, but in using this type of definition, this decision is based on the duration of time that passes. Consequently, school policy is important in stipulating how long the behaviour must last in order to be identified as bullying.

The power differential between those involved in behaviour described as bullying is very much open to question and relies on the key players within a bullying situation,

such as teachers and pupils, identifying the levels of power in the relationship. An example of bullying defined in this way is suggested by Sullivan, Cleary and Sullivan (2004, p.3), who state that, “bullying is a negative and often aggressive or manipulative act or series of acts by one or more people against another person or people usually over a period of time. It is abusive and is based on an imbalance of power.” (p.3). The implication made here, is that one person or group of people are able to exert influence over others by abusing the relationship between them. An example of this may be when one child, who is older and physically bigger in stature than another child, demands lunch money to be given over to them, which may lead to serious consequences for the younger child such as fear and trepidation. The difficulty is that those who judge whether particular behaviours are bullying or not, also exert power and influence over others. The system of order and discipline within a school is also based on a hierarchical power structure. The principal is the leader of the school, followed by the deputy principal, the teachers on the next level and then there are more layers within the structure of the school, often ending with the pupils on the lowest tier. The ethos of any school will probably be based around the ideal of equality of access and opportunity for all. However, relationships between individuals, from the point of view of the nature of assigned roles in the school setting, exist on the basis of differences in levels of power between them. For example, the teacher instructs the pupils about what to do. Further to this, as Lines (2008, p.23) asserts, some pupils use subtle controlling techniques, such as body language and facial expression, to “exercise dominion” over others in order to bolster self-esteem and status within the peer group.

The final element contained within few definitions only, is the level of provocation. Frey and Hoppe-Graff (1994) suggest in their definition that the level of provocation is a significant factor. Bullying is described by them as “dominant aggression which occurs when an unprovoked child taunts, intimidates, coerces, makes fun or assaults another child-without a clear external goal for this behaviour” (p.250). Use of this definition would imply that the retaliatory actions of children who are provoked, cannot be interpreted as bullying. Some theorists, for example, Stephenson and Smith (1987) and Besag (1989), do associate provocative behaviour with bullying, but as a personality trait of some children, rather than as a defining factor. Besag (1989) does describe some children as “provocative victims” (p. 13). These children intentionally provoke others through teasing and taunting, and then, when an individual retaliates, the child who is alleged to have provoked another, quickly looks to the authority figure in the school to complain. However, it is questionable whether the level of provocation should be considered when defining bullying. An individual chooses to act or respond to any given situation, whether provoked or unprovoked, whatever the trigger point is. In utilising a definition which relies on provocation, the implication is that a child who is victimised by others, has brought the actions of another upon themselves because of something they have done, said or prompted, and the child who retaliates or acts aggressively in response, cannot be accused of using bullying actions in this situation. In making this inference, school leaders and other staff may interpret behavioural responses as being provoked and therefore conclude that it is not bullying.

As the next section now highlights, in defining bullying, the labels that may be ascribed to the individuals involved may have an impact on how they are perceived and responded to by school leaders, and other staff members.

Labelling

The language associated with defining and characterising bullying is significant. Some research papers, for example, Cheng, Chen, Ho and Cheng (2011), Siann, Callaghan, Lockhart and Rawson (1993), together with supporting anti-bullying resource materials written for parents and schools, make reference to the labels of ‘bullies’ and ‘victims’ within their text in relation to children (see Elliot, 2011). By labelling children as ‘bullies’ and ‘victims,’ this increases the possibility that the behaviour will be reduced to a series of events and actions. There is a possibility that children who are labelled as bullies will find that this label is a permanent stain on their character and their days of schooling are blighted by such labels. These children are often confined to being known as trouble makers and abusive, or permanently labelled as victims. For example, in addressing the issue of labelling within a particular anti-bullying resource, Frost (2011) refers to the use of the label ‘bully’ throughout the text. However, in justifying the reason why a child should not directly be called a ‘bully,’ Frost (2011) states that “if a young boy is not doing very well at school and the only thing that he is good at and that gives him any feeling of power is making others miserable, then being awarded the tag of ‘bully’ might give him a status among his peers that he cannot achieve any other way” (p.106). In labelling children directly or indirectly in this way, it is possible that school

leaders and other staff, identify individuals they regard as having the potential to cause disruption and difficulties in the everyday workings of the school. This can affect the relationship one child may have with all members of staff because of the reputation which the child brings with them.

In addition, a child who is labelled as the victim of bullying is also judged according to a particular bullying event in their lives or a series of events which have happened to them. Elliot (2011, p.10) refers to “a small majority of pupils [*who*] seem to be perpetual victims. They are bullied no matter where they go, and it even carries on into adult life.” Entering school situations as a ‘victim’ may increase the likelihood of further bullying because of the notion that a particular child is prone to reacting in an uncontrolled and anxious manner when faced with taunts and jibes. The feelings associated with such behaviour then may become exacerbated and more extreme, and as Carney (2000) suggests from his research, the child may turn these feelings in on themselves and become anxious and withdrawn, even suicidal. As some commentators have also argued, the use of negative labelling such as ‘bullies’ and ‘victims’ may be unhelpful in addressing bullying. O’Moore and Minton (2004) suggest use of the word ‘bully’ as a verb rather than a noun endorses a move away from the traditional idea of blame and punishment of individual perpetrators, to a no blame approach. The implication here for school leaders and teachers is that they enable children to take responsibility for their actions, and label the behaviour as inappropriate rather than labelling the child, whether they act as the perpetrator or are victimised.

The final part of this section considers the link between bullying and how individuals are perceived and labelled within the social context of the school environment.

Social context

Within any social group people establish themselves on a continuum and interact with others in their various relationships. This same continuum exists in schools where both children and adults interact with each other and act according to the established social norms and cues. Individuals compete and vie with each other to establish an order within the social group. Bullying occurs when the relationships between individuals and groups of people within the social order break down. Lee (2006) supports the idea that this continuum exists, suggesting that a bullying action exists at one end such as verbal abuse, and a bullying relationship at the other. Key to the existence of this relationship is the duration of time the bullying lasts for, and the fact that it may happen repeatedly. In turn, both these factors lead to the imbalance of power between individuals.

It is feasible that the personal relationship between individuals involved in bullying is non-existent. One person may simply be aware of the presence of another within a school rather than knowing them on a day to day basis. An individual may then simply be targeted because they exist within the same social space and present with human traits that are not liked by another. For children who do not fit the norms and roles established within the social group, there is an increasing possibility that they will

become isolated and targeted. Children who are identified as not fitting the social norm are picked out from the group for either acting or looking different. When one child fails to follow the established protocol and are identified as being different, they are often labelled and targeted accordingly. The labelling usually identifies the reason or feature of their personality that is recognised as being different from the norm. Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) in their study of 13-15 year olds in Finland, identified difference as being at the heart of bullying. They found that children test each other through the use of language and expression, and identify differences between each other. If the differences are not accepted within the social group, then they are used as a basis for targeting an individual. This targeting may become increasingly vitriolic which often leads to increasing social isolation and the individual may experience reduced levels of self-esteem and increased self-loathing. An example of this could be as Renold (2002) identifies in her research, that children perceived to act in ways deemed to be overly masculine or overly feminine are often targeted with names such as 'gay' and 'lezzie,' and that these names are used in a derogatory way. These names become a powerful form of hurtful attack against another individual, and are directly or indirectly targeted at the inner core of a person. This behaviour then constitutes homophobic bullying.

Conceptualising homophobic bullying

Due to the fact that bullying generally is so difficult to define and to identify, recognising behaviour as homophobic bullying is even more difficult. From an academic and research perspective, homophobic bullying is simply defined as another form of bullying with the addendum of words or actions associated with sexuality. For example, Douglas, Warwick, Kemp and Whitty (1997, p.12) define homophobic bullying as “taking place where general bullying behaviours such as verbal and physical abuse and intimidation is accompanied by or consists of the use of terms such as gay, lesbian, queer or lezzie by perpetrators.” This definition has been used as the basis for research carried out into this phenomenon in schools, and continues to be so. The fact that the definition is written in this way reinforces the difficulty surrounding homophobic bullying and conceptualising it as one distinct phenomenon. It is complex because it combines both homophobia and bullying into one issue, when in fact that it is two very distinctive issues. Redman (2000) argues that use of the term homophobia implies a “psychological fear and loathing of homosexuality” (p.485), but as Espelage and Swearer (2008) recognise, research suggests that victimisation as a result of homophobia is not confined to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identified individuals. The implication of this for primary schools, and for school leaders in particular, is that they need to be able to recognise behaviour as bullying, whilst also judging and ascertaining if homophobia is a feature of this bullying. This underlines the complexities associated with identifying behaviour as homophobic bullying and highlights the need for consensus in defining this form of bullying.

In view of this and for the purposes of this study, a working definition of homophobic bullying was created, and as discussed further in Chapter 3, forms part of the survey instrument used in this study. The definition states that: “Homophobic bullying may be defined as bullying that occurs when pupils use terms like queer, faggot, gay, lesbian and other such terms, in a negative sense, or when these type of words are used in conjunction with other aggressive or negative behaviour.”

This definition was constructed based on the literature available and the purpose of it was to try and ensure the respondents understood the meaning of homophobic bullying in relation to this study. Other studies such as Douglas, Warwick, Kemp, Whitty and Aggleton (1999) also constructed their own specific definition for the purpose of their study. The fact that there is no commonly agreed definition of homophobic bullying in the literature or one commonly used in schools in Ireland, meant that it was important to clarify the specific behaviours that the questionnaire was referring to when reference was made to the term ‘homophobic bullying.’ In a similar way to the aforementioned definition of homophobic bullying coined by Douglas et al. (1997), and which was utilised in research such as that conducted by Minton and O’Moore (2008) in relation to LGBT youth in Ireland, words such as queer, faggot, lesbian, and gay are tagged onto a more traditional definition of general bullying.

The previously stated definition which was used for the purposes of this study, was carefully constructed prior to the first pilot study being conducted, and was

subsequently included within the first and second pilot questionnaires, as well as the main study questionnaire. This definition gave consideration to the specific type of derogatory homophobic language used by pupils, such as those Poteat and Rivers (2010) identified in their study in the US, and Thurlow (2001) in his study in England and Wales.

Homophobic language has been identified as a key feature of homophobic bullying (Guasp, 2009), and therefore it was regarded as being important to identify examples of homophobic pejoratives within the definition. In addition, it was important to distinguish the use of this language as being specific to homophobic bullying when compared to other types of bullying behaviour, and how it relates to different sexualities, because as O'Higgins-Norman (2008, p.71) suggests, "[homophobic bullying] underpins the heteronormative ethos of the school environment". In other words, this negative language is often used to describe something that cannot be separated from the "sexual and gender connotations they carry" (DePalma & Jennett, 2010; p.18). In the primary school in Ireland, as a later section in this review highlights, children are not taught about different sexualities other than heterosexuality, and as DePalma and Jennett (2010) suggest, this is an example of how schools reinforce the view perhaps held within sections of wider society, that sexualities other than heterosexuality are at least unacceptable, if not deviant. If children use this specific homophobic language, and it is accompanied by or coupled with other negative behaviours associated with homosexuality or being gay, then this is a very specific form of behaviour which is directed at individuals, or groups of individuals for a variety of reasons; including because of the perception they may be gay. School leaders may or may not be aware of this, and therefore, this needed to be

highlighted for respondents within an explicit definition, so that they would understand the precise behaviour the study was referring to.

The fact that there is no clear and precise commonly held definition of bullying means that when words or actions are directed towards another individual that refers to sexuality and matters of a sexual nature, the behaviour may be regarded as bullying but not necessarily identified as homophobic bullying. To label bullying as homophobic implies that the fear of homosexuality exists at an individual level, but if the bullying is ignored it suggests the possibility that homophobia exists at an institutional level through the school, and wider society. O'Higgins-Norman (2008), in his research conducted in second level schools in Ireland identifies with the terms coined by Blumenfeld (2000). These terms include personal, institutional and cultural homophobia, which are said to exist, with the general premise that there is a fear and hatred of those who love and sexually desire those of the same sex. This is significant, because in addressing bullying, schools will invariably challenge both the language and actions regarded as bullying behaviour, but not specifically address the issues pertaining to human sexuality which lie at the heart of homophobic bullying. Research suggests that addressing this particular form of bullying is extremely difficult for school staff. O'Higgins-Norman (2005) identifies the reasons why teachers at second level schools in Ireland find addressing homophobic bullying difficult. These reasons include fear of the reaction from Boards of Management, parents and other staff, suggesting that people are afraid to address the issue of sexuality. Guasp (2009) in her UK research for Stonewall found that two thirds of primary school teachers did not address issues of sexual orientation in their

classrooms, and yet three quarters of them heard children use homophobic expressions. The silence which accompanies this form of bullying is described by Shai (2011, p. 152) as being “insidious”. He supports this claim by suggesting that often no sanctions are actually meted out to those who use derogatory terms against another in relation to sexuality or those not acting in line with conventional and traditional gender-typical behaviours. Instead of recognising these behaviours as abusive and violent, Shai (2011) suggests that school responses invariably claim that children are too young to understand what they are saying, so the words are ignored.

Associated language

Research indicates that children, of primary school going age, use terminology which makes reference to sexuality and sexual innuendo to both criticise and cajole. Children within the primary school setting are known to use very explicit sexual language to establish themselves amongst their peers, and often boast about their sexual exploits, and participate in interactions which are overtly sexual in nature. Renold (2000) draws on examples from primary school children in her UK research to explain how they continually negotiate their position in their social group by referring to matters of a sexual nature, and that heterosexuality underpins the discourse that takes place. Girls, for example, would be continually using language such as “fancying, going out and dumping” in relation to their interactions with boys, whilst also “positioning themselves as fashionable” (Renold 2000, p.314). Evidence from this research also suggests that the focus on fashion enabled the girls to be labelled attractive at one moment, which could

change to the label of a “tart” at another, which ensured the “regulation of their bodies and bodily expression” (Renold, 2000, p.314). In relation to boys, Renold (2000) found that they overtly spoke about heterosexual practices through describing sexual performance, using sexual innuendo, telling sexually explicit stories to their peers, and the sexual objectification of women and girls. The implication of these research findings for school leaders and for all staff, is that the language used by the children and their overt and covert sexual behaviours are recognised as being important and significant in the formation of sexuality. However, as the next section alludes to, when children don’t conform to what Renold (2000) describes as “compulsory heterosexuality” (p.310) and the “embeddedness of gender and sexuality” in terms of role and position within the social group, they are often severely victimised and abused.

When a child within the social group does not conform to stereotypical heterosexual norms through their own language, dress, style, and personality, there is a danger that they will be targeted with language of a sexual nature that is homophobic. The reason for this as Renold (2002) discovered in her research, is that there are “hegemonic heterosexual” (p.425) masculine and feminine behaviours which are acceptable within the social group, and behaviours which fall outside this, are deemed unacceptable and labelled as such. Renold (2002) describes how girls of “high heterosexual ranking” use their ‘sexual prowess to subordinate and heterosexualise other, less desirable and often effeminate boys” (p.423). In contrast, girls who do not “cultivate their femininity”(p.426) in terms of being attractive to boys, are rejected and excluded. In addition, Renold (2002) also discovered that boys who did not play football, fight, or talk

about girlfriends and their sexual relationships, found that their behaviours were “homosexualised” (p.425) and they were “denigrated as gay” (p.320). In this way, children and young people identify a feature or personality trait of a person they do not like, or someone they feel either displays traits which are of a homosexual nature, or an individual who has identified themselves as being homosexual, and target them through harassment and verbal abuse. It may simply be that someone has a hairstyle or style of clothes, or personality trait that another does not identify with, and they make a link with human sexuality in the labels they identify the person with. Language such as ‘gay, poofter, wuss, faggot, lezzie, dyke, gayboy’ and other such derogatory words are used to label others and let them know that they do not fit in to the norms of the group. This language is used in such a way to reinforce the lack of belonging and identity within a particular social group, and to “regulate and police the boundaries” (Renold, 2000; p.322) of heterosexual masculinity and femininity. This language can be very specific and very hurtful. This reinforces the viewpoint put forward by Hamarus and Kaikkonen (2008) that for educators to understand bullying they must give consideration to the possibility that it features as “a cultural and social phenomenon with interaction and communication as its crucial element.” (p.342). The implication of this for school leaders in particular, is that they recognise how the culture of the school can reinforce both homophobia and the dominance of heterosexuality by accepting language that derides others.

In his study of secondary school pupils in the UK, Duncan (1999) found that pupils identified being called ‘gay’ as the worst possible insult. The evidence suggests that being called gay or another derogatory label which denotes sexuality, strikes at the

inner core of a person in a much more painful way than other labels. Askew and Ross (1988) argue that because sexual name calling is a direct attack on the character of the individual rather than racial, cultural or religious background, this increases children's sensitivity to such labelling. At primary school age, children may understand what it means to be characterised as being gay, but possibly have very little exposure to being told that it is acceptable and normal to be of a different sexual identity. Shai (2011) argues that young children are in fact rarely exposed to both the language of homosexuality and other sexualities, other than the slang and derogatory remarks they hear, and that issues of sexual identity "are to be entrusted to those educating adolescents" (p155). This highlights the possibility that there is very little acceptance or real understanding of different sexualities within the children of primary school age. This in itself identifies other sexualities as being a negative concept and something which is 'other'. This is particularly pertinent to the role of the primary school principal/deputy principal, and other teaching and non-teaching staff and how they address issues of sexuality at this level. As research evidence from studies conducted by Denver et al.(2005) (US) and Renold (2002) (UK) indicates, pre-school aged children experience verbal and physical abuse relating to sexual identity.

Research identifies that the language children use towards each other in the context of homophobic bullying is not necessarily making reference to sexuality. Duncan (1999) in his study of sexual bullying in secondary schools in the UK, found that males in particular used derogatory expressions such as 'gay' and 'poof' to label peers who did not fit the expectations of masculinity or "laddishness" (p.107). In the context of second level

schools in Ireland, research indicates that the use of words such as 'gay' are used by children and young people to describe something that they do not like, including inanimate objects. Children will say "oh that's so gay" to express dissatisfaction or disagreement with something or someone. O'Higgins-Norman (2009) in research conducted in second level schools in Ireland, identified how name calling was often minimised amongst parents, pupils, staff and management. One teacher, for example, refers to the term 'gay' as an everyday term which is used "to describe something as negative" (O'Higgins-Norman, 2009; p.11). Thurlow (2001) also acknowledges that the term 'gay' can be used to describe anything that is undesirable, and this includes "a lack of interest in sport, academic success or a lack of aggression" (p.33). Using these terms suggests that there is in fact a much deeper issue at play with regard to homosexuality, beyond an "irrational prejudice" (Epstein & Johnson, 1994; p.198), and expressing an unacceptability of differing sexualities in the eyes of young people. If children and young people are asked to explain and clarify what they mean they will often not refer to the issue of sexuality at all, despite the negative connotations of what has been expressed. Research conducted by Swearer, Turner, Givens and Pollack (2008) in the US, established that boys in their study were called gay not necessarily because of the real or perceived sexuality of another boy, but because one boy was able to establish a relationship of dominance over another through the language used. This phenomenon is referred to as 'gay-baiting' by Kimmel and Mahler (2003). In terms of the role of principal teacher and other staff, the implication is that the use of words such as queer, homo, sissy, wimp or lezzie may be used by pupils to establish dominance over another, rather than someone being prejudiced. However, for children and young people who are

in fact gay, these labels are extremely hurtful and can cause great distress, both initially and in later life, as the research by Rivers (2001) in the UK shows.

Within the primary school setting, the language and actions associated with staff members, will also make reference to issues pertaining to sexuality both overtly and covertly. However, as research by Allan, Atkinson, Brace, DePalma and Hemingway (2008) discovered in UK primary schools, talk about sexuality is usually confined to the “safe space” (p.319) of the staffroom, and in general, these will be confined to heterosexual practices. Research conducted by Neary (2012) in Ireland, which examined the experience of primary and secondary school lesbian and gay teachers in disclosing their sexuality, indicates that reference will rarely be made to issues of sexuality that concern homosexuality and different sexualities. Talk in the staffroom is invariably in and around dating, marriage and children from the perspective of heterosexuality, and rarely if ever, will make reference to homosexuality or other forms of sexuality. There is a presumption in existence of heterosexuality being the norm. It is rare that homosexuality will be openly spoken about amongst staff, children and management bodies alike. As Neary (2012) states with regard to the LGBT teachers in her research, “these teachers’ staffrooms are desexualised spaces conversely embedded with assumptions of heterosexuality, where symbolic messages are received about morals, reputation and respectability that align with the heterosexual imperative” (p.13). In a study conducted by DePalma and Atkinson (2009) in the UK of teachers and trainee teachers, the findings indicate that both teaching and other staff that identify as being gay would rarely be open about their sexuality within their own schools for fear of rebuke and

retribution or sanction against them. It is therefore not unusual to find that staff remain completely silent about their sexuality within the confines of school and live a totally separate life outside the school environment.

Institutional gender role practices also serve to reinforce heterosexuality as the norm, and make homophobic bullying difficult to deal with and challenge. DePalma and Jennett (2010) argue that homophobic bullying extends beyond the abuse of an individual to a form of “systemic and social policing” (p.16), in terms of gender. For example, female teachers who choose to marry while they are working in a particular school often change their surname to that of their spouse and often wear their new identity on their hand through their wedding ring. The use of labels such as ‘Mrs and Miss’ identify the female teacher and their role within both school and society. Both labels identify whether a person is married or not. Allan et al. (2008) in their research, identified different practices in the primary school which they regard as reinforcing “the heterosexualised nature of the school space” (p.321). These practices included for example, the music played in assemblies which referred to relationships, in books that were read to classes, and in the conversations held during lessons in which teachers referred to their husbands or wives. Therefore at an institutional level there may be practices in existence which reinforce heterosexuality as the norm. Where there is a fear amongst staff of talking about their own personal circumstances and identifying themselves as being openly gay, challenging homophobic bullying will become very difficult. Neary (2012) found that primary school teachers in her research were reluctant to discuss issues of sexual orientation because of ambiguity around what was appropriate for discussion. When

teachers challenge behaviour associated with this form of bullying, there is an increased possibility that there will be discussion about issues pertaining to sexuality. As one teacher in Neary's (2012) study states "I find it hard at times, because, you know, the kids make remarks about gay children....and in our school we're not supposed to have much dealings with that" (p.12). If there is a fear about homosexuality, and other sexualities in general being addressed when incidents of homophobic bullying arise, the whole issue is likely to be avoided and the bullying continue or the behaviour not acknowledged as bullying. Indeed as the aforementioned teacher indicated, homophobic slurs in the playground were often not reprimanded, and as such, this sent a subtle message that "it's ok to call a person by this name, and it's ok to use it as a term of offence" (Neary, 2012, p.12). The next section details how cyberbullying facilitates using homophobic language in a way which can be extremely harmful and damaging to others.

Homophobic cyberbullying

With the advances being made in phone and computer technology and the ever increasing use of social media in society, it is possibly inevitable that children and young people are also engaging in the use of such technology, and that this technology has provided an alternative means by which children and young people can perpetrate homophobic bullying behaviour, in the form of cyberbullying. Although this study is not specifically about cyber bullying *per se* it is important to acknowledge it as a method of bullying behaviour which, as Rivers and Noret (2010) suggest from the results of their study in UK study in secondary schools, is increasingly likely to become more prevalent

in both primary and secondary schools as technology advances at an ever increasing rate. Research evidence from the aforementioned study shows that many of the students who had received nasty or threatening text messages and emails were also subject to other more 'traditional' forms of bullying such as direct physical or indirect relational bullying as a result of their appearance, clothing, weight, size, body shape or because they were called 'gay' (Rivers & Noret, 2010). These findings have implications for how people in positions of leadership working in Irish schools deal with this form of bullying and highlights the need for school leaders to both understand the phenomenon and develop the necessary skills to address it. Those pupils who are bullied in one particular way such as experiencing verbal bullying are also prone to become victim to cyberbullying, but not exclusively so (Rivers & Noret, 2010).

As Corcoran and McGuckin (2014) suggest, and as previously highlighted, traditional forms of bullying are characterised by criteria such as intent to cause harm, repetition and an imbalance in power and are associated with physical, verbal or relational bullying. However, with cyberbullying, the nature and context of it are likely to be different. For example, the taking of a picture or sending a message may happen once, and be forwarded to one other person only, who then sends it to someone else. It then becomes difficult to identify where the repetition has occurred and who has done it. Similarly, Corcoran and McGuckin (2014) suggest the imbalance of power is likely to be characterised by the anonymity of the perpetrator rather than their physical size or social status. Also as O'Moore and Minton (2009) point out, a unique aspect of cyberbullying is that the behaviour can be perpetrated in any location and at any time.

The new DES anti-bullying guidelines (DES, 2013) make specific reference to cyberbullying as part of the guidelines and include it within the definition of bullying. Further to this the guidelines suggest that it is teenagers who are likely to experience such a form of bullying and use the example of messages being sent which are homophobic in nature. However, a European survey of 9-16 year olds showed a very high level of awareness of the dangers associated with the internet and amongst them, with cyberbullying listed as a major cause of concern for them (Livingstone, Kirwil, Ponte & Staksrud, 2014). This also has implications for primary school leaders, especially as the evidence suggests that primary school children may also fall victim to such bullying. According to Cowie and Colliety (2010) schools are critically important in addressing cyberbullying. By providing the opportunities for children to learn safe strategies for dealing with online abuse and increasing awareness amongst the whole school community about cyberbullying, schools can help to reduce bullying behaviour and prejudice. For example, utilising Safer Internet Day to increase the awareness of cyberbullying as recommended by the Anti-Bullying Working Group (2013) is one such way of increasing awareness. It is evident as the next section highlights, that bullying, whether it is perpetrated using 'traditional methods' or through modern forms of cyberbullying, the effects can be just as devastating.

Effects of bullying

Much international research has been carried out into the effects of bullying. Research indicates that the consequences of being involved in bullying, both as perpetrator and someone who has been victimised, are extremely wide and far reaching. It is known for example, that children who are bullied rate much more poorly on measures of psychological well-being than their peers (Owens, Slee & Shute, 2000) and that the experience of being bullied can cause great psychological distress (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

There are however, many different effects of bullying documented within the literature. For children who experience being bullied, the effects are often manifested in the form of physical, emotional, psychological and social difficulties. These difficulties exist on a continuum in a similar way to the bullying itself. The more severe and prolonged the bullying is, the greater the likelihood that the net effect will lead to increasingly more severe difficulties. In terms of homophobic bullying, theorists such as Chan (2009) perceives that the effects can be even more marked and severe than other forms of bullying. The reason for this is because sexuality is such an important part of a persons make up and their inner core as a human being, when this is attacked and vilified, often the feelings associated with this are turned inwards and become very personalised. In addition to the victimisation which takes place in school, Chan (2009), cites statistical data gathered from within the US Centre for Population Options, which found that sexual minority adolescents faced “rejection, isolation, verbal harassment and physical violence

at home, in school and in religious institutions” (p.154). This underlines the need for teachers and school leaders to be increasingly aware that it is not just within school that children can be labelled with derogatory homophobic names, and that the acceptance of these names increases the level of isolation and rejection which children and young people experience.

For children who are bullied, they will often experience poor physical and mental health both during a period of being victimised, and subsequently (Rigby, 1994; Rigby, 1999). Early physical symptoms such as insomnia, nightmares, or bedwetting (enuresis), feelings of sadness, and experiencing headaches and stomach aches are commonly associated with victimisation (Williams, Chambers, Logan & Robinson, 1996).

These symptoms may provide an initial indication that a child is experiencing difficulties in their relationships with others at school, and that these relationships are of an order that represent a form of bullying. If the behaviour is not addressed or the child does not feel that the bullying has ended, and/or it becomes persistent and continuous, these symptoms may lead to much more serious psychological and physical health consequences.

Research indicates that children who are victimised, be it repeatedly or over a long period of time, often show and experience heightened feelings of anxiety, (Olweus, 1978; Slee, 1994; Hawker & Boulton, 2000), low self-esteem, (Besag, 1989; Olweus, 1993; Boulton & Smith, 1994; Randall, 1996) and loneliness, (Boulton & Underwood,

1992; Hawker & Boulton, 2000). In addition they may also experience feelings of guilt and shame, social isolation and exceptional timidity (Besag, 1989; Elliot & Kilpatrick, 1994).

In terms of social relationships and their experience of school, children who are bullied often reach a point of becoming totally afraid of school, lack concentration, start refusing to attend and truanting. In addition, children who are bullied find it very difficult to establish and maintain friendships. The formation of friendships is often based on varying degrees of popularity, and as the child who is bullied is likely to be unpopular, there is an ever decreasing likelihood that friendships will become established. This leads to children often becoming increasingly anxious and withdrawn (Mayock, Bryan, Karr & Kitching, 2009). The resulting increase in isolation leads to a loss of confidence and as a result, there is a further decline in self-esteem (Rigby & Slee, 1993; Boulton & Smith, 1994). This erosion of self esteem can lead to what Gilmartin (1987) terms as love shyness, where he found that young men who had been bullied as children found that establishing relationships with others in later life was extremely difficult.

In the extreme, the lack of self-esteem and self-worth that an individual feels can lead to severe forms of behaviour and mental illness developing. Examples of such include eating disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (Rivers, 2004; Bully-on-line, 2005) alcoholism and drug addiction, self-harming and suicidal ideation (Mayock et al. 2009). There have been a number of high profile cases in Ireland and

elsewhere in the world, whereby children who have experienced different forms of bullying have chosen to end their own lives.

The wide and far reaching effects of bullying also extend into the relationships of the children who bully others. Research shows that adults who have engaged in bullying others as children are often associated with continued aggressive patterns of behaviour, resulting in delinquency, criminality and have a strong association with mental health services as in or out patients (Olweus, 1993; Berthold & Hoover, 2000).

For the child who is prone to engaging in behaviours that are construed as bullying, their behaviours are often associated with overt aggression in their relationships with others. As children get older they start to discern whether or not they wish to be associated with each other and on what level of friendship they seek to maintain. The child who bullies often appears to be popular, as confirmed in a US study by O'Brennan; Bradshaw and Sawyer (2009), but invariably they become increasingly isolated from the social group, as norms and values are established about what is and is not acceptable behaviour. The child who bullies then gravitates towards other children who are aggressive and display similar patterns of behaviour and become part of a different social group. The net result is a tarnished reputation which is very difficult to change. O'Brennan et al. (2009) perceive that children who are prone to bullying others, often develop the ability to manipulate and control others through social relationships, and have the ability to influence others, and yet become increasingly isolated. As people within and outside the local community become aware of individual reputations,

difficulties are created in the social relationships between people, for example, when entering local shops an individual may be regarded with a level of suspicion. An increasingly isolated group or single individual will then become prone to engaging in criminality and anti-social behaviour including the use and sale of illicit drugs and the consumption of alcohol. The feelings associated with such activity can invariably be turned towards the community or back in on the individual with the net result of criminal activity and/or conviction or towards spiraling self-destruction through illicit means. This is especially pertinent because O'Brennan et al. (2009) found that children who are prone to bullying, actually feel unsafe themselves in school, tending to harbour retaliatory attitudes, and often experience worry and anxiety.

Effects of homophobic bullying

In terms of homophobic bullying, because it targets the inner person and the most intimate aspect of a person's personality, the personal effects of it can be more extreme than other forms of bullying. The same feelings previously described, such as the isolation and loss of self-esteem, which are associated with other forms of bullying, become even more severe and extreme when personal worth is attacked. This may be because of someone's perceived or actual sexuality, or simply because they are not liked. Research indicates that for children who are bullied in this way, the consequences can be extreme (Rivers, 2011). Suicidal feelings are commonly associated with this form of bullying, but in later life there is an even greater chance of suicidal ideation for previous victims of this form of bullying (Rivers, 2001). Chan (2009) alludes to the fact that in the

US, rates of suicide are higher for young people who identify as being in a sexual minority grouping than their heterosexual counterparts. Further to this, Chan (2009) suggests this is not because of their sexual orientation but because of their social experience, including bullying. Human sexuality as a fundamental part of the inner person requires careful nurturing, particularly when children are young and vulnerable. During puberty and adolescence when children and young people are starting to become aware and coming to terms with their own identity, when this identity is attacked, the feelings generated are often heightened and can lead to personal heartache and complete loss of self-esteem. As this stage of development can take place during the latter part of the primary school years, if the bullying is ignored or dismissed, the feelings experienced by a child could be catastrophic for their future growth as a happy healthy person. As Chan (2009), points out, some LGBT young people who experience a negative school environment, truant, drop out of school, abuse alcohol and drugs, or become homeless, and this exposes them to sexual exploitation.

The next section considers the research evidence which highlights the frequency with which homophobic bullying occurs in schools.

Section two: Research studies of homophobic bullying

This section considers the various studies that have been carried out into homophobic bullying within both primary and second level schools and amongst different education professionals. It must be noted however, that no research has been conducted into homophobic bullying at primary school level in the context of Ireland. The section is divided up into two parts, *national research studies and international research studies*. It begins with international studies.

International research

International research has identified how homophobic language is used both at primary and secondary level in schools. Internationally, a common experience of children and young people at both primary and second level is to hear the use of homophobic pejoratives and derogatory language within their own school setting and outside it. Thurlow (2001) considered how secondary school pupils in England and Wales use homophobic pejoratives. Thurlow (2001) identified 6000 pejoratives that young 14 and 15 year old respondents listed. Of these, 10% were regarded as being homophobic in nature. Significantly, homophobic verbal abuse was rated by the pupils as being much less serious than either racist abuse or other taboo slang, and yet as Thurlow (2001) intimates, young people seem to be so unaware of the emotionally and psychological damage such labelling causes to other students. In their US study of middle school students, Poteat and Espelage (2007) found that being a target of homophobic epithets

significantly increases the negative social effects on an individual, such as withdrawing from the group and experiencing depressive moods. It may be that a child pretends such labels don't offend and hurt, when in fact these labels are being internalised and can be recalled in later life, as the study by Rivers (2001) found.

Research conducted by Emma Renold in the UK identified homophobic bullying as being a specific and prevalent form of bullying in primary schools. Renold (2002) identifies different gendered forms of harassment which she describes as being heterosexist and homophobic. In exploring these terms she gives clear insight into how children behave towards each other in terms of sexually explicit and covert behaviours. Renold (2002) suggests that children display behaviours which can be construed as being homophobic and heterosexist, but which serve to establish and maintain a hierarchical gender order between the children and within the institutional structure of the school. Renold (2002) found that boys aged 10/11 who did things differently to the majority, such as playing fantasy games instead of football and enjoyed musical ballads rather than heavy rock, were "positioned as Other within a hegemonic masculine matrix" (p.426). This equated their behaviour with girls, feminine things and "non-masculine ways of being" (p.426). For girls, particularly those who were not interested in boys, they were regarded as having "failed to cultivate their femininity" (p.426) within their own peer group, and were labelled and excluded. Heterosexist gender practices help to establish heterosexuality as the norm within schools, and to confine homosexuality and differences between sexualities, as being of secondary importance to heterosexuality. The implication of this for school leaders is that for pupils who display behaviours which are not regarded

as being the norm for the particular social group, they will find that they are probably way down the pecking order in terms of popularity and friendship group. This leads to isolation and an erosion of self-esteem. Renold (2000) demonstrates how children in primary schools use language that is both homophobic and heterosexist in nature to establish the appropriate norms of behaviour within the social group. For example, boys who behave in ways that are regarded as being non-macho and fail to live up to the expectations of being masculine are labelled and targeted in a way which sets them out as being different from the norm. In a similar way, girls who are overtly sexual in their interactions with either other or boys find that they are also labelled with derogatory names that question their morality in terms of their sexual behaviour. In this instance they would be accused of being sexually active and terms such as 'slag' and 'whore' would be used.

Organisations such as Stonewall (Guasp, 2009) and Childline (NSPCC, 2006) in the UK, have recorded figures from both primary school teachers and children respectively, about the prevalence of homophobic bullying. Figures indicate that within the UK system of primary education, there is a major issue for both children and teachers to deal with. Childline (NSPCC, 2006) recorded that an estimated 2,725 young people call them each year to talk about sexual orientation, homophobia or homophobic bullying. In April 2006, 6% of the people who called in relation to the above, were primary school children aged 11 or under. Meanwhile, the figures released from a study conducted for Stonewall (Guasp, 2009), indicate that two in five teachers in primary schools in the UK believed that children were currently experiencing homophobic

bullying, whilst a further two in five did not respond when they heard homophobic pejoratives being used. A further statistic put forward by Guasp (2009) was that some teachers were reluctant to tackle the issue head on because they did not believe the pupils were being homophobic. The fact that homophobic pejorative language is often ignored by teachers because they believe that children don't understand what is being said to them, nor the meaning associated with it, supports the argument put forward by Wallis and VanEvery (2000) that primary schools are places where sexuality is often regarded as being something confined to the staff only, and a place where children as sexual beings are invisible. In addition, just less than half of the primary school teachers questioned in the Stonewall study (Guasp, 2009), expressed the view that the principal teacher demonstrated a clear leadership role when it came to tackling homophobic bullying, while more than half stated that their schools did not have a policy that explicitly addressed homophobic bullying.

Similar findings were recorded by Warwick, Aggleton and Douglas (2001) in another UK study in secondary schools in England and Wales. Warwick et al. (2001) found that 82% of respondents were aware of instances of homophobic bullying, and while 99% reported having a school policy which addressed bullying, only 6% said that reference was made to bullying which related to LGBT issues. However, 98% of the respondents had an RSE policy, with 51% referring to LGBT issues, but significantly many of the respondents believed at secondary school level, it was inappropriate that schools should provide such information. Further to these findings, Meyer (2008), in a Canadian study of secondary teachers, found that they were reluctant to tackle the issue

of homophobic bullying because of a perceived lack of support from their own principal teachers and school management bodies. In addition, and significantly, the social norms and values of the wider school community such as parents and teaching colleagues influenced teacher behaviour in choosing whether to address homophobic bullying.

Research conducted by McGuckin and Lewis (2008), as part of a large study about bullying behaviour in Northern Ireland indicates a reluctance of many primary school principals to tackle homophobic bullying. When principal teachers were asked to participate in a campaign against homophobic bullying in both primary and secondary schools, there was an extremely negative response from some principals. At primary level, some principal teachers gave an indication as to why they did not want to get involved. These reasons included that the children would not understand, or they were too young, parents wouldn't agree or management bodies would not like it. Although it was unclear here as to the prevalence and nature of homophobic bullying in schools in Northern Ireland, this study does help to underline the importance of the role of school leaders in addressing the issues of homophobic bullying. The reluctance to tackle the issue, and in some cases the refusal to place a poster in the school in terms of raising an awareness about the issue, meant that children and young people in those particular schools were prevented from knowing that support was available both inside and outside school. In addition, there is a likelihood that any child who experienced bullying of a homophobic nature in certain schools, would have needed to identify a staff member to provide support, and who was not afraid to tackle the issue, or to seek support outside school, or suffer in silence. These findings are significant because of the obvious close

association between the North and the Republic of Ireland. The different views expressed by the principal teachers in this study, regarding homophobic bullying, may indicate the possibility that school leaders in the Republic of Ireland may also share those same views.

Research in Ireland

At primary school level in Ireland there has been no research conducted into any aspect of homophobic bullying. Much research has been carried out into bullying generally, for example Byrne (1994) and O'Moore et al (1997), but not specifically about homophobic bullying. This suggests the possibility that this specific form of bullying behaviour is generally not thought to be associated with the Irish primary school. However, research within second level schools here in Ireland, provides possible insight into the reasons why homophobic bullying has not been addressed or researched at primary level. The earliest study conducted into homophobic bullying was carried out by O'Higgins-Norman (2005) in Dublin schools. It gave consideration to the views of second level SPHE teachers and how they regarded homophobic bullying and the teaching of RSE within their own subject area. Research findings indicate that the vast majority of teachers (79%) had encountered homophobic bullying amongst pupils; that many were reluctant to tackle homophobic bullying; and that "there is a significant problem with homophobic bullying in Irish second level schools" (O'Higgins-Norman, 2005; p.14). A number of teachers (41%) stated that they found it more difficult to deal with bullying which related to homosexuality, than other types of bullying, and that their

desire to help pupils, was hindered by the fact that in trying to be protective and sensitive to the needs of the pupil, they feared negative reactions from parents, other staff, and other pupils. In addition, although teachers recognised the school as an appropriate place where LGBT issues could be discussed, significant factors were regarded as preventing issues to be aired which would improve conditions for LGBT pupils. These reasons included fear of disapproval from their own Board of Management (BOM); staff inexperience, lack of formal policy guidelines, parental, pupil and colleagues disapproval, together with disapproval of the patron. The implication of this research for primary schools in Ireland is that the majority of key stakeholders could possibly disapprove of addressing issues pertaining to sexualities which are non-heterosexual.

In a study which reviewed the 'Exploring Masculinities' SPHE programme for single sex second level schools in Ireland, Mac an Ghaill, Hanafin and Conway (2004) identified how adolescents in Ireland use homophobic terms as a form of banter. In the context of primary schools in Ireland, this finding is particularly important because even though pupils at primary level are much younger, it may be that school leaders and other staff members also regard the use of such homophobic terms as a form of banter, rather than indicating that a child is being bullied.

The experience of LGBT youth in Ireland has been examined in research conducted by Minton, Dahl, O'Moore and Tuck (2008). They found that the consequences for young LGBT people of secondary school going age, of being bullied at school was extremely severe and left them with a legacy of emotional, psychological and

physical health problems. Many of the young people from the study described their experience while at school, and how there was a reluctance of teachers to get involved in bullying situations, and to deal with any issue of homophobia that arose within the running of the school. The increased isolation and constant abuse directed at individuals, often left them confused and despairing. Findings from the research indicated that many of the young people felt unsafe both on the way to and from school, and that the level of verbal abuse based around their sexuality was frequent, together with rumours being spread about them. Minton et al. (2008) draw an interesting comparison with the nationwide study conducted by O'Moore et al. (1997) in terms of second level pupils being bullied. Minton et al. (2008) did identify that pupils who identified as being LGBT were more likely to be bullied than pupils who did not identify as being LGBT, although Minton and O'Moore (2008) are cautious in making this comparison with the aforementioned nationwide study because of the differences between the nature of the samples, age ranges of participants and the methodology employed in both studies. However, this finding does underline the importance of conducting research to ascertain whether homophobic bullying exists within the context of primary schools in Ireland, particularly as evidence from other jurisdictions shows how young children are known to use physical and verbal methods of abusing each other based on the issue of different sexualities (Renold, 2000; 2002).

The implication of the findings presented in all the aforementioned studies is that because of the similarities in western culture and the way the primary education system operates in these cultures, there is an increased possibility that homophobic bullying does

exist within schools here in Ireland, especially as bullying in general has been shown to be “pervasive in western countries” (Ananiadou & Smith, 2002, p.473). This further underlines the need for research to be conducted here in Ireland to find out the frequency of homophobic bullying, and to ascertain how school leaders view their role in addressing homophobic bullying.

Section three: Leadership response to homophobic bullying

This section is divided up in to three parts. The initial part considers the role that school leaders play in addressing homophobic bullying, including their leadership style and their emotional response to homophobic bullying. This leads into the role they play in creating school policies such as the anti-bullying policy and RSE policy, and finally consideration is given to the role other stakeholders play in addressing homophobic bullying. The term school leader has been used throughout this study to refer to principal/deputy principal or acting principal. In this particular section the term ‘principal’ is more commonly used to refer specifically to the individual in that particular leadership role.

Role of the school leader

As a school leader, through the introduction of the Education Act (1998), the principal is charged with the responsibility for managing the day to day running of the school as set out in Section 23. This includes managing the behaviour of the children and

staff, and in addition, ensuring that there is a level of discipline which exists within the school that guarantees all the children have 'equality of access to and participation in education' as prescribed in the aforementioned Education Act (1988). As previously stated, for the child who experiences or perpetrates any form of bullying, the effects are wide reaching, and limit the level of participation the child has in education. The principal, as one of the key stakeholders in primary education, "plays a vital role in the prevention of bullying," as stated by Harris and Hathorn (2006; p.50). The principal is charged with trying to ensure that bullying does not happen, and has to take steps with school staff, and the BOM, to establish what behaviours are acceptable within the confines of the primary school.

When an incident of homophobic bullying occurs, the principal/deputy principal has a key role to play in response. Their response depends on how they view the behaviour itself, and the descriptions of a specific incident. These descriptions will often be given to them by a staff member, a child or a report from a parent. The school leader may choose to investigate further, dismiss what is being said to them or simply act straight away because they have observed something happening. Research conducted by Harris and Hathorn (2006) about middle school principals in the US, found that principal teachers often had a different view of an alleged bullying episode than their pupils. The discussion that ensues after any alleged incident, may lead to talk of sexuality, sexual innuendo, sexual labelling and their levels of appropriateness within the primary school. This discourse is important in the role of the principal and in shaping the ethos of the school. If there is a lack of openness and honesty in what is said, there is perhaps a much

greater chance that homophobic bullying will be present within the greater environs of the school. Children, staff and parents alike will know what attitude is prevalent within the school, and also how the principal deals with such incidents. Harris and Hathorn (2006) also found that principal teachers believed that their schools were safe places to be, and yet pupils do not always agree that they feel safe in school. If the principal dismisses talk about sexuality and homophobia, this message will be conveyed to the wider school community very quickly. The implication of this is that children continue to use such language because they know they can get away with it. In contrast, if the school leader is prepared to specifically address any issue that arises, and is prepared to talk about sexuality and sexual language where it is appropriate, and establish that labelling and targeting are unacceptable in any circumstances, then this may lead to a much more successful outcome. By being open in terms of allowing for discussion about sexual identity and orientation, and fostering this within RSE, the school leader and the school can “make an important contribution to the welfare of young people who may now, or at a later time, identify as [gay]” (Milton, 2003; p.253). This suggests there is a key role to play by school leaders these situations. In her Canadian study, Meyer (2008) identified that school leadership in bullying situations is vital in bringing about a successful resolution to bullying. Meyer (2008) argues that where principal teachers fail to address the issues pertaining to homophobic bullying, they are communicating to staff that these behaviours are not problematic, and significantly, they “reinforce the primacy of heterosexual masculinity in schools” (p.562).

Leadership style

Various models of leadership have been described and articulated within the different spheres of academia. When consideration is given to the construct of leadership within education, individual labels are expounded in terms of style and type of leadership which are appropriate for an individual principal teacher. It is most likely that every school leader here in Ireland will at some point encounter bullying behaviour, either within the staff or more particularly amongst the children. As the previously mentioned research of Meyer (2008) suggests, the leadership response is critical to successfully resolving any bullying situation and this depends on the individuals' skills and attitude in being able to resolve it successfully. In turn, this may depend on the type of leadership model each individual adopts in their practice. As Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001) concluded from their research, "effective leadership is defined and driven by individual value systems" (p.32)

Due to the possible fact that bullying exists on a continuum and that it is brought about by the differences between people in terms of relationships with each other, so too should the leadership response exist on a continuum. At times the principal and deputy principal may have to adapt to different models of leadership, depending on the situation and the personnel involved. This requires skilled and careful manipulation. Linsky and Lawrence (2011) believe that this adaptive leadership can be learned, but it requires courage and effort to perfect the skills required. For example, even though schools adopt anti-bullying policies, one staff member may not have the capacity to cope with bullying

of any kind and completely ignore any form of behaviour like this, while another staff member might be gung-ho in their dealings with children and parents, and make errors of judgement by being too hasty. Both these situations would possibly require the principal/deputy principal to intervene and prevent a situation from becoming worse, especially as resolution requires careful and measured tactics. In contrast to both of these situations, another teacher may be very adept at dealing with bullying behaviour of any kind and make correct decisions in following procedures, and be able to handle any outcome, to bring a comprehensive resolution to a situation. This allows school leaders to simply act in a supporting role and at the most appropriate time, and when required, to be brought in to the situation, thereby “demonstrating a social awareness about what feelings to show in what circumstances” (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011; p. 133).

Dealing with bullying requires all staff to be allowed to adopt a leadership role and be prepared to tackle a bullying situation when it arises. From the outset the school leader has to lead by example and adopt an approach which empowers all staff to respond. Meyer (2009) suggests that if teachers do not see their school leaders prioritising a bullying situation when it arises, then consequently teachers feel limited in their ability to change the behaviour patterns amongst pupils. Vigilance and awareness are at the heart of preventing, or at least reducing bullying behaviour in schools. As Meyer (2009) identified from her research in Canada, the actions of the school leader are critical in encouraging individual teachers to both act and to respond appropriately. In this way, the school leader shares the burden of leadership with all staff, and distributes the responsibility between all the adult stakeholders in the school community. By adopting a

style of leadership which is democratic, the individual principal teacher/deputy principal empowers individual teachers as decision makers. Spillane (2005) suggests that it is these interactions between each staff member and school leader which are vitally important, and individuals play off one another and create interdependency between their actions. In other words, the school leader cannot be the eyes and ears for the whole school community, but by encouraging each individual staff member to be aware of bullying behaviour and to ensure that all staff members know what bullying is, and to be able to recognise bullying situations, the leader distributes the task of leadership, and ensures that every staff member takes responsibility for addressing bullying in order to attain a collective whole school response.

By allowing individuals to be autonomous in their decision making and practice, whilst quietly overseeing the whole school picture, the principal/deputy principal facilitate teacher empowerment. This is likely to be more productive in terms of dealing with bullying behaviour, and demonstrates how “it is not the actions of individuals, but the interactions among them, that are critical in leadership practice” (Spillane, 2005; p.145). By allowing every individual teacher to lead their own class, there is a good chance that modelling this type of behaviour will discourage the children from engaging in bullying behaviour. When inappropriate language is used towards an individual or when the teacher is aware of someone being excluded and isolated from the social group, it is imperative that the teacher steps in. By doing this, the children observe that it is not just the principal/deputy principal who act as the leaders in the school and the authority figures. The DES (2013) guidelines recommend an approach such as this be adopted and

the teacher takes an active role in dealing with bullying. The principal/deputy principal may be required to assist in this situation, but to reinforce the message rather than taking over and dictating what happens. In this way the principal/deputy principal actively seek “to engender leadership capability in others” (James, Connolly, Dunning & Elliot. 2007; p.581). By encouraging such wide involvement in decision making, the leader contributes to a “sense of leadership depth” (James et al. 2007; p.581).

As a staff, establishing that there are different types of bullying, together with the correct procedures and practices to follow when any type of bullying comes to the fore, will ensure that the school is a place of relative safety for all children. As Minton & O’Moore (2004) suggest from their research in an Irish context, successfully addressing the issues pertaining to bullying, requires a whole school approach, and that this stems from the leadership of the principal teacher. Depending on the size of the school, there will be a different range of middle management structures in each, from none or one post of responsibility (B post) to assistant principal (A post) and deputy principal. By ensuring that the people in these posts are aware of bullying behaviour, including homophobic bullying, and understand the roles and responsibilities they have when any bullying situation arises, the principal can also distribute the tasks of leadership. However, Sugrue (2011) alludes to the fact that Whole School Evaluation (WSE) reports generate the impression that these management posts are supportive to the principal rather than providing a more collaborative form of distributed or shared leadership, in the way Spillane (2006) describes. Research conducted in Ireland with a view to improving school leadership (OECD, 2007), identified that these management posts were more

attractive to people than undertaking the role of principal teacher. This suggests the possibility that many teachers have a feeling that the role of principal is too arduous, and by implication, in terms of responding to bullying behaviour, that the responsibility actually remains with the principal rather than the whole staff.

Emotional response

In order to be able to implement distributed leadership in school, there is a requirement of the principal and/or deputy principal to be an emotional leader, because it is premised on the success of relationships between the principal/deputy principal and the rest of the school staff. As Brennan and Mac Ruairc (2011), state “leadership involves intensive personal interactions that are publicly displayed, and therefore includes an emotional dimension” (p.135). Various authors have stressed the importance of school leaders demonstrating their leadership skills through using their own emotional capacity, for example, Beatty (2000), Crawford (2007), and Brennan and Mac Ruairc (2011). Being able to recognise the emotion of others, or empathising, can help to bring successful resolution to various situations. Emotions, as a fundamental part of who we are as human beings, are often used as a basis for doing good or harm. All the stakeholders within a school community are emotional beings, and therefore the principal/deputy principal being able to recognise these emotions whilst also acknowledging their own level of emotion, can lead others through their understanding. Both adults and children will experience different levels of emotion in their daily lives. From a leadership perspective, the principal/deputy principal needs to be able to respond

to these emotions and act accordingly. Bullying behaviour presents an excellent example of how this can be done, and how “all organisational actions are inseparable from, and influenced by emotion” (Crawford, 2007; p.135). For the purposes of this study emotion is defined as “experienced as a distinctive type of mental state, sometimes accompanied or followed by bodily changes, expressions, actions.” (Brennan & MacRuairc, 2011; p.132).

In a situation where, for example, one child is abusing another through the use of homophobic pejoratives, or leaving the child out of social encounters because they are perceived to be ‘gay,’ this presents the whole school community with a difficult problem, but in particular the principal/deputy principal as the school leaders. In observing this behaviour, or when this behaviour comes to light, there will be an emotional response from the staff member or children who observed this behaviour happening. It may be as research suggests, for example, Guasp (2009), that the fear of the consequences of acting when this form of behaviour arises, means that the teacher walks away pretending that it either has not happened or dismisses the behaviour as child’s play. If it is a child who observes and reports the behaviour to a staff member, and nothing is done about it, the child will inevitably feel confused or unsure about what they have observed. They may also feel empathy towards the victim of such abuse, and possibly glad in the knowledge that this has not happened to them personally. If it is the principal/deputy principal teacher who either receives a report of the behaviour happening or witnesses the behaviour themselves, they too will use their emotional capacity to respond to the situation. Brennan and Mac Ruairc (2011) suggest that for principal teachers, there can be

a great intensity of feelings generated within their daily experience, and that these feelings occur in what they term as the “inner principal” (p.135); in other words, deeply within their being. These feelings include vulnerability, stress, sadness, regret, powerlessness, paranoia, isolation and anxiety. The implication of this for the principal/deputy principal is that bullying behaviour can lead to the possibility of these extreme feelings being felt when dealing with such situations.

All parties in the situation described, would display a wide range of emotional behaviours which could result in relationships between people becoming fractured, depending on the next level of response. If adults dismiss that a bullying event has either happened or is continuing to happen, this can leave a very serious emotional scar on those whom it affects. As previously mentioned, research indicates that the feelings of isolation and loneliness can really become heightened for any child in any bullying situation (Rivers, 2001). Often there is a great level of secrecy around bullying behaviour and children do not always tell. However, when they do tell the emotional response from those who hear it and those in a position of leadership is critical to a successful resolution for the child concerned. This revolves around empathy, and the child feeling that the school leader accepts what is being said to them, and understands what the child is experiencing. It is possible that the principal/deputy principal may feel afraid and worry about the consequences for themselves, but in recognising the hurt and pain caused to the child, they are more likely to be able to respond and to reassure the victim of such behaviour, and then to act to stop it from happening again. By drawing in other members of staff, particularly the class teacher, senior management team and parents, the

principal/deputy principal can use the emotion of a situation to bring empathy and reassurance to all concerned. In this way, as Brennan and Mac Ruairc (2011) recognise, “school leaders need to be emotionally competent as they engage with others in the process of collaboration; by recognising, understanding, and managing the emotional aspects intrinsic to the collaborative process; thus reducing conflict and promoting positive relationships” (p.136). In any bullying situation, anger and fear will be at the heart of it, particularly for the child and their parents, and meeting that with kindness, calmness and reassurance will hopefully help to allay those emotions. By allowing both the child and the parents to express how they feel, allows everyone to understand and to feel also. The value of empathy is extremely important in understanding how bullying behaviour should be dealt with.

In terms of perpetrators of such bullying behaviour there may also be an emotional response from the principal/deputy principal. Children often behave in certain ways because of their own level of emotions and because of the hurt that they feel themselves about other things in their lives such as family difficulties. In contrast, some children display psychopathic tendencies and show no emotion to victims of such behaviour and find it very difficult to verbalise the reasons why they acted in such a way beyond not liking a person. Plaford (2006) identifies children who are prone to bullying often lack the ability to empathise with others and/or how to build and maintain social relationships. This also raises the issue of emotional response from the principal/deputy principal. Anger and resentment could arise here, and being careful not to use those emotions to either cloud judgment or to act in anger would present a different series of

problems. By empathising with the perpetrator of bullying also allows for a calm and measured response to the bullying situation. When the issue becomes on-going or if the principal/deputy principal and senior management team regard the situation as being an extremely serious breach of school rules, then the steps of the school discipline policy, such as suspension and exclusion can be invoked. This involves a serious level of emotional difficulty for the principal/deputy principal and other members of the school community, because in invoking such procedures, this brings a response from all those concerned, who may agree or disagree with the steps that have been taken. This means that the principal/deputy principal has to be able to deal internally with this level of emotion and to be able to respond in an appropriate manner afterwards. As Beatty (2000) discovered in her research with principal teachers in Canada, “emotional well being was associated with the ability to do the job even when it was a painful or distasteful task.” (p. 352)

The following section deals with how school policies can help in dealing with homophobic bullying and possibly help to reduce the negative impact.

School policies

School leaders have to ensure that policies exist which stipulate how such eventualities are dealt with. All the school policies have to be integrated to ensure that each one is clearly communicated to all staff, parents, children and the wider school community, be it through hard copy, indirectly, or as commonly done now, by being

posted on the school website. In doing this, all the stakeholders from within the school community have an important participatory role to play.

Anti-bullying policy

The introduction, implementation and review of a school anti-bullying policy is a key factor in trying to reduce the amount of bullying that occurs. Research such as the work by Smith, Smith, Osborn and Samara (2008) in the UK, and O'Moore and Minton (2004) in Ireland, indicate that the adoption and use of a school policy as part of a whole school approach, is fundamental in successfully tackling the issue of bullying. Further to this, Smith et al. (2008) believe that the more succinct documents are, the more easily they are read and understood by all stakeholders, which in turn, helps to provide a more useful working document for use in school.

The school anti-bullying policy is usually produced under the guidance of the principal and deputy principal with the co-operation of all members of staff and parents. Careful consideration has to be given to the content of the school anti-bullying policy, in order for it to be effective. Research conducted in Sheffield in the UK, by Eslea and Smith (1998) demonstrates the importance of the role of the principal in reducing bullying behaviour, by adopting a comprehensive whole-school anti-bullying policy, which includes specific types of bullying behaviour. In Ireland, from a theoretical perspective, the principal/deputy principal teacher usually seek advice and the opinions of the many different stakeholders such as staff, parents, BOM, and the recommendations of

outside agencies such as NEPS and the inspectorate. Ideally, the opinions of children will also be considered, but not always. This is often done through the use of a questionnaire, which ascertains what the children understand by the term bullying and their own experience within the school. This information is collated and used to inform policy. Eslea and Smith (1998) found that when they evaluated the Sheffield intervention project, the use of questionnaires were invaluable in helping to reduce bullying behaviour. The school leader's role is to ensure that all views are considered and the end result is a comprehensive policy which can be used as a working document to tackle bullying throughout the school community.

The policy may include a definition of what behaviours constitute bullying and identifying different types of bullying behaviour such as sexual bullying in the form of homophobic and heterosexist harassment. Following on from their research in the UK, Smith et al (2008) identify that successful anti-bullying policies necessarily define what behaviours constitute bullying, and in addition make reference to specific bullying behaviour such as homophobic bullying. However, school policies do not always do this, as O'Higgins-Norman (2005) found in second level schools in Ireland, and are more generic in their description of the behaviour. As previously indicated, deciding what behaviours constitute bullying is not straightforward. The school leader's opinion and attitude towards the different types of bullying behaviour, will impact on whether or not different types of bullying behaviour are included within the document and how to tackle specific types of bullying. The reason for this is, because they generally lead policy formation and give the final approval to the document before it is brought before the

BOM. As previously indicated, research shows that policies are much more effective if they specifically name and include all the different types of bullying in the document. By naming homophobic bullying, the whole school community is made aware that the use of homophobic pejoratives and the physical targeting of a child are not acceptable. As Milton (2003) states, “schools have a moral and legal obligation to provide a safe learning environment for all students” (p.253).

Naming homophobic bullying in the school anti-bullying policy is a recommendation made by the DES (2013) in the recently updated guidelines. Whether or not this happens may depend on how homophobic bullying is perceived by those in positions of school leadership, that is, whether it occurs or not. Harris and Hathorn (2006) emphasise the point that reducing bullying in schools is dependent on the level of commitment and leadership style of the principal, but, in addition, that it is coupled with the attitudes and beliefs of the other teachers and the parents within the school community. If the principal is autocratic in their outlook, they will probably insist on the policy conforming to their own beliefs, while if they adopt a more democratic approach they will have given equal consideration to all opinions. It may be that staff members feel it is unnecessary to include homophobic bullying as a specific bullying type, but by being well informed and a good negotiator, the principal/deputy principal can insist on it being included. The principal/deputy principal will need to have knowledge of what constitutes bullying and recognise that there are specific types of bullying. The implication of this is reflected in the research conducted by Meyer (2008) in Canadian schools, where she found that the lack of clear policy and definition of homophobic bullying prevented

teachers from addressing the issues within their own classrooms and schools, when they were willing to do so.

Describing bullying as homophobic in nature might lead to the conclusion that in future, the school as an organisation, including principal, deputy principal, staff and BOM, are necessarily going to acknowledge the language of sexuality within the primary school, especially as the DES anti-bullying guidelines (DES, 2013) recommend that addressing homophobic bullying be considered in terms of, for example, including LGBT posters on notice boards, discussing LGBT issues with parents and teaching about it through SPHE lessons. In terms of this form of bullying, the principal/deputy principal can guide the staff of the school to ensure that the language of homophobia can be addressed within the curriculum through the RSE programme. In addition, the principal/deputy principal can facilitate discussion about sexuality and relationships, and bring awareness to all staff that any derogatory language used within the school is unacceptable and not tolerated. This can be formed within different school policies such as the school discipline or anti-bullying policies. It is possible that members of staff or parents of children in the school will identify as being gay or lesbian. As leader of the school, the principal is charged with ensuring that discrimination is not practised within the school community. Research studies have shown that teachers working in Ireland, invariably do not identify themselves as being gay within the primary school community (Gowran 2004; Neary, 2012). This is because of the fear associated with being open about personal sexual orientation, and the consequences of doing so. These consequences include discrimination and the fear of disapproval from management bodies and the

wider school community. Although the law in Ireland prevents discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (Equal Status Acts), in reality as Neary (2012) shows, the fear of, and actual discrimination is very real.

A study conducted by O'Higgins-Norman (2008) in Ireland, where interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, students and senior management bodies within second level schools, found that there was reluctance amongst teachers and school authorities to address issues associated with sexuality. This included homosexuality and homophobic bullying. In addition to this, the young people interviewed demonstrated a negative attitude towards LGBT people which O'Higgins-Norman (2008) argues, is because knowledge of sex education is transmitted informally between peers, and through the media and television. If sexuality is regarded as being a subject not to be addressed at second level, then there will be an even greater reluctance for both parents and teachers to acknowledge its importance at primary level, particularly because, as DePalma and Atkinson (2010) assert, "the narrow definition of sexuality as confined to (particular) sex acts does not help primary teachers see how sexuality can be a relevant or even permissible topic for young children" (p.1675). In addition, Wallis and VanEvery (2000) would argue that such a narrow focus leads to belief that the primary school is an "asexual space" (p.420), where sexuality is irrelevant. These difficulties and those experienced in the aforementioned study by O'Higgins-Norman (2008) serve to underline the difficulties that may be experienced both in addressing issues concerning non-heterosexuality in the primary school and homophobic bullying. The next section

therefore considers the reasons why the issue of sexuality may need to be addressed within the primary school RSE curriculum.

Relationships and sexuality education (RSE)

In Ireland, relationships and sexuality education (RSE) in the primary school, does not specifically address the issue of homosexuality or other forms of sexuality. The SPHE curriculum documents (Government of Ireland, 1999), although they make reference to different forms of love at fifth and sixth class level only, do not explicitly state that schools should educate their children about issues pertaining to different sexualities. In the context of primary schools in Ireland, Neary (2012) advises that teachers can answer questions pertaining to sexuality, but on condition that the answers given are in accordance with the ethos and value system of the school. This suggests that it is very much open to question as to whether or not schools address the issues pertaining to this, and that individual schools must decide for themselves whether these issues will be covered, and content of the responses given.

Prior to the introduction of the new revised curriculum documents in 1999, the government of Ireland commissioned an expert advisory group on RSE to examine and report how school policy and RSE programmes could be developed in both primary and secondary schools (Government of Ireland, 1995). The subsequent report makes reference to 'Sexuality, sexual identity and self-esteem' as a main heading. However, the only reference made to teaching about different sexualities, and in particular

homosexuality, is within the post-primary senior cycle under the sub-heading of sexual orientation. At primary level, recommendation was made by the advisory group that children are taught about the meaning of sexuality, but from a heterosexual perspective. This implies that at this particular time there may have been a belief that children either don't understand the differences between different sexualities or that they are regarded as being too young to deal with such matters, and that homosexuality in particular is a concept suited to secondary school aged children only. As Shai (2011) suggests, by avoiding addressing homosexuality and other sexualities at a young age, there is a danger that early childhood educators "avoid and ignore homophobic behaviour" (p.155). Following the recommendations of the advisory group, an interim curriculum document (NCCA, 1996) was used as a temporary support to schools at the time, and gave consideration to teaching about different sexualities, by making reference to one of its aims as "enabling the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others, while growing and developing" (NCCA, 1996; p.9). Within the content for fifth and sixth class only, reference is then made to the "portrayal of sexuality and relationships" as one strand unit, referring to the way for example, human sexuality is influenced by famous personalities, churches, state and media. However, no explicit reference is made to homosexuality and the diversity of people within Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups. This explicit aim is removed from the revised curriculum document (Government of Ireland, 1999) which is widely in use today. This means that schools can interpret the current document as they see fit and choose whether or not to explore this area of the curriculum. As Neary (2012) argues, currently, "there are no initiatives that address alternatives to heterosexuality at primary level" (p.2), but

historically, this lack of recognition, misrepresentation and silence with regard to homosexuality and other sexualities, has been systemic within the education system in Ireland both at primary and secondary level, and has been a way of “policing and reproducing [the] norms of heterosexuality” (Neary 2012, p.2).

The series of resource materials produced for the teaching of RSE in all classes in primary schools in Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2000), make reference to the different themes of ‘different kinds of friends’ and ‘different kinds of love’ to be taught in fifth and sixth class respectively. However, although these titles change within the context of the material taught to each class, no explicit reference is made to homosexuality or the diversity of sexualities that exists. In sixth class for example, as part of a thematic approach to the curriculum, the children are asked to consider the question “what is love?” (Government of Ireland, 2000; p.148). The authors describe the different kinds of love within this theme, including the love between husband and wife, children and parents, but no reference is made to the love between people who identify as being gay. Individual schools may therefore give consideration and curriculum time to teaching about homosexuality, and relationships within different sexuality groups, but it is entirely down to individual school choice. The lack of explicit reference to such relationships, suggests the possibility that schools will generally not need to refer to other sexualities other than heterosexuality, and as research by DePalma and Atkinson (2010) shows, often they do not consider different sexualities. The aforementioned research, which was conducted in the UK, found that teachers were afraid of including LGBT people, whether they were real or fictional in the curriculum. Teachers and non-teachers both assumed

parents would disapprove of activities such as using picture books that depicted gay and lesbian headed families, and that “LGBT issues were both unrelated and irrelevant to children’s lived experiences” (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; p.1671).

In order to teach the sensitive areas of the SPHE curriculum such as RSE, all schools in Ireland, both primary and secondary, are required to produce a school policy which deals with how RSE is both taught, and the contents that are taught within the curriculum programme. However not all schools do have a policy on RSE (O’Higgins-Norman, 2008). At second level, as Mayock, Kitching and Morgan (2007) assert from their study in second level schools, a teacher ‘volunteers’ or is appointed to teach SPHE rather than the teacher being specifically trained to teach the subject, which suggests that SPHE as a subject is underplayed. In primary schools in Ireland, an agreed curriculum programme is invariably considered within the policy, whereby each mainstream classroom teacher is required to teach a series of lessons which cover the issues of sexuality and relationships, but not specifically homosexuality. In addition, and common to Ireland, is the notion that as part of the delivery of this curriculum area, an outside facilitator may be brought in to the classroom, particularly at the senior end of the primary school, to teach the children about the intimate aspects of the RSE curriculum such as sexual intercourse and conception. By adopting an approach such as this, schools maintain what Ashley (2003) refers to as a “traditional mechanical focus” (p.265) on puberty and reproduction, and fail to acknowledge the pupils’ emotional responses to their sexuality, which he describes in terms of “invisibility” (p.267). The implication of this for schools is that both parents and children then regard the issue concerning sex and

sexuality as something that we can only talk about while the facilitator delivers the curriculum, and in terms of the 'mechanics' of reproduction, whilst it is also being something that teachers can't or won't deal with. This apparent discomfort teachers may have in terms of teaching RSE, possibly reinforces the assertion made by Mayock et al. (2007) that schools acknowledge that they are delivering the SPHE curriculum, but "they never quite get round to the RSE section" (p.394), and in particular, avoiding topics such as sexual orientation and homophobia.

At primary level, the specific aspects of 'sex and sexuality' which would be explicitly taught, are usually agreed upon and formulate part of an overall RSE/SPHE policy which is created by some or all staff members, together with representatives of both the BOM and parents association. This will vary in each school. The critical aspect is that the BOM have to approve the policy in order for the programme to be implemented within schools. There may be an acceptance or rejection of any aspect of the policy, including whether or not to teach about different forms of human sexuality. This will depend on the eight members of the BOM and their views about the issue. They are charged with making any decision regarding the implementation of policies. However, the principal in their position on the BOM as leader of the school, is placed in a situation to be able to persuade the BOM about the necessity for including specific aspects of RSE within school policy. In this way they are able to "influence the organizational conditions necessary for the development of shared goals, collaboration and school climate" (Mannix-McNamara et al., 2010, p.235).

The latest policy guidelines from the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) allude to the fact that the current curriculum doesn't make reference to other forms of sexuality such as homosexuality, but that it may be a question which arises out of the formal discussions that take place in schools. The recommendation is made that this issue be dealt with amongst the more sensitive issues such as abortion and masturbation, and responded to accordingly. That is, only when children ask questions about such matters. The implication of this, is that different sexualities in the form of homosexuality are to be considered as an individual and serious issue which are an aside from the 'normal' heterosexual practices, and fail to consider that being gay or lesbian is also normal. In dealing with different sexualities in this way, there is a danger that children are receiving a message that homosexuality and other forms of sexuality are abnormal and that they will only be considered when a child thinks that a question about it is important. It also means an increasingly likely outcome will be when children use derogatory homophobic language towards each other, it is ignored because of the fear that issues around homosexuality will have to be discussed within lessons, staffrooms and the wider school community. DePalma and Atkinson (2010) found that many teachers reported they would in fact respond to homophobic bullying such as reacting to homophobic language, but very few would engage in curriculum based work about sexuality. If there is a lack of openness and honesty regarding this subject then homophobic bullying is an increasingly likely outcome. From an international standpoint, DePalma and Atkinson (2010) cite the work of Rofes (2005) in the US, to suggest that teacher silence about sexuality sends out a very clear message to children, that knowledge

of non-heterosexuality is both irrelevant and inherently dangerous from a moralistic perspective.

One of the major issues regarding the inclusion of different sexualities in the RSE programme is the lack of distinction between sexual identity, sexual preference and sexual activity. Shai (2011) perceives that teachers at primary level often misunderstand what these terms mean. The language used in the delivery of the curriculum is extremely important both for children and adults alike. Often when decisions are made regarding the delivery of a programme of lessons concerning RSE, the notion of difference and sexuality is often not explored because of the fear that explicit reference will be made to sexual activities within lesbian and homosexual relationships. As Wallis and VanEvery (2000) argue, "homosexuality is assumed to be fundamentally associated with sexual activity in a way that heterosexuality is not" (p.413). In reality, children need to be taught the differences particularly between sexual orientation/preference and sexual identity, rather than focussing on the sex act itself. In this way children can be taught to understand the importance of differences between people, and to recognise that within their own peer group or family there may be other children who identify themselves as homosexual or of another sexual persuasion. Shai (2011) argues that not only are children sexual beings, but as Honig (2000) identified in her cross-cultural study of toddlers, by the age of six, boys in particular, have to some extent, become intolerant of behaviours they consider do not fit the existing stereotypical norms in terms of sexuality. By not addressing such issues within the curriculum there is a danger that the silence in and around such issues, allows homophobic views to develop and be fostered; and as Renold

(2002) identifies, for very young children to experience verbal and physical abuse relating to sexual identity. As Shai (2011) asserts, by avoiding and silencing issues relating to sexual identity, a message is conveyed that “we are dealing with something that is not legitimate, or at the very least, surely not desired,” (p.161) and that “such silence is just one more form of homophobia” (p.161).

Irish primary schools under the patronage of Educate Together have tried to address the issue of homosexuality through its policies and SPHE work on relationships and sexuality. However, when this was initiated at first, it met with a great deal of resistance from within Irish society at large. This suggests the possibility that may be a level of institutional homophobia in existence within the context of the wider society in Ireland. Schools belonging to the remaining different patronages such as those who are Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland and Gaeilscoileanna will decide for themselves whether such issues are addressed within the curriculum. This is usually addressed at an individual school level under the direction of the BOM, but it will depend on each BOM as to whether these issues are discussed. However, school patronage undoubtedly influences this decision. For example, discussion about homosexuality and homophobia within RSE, could present a major difficulty for teachers employed in a school with a Catholic ethos. The reason for this is that the Catholic Church, although it does not condemn the person who identifies as being gay, it does criticise the practice of sexual acts within relationships, as Salzman and Lawler (2009) recognise. Church authorities, or the *Magisterium*, would argue that all sexual acts should occur within marriage and that the possibility of procreation should be an element within this. A principal teacher and

their staff, in trying to create a school RSE policy will have to consider the views of the Church in relation to this issue prior to bringing the policy before the BOM. The knock on effect of this is that when an incident of homophobic bullying occurs, discussing the reasons for its occurrence becomes even more difficult for school staff, particularly for staff that may be gay themselves. Neary (2012) found in her research in Ireland, that LGBT teachers did not want to draw attention to themselves within schools of religious patronage, by referring to homophobic bullying. Neary (2012) suggests the reasons for this, are a lack of school policy in terms of sexuality education, and the fact that section 37.1 of the Employment Equality Act (1998, 2004) allows dismissal of teachers on the grounds of non-compliance with the ethos of an institution. The implication of this for school leaders is that if they are aware of a teacher who is living a gay lifestyle, and working with a school of Catholic religious patronage, for example, their own views and feelings about sexuality will come to the fore, and they will make a choice in terms of their own behaviour regarding issues of sexuality within school and how they direct a member of staff.

Research relating to RSE

Research indicates that teacher confidence is a factor where homosexuality and other sexualities are to be openly addressed and discussed within relationships and sexuality education. For example, Buston and Hart (2001), in their research in secondary schools in Scotland, found that teachers were generally less confident discussing and teaching about homosexuality than what they phrased as “the more traditional aims of sex

education” (p.108); that is, heterosexuality. Douglas et al. (1997) in their UK research, also perceive that a lack of teacher confidence affects the ability of schools not only to teach about homosexuality but also to tackle homophobic bullying. At primary school level, DePalma and Jennett (2010), reporting on a UK project called ‘No Outsiders,’ which was designed to promote LGBT equality in the classroom, found teachers to be very reluctant to explore issues relating to sexuality because of the implicit link between sexual orientation and sexual activity; a point which Wallis and VanEvery (2000) argue is because “[children] are innocent and corruptible, it is deemed necessary to protect them from carnal knowledge” (p.418). The openness, tolerance and respect which can be fostered and promoted through the formal RSE curriculum, could help prevent children from engaging in activities which deride those who identify as being homosexual and reduce the chances of homophobic bullying occurring in schools. The lack of confidence amongst teachers to address issues of sexuality, reinforces the call made by McCormack and Gleeson (2010), that teaching about sexuality both at in-service and initial teacher education levels be increased in Ireland .

Research in other jurisdictions indicates that the same difficulties which exist in Ireland are present elsewhere. Gerouki (2010) found that some primary school teachers in Greece regarded the teaching of RSE as being problematic because of the reference to sexuality and in particular homosexuality. Respondents reported how uncomfortable they felt when questions were asked informally about homosexuality. Further to this, Gerouki (2010) reported how teachers reacted to incidents where “non-conforming sexuality and gender-related” (p.335) behaviours were exhibited by pupils. These reactions included

ignoring it, dismissing it as unimportant or privately finding it amusing. Similarly, from an Australian research perspective, Milton (2003) found that issues concerning sexual identity and orientation were addressed informally, and only when questions were asked by children, with no formal curriculum programme covering these issues. In addition, Milton (2003) found that teachers were concerned about what parents thought about schools discussing sexuality, and how they could manage the different levels of maturity, knowledge and comfort among the children; suggesting a lack of confidence and training. From an Australian perspective, it is interesting to also note that Milton (2003) believes that it is only through the formal curriculum and enlightening children about the meanings of sexual orientation and identity, and by pro-actively denouncing homophobic comments, that levels of homophobic bullying can be reduced.

The final section of this literature review now considers the role played by other stakeholders in addressing homophobic bullying.

Role of other stakeholders

In terms of homophobic bullying, as in all forms of bullying, and in addition to the role of the principal/deputy principal, many different stakeholders have a key role in to play in understanding, facilitating or addressing bullying behaviour. These stakeholders include teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, children, BOM, parents associations, and government bodies such as the DES, Inspectorate, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), and the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).

Further to this, non-governmental organisations such as the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) and the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) influence principal/deputy principal teachers. In addition, teacher training colleges, responsible for initial teacher training, also influence how student teachers perceive homophobic bullying. First and foremost, all the aforementioned stakeholders have a professional or personal relationship with the principal teacher of any school, and this relationship is a key factor in how the issues are addressed. Drea and O'Brien (2001), in their seminal work on identifying the role of the primary principal in Ireland, recognise that the principal has to manage a broad range of relationships both within and outside the school, and that this requires different competencies, which are "complex and demanding" (p.5). If the school principal is respected and regarded as being competent and intolerant of bullying behaviour, then this helps to build a constructive platform for dealing with the issues associated with homophobic bullying. However, in contrast, if the principal has a poor reputation for tackling bullying, it becomes increasingly difficult for all the other stakeholders to deal with any aspect of bullying, and the response would usually be more *ad hoc* from individual teachers in particular.

Teaching staff are in a prime position to be able to recognise any incident of bullying behaviour, and they are in the frontline to challenge behaviour which is deemed unacceptable in school. As a staff, all the teachers should play a part in deciding what behaviour constitutes bullying, and these discussions should lead to the formation of a written school policy, which outlines in great detail what happens when a bullying situation arises. Minton and O'Moore (2004) stress the need for consultation in order for

the policy to be effective. This policy may include reference to homophobic bullying, or the idea of mentioning specific types of bullying may be rejected by school teaching staff. Research, for example, the study of teachers in the UK by Siann et al. (1993), shows that teaching staff are critical in successfully resolving issues pertaining to bullying behaviour, both in terms of acknowledging behaviour as bullying, and understanding how it can be resolved. However, research also shows that to an extent, teachers also fail to recognise bullying and misjudge behaviour. Hazler et al. (2001) in their US study of teachers and counsellors, found that teachers were more likely to identify behaviour as bullying when physical threat or abuse was involved, rather than verbal, social or emotional abuse. This is significant because verbal bullying has been identified as a critical element of homophobic bullying here in Ireland (O'Higgins-Norman, 2005) and elsewhere (Poteat & Rivers, 2010). Teachers are in a position to observe individual children both inside and outside the classroom, and recognise when individual children show signs and symptoms of bullying behaviour, such as becoming withdrawn and anxious. Encouragement and direction from the school principal/deputy principal is particularly important in doing this, and how they facilitate teachers reporting such instances. For example, research shows that pro-active yard supervision, where the school staff are vigilant and recognise different bullying situations, there is a reduced opportunity for bullying to occur (Leff, Power, Costigan & Manz, 2003). When any behavioural situation develops, and it is construed by the teacher as bullying, the teacher invariably approaches the principal/deputy principal to convey what had happened, as the DES (2013) guidelines recommend. The relationship between the teaching staff and the principal/deputy principal in these situations is critical, both in resolving the situation,

and establishing what the likely outcome would be in future incidents. As Meyer (2009) discovered in her Canadian research, if teachers feel that they have the backing of the school principal, they are much more likely to confront any bullying situation in the future and to deal with it. However, in contrast, where the leader of the school does not respond or is dismissive of a bullying situation, then teachers may become disillusioned and not bother dealing with it.

Non-teaching staff are also employed in key positions in schools, which are vital in terms of responding to bullying behaviour. These include Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), school secretary, cleaning staff and the caretaker. SNA's are employed to cater for the specific needs of individual children and are assigned by the school principal to individual classes. Therefore they are in a position to keenly observe the different behaviours associated with bullying, particularly while patrolling the yard area with teaching staff, and then reporting back to the principal/deputy principal. This requires an understanding and clear policy guidelines to reinforce what is required, and necessitates a positive relationship between the two parties. This emphasises the point made by Besag (1989), that in order to prevent bullying, all staff have to "be responsible for all pupils at all times" (p.122). The implication of this is that all adult staff members need to have awareness of what constitutes bullying, to be observant, and analyse behavioural interactions, whilst also being willing to challenge and intervene when situations arise, which includes reporting incidents. The role played by the SNA is clearly defined through DES guidelines. However, ensuring that there is feedback and reporting, is the responsibility of the principal and BOM. In terms of homophobic bullying, the

principal/deputy principal may need to outline to the SNA(s) whether or not the school responds to homophobic pejoratives and how this is done. Staff meetings which are inclusive of all staff, are particularly important in developing and reiterating the importance of a whole school approach to dealing with bullying, and establishing every employees' individual role regarding the school policy. In this way, the school leader is doing what Day et al. (2001) describe as "communicating their personal vision and belief systems by direction, words and deeds" (p.34). The school secretary, caretaker and cleaners also have a relationship with the principal/deputy principal which is fundamental in dealing with bullying. If the relationship is mutually respectful between all parties, then it should be much easier to establish with each individual, the need for vigilance around the school environment. For example, in the case of the cleaner and caretaker, this would involve reporting graffiti and vandalism of individuals' and school property, particularly where reference is made to personal characteristics such as sexuality. In terms of where a school secretary is employed, ensuring that telephone messages and parental comments about behaviour are conveyed back to the principal are one way of the principal being informed and knowing what is happening around the school. A study by Day et al. (2001) in the UK, demonstrated how principal teachers constantly engage in "managing inter-personal relationships and challenging others to give of their best" (p.26).

In any bullying situation, children and their parents are at the centre of the relationship because of the emotional turmoil it causes to both parties. For children who experience bullying, whether as the individual who is victimised or as the individual

perpetrating the behaviour, they act as one of the key stakeholders. For children who experience bullying, telling an adult can be extremely difficult. Research carried out in Ireland, for example, O'Moore et al. 1997, and in other jurisdictions, for example, Smith and Shu (2000) in the UK, indicates that children don't always tell adults that they are experiencing bullying. The reasons stated for this include the fact that adults will not always believe them. It is therefore incumbent on the principal to believe children when they disclose that they are being victimised in any way. It is possibly even more difficult for children experiencing homophobic bullying because of its association with sexuality and sexual language. As previously alluded to, children identify being labelled with derogatory homophobic pejoratives as one of the worst forms of taunting or personal attack.

In response, parents often find it very difficult knowing how to respond when their child admits to being victimised, particularly when sexuality is at the heart of it. Often they react emotionally with anger and sadness that this has happened to their child, and as Minton and O'Moore (2004) recognise, "a situation of high emotion can result" (p.67), with the child possibly begging their parents not to report it for fear of reprisals. It may also be that a conversation ensues which involves talking about sexuality, and that talk of other sexualities is possibly referred to in a negative way because of the level of emotion involved. This response is sometimes then directed towards the school authorities, which is often the principal/deputy principal teacher. This underlines the importance of the relationship between the parents and those in position as school leaders. This helps to emphasise the point made by Crawford (2007), that "the core of a

school lies in relationships; teacher-student; parent-teacher; teacher-teacher; child-child” (p.88). In their role as leader of the school, the principal is charged with responding to any parental complaint and ensuring that any complaint is investigated and due procedure followed. The principal/deputy principal, depending on their attitude to a situation, may be dismissive, or in contrast listen attentively, and respond accordingly, by reassuring the parent and subsequently the child involved. The principal/deputy principal may be dismissive because of a fear they may have about dealing with aspects of sexuality that they are not comfortable with. In this way, “a diversity of feelings influence leadership effectiveness” (Crawford 2007; p.2007).

Both the BOM and parents association are key stakeholders in schools, and have critical roles to play in dealing with bullying behaviour. The BOM has a legal duty to ensure that school policies are both created and implemented. Policies are invariably written within the school staff group and are then brought before the BOM for ratification. The relationship between the principal and the BOM is crucial here, because the principal as part of the BOM, leads the direction of policy formation within the group. The principal demonstrates what James et al. (2007) refer to as a “special organizational role that has the purpose of enabling others (individuals, groups and whole institutions) to enact their role in relation to the institution’s primary task” (p.575). There may be disagreement about the inclusion of homophobia within either the RSE policy or the anti-bullying policy, which ultimately ends with the rejection of such issues, but the principal can at least bring the issue before the management body for discussion. If the relationship between the BOM and principal is positive, then there is a good chance the BOM will

accept the recommendation of the principal as to what are best practices, and the content of school policies. In contrast, where there is a negative relationship between members of the BOM and the principal, this makes the creation of school policy so much more difficult to do. Although the parents association is charged with raising funds for schools, they do also have a voice in terms of expressing the opinions of the parent body. In their study of secondary schools in Ireland, McCormack and Gleeson (2010) demonstrate that where sexuality is a specific element of bullying, parents are often defensive and uncomfortable about dealing with the issues. Parents often rely on others expressing their opinions for them, and the parents association can make representation to the school principal/deputy principal, by either approaching them directly or contacting the parents' representative on the BOM and conveying their concerns. Again, the relationship between the parents association and the principal is also critical. An acceptance and willingness to listen to any views expressed, means there is a greater chance of the school being open to the possibility that homophobic bullying could be an issue within the school. As James et al. (2007) recognise, it is beneficial to the school to foster "the development of productive and supportive relationships and a shared understanding of a school's aims and purposes with key stakeholders, such as parents and the wider community" (p.575).

The DES and the Inspectorate are both critical stakeholders in terms of bullying behaviour in schools. Due to the fact that the DES, as the government department responsible for all schools, issues circulars and directives to school management bodies, they are in a position of great influence. All schools, for example, as directed by the DES,

have to have a series of organisational policies such as the anti-bullying and school discipline policies. During an incidental visit or a whole school evaluation (WSE), these policies will be requested by the inspectorate. The inspectorate evaluates the content of policies and advises schools as to the viability of such policies. However, due to the fact that these policies are formed on an individual school basis, they rely on the knowledge and expertise of individual principal/deputy principal teachers, and the collective expertise of individual BOM to create policies which are productive and feasible. Where policies are not deemed acceptable by the inspectorate, revisions are requested and expected to be undertaken. This is where the inspectorate could influence policy making, particularly in relation to homophobic bullying. It could be stipulated that reference to both sexual forms of bullying within school policy, and different sexualities within the school curriculum, are expected to be addressed. This would make a difference to how schools perceive bullying behaviour. There is a much greater chance schools will include these elements if they are directed to do so by the DES, rather than the over reliance on the local individual school circumstances. Unless there is a willingness to undergo systemic change, as Fullan (2005) suggests, then it is unlikely that nationally, schools will include reference to different sexualities within policy or the curriculum.

Individual government organisations such as NEPS and the NEWB are also in a position to influence school policy. NEPS in its role as a psychological service are in a position to influence principal teachers in particular, when bullying is identified as an issue for individual schools. Day et al.(2001) identify that effective leaders recognise how they have a “responsibility for the on-going evolutionary development of schools” (p.

26), which involves managing and monitoring the “legitimate interests and aspirations of internal and external stakeholders” (p.26). Organisations such as NEPS and the NEWB provide external support to individual schools and take a legitimate interest in schools when bullying situations arise. The individual school psychologist will sometimes be sought after for advice, and the relationship between them and the principal is extremely important in how this advice is utilised. In discussion with the psychologist, the principal/deputy principal can establish the correct steps to take in school when bullying situations arise, and this can include the more difficult aspects of homophobic bullying, such as the psychological and emotional effects on individual children. The NEWB, through the issuing of behaviour guidelines and the active role of the education welfare officer in visiting schools, for example, can also influence how schools deal with the various aspects and intricacies of bullying behaviour. School authorities look to the various government agencies for help and support when bullying situations arise, but this is very much dependent on the principal teacher. It may be however, that they feel in control of a bullying situation and rely on their own individual knowledge rather than looking to outside help.

Independent non-governmental organisations such as the INTO and the IPPN are also in a position as stakeholders, to influence both individual teachers and school leaders. Where an individual teacher feels they need help and support to deal with a bullying incident, whether the bullying is directed towards them as an individual or when they feel they cannot cope, the INTO, as the main teaching union, serves to support that teacher. A principal/deputy principal can also avail of this support either through the

union or from the IPPN, the latter being an organisation, which is primarily for principal and deputy principal teachers who require expertise and advice in any area. School policies are widely available for individual schools to adapt to their own particular circumstance, and to be used accordingly. In addition, when any specific case requires outside expertise, the IPPN provide expert help to principal/deputy principal teachers who require it through telephone, email and one to one personal support. They are therefore both in a position to influence practice and the emotional welfare of the principal/deputy principal. As Brennan and Mac Ruairc (2011) recognise, within the primary education system in Ireland, school leaders “rely heavily on the quality of interpersonal relationships to sustain the individual themselves and the school organisation” (p.131).

Finally, the teacher training colleges are in a position to influence how homophobic bullying is perceived, and yet as Shai (2011) argues, few teacher education programs contain minimal curricula focusing on homosexuality and homophobia. By addressing the issue during initial teacher training, individual teachers who then go on to practice, can be made aware of the issues involved, and bring understanding and knowledge to their individual schools. This can be done through stressing the importance of the role of the curriculum, in particular SPHE and the RSE programme, and by being taught how to recognise and deal with any bullying situations, through for example, the medium of drama. In facilitating this, colleges can increase the awareness about bullying in general, and in particular can help students recognise specific forms of this behaviour such as homophobic bullying. It may be difficult to influence individual schools, but by

newly qualified teachers being aware in their own individual classroom practice and modelling behaviour which does not tolerate any form of bullying, they can influence colleagues, including the principal/deputy principal.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to set out the theory associated with conceptualising homophobic bullying and to draw attention to its complex nature, whilst also examining the role played by school leaders in addressing homophobic bullying, including the role played by other stakeholders. In addition it considered the findings of international research studies which examined homophobic bullying and how these findings influenced the rationale for this empirical study. This chapter was set out in three distinct sections:

- Section one of this chapter highlighted that defining and conceptualising bullying and homophobic bullying is complex.
- Section two considered the research evidence from studies conducted in Ireland and other jurisdictions in relation to homophobic bullying. Evidence shows that it occurs in primary schools in places such as the UK, and at second level in Ireland.
- Section three examined the role of school leaders in terms of dealing with homophobic bullying, and discussed the different styles of leadership adopted by school leaders. The section entitled 'emotional response' showed how leaders display emotion when faced with homophobic bullying and highlighted the influential role they play in the formation of a school anti-bullying policy and

RSE policy. This third section also considered the role played by other stakeholders in addressing homophobic bullying and established the importance of a positive relationship being established between them and school leaders.

The outcome of this literature review combined with the conceptual framework inspired the design of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This quantitative research study considered the possibility that homophobic bullying occurred at primary school level in Ireland. The current lack of empirical data regarding its possible existence at this level in Ireland, together with the already highlighted international research confirming its existence in other jurisdictions (Denver et al., 2005; Renold, 2002), and its existence here at second level (O'Higgins-Norman, 2005), justified the need for data to be collected here in Ireland.

A recent statement to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children by the Special Rapporteur on Children, Dr. Geoffrey Shannon (Shannon, 2013) also helps justify the need for this study to take place. He states:

Homophobic attitudes begin amongst children while they are at primary school going age. If we are to fundamentally change these attitudes - which in turn can lead to homophobic bullying, which is a profound child protection issue and which can have devastating effects on LGBT young people, we need to start working with primary school children. LGBT young people are realising their identities and 'coming out' at an ever earlier age -

on average at 12 years old, but often younger. This means that supports should be put in place to support these young people and their families. (p.8)

The starting point for collecting this data was school leaders in primary school in Ireland. This refers to those in positions of principal teacher, acting principal or deputy principal. The recently updated DES guidelines (DES, 2013) stress the importance of the role of the school principal in particular in dealing with bullying, but also highlight the importance of other leadership roles such as the deputy principal, together with teachers and all stakeholders taking a leadership role in creating and implementing the school anti-bullying policy. School leaders are placed within a unique position in all schools to have some knowledge of the possible existence of bullying behaviour due to their position of responsibility and their role in managing individual schools and managing pupil behaviour. However, it is important to acknowledge that this group does not have exclusive knowledge about the existence of such behaviour, especially as research indicates that children do not always tell adults that they are being bullied (O'Higgins-Norman & Ging, 2014). However, where knowledge of bullying behaviour is brought to the attention of those in leadership positions, probably by other adults such as teachers and parents, it is most likely that they are the ones who will deal with it.

This study attempted to target the largest feasible population, with an on-line survey questionnaire being sent to all members of the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN). This represented 2978 primary schools being contacted in Ireland to ask for the

survey to be completed. The population size numbered 5029, which comprised of 2839 principal teachers and 2190 deputy principal teachers.

This chapter begins by detailing the aims and rationale of the study. The design of the study is then examined and the conceptual framework explained. The chapter outlines the strategy used for conducting the research and examines how the research participants were selected for the study and how the population was acquired. The outline of the questionnaire design is also explored. Further to this, details of the pilot study are provided including how the participants for this part of the study were selected and the details of the main part of the study. Consideration is then given to validity and reliability of the study. Following on from this, ethical considerations are made, together with an examination of how the data was handled. This includes the procedure followed for the codification of the aforementioned data.

Aims and rationale of the Empirical study

The primary aim of this study was to ascertain if teachers in leadership positions in schools, namely principal, deputy principal and acting principal had experience of dealing with homophobic bullying amongst pupils, during the 2012-13 academic year. This included ascertaining how frequently the aforementioned school leaders had experience of their pupils using derogatory homophobic language towards each other as an insult or to describe an object, or something the pupils regarded as being different, and separate from the norm.

The literature review highlighted the fact that children of primary school age often use homophobic language to both insult each other and to identify individuals within their own social group whom they don't perceive to fit in because of an identified or perceived difference, for example, a boy whose choice of music is perceived to be overtly feminine rather than masculine (Renold, 2000, 2002). In addition, the literature highlighted how pupils do not necessarily use homophobic language to comment negatively about an individual's sexuality, but in order to establish dominance of one person over another within relationships (Swearer et al. 2008). This may be significant in the context of the Irish primary school, because if children use derogatory homophobic language, it might be to label something that is distasteful to them or to establish a relationship of dominance and power over another, rather than it being an expression of prejudice towards someone they perceive to be gay. The fact that such terms can be used to establish dominance over another suggests as McCormack and Gleeson (2010) perceive, that "the reality is that sexual orientation and homophobia are deeply embedded within the culture of society and schools" (p.394), and as the aforementioned study found, parents were almost unanimous in believing that for young men it was "important to be seen as heterosexual" (p.394). As McCormack and Gleeson (2010) assert, homosexuality tends to be ignored in schools and 'compulsory heterosexuality' is regarded as the norm, which perhaps reflects how wider society perceives the positioning of different sexualities. As Ellis and High (2004) in their UK study found, any discussion regarding homosexuality in schools takes place within a heterosexual context, and where one respondent described homosexuality as being seen as an "illness rather than a way of

life.”(p.221). This finding has implications for how schools address homophobic bullying and consider ‘homophobia’.

The second aim of this study was to establish whether school anti-bullying policies referred to homophobic bullying and whether or not school RSE policies included teaching about sexual orientation. The literature highlights that in order to have effective anti-bullying policies they need to define what actions constitute bullying behaviour, and this includes homophobic bullying (Smith et al. 2008; Meyer 2008). However, in the context of Irish second level schools, policies do not always do this (O’Higgins-Norman, 2005), whilst in primary schools, because no research has been carried out into homophobic bullying it is not clear whether policies make specific reference to homophobic bullying. The new action plan on bullying considered by the DES and the many education stakeholders, did recommend that bullying be defined differently. However, after much discussion had occurred amongst the education partners relating to this, the new DES guidelines (DES, 2013) did not alter the definition of bullying from the 1993 guidelines, but rather provided an expansive explanation of what constitutes bullying within the context of schools. These guidelines do now include reference to homophobic bullying in the context of both primary and secondary education.

In the context of RSE policies, as the literature review highlights, the primary school curriculum in Ireland does not make any specific reference to teaching about different sexualities (Government of Ireland, 1999; Neary, 2012), and in Ireland as in

other jurisdictions, and as research indicates, teachers are often afraid of referring to different sexualities (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; DePalma & Jennett 2010; Mannix-McNamara et al., 2010; Mayock et al., 2007). Research conducted in Ireland shows that teachers identifying as LGBT do not want to refer to homophobic bullying for fear of drawing attention to their own sexuality (Neary, 2012), whilst research also shows that a perceived lack of confidence amongst teachers affects not only the ability of schools to teach about homosexuality but also tackling homophobic bullying (McCormack & Gleeson, 2010). This implies that if there is a reluctance of schools and policy makers to make reference to teaching about different sexualities and naming it within school policies, then it will be more difficult to address homophobic bullying.

The third aim of this study was to find out what role school leaders play in response to incidents of homophobic bullying and to what extent they experienced an emotional response if and when incidents of homophobic bullying occurred. The literature review highlights the importance of the role school leadership plays in combating bullying behaviour, and the individual response made by people in a position of leadership (Meyer, 2008), together with the fact that school leaders are required to adapt to any situation that confronts them (Linsky & Lawrence, 2011). In addition, the literature review highlights that the role of leadership is accompanied by intense emotion (Brennan & Mac Rauric, 2011), and from a perspective of school leadership, all actions are influenced by emotion (Crawford, 2007). The implication of this for this study, is that when and if confronted by a situation of homophobic bullying, school leaders might respond in different ways, including choosing to ignore homophobic bullying or to

combat it directly, but any decision made, could be influenced to a certain extent, by the level of emotion displayed and felt by the school leader in response to the issue of homosexuality (Crawford, 2007).

Further to this, an important fourth aim of the study related to the role of other education stakeholders within the primary education system, for example, in-school management teams or the IPPN, and which of the various stakeholders school leaders believed were in a position to provide support to them in addressing homophobic bullying. Further to this, the aim was to establish how likely school leaders as individuals were, to look for such support in addressing homophobic bullying and from where this support would be obtained. The literature review highlights the importance of consultation taking place between the school leader and other stakeholders if a school anti-bullying policy is to be effective (Minton & O'Moore, 2004), whilst relationships have to be very carefully managed between stakeholders and school leadership personnel (Drea & O'Brien, 2001). The emotionally charged bullying situation, as described by Minton and O'Moore (2004), calls for a measured and calculated response from those in positions of leadership within a school, but one where the quality of the relationships between the individuals involved are developed, nurtured and maintained, in order to facilitate what Brennan and Mac Ruairc (2011) regard as a successful outcome to the situation.

The final aim of the study was to determine how school leaders felt in relation to homophobic bullying and about their own sexual orientation, that of other staff members

and discussing sexuality with other people, including the pupils. Research has shown that teachers are reluctant and uncomfortable engaging in discussion about homosexuality and sexual orientation in schools, both within the privacy of the staffroom (Allan, Atkinson, Brace, DePalma & Hemingway, 2008) and also within the classroom with pupils (Neary, 2012). These findings coupled with the fact that homosexuality and discussion about other sexualities is not considered as part of the primary school curriculum in Ireland (Government of Ireland, 1999), and because exposure to knowledge about different sexualities, including homosexuality, tend to be avoided in relation to younger pupils, there is a possibility that homophobic behaviour will be ignored (Shai, 2011). The implication of this for this study is that because of the apparent reluctance to discuss different sexualities, including homosexuality, both amongst staff and with children, an incident of homophobic bullying or pupils using homophobic language may be ignored or dismissed because of the sensitive nature of dealing with the issues surrounding it. For example, words such as 'fag', 'gayboy' and other homophobic pejoratives may have been used by pupils, but in dealing with an incident where these words were directed at another, school leaders might have to explore the meaning of such words with the pupils concerned in order to address a particular incident. If such terminology was spoken about through RSE lessons and children understood the language associated with different sexualities such incidents may be easier to deal with. However, as research by DePalma and Atkinson (2010) discovered, teachers are willing to respond to homophobic bullying, but they are reluctant to engage in curriculum work about sexuality. Therefore it is possible that the bullying behaviour may be dealt without reference to homosexuality or that the behaviour/use of language is simply dismissed or ignored.

The previously listed aims generated five main research questions as a result:

1. How frequently has homophobic bullying occurred in schools during the 2012-13 academic year based on the experience and opinions of principal teachers/acting principal teachers and deputy principals?
2. To what extent do school anti-bullying policies make reference to homophobic bullying, and to what extent do school RSE policies make reference to teaching about sexual orientation?
3. What level of emotional response do school leaders display when addressing homophobic bullying, and what is their perception of the role they play in doing so?
4. To what extent does the principal teacher/acting principal/deputy principal acknowledge and garner support from other education stakeholders in addressing homophobic bullying?
5. How do school leaders, specifically principal/acting principal and deputy principal teachers feel in relation to homophobic bullying and the sexual orientation of school personnel, including themselves?

Research Design

Conceptual framework

Following the traditional quantitative hypothetico-deductive model, this study began with a theory and tested it through the use of a questionnaire, collecting numerical data and analysing the data statistically. A conceptual framework for this study was constructed to identify the possible elements that might be related to each other and they are explored in the following paragraphs (see Appendix A). The research considered the possibility that homophobic bullying had occurred in the context of the primary school in Ireland during 2012-2013. To facilitate this, the framework was constructed around a consideration of three key elements:

1. Conceptualising what homophobic bullying actually is;
2. The impact it has within the primary school and
3. The role played by education stakeholders in relation to homophobic bullying.

Conceptualising bullying draws on many different theories espoused since the late 1960s, early 1970s. There are many different definitions of bullying, as highlighted within the literature review, and definitions consider different facets of the behaviour. However, the lack of agreement regarding one overall definition of bullying contributes to the fact that people, including both adults and children, interpret bullying situations differently. If the use of derogatory sexual language and sexual behaviours are added to

the mix, this increases the complexities surrounding what has been termed homophobic bullying (Douglas et al., 1997). Adults interpret the use of labels used by children, such as gay, puff, queer and so on as being derogatory homophobic forms of name calling, but when consideration is given to the reasons for such labels to be ascribed, it is possible that complex social interactions are taking place, which may not necessarily be interpreted as bullying. Children may in fact be using different male and female conformist and non-conformist behaviours to establish an order of dominance and hierarchy within their own social grouping, or to simply establish that something is not liked or agreed with. The first part of the conceptual framework therefore considered the importance of understanding the complex relationships and underlying processes that exist within the behaviour named as homophobic bullying. This began with a working definition of what homophobic bullying is for the purpose of this study, as indicated within the literature review.

The second element of the framework highlighted the possible impact of homophobic bullying. This form of bullying may remain unchallenged because of a misconception amongst parents and teachers that young children are not sexual beings. Blaise and Andrew (2005) identified from their research, a widespread belief that issues of sexual development pertain predominantly to adults and not young children. We know that in second level schools when sexuality forms part of bullying behaviour, teachers report that it makes it even more complicated to deal with and to understand than other forms of bullying (O'Higgins-Norman, 2005). The fact that sexual language and physical abuse forms part of bullying makes it even more complicated to deal with and to

understand. Sexuality discourse is a construct which is generally confined to second level education in Ireland, and although children at primary school participate in RSE lessons, no consideration is given towards a conceptualisation of homosexuality within the curriculum framework. Therefore, when children use language in the school environment which is deemed as derogatory and/or homophobic, it is possibly brushed off as being unimportant and not hurtful. As Shai (2011, p.152) argues in his work, there is often a silence within education systems where “homophobic behaviour is ignored or simply not confronted.” For Shai (2011) children are regarded in this instance as being too young to know what they are doing or saying and the behaviour is best ignored. Further to this he argues that this ‘silence’ he describes, can be legitimised by claiming that it is “developmentally inappropriate to discuss notions regarding sexuality with young children” (Shai, 2011; p.152). It is possible that because of fears surrounding knowledge about and of homosexuality, school leaders maybe don’t or can’t acknowledge that homophobic bullying exists, or cannot recognise it as being different from other forms of bullying. These fears may stem from the possible disapproval of other stakeholders within the primary school setting such as BOM, Patron, other teachers and parents. Further to this, the situation arises whereby issues around different sexualities are then not considered as part of the curriculum through RSE/SPHE.

The third element of the conceptual framework prioritised the views of school leaders in relation to the role played by the different aforementioned education stakeholders concerning homophobic bullying. The principal, acting principal or deputy principal, play a part in trying to prevent any forms of bullying occurring in schools,

including homophobic bullying. The obvious link between this form of bullying and matters pertaining to sexuality and sexual orientation, may lead to it being more difficult for a person acting in a school leadership role to know how to address homophobic bullying in particular, principally because of the way sexuality is considered at primary school level in Ireland. As Neary (2012) shows, LGBT teachers in particular, are afraid to reveal their own sexual orientation within both the primary and secondary school settings, for fear of reprisals from school authorities. This finding possibly suggests there could be a wider disapproval amongst a range of education stakeholders if links are made either within or outside the curriculum to different sexualities, sexual orientation and bullying.

Acting as a school leader brings into contact many different stakeholders, including parent groups, staff colleagues, children, the BOM to name but a few. As a school leader, acting in this capacity means it is important to observe the different relationships that exist between all members of the school community, but in particular the relationships between children. This involves recognising the many different complex layers of emotion that exist between individuals and how these relationships help to create situations whereby bullying exists, and in what form. Therefore it may be important that people in positions of school leadership are aware of their own emotional capacity and feelings surrounding homophobic bullying. As Crawford (2009, p.10) argues, “leadership cannot function without emotion,” referring to emotion as a fundamental part of the relationships between school leaders and other individuals, and the social processes operating in schools. For example, there may be a fear of possible

conflict with other stakeholders which prevents schools from teaching children about different sexualities and sexual orientation. School leaders may feel that it is not necessary to teach children about sexuality and sexual language in order to be able to address the issue of homophobic bullying. In addition to this, school leaders may also lack knowledge and understanding of different sexualities. The school policy may in turn reflect the fact that children do not really need to know or understand about homosexuality at such a young age and therefore the school RSE policy serves to reinforce the dominance of heterosexuality within the school environs and community. When bullying occurs both children and adults may interpret the situation differently, which possibly means that the behaviour continues.

In light of the recently published DES anti-bullying behaviour guidelines (DES, 2013) it is important to learn the views of school leaders in relation to the issue of homophobic bullying. This is particularly significant because the guidelines advocate measures be taken in all primary and secondary schools to specifically address “identity based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying” (DES, 2013, p.26) and that all education stakeholders within the school community play an integral role in developing an anti-bullying policy inclusive of this form of bullying.

Research Participants

All the participants in this study worked in a school leadership role, as principal teacher, deputy principal or acting principal, and are specifically named within the IPPN

database as members of the organisation. In Ireland there are over three thousand three hundred primary schools, and of these, more than 90% of the primary schools are registered with the IPPN.

The population therefore for this study was determined by the numbers of schools registered on the IPPN database. These numbered 2978 schools according to the 2012-2013 membership figures. Where schools are registered members, both the principal and deputy principal (where applicable) are automatically included on the mailing list and receive weekly electronic bulletins in the form of an e-scéal, which includes the latest relevant news and announcements, and any surveys being conducted by the organisation itself. The population size under consideration was 5029, made up of 2839 principal teachers and 2190 deputy principal teachers.

The survey request and on-line link for this study was sent to all registered member schools of the IPPN organisation via the aforementioned electronically transmitted news bulletin, in accordance with their own procedures. This is a regular occurrence, and highlights what Robson (2002, p.233) describes as a main advantage of adopting questionnaires, as a “relatively simple and straightforward approach to the study of attitudes, values, beliefs and motives.” It is important to note that surveys issued by the organisation generally obtain a response rate of 10% or less, which is much less than the 30% response rate Gillham (2007) suggests is the norm to be expected for an ‘impersonal’ questionnaire. A number of schools (about 9%) also remain outside the membership of the IPPN on a year to year basis. These schools are not included in this

study for practical purposes, due to the amount of time involved in locating them in particular, and the fact that individual school membership of the IPPN fluctuates year on year due to the appointment of different principal teachers who may not wish to continue with membership.

Data Collection Methods

The literature review, conceptual framework and the research questions formed the basis for the construction of the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B. The main reasons for adopting and using a questionnaire were mainly because it was quick and relatively easy for respondents to complete; the information could be obtained from a lot of people quickly; it was low in cost and because the respondents could complete the questionnaire when it suited them. This was extremely important considering that the respondents were all school leaders working in schools, many of whom were teaching full-time. The on-line questionnaire contained 20 questions altogether, nine of which requested biographical information whilst the other 11 were longer and more detailed and concerned the subject of the study as outlined below. The questions were predominantly closed type questions using the Likert scale, with some open ended type questions also being included. An outline of the purpose of the research was given to participants at the beginning of the survey, together with a link to further information about the study in the form of the plain language statement (see Appendix C).

Section one within the survey concerned the collection of biographical and background information about the participants. The nine questions (categories) sought information about various aspects of the school including size, patronage, school type and status; the latter referring to whether the school was identified as 'Educationally Disadvantaged' or a DEIS school as it is known colloquially. In addition, personal information such as the role of the person, for example, whether they are principal or deputy principal teacher, and their number of years of experience in that role, together with their age or gender were also requested. This type of information is used to link any possible correlation between variables. For example, it may be important to establish whether males and females in positions of school leadership felt differently about talking to their colleagues about sexual orientation.

Section two of the survey addressed the primary research question for this study; ascertaining information from respondents about how frequently in their experience, homophobic bullying had occurred during a specific twelve month period. The respondents were asked in a single question (Q10) to read 14 items which referred to the use of homophobic language, and the actions of the respondent, their teachers, parents and pupils in response to any incident. They were then asked to judge how frequently any event had occurred and to indicate this on the survey. These judgements were based on a timescale of daily, weekly, monthly or yearly occurrences, with the option possible of indicating that an event had never occurred.

In section three, the survey attempted to answer the second research question, asking respondents if they had both anti-bullying (Q11) and RSE policies (Q13) and whether or not these policies made reference to both homophobic bullying (Q12) and teaching about sexual orientation respectively (Q14). Respondents were also requested to state the specifics of individual policies in relation to homophobic bullying (Q12) and teaching about sexual orientation (Q15 and 16), but they could also avoid answering these questions by using the don't know option or leaving them blank.

Section four of the survey presented respondents with 20 items (Q17) which they were asked to express varying degrees of agreement/disagreement in a Likert scale format. The items referred to the third and fifth research questions pertaining to the emotional response of respondents as school leaders, the perception of their role, and how they felt in relation to homophobic bullying and the sexual orientation of school personnel. The statements were structured so that they related to the respondents personal feelings about the aforementioned issues.

The final section of the survey related to the fourth research question and to what extent the respondents as school leaders acknowledged and utilised the support of other education stakeholders in addressing homophobic bullying. Respondents were asked to rank order (Q18) a list of stakeholders including groups within the school community such as teachers and parents, and groups which are external to the school such as NEPS and the IPPN. Q19 asked respondents directly how likely they were to address homophobic bullying in specific ways such as referring to the anti-bullying policy, or

seeking support from outside school. This question considered the detail outlined within the action plan on bullying, as compiled by the DES working group during the 2012-2013 academic year. This group was assembled in response to a number of high profile bullying cases in schools over the past couple of years. Subsequently the new guidelines for schools issued in September 2013 pertaining to bullying behaviour in schools, and many of the items in this particular question related to the detail and recommendations within this document, and the subsequent response to be made by schools to any incident of bullying.

The final question sought the opinions of respondents in relation to the survey and the issues it raised. The reasons for this related to the results of the pilot study and are explored in the following section. This section is a summary only of the pilot study findings, with a more comprehensive and detailed analysis included in Appendix D.

Pilot Study

The initial pilot study was distributed to all members of the IPPN National Committee in June 2013. The committee numbers 52 people in total. This group is representative of the population of school leaders working within primary schools in Ireland who are members of the organisation.

The initial pilot study resulted in a poor response rate, with approximately 15 responses. Following a reminder issued by the IPPN, 26 people responded in total to the

request for completing the survey. However seven respondents did not complete the survey. The lack of response combined with the numbers who did not complete the survey suggested that there were possible difficulties with the instrument itself in terms of structure and content. Consequently a second pilot study was conducted with 10 colleagues who were selected by means of convenience sampling. This group of respondents was asked to complete the questionnaire and comment on the structure and content material of the survey. This second pilot revealed that most respondents were comfortable with the content and structure of the survey. However, it was interesting to note that two of the respondents expressed discomfort with the topic being researched. One of these respondents commented that “while the survey is anonymous it still feels intrusive, personal and private.” As a direct result of such comments and a suggestion made by another respondent, a comment box was added to the final survey to allow for any of the respondents to elaborate on their views.

During the initial pilot study a technical glitch with the software caused items in Q10 section two to be duplicated. The subsequent length of the questionnaire may have contributed to the numbers not completing the entire survey. However, this question did reveal that 92% of the school leaders who responded to the survey had reported that pupils used words such as gay, faggot or lesbian to label other pupils, and that 29% of them had reported that it had occurred more than 10 times over a twelve month period. When the second pilot study was conducted, four out of the seven respondents who completed the second pilot revealed they had issues with the frequency categories that had been set. These ranged from very frequently (10+ times) to never. The difficulties

highlighted, included the problem of distinguishing homophobic bullying from other types of bullying; the lack of awareness a principal might have regarding the number of incidents, and that it was too hard to judge the frequency. As a result of the second pilot and the constructive comments from respondents, the categories were altered to reflect the whole year time period in a more representative way. These categories were changed to daily, weekly; monthly or yearly events. In addition to the category changes, six items were also removed from Q10 because the pilot study revealed the events were never happening. These items included gender specific homophobic name calling and teachers ignoring homophobic bullying.

The majority of respondents who failed to complete the initial pilot study stopped at section three which requested respondents to verify details of both anti-bullying and RSE policies and the comments be written into the appropriate space provided. However, this may have put some respondents off answering because they might not have had immediate access to policies or it may have been because information regarding teaching about sexual orientation was being sought, which may have been a sensitive topic for some respondents to consider.

Although sections four and five of the questionnaire seem to have been straightforward for respondents to answer, following the pilot study, four items were removed from Q17 in section four in order to reduce the size of the survey instrument. These included whether respondents felt homophobic bullying was innate or learned, together with items relating to the sexual orientation of non-teaching staff. A significant

change here was to replace the word 'combat' to 'address' in relation to school leaders dealing with homophobic bullying, because it was felt the use of the term 'combat' may have been leading. In section five, Q18 asked respondents to indicate which stakeholders they felt were important in supporting them addressing homophobic bullying. The pilot revealed this was predominantly school community members and having included 'other' as a category this was found to be confusing for respondents, so it was not included in the main study.

The second pilot study revealed how for one respondent the issues raised were 'taboo' and a 'non-issue,' whilst for others they stated how uncomfortable they felt talking to pupils or staff talking to other staff about sexual orientation. This second pilot also revealed that a couple of respondents perhaps did not want to indicate their true beliefs in relation to sexual orientation, perhaps remaining neutral because they were known to me personally and maybe did not want me to know their views in relation to this. As such they may have demonstrated "social desirability response bias" (Robson, 2002, p.233). Significantly the initial pilot study revealed that school leaders identified that they rarely dealt with homophobic bullying, and yet a high level of frequency was attached to the use of homophobic language. It was therefore important to find out in the main study if this finding was going to be the same.

Main Study

As already described, the results of the two pilot studies, a number of changes were made to the survey instrument prior to being distributed amongst IPPN members. Once these changes were made, a date was set for the distribution of the survey to all 2978 schools in agreement with the IPPN. Following consultation with them, it was agreed that the survey would go out on the 19th September 2013 as part of the fortnightly é-scéal with the link attached to the 'Survey Monkey' software research tool.

In addition and most significantly, it followed a week after the new anti-bullying guidelines were published by the DES for all primary and secondary schools. The topic of bullying was immediately topical and relevant to people's thinking. Some of the items, particularly in Q19, were important because they were recommendations taken from the action plan on bullying, and which became part of the guidelines subsequently. This question asked respondents to examine the different ways they might seek support in addressing homophobic bullying, and how likely they would be to follow the suggestions recommended within the guidelines such as referring to a DES anti-bullying website, organising friendship week or having a safer internet day to raise awareness of homophobic bullying.

The pilot study had placed a deadline on completing the questionnaire. However, this may have caused people to 'put off' completing the questionnaire. The decision was

therefore made not to have a definitive return date in the main study and to allow people to respond whenever they were able to.

The first escéal released to members (20th September) contained many news items for the perusal of school leaders and as a result, reference to my research was placed in a position which required the respondent to scroll down the page to find it. In addition, no reference was made to the research within the email subject box. This may in my view, have caused a very slow response to the survey overall, and having approached the IPPN for a reminder to be issued, I was informed that due to strict regulations around individual research, no reminders could be issued. However, in due course it was possible to re-issue the request within a later escéal (26th September). In combination with this, I also issued a personal request on the IPPN email 'network' to refer members to the escéal and to state the purpose of the research once again. This subsequently had a positive effect and resulted in many more responses to the request. A final reminder was sent out two weeks after the escéal, both to say thank you for participating and to provide the link again. This resulted in a further response to completing the survey, thereby increasing the validity of it.

A total of 283 survey responses were received which represents approximately a 6% response rate.

Validity

Every effort was made to ensure that the results of this enquiry were trustworthy and believable. The fact that this topic under investigation has not been examined in primary schools in Ireland before now means that the integrity of the study is extremely important. Time and effort were spent constructing the survey questions, and subsequently conducting the pilot study, in an endeavour to try and ensure the survey instrument was valid, even though this did not guarantee validity. The questions asked were designed to try and ensure that the subsequent findings would be worth taking account of within the education sector and beyond. Consequently much effort was placed on the structure of the questions asked, so that they were clearly stated, without ambiguity, and logically presented.

It can be argued that the survey instrument used in this study has construct validity, as defined by Trochim (2000). The questions for the survey emerged directly from the literature and the conceptual framework. The literature identified the existence of certain relationships between concepts associated with homophobic bullying. These were placed within the conceptual framework as previously mentioned, and identified primarily as conceptualising homophobic bullying, the impact of homophobic bullying and the role played by stakeholders in addressing homophobic bullying. Subsequently, this framework and the review of the literature led to the emergence of the survey questions used for this study, which were carefully constructed and repeatedly refined to reflect the relationships between the many different constructs identified in the

conceptual framework. The collection and analysis of the data evidence, as identified in the following chapter, shows that some respondents had experience of dealing with homophobic bullying during the 2012-2013 academic year. In this way, and according to the definition of construct validity proffered by Trochim (2000), the initial theory presented in the conceptual framework formed a 'theoretical pattern,' and the instrument adopted captured the reality, which is the 'observed pattern.' For Trochim (2000), this associated 'pattern matching' is the essence of construct validity. In other words the questionnaire successfully measured what it set out to.

In terms of demonstrating construct validity for the instrument used in this study, face validity and content validity are considered as a way of doing this, as highlighted by Trochim (2000). In terms of face validity, a review of the survey instrument led to the conclusion that it measured the frequency with which homophobic bullying had occurred based on the experience and opinions of school leaders. A small group of school leaders, with expert knowledge of education and dealing with bullying, were asked to report back their thoughts about the instrument, and whether they thought it was suitable for measuring the frequency of homophobic bullying in the second pilot study. The majority stated that it did. This enhanced the face validity of the instrument. In terms of content validity, it was critically important that the questions were going to be interpreted without ambiguity and therefore provide an accurate measure of what the research questions were seeking information about. The pilot studies tried to ensure that the questions were very clear in what they were asking prior to the main study. As previously mentioned, as a result of both pilot studies certain questions were refined such as Question 10, where the

frequency categories were changed. Each individual question of the survey instrument was checked and re-checked to ensure that it was clearly worded with no ambiguity about what the question was asking and what it was seeking to find out. This ultimately helped to improve the content validity of the instrument.

Within the introductory paragraph of the survey school leaders were encouraged to be honest and fill in the questionnaire as accurately as possible, particularly considering the importance and relevance of the topic being investigated.

It was important to try and ensure that the instrument measured what it set out to, primarily how often school leaders had dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying during the 2012-2013 academic year.

As far as practicable, steps were taken to ensure that the results of the questionnaire accurately captured the picture of reality in primary schools in Ireland in terms of the frequency with which incidents of homophobic bullying had occurred according to school leaders. However, the limited response rate and the fact that a number of respondents did not complete the questionnaire reduced the internal validity of the instrument. In addition, the fact that the response rate was low (6%) means that the data cannot feasibly be generalised to the wider population of school leaders, thereby reducing the external validity of the instrument. Nevertheless, the data provided some useful insights in to how homophobic bullying was perceived, understood and addressed by the respondents.

Due to the size of the population under scrutiny, and the fact that the topic for consideration in this survey was being advocated by the professional body of principals (IPPN), and the research instrument was disseminated by them, it was envisaged that this would help increase the number of respondents, and thus improve external validity. However, this was not the case. It was also evident that respondents failed to complete the survey at a wide variety of points rather than any one question in particular, although a third of respondents did stop at Q10 in section two.

Reliability

The questions asked in this study were worded in such a way so that that they could be repeated in the future, and this together with the particular procedures of data collection that were adopted, tried to ensure that the same results could be achieved if the study were to be replicated. Through the process of cross checking the findings with the pilot study, as suggested by Bush (2007), it was possible to check reliability of this research. The data from both the pilot study and the questionnaire revealed similar findings. In both instances school leaders indicated that they had dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying on a fairly infrequent basis. However, in terms of their experience of pupils using homophobic language towards each other and about things they perceived as different or didn't like, the frequency was much higher. Similarly, Q18 in section 5 of the questionnaire and pilot study revealed that it was school community members who

were regarded as being best placed to help school leaders address homophobic bullying. Findings such as these strengthen the reliability of the survey instrument.

The pilot study highlighted the fact that in some browsers, the 'Survey Monkey' software led to the duplication of answers, thereby increasing participant error in filling out the questionnaire, with some respondents filling in the answers differently to the same question which had duplicated. This was eliminated for the main study. In addition, putting in the possible answer 'don't know' to the questions about school policy in section three further reduced the chance of any participant error. As already indicated, some respondents failed to complete the survey at this point which may have been due to them being asked to find out further information which they were not prepared to do.

Fine tuning the survey instrument in terms of layout and language, following the pilot studies increased the reliability of the survey and also would allow for the possibility that this study could be replicated both in an Irish context, and with amendments, in an international primary educational context.

Ethical and Political Considerations

Approval for this research project was sought from the Research Ethics Committee of St. Patrick's College. This involved completing the research ethics protocol form and within that, the researcher agreed to abide by the rules set down by the college for conducting research. This included agreeing to protect the identity of those

participating in the research, and providing clear information about how this was to be done. For the purposes of this study the IPPN administered the questionnaire by sending an escéal newsletter to all members of the organisation which provided an internet link to the survey. A second link was also provided for respondents giving them a detailed account of the study and information provided as to whom and where individuals could make contact should they have required further information. A copy of this statement can be found in Appendix C.

Once the survey was accessed by clicking on the link, respondents were provided with a statement which further explained the purpose of the study, what the research would involve, and the fact that although biographical data was requested, this would be aggregated, and no identifying information of individual respondents would be known. In addition to this, the respondents were also informed that their participation was voluntary, and completing the survey confirmed the respondent understood both the purpose of the study and giving their consent to participate in it. These details are included in the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Only the IPPN support office knew which schools received the questionnaire and the location of these schools, and in turn, only the researcher will be aware of the number of respondents who return the questionnaires, and neither location of school or the individual school leaders were required to furnish the researcher with any personal information, other than school type, gender of respondent and their number of years experience. Many different types of questionnaires are sent out to school leaders within

the organisation on a regular basis, and they are made aware of the reasons for such studies to take place. Completion of these questionnaires is on a completely voluntary basis, and this applies to this study also. Confidentiality was assured by the nature and structure of the questionnaire and the procedures which were put in place for returning the completed questionnaire back to the researcher.

The knowledge that was acquired from this study will be used to inform practice within the primary education system in Ireland, and the findings disseminated to interested parties, including the DES, teaching unions and other professional bodies, to inform them of the views and practices of school leaders regarding homophobic bullying. This information was also shared with respondents when they clicked on the link to access the survey.

It was evident from the comments received from two of the respondents in the second pilot study in particular, that the topic of homophobic bullying is a politically sensitive issue. Respondents highlighted this through various comments such as describing the subject as ‘taboo’ and stating that there would be a reluctance to answer any questions about homophobia and homophobic bullying. This perhaps underlines a certain view as proffered by Blaise and Andrew (2005, p.49) for example, that adults working with children within the primary school and pre-school settings often regard children as “asexual innocent bundles of joy” and therefore dealing with such matters as homophobic bullying in this context could be described as “political and risky” (Blaise & Andrew, 2005; p.50).

The literature review highlighted how the primary SPHE/RSE curriculum in Ireland does not include reference to teaching about sexuality, and how it may be seen as being developmentally inappropriate to teach young children about sexuality. With this in mind, it may be also that choosing to conduct research about the issue of homophobic bullying with pupils at primary level may have been politically sensitive. If children are considered too young to talk about such matters within the classroom environment it would be very difficult to ask questions of children in relation to this topic. Similarly, because parents also expressed strong feelings about this topic and felt homophobic bullying was often dismissed at second level (McCormack & Gleeson, 2010) researching the issue of homophobic bullying with parents of primary school children may also have been a very sensitive matter, and difficult hurdle to get over. It would be possible to consider conducting similar type research with other groups of educational stakeholders, such as teachers, but as a researcher it was believed that the best starting point for knowing whether homophobic bullying occurred in primary schools was initially with those in positions of leadership. It was also perhaps the safest option until it was established whether homophobic bullying occurred or not.

Data Handling

The software research tool 'Survey Monkey' automatically read and recorded the data. These data were then coded and transferred to an excel file and then transferred to SPSS for a more rigorous analysis using the software. For example, where five possible

answers were required, these answers were coded numerically 1 to 5. This information was then imported to the analysis software SPSS. The data was arranged into rows and columns. Each row corresponded to what is referred to as a “case or record” (Robson, 2002, p.394), and included the data from a particular respondent.

Following the transfer of the data to SPSS it was checked to ensure that all the categories were correct and that data had been inserted correctly from ‘Survey Monkey’. In this way the data was cleaned of any errors in terms of, for example, the labels that had been placed against each item from the questionnaire were written out in full which really helped with the subsequent analysis. In addition the data corresponding to question 10 was originally put in as nominal data and the mistake was rectified and changed subsequently to scale. Once again this affected the final analysis of the data.

The data from the survey are used in the next chapter to answer the five research questions. This next chapter provides both a descriptive analysis of the information provided by respondents, and an attempt is made to further analyse the descriptive statistics and interpret the data in a way which explores the patterns of results and relationships between the variables. As Robson (2002, p.235), describes it is “seeing where relationships are strong and where they are weak or non-existent”. For example, the pilot study indicated that a high percentage of respondents (70%) had spoken to their pupils about the casual use of words such as gay and lesbian, and yet a much smaller number (29%) indicated that they had dealt with an incident of homophobic bullying.

Therefore it was important to try and discover when and how this language was used and in what context.

The data is only available to be viewed by the researcher and my supervisors and is stored securely within the software package and on the hard drive of my own personal computer.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the findings pertinent to each of the research questions as outlined previously:

1. How frequently has homophobic bullying occurred in primary schools during the 2012-13 academic year based on the experience and opinions of principal teachers/acting principal teachers and deputy principals?
2. To what extent do school anti-bullying policies make reference to homophobic bullying, and to what extent do school RSE policies make reference to teaching about sexual orientation?
3. What level of emotional response do school leaders display when addressing homophobic bullying, and what is their perception of the role they play in doing so?
4. To what extent does the principal teacher/acting principal/deputy principal acknowledge and garner support from other education stakeholders in addressing homophobic bullying?
5. How do school leaders, specifically principal/acting principal and deputy principal teachers feel in relation to homophobic bullying and the sexual orientation of school personnel, including themselves?

The chapter is organised into three sections using headings related to each of the research questions, and in each section the empirical data are discussed with reference to the literature review in Chapter 2 and the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 3. Broadly speaking the analysis presented in the chapter focuses on the premise that homophobic bullying is an issue within primary schools in Ireland according to the opinions and experiences of school leaders. The chapter is divided up into three main sections: a) the frequency of occurrence of homophobic bullying, b) school policies relevant to homophobic bullying, and c) the response of school leaders to issues pertinent to homophobic bullying. The initial section describes the most salient biographical data pertaining to the respondents. The biographical data emanating from the first section of the questionnaire are presented in Appendix E. The subsequent sections highlight the phenomenon of homophobic bullying as a deeply complex issue and not simply as an answer to a question about whether it exists in schools or not. Although the data collected are primarily quantitative, some of the qualitative data collected in the questionnaire are used where it helps to provide insight and understanding with respect to the survey findings. It should be noted at the outset that the percentages used in the data tables are based on the numbers who responded to individual questions (the valid percent) rather than the total number who returned questionnaires. The actual number of respondents is provided after each statement with the overall number of respondents listed at the foot of the table.

Biographical sample

The total number of respondents who completed or part completed the questionnaire numbered 283. The data show that the largest representative group of respondents were administrative principal teachers (45%), with a slightly lower number of teaching principals (37%) and deputy principals (16%) who completed or part completed the questionnaire. This finding is important because the total number of principals who responded reflected 10% of the total population of principals' on the IPPN database, whereas the number of deputy principals who responded was 2% of the total population of deputy principals on the database. In terms of the low response rate, this finding does indicate the possibility that a large number of deputy principals did not respond to the survey request. The reasons for this may have been that they didn't see the email because it was sent to the school and were not told about it; they were busy teaching their own class and didn't have time, or they simply chose not to answer.

Data from both teaching and deputy principals indicated that they were teaching in a wide range of different class groupings. Although this finding in and of itself is not significant for this study, it is important to note as highlighted in the literature review previously, that research studies have shown that both very young children and older children of primary school going age experience being called homophobic names. Consequently, school leaders whether they were teaching any class grouping or not, need to be aware of this.

The data indicated that female (71%) respondents outnumbered male (29%) and that the majority of respondents fitted the combined age profile of 41-60 years old (71%). We may speculate that the difference in terms of numbers of males and females was to be expected considering that generally there are more women than men employed in the teaching profession in Ireland. Also, in terms of age profile, because a certain amount of teaching experience is generally required prior to an individual applying for a position of school leadership such as principal or deputy principal, it may have been expected that the majority of respondents were older. In terms of years of experience in the position of school leader, the data show that over half the respondents had 3-10 years experience, with more than a quarter having 11-20 years experience.

The participants in this study were mainly from combined junior and senior schools (86%). There was a wide variation in the size of school, but fewer than half (45%) came from schools with 200 or more pupils, with more than quarter of the respondents coming from schools with 100-199 pupils (26%) and 1-99 pupils (29%). The majority of respondents also taught predominantly in co-educational schools with a Roman Catholic ethos (64%), with less than a fifth of respondents coming from schools with a different denominational, non-denominational or secular ethos. The data also revealed that the vast majority of respondents (78%) were from non-DEIS schools. This relates to the 'Delivering Equality in Schools' initiative adopted by the DES in schools identified as economically disadvantaged. This figure reflected the national average with about 19% of schools being designated disadvantaged. There are a total of 658 primary schools within the DEIS scheme (Government of Ireland, 2014).

Using this survey method of gathering data in this study highlighted certain difficulties with the approach, including a typically low response rate and possibly what seemed like an apparent lack of motivation on the part of the respondents to complete the questionnaire. The fact that a significant number of respondents did not complete the questionnaire also reflects an issue which is commonly associated with this method of data collection (Gillham, 2007).

The following section now gives consideration to the frequency of occurrence respondents dealt with homophobic bullying during one specific time period.

Section one: Frequency of occurrence of homophobic bullying

Respondents were asked in section two, question 10 of the questionnaire (see Appendix B) to estimate how often they had dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying during the 2012-2013 academic year.

It is important to point out that the questionnaire made very clear what behaviours were to be considered by respondents as homophobic bullying. This was due to the well documented difficulties associated with defining bullying, including homophobic bullying, as referenced within the literature review. In light of this, a working definition of homophobic bullying was provided in the questionnaire, the same definition which was coined prior to the collection of the data, and as included in the literature review. The definition coined for this study which was provided to respondents in the questionnaire is

stated here once again. Homophobic bullying is “bullying that occurs when pupils use terms like queer, faggot, gay, lesbian and other such terms, in a negative sense, or when these type of words are used in conjunction with other aggressive or negative behaviour.”

Respondents were asked about whether they had dealt with behaviours specified as exclusion, physical abuse and cyberbullying in relation to homophobic bullying. In addition they were asked to estimate, to the best of their knowledge, the frequency with which their pupils had used homophobic language to label other pupils behaviour and/or to describe things they didn't like or that they regarded as being different, for example, it could be items of clothing, a book, a film, and objects of this nature.

This section is divided up into two main headings, namely the occurrence of homophobic bullying and the language associated with it.

The data are presented in tabular form with a title explaining what each one is about. They are arranged in such a way as to be able to compare data using the percentages given for each item, and from highest to lowest in tables were there are a number of items reported. Each table also indicate the numbers of respondents who completed each item (n) with the overall number of respondents placed underneath (overall n).

Occurrence of homophobic bullying

The findings as evidenced in Table 1 show that the majority of respondents (81%) stated they had never dealt with an incident of homophobic bullying during the specified time period of the 2012-2013 academic year. A small but significant number of respondents (16%) did however indicate that they had dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying once or twice during the school academic year specified, with a smaller number (2%) indicating once or twice a month.

Table 1

Frequency with which Respondents Dealt with Incidents of Homophobic Bullying

How often did you deal with incidents of:	Almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a year	Never
	% selecting				
Homophobic bullying (n=256)	-	1	2	16	81

Overall n= 283

The data suggested that homophobic bullying had occurred in primary schools in Ireland. Almost one in five respondents suggested that they had dealt with the issue to varying degrees. Despite the fact that the number of respondents was small, it did represent a reasonable number to draw some inferences from in relation to homophobic bullying in the primary schools in Ireland. The figures presented in Table 1 revealed that the rate of homophobic bullying in primary schools in Ireland was similar to that found in schools in research from studies in the UK. For example, in the UK 6% of the children

calling Childline about homophobia and homophobic bullying were under 11 years of age (NSPCC, 2006). Similarly, research conducted on behalf of Stonewall in the UK, identified that two in five primary school teachers believed that some children were currently experiencing homophobic bullying (Guasp, 2009). These data are worth considering in light of the fact that the findings from this study indicated that some respondents had experience of dealing with homophobic bullying. The data though not nationally representative, do suggest that while homophobic bullying was not hugely common there was a significant amount of it in primary schools.

It could be argued that the findings justified the specific inclusion of homophobic bullying within the recently updated DES anti-bullying guidelines (DES, 2013), and the recommendations made to schools in how to assess and record incidents of homophobic bullying. The guidelines recommend that primary schools in Ireland include identity based homophobic bullying within their school anti-bullying policy, and that it should be dealt with and acknowledged in the same way as other forms of bullying. In addition, primary schools are also asked to make every effort to address the issue should it arise. This includes an investigation of what has taken place and recording and reporting such incidents, particularly in situations where no successful resolution has been achieved. The data from this study provided some indication that homophobic bullying was an issue in some primary schools in Ireland. However, it cannot be verified from the data how many schools, because it is possible that both principal and deputy principal may have completed the survey in one school.

The data from this study could help to reassure school leaders about the validity of including homophobic bullying on the recording template, specifically because the study provided evidence that homophobic bullying had occurred in some primary schools in Ireland. Subsequently this may help to lead to a more comprehensive understanding of homophobic bullying and the frequency with which it occurs in primary schools.

Figures presented in Table 2 also indicate that a small but significant number of respondents have dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying whereby children have been physically abused by their peers over the stated time period because pupils thought they were gay or lesbian; others have been excluded from playing with their peers, once again for the same reason, and/or they have experienced homophobic cyberbullying through texting or via the use of social media.

Table 2

Frequency with which Respondents Dealt with Different Types of Incidents of Homophobic Bullying

How often did you deal with the following behaviours which were specifically associated with homophobic bullying:	Almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a year	Never
	% selecting				
Physical abuse (n=256)	-	-	-	6	94
Exclusion (n=255)	-	-	1	11	88
Cyberbullying (text/social media) (n=256)	-	-	1	7	92
Overall n= 283					

The figures presented in Table 2 highlight that homophobic bullying involved forms of behaviour that were traditionally associated with bullying in general such as physical forms of attack and exclusionary behaviour. This highlights the point made by Douglas et al. (1997) through their definition, that homophobic bullying often consists of general bullying behaviours such as physical and verbal abuse, with the specific dimension of homophobic language also being perpetrated against another person. In addition, it is evident from the data that some respondents have had to deal with the relatively more recent phenomenon of cyberbullying amongst pupils, through the use of unwanted negative labelling via texting and social media. As technology becomes more sophisticated and children become ever more aware of how to access and use technology, it may be inevitable as Rivers and Noret (2010) suggest, that bullying behaviour also becomes increasingly sophisticated, and by implication, harder for schools and school leaders to detect and deal with. Although schools are ideally placed to deal with such forms of bullying, and as Cowie and Colliety (2010) assert, they should be able to help children both understand and appreciate the dangers associated with cyberspace, the fact is that school leaders may be tapping into the private online world of children to ascertain the facts about alleged incidents of homophobic bullying. As a consequence, this may pose problems for schools and how people in positions of leadership address the issue. For example, parents might feel that any intrusion into the online world of their children is simply unacceptable and unwarranted and outside the remit of the school authorities. These findings highlight the need for an agreed whole school approach to all forms of bullying including homophobic bullying and cyber bullying as recommended by a number of theorists (Corcoran & McGuckin, 2014; Cowie & Colliety 2010; O'Moore &

Minton, 2009). Although the number of respondents in this study who had dealt with cyberbullying was apparently quite small, it was significant nevertheless that there have been incidents of this nature, and this may warrant the need for increased awareness and vigilance amongst school personnel and perhaps a greater focus placed on the importance of teaching all children about internet safety and the use of social media.

The next section considers the language that is associated with homophobic bullying and from the experience of respondents, the frequency with which they perceive it has been used by pupils.

Language associated with homophobic bullying

Based on their own experience as school leaders, the respondents provided possible evidence that their pupils used language in their schools which may be associated with homophobic bullying. Specifically, when asked about whether pupils used language such as the words gay, poof, faggot or lesbian to label another pupil's behaviour in question 10, section 2 of the questionnaire, more than 7 in 10 respondents indicated that they did as Table 3 shows.

Table 3

Frequency with which Respondents Recognise the Use of Homophobic Language by Pupils

How often did the pupils use homophobic language such as gay, poof, faggot, lesbian to:	Almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a year	Never
	% selecting				
Label behaviour of other pupils (n=255)	1	8	15	47	29
Describe things they don't like or different (n=255)	2	9	15	42	33
Overall n= 283					

The data showed that although nearly half the total number of respondents had experience of their pupils perpetrating this type of behaviour only once or twice in the year, overall the evidence did seem to suggest that a fairly significant number of pupils were actually using homophobic derogatory language towards other pupils.

In a similar way, but to a slightly lesser extent, respondents also provided the evidence to suggest that pupils perhaps used homophobic pejorative language to describe things that they didn't like or perceived as being different. Roughly just fewer than 7 in 10 respondents identified their pupils as having behaved in this way, with the majority of incidents occurring once or twice in the year. Although the figures indicate this language was being used, it is not clear from the data how many pupils were actually using it. Also respondents may have heard this language being used several times on each occasion from many pupils or heard it only once.

Broadly speaking, these findings were similar to the research findings of a study by Renold (2000) in the UK, who found that children of primary school going age used terminology associated with sexuality and sexual innuendo, including homophobic language, to both criticise and cajole each other, and not generally because the pupils have a fear of or loathing of homosexuality. The implication of the findings from this study are maybe that those in positions of school leadership need to understand as Renold (2000) describes, how children negotiate their role and position within their own social group and that those children who don't fit in, in terms of, for example, their dress, language, style and personality, will be targeted with language that is homophobic in nature. Renold (2002, p.425) alludes to the fact that in this way there are commonly held masculine and feminine behaviours which are deemed acceptable and anything that falls outside these "hegemonic heterosexual" behaviours are labelled with pejorative words associated with homosexuality.

In this study the respondents were also asked in question 10, section 2 of the questionnaire, how often teachers and parents approached them regarding the pupils' use of homophobic language, such as pupils calling other people gay and lesbian, or as in the case of parents, their own child being labelled in this way. Table 4 highlights that up to 16% of respondents had been approached by parents to complain about their child being called gay and lesbian, whilst over half the respondents had been approached by teachers in their own schools in relation to their pupils using words such as gay and lesbian and directing this label towards others.

Table 4

Frequency of Parents' and Teachers' Informing School Leaders about Pupils' Use of Homophobic Language

How often was the use of homophobic language referred to school leader by:	Almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a year	Never
	% selecting				
Parents (n=256)	-	-	1	15	84
Teachers (n=255)	-	2	7	42	49

Overall n= 283

These findings point to the possibility that only some children told their parents they were being abused in this way, but also there is the possibility that some children did not necessarily approach their parents to tell them they were being labelled at all, which may be because they were afraid of what their parents might say to them, or because they were embarrassed being labelled in this way, and would rather have just forgotten about it.

It is also conceivable that parents were reluctant to approach the school for fear of the response they would receive from the school staff. It could be for example, that a parent may have felt that their complaint was dismissed as being frivolous and highly unlikely in a primary school setting and therefore they chose not to have brought the matter to the attention of the school principal or deputy principal. The parents may have also feared what might happen to their child in the future as a result of reporting it,

especially if the school had a history of dealing with bullying in a very open and upfront manner, therefore bringing more embarrassment and fear to the child concerned. The fact that over half the respondents had been approached by teachers to inform them about their pupils using such language is perhaps significant and does suggest the possibility that the use of homophobic language by pupils was more common than might be generally thought. In some cases (2%) this reporting by teachers to their school leader occurred more than once a week, which indicated that a high level of use of homophobic pejoratives were common in some schools. It may be that teachers were very concerned about the level of use of homophobic language and wanted the person in a position of leadership within the school to respond accordingly, or it could be that the school recognised that the use of homophobic pejoratives was an issue and individual respondents requested that they be kept informed about the incidence of such language use. The fact that so many teachers approached their school leader to complain about such language being used, when compared to the number of parents who approached respondents, suggests the possibility that parents were reluctant to bring the subject up in school, perhaps because of a real and substantial fear about drawing attention to issues relating to homophobia and sexuality in general.

These findings are important to consider in light of previously conducted research within second level schools in Ireland conducted by O'Higgins-Norman (2005). He found that many teachers had encountered homophobic bullying amongst the pupils, but a significant number of them were reluctant to tackle this form of bullying because of the fears they shared about adverse negative reactions from parents, other staff and pupils in

relation to the subject. Similarly, Meyer (2008) in her Canadian study of secondary teachers found that many were reluctant to tackle the issue of homophobic bullying because of a perceived lack of support from principal teachers and management bodies. McGuckin and Lewis (2008) in their Northern Ireland study also identified that primary school principals were reluctant to tackle homophobic bullying because they felt parents and management bodies of schools would not like it and because some principals believed the children in their schools were too young to understand the labelling. The implication for the findings of this study when considered in conjunction with the aforementioned research, are that when parents or teachers approached those in positions of leadership, there perhaps needed to be a clear and robust response from the school authorities in how homophobic bullying was to be dealt with. Such a response may only have been likely if an agreed whole school approach had been adopted and formalised as a written anti-bullying policy, and the agreed steps and procedures clearly outlined for all members of the school community to adhere to.

The updated DES guidelines (DES, 2013) have set out to ensure that all schools are both aware of and recognise that homophobic bullying can occur at primary level and that school anti-bullying policies are explicit in their response to homophobic bullying. In responding to homophobic bullying through a comprehensive policy it could also be argued that children may need to have some understanding of the meaning of such terms as 'homophobic' and probably the most suitable area of the curriculum for teaching about this is within the boundaries of appropriate Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

Section two: School policies and homophobic bullying

This following section therefore now considers school policies and in particular gives some consideration to whether respondents had anti-bullying policies and RSE policies in schools and significantly, whether or not these policies referred to homophobic bullying in the former, and teaching about sexual orientation in the latter. In addition, question 12 in section 3 of the questionnaire asked respondents about the content of individual policies requesting them to state specifically what the policy referred to in relation to homophobic bullying. Similarly, question 15 asked respondents to state what their RSE policy recorded in relation to teaching about sexual orientation, whilst question 16 asked for reasons why if no reference was made to teaching about sexual orientation. Some of the responses are provided here to provide further insight and understanding.

Anti-bullying policy

The data evidence recorded that over 99% of respondents did have an anti-bullying policy operating in their schools. It was not ascertained from the questionnaires how successful respondents perceived their individual anti-bullying policies were at helping them deal with and address bullying. Nevertheless, the data did suggest that on face value respondents had such a policy and in so doing were compliant with the DES requirement to adopt such a policy.

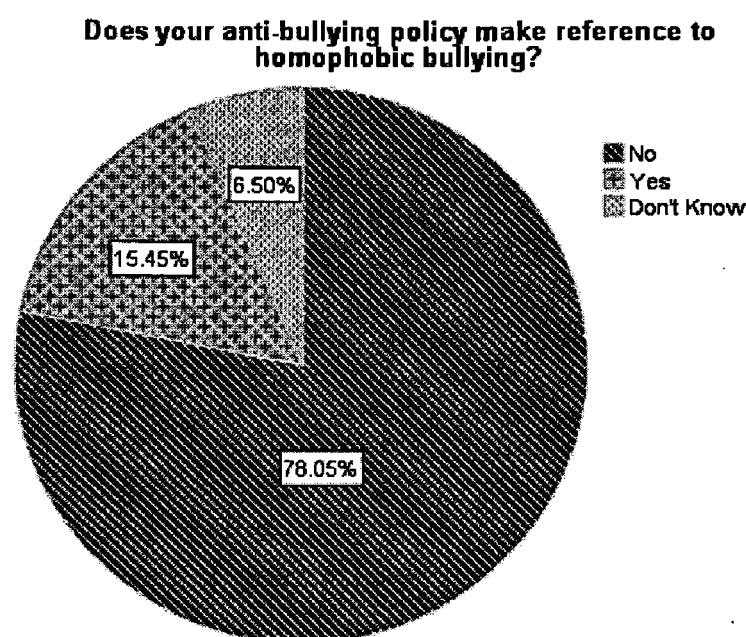


Figure 1. Number of respondents who refer to homophobic bullying within their school anti-bullying policy.

When the respondents were subsequently asked if their policies made specific reference to homophobic bullying, the data evidence shown in Figure 1 illustrate the fact that nearly four fifths of respondents did not refer to homophobic bullying within their school anti-bullying policies.

As a direct consequence of the publication and subsequent school adoption of the new DES anti-bullying guidelines, many schools will probably have to reconsider this position, and include phraseology associated with both preventing and dealing with homophobic bullying in their school anti-bullying policies. The reasons why policies did not include reference to homophobic bullying were not clear from the data gathered.

Interestingly however, when respondents were subsequently asked in question 19, section 5 of the questionnaire whether they would refer to the school anti-bullying policy in order to specifically address homophobic bullying, as the data in Table 5 show, over four fifths of respondents were likely to refer to their school anti-bullying policy, with over two thirds very likely to refer to the policy.

For the sake of parsimony, a decision was made to combine the percentages from the categories of very likely and likely and denoted by (^) in tables, whilst probably not and definitely not were also combined being denoted by (+). This is a feature of other tables, including Table 6 where the categories agree and strongly agree, and disagree and strongly disagree were combined. The presence of the aforementioned symbols indicates where such a combination has occurred.

Table 5

Seeking Support in Addressing Homophobic Bullying

In order to address homophobic bullying how likely are you to:	Likely [^]	Maybe	Probably not ⁺
	% selecting		
Refer to the school anti-bullying policy (n=202)	85	8	7
Overall n= 283			

We might speculate that because the majority of respondents in this study did not have policies which referred specifically to homophobic bullying, it is possible that respondents used a more generic policy to deal with any type of bullying and this pointed to a possible belief amongst them that there was no need to have any demarcation of different types of bullying within policies. This finding is plausible when considered in relation to the findings of O'Higgins-Norman's (2005) study carried out in second level schools in Ireland, which also showed that schools adopted a more generic bullying policy to deal with bullying in all forms.

It may be understandable that the aforementioned situation should arise considering that the DES (1993) guidelines for schools were maintained up until their most recent update, and that these former guidelines did not include reference to homophobic bullying. As previously mentioned in the literature review, research conducted by O'Moore and Minton (2004) in Ireland and Smith et al. (2008) in the UK highlights the importance of adopting a comprehensive anti-bullying policy in order to tackle bullying successfully. However, Smith et al. (2008) also identified from their research that specific reference to different types of bullying led to a more successful resolution of a bullying situation.

The implication of these findings is that the recent DES guidelines' suggesting homophobic bullying is to be included in school policies is likely to be a positive development. It could be argued however, because up until recently school policies had not included homophobic bullying this may simply reflect an oversight on the part of

schools or perhaps it reflected the culture of schools as being heteronormative and not reflecting the needs of all pupils in terms of diversity, including referring to other sexualities.

It is noteworthy that when respondents who included homophobic bullying in their school anti-bullying policies were asked to clarify what their policies stated, a number of respondents (5) alluded to the fact that the nine grounds of discrimination were the basis for their school policies and included homophobic bullying, thereby reflecting the most recent recommendations of the anti-bullying guidelines (DES, 2013). Similarly, comments were also posted which alluded to the fact that homophobic bullying was simply listed as a specific form of bullying in policies, with a further five respondents also referring to the fact that their policy documents were explicit in stating that homophobic bullying was not tolerated. A sizable number of respondents (9) also made reference to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation as not being acceptable and included this within their individual anti-bullying policies. For example, one respondent referred to their policy stating categorically that “no child or adult should be discriminated against because of their sexual orientation,” whilst another respondent stated “children are not allowed to refer to the sexuality of others. They are discouraged from referring to boyfriends, girlfriends, and boys preferring feminine pursuits and girls preferring masculine pursuits.”

It could be argued that the aforementioned comments and the data pertaining to the inclusion of the specific wording of ‘homophobic bullying’ in school anti-bullying

policies highlight complexities associated with understanding and dealing with homophobic bullying. Many respondents in their comments highlighted many different behaviours and issues in their policies which could be associated with this form of bullying such as homophobia, sexual name calling, sexual orientation, use of homophobic terms such as gay or queer, and differences between genders in terms of behaviour. The fact that the majority of respondents seemed to have a generic policy for dealing with bullying is perhaps understandable considering that in making specific reference to homophobic bullying other complex factors are intertwined. One of these complex factors is sexual orientation. In naming such behaviours and specifically alluding to terms such as sexual orientation, it is perhaps important to establish whether or not children were taught about the meaning of such terms. Conceivably, if updated school anti-bullying policies refer to 'homophobia,' and homophobic pejoratives, then it is debatable whether children would need to understand what these terms meant. The most appropriate place for this discussion to happen would be within SPHE and more particularly RSE lessons. Therefore it was important to find out from the respondents whether RSE policies covered such material as teaching about sexual orientation.

Relationships and sexuality education policy (RSE)

In section 3, question 13, of the questionnaire, respondents were asked specifically whether or not they have an RSE policy (see Figure 2) and whether or not it included reference to teaching about sexual orientation (see Figure 3). Respondents were

also asked to give specific details of the policy and to explain the reasoning if no such reference was made.

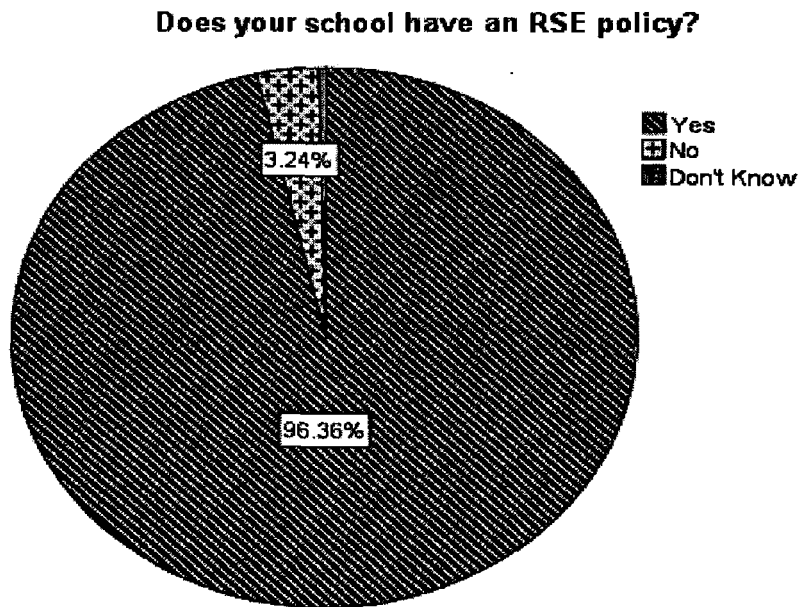


Figure 2. Number of respondents who state that they have an RSE policy.

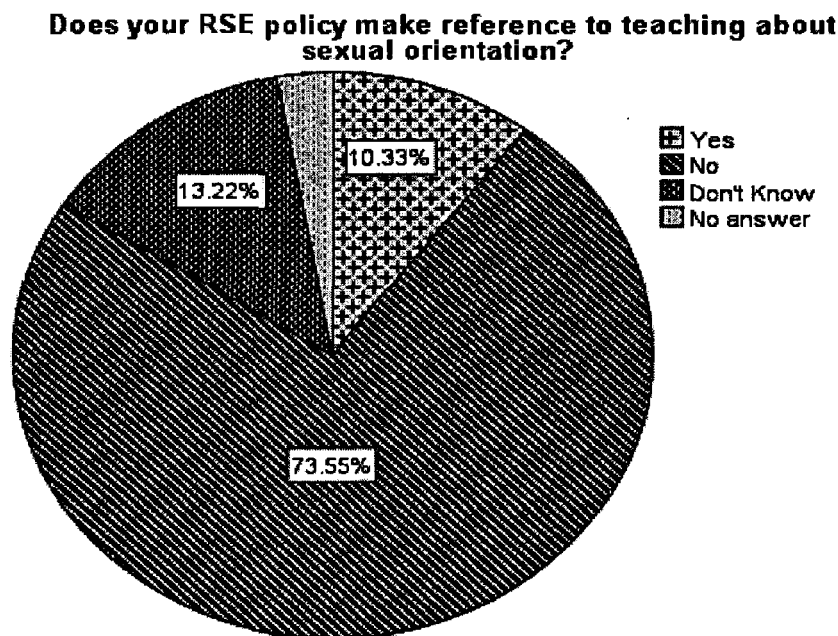


Figure 3. Number of respondents whose RSE policy refers to teaching about sexual orientation.

The conceptual framework pinpointed the importance of RSE and the possible impact it may have on homophobic bullying. The new DES anti-bullying guidelines have tried to ensure that schools refer to homophobic bullying within school policies, but this may not necessarily help children to understand the reasons why the use of homophobic language is unacceptable. It is questionable whether homophobic bullying can be successfully resolved if children are not taught about different sexualities other than heterosexuality. If the situation presents as Shai (2011) argues, that schools and educators avoid discussion about different sexual identities, then this might suggest to children that homosexuality is neither desired nor legitimate, and can be very damaging to the child as they develop and mature. Questions were therefore asked to see if there was any link that could be established between both the anti-bullying policy in terms of including homophobic bullying and RSE policies to see if any reference was made to the notion of sexual orientation and teaching about different sexualities.

The data show in Figure 2 that over 96% of respondents had an RSE policy. However, as the data in Figure 3 illustrate, just over 10% of respondents referred to teaching about sexual orientation in their policy. When respondents were subsequently questioned as to the specific content of RSE policies in relation to both teaching about sexual orientation and to elaborating the reasons for not including reference to sexual orientation, a number of different categories were identified from the descriptions given by respondents. These categories included the curriculum, age appropriate information, role of parents and school ethos.

Firstly, in terms of the curriculum, three respondents made it very clear that within their policies they referred to teaching about different sexualities and named the relationships involved. For example, one respondent explained that their policy was to teach about different relationships, and explaining to the children the differences between love for family members and both heterosexual and homosexual love. Similarly, two respondents also spoke about referring to the fact that some people prefer to have a relationship with someone of the same sex and name it as being a homosexual relationship, with the caveat placed on this by one respondent that “We do very little else in this regard.” Further to this, it was interesting to note how a couple of respondents talked about the children being encouraged to engage in discussion within RSE lessons, with one respondent saying that “Homosexuality is explained as love of same sex person” which was also referenced as being as valuable as a heterosexual relationship and also that the children are able “to relate their experiences”, which is of note.

In contrast and in relation to the curriculum and teaching about sexual orientation, six respondents drew attention to the fact that teaching about different sexualities was not part of the curriculum and in many cases they concluded it was not a relevant question to ask. This was a commonly recurring notion. As highlighted within the literature review, no reference is in fact made to teaching about sexual orientation in any of the DES primary school documents previously mentioned. Some comments did include reference to the specific content of the curriculum, for example, making reference to teaching about growing and changing but excluding sexual orientation because the curriculum documents didn’t refer to it. Similarly, another respondent alluded to the fact that the

curriculum referred to same sex friendships but in their opinion this did not mean it was acceptable to teach about sexual friendships.

One respondent made a connection between the curriculum, bullying and sexual orientation stating, “We only broadly state for the purpose of the policy that we are following the Stay Safe and RSE programmes as prescribed, and how the classes are organised. Also, homophobic bullying and sexual orientation have never arisen as yet (tiny rural school, quite innocent pupils).” This comment was particularly important because it suggested the respondent felt that sexual orientation was uncovered in later life and not part of one's personality or ‘socially constructed’ (Connell, 1995), and possibly endorses what O’Higgins-Norman (2009, p.382) describes as the prevailing culture within many Irish schools, that “sexuality is innate, fixed and biologically determined.” Also, from the views expressed by the previously mentioned respondent, we may speculate that homophobic bullying may be regarded as equating with knowledge and understanding of one's sexual orientation and that homophobic bullying cannot exist in school because a child's sexual orientation is unknown.

The second category highlighted within the data related to the issue of teaching children about sexual orientation in an age appropriate way. In relation to teaching about sexual orientation and the RSE policy one respondent states, “It is [policy] due for review but we have begun to work with all classes, in what we feel are age-appropriate ways through story via our 'Learn Together' ethical education programme e.g. stories like 'And Tango makes Three', 'I Want Toast' etc for younger classes and the 'Harvey Milk Story'

for 5th/6th.” In contrast, other respondents (6) suggested that teaching about sexual orientation was not applicable in a primary school, with one respondent stating “In RSE we simply teach about puberty and sexual intercourse.” This latter finding suggests that in some cases, respondents maybe taught children about heterosexuality and procreation only, as the SPHE curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999) prescribes. This notion which is described by Ashley (2003, p.265) as a “mechanical focus”, possibly underlines that some respondents choose not to deviate from this prescribed curriculum to include alternative sexualities, and instead maintain a more conservative approach as Mannix-McNamara et al. (2010) perceive schools do in Ireland.

Similarly, a number of respondents (5) indicated that they not only felt teaching about sexual orientation were inappropriate, but also that it was an issue for parents to address with their children. This was the third significant category found within the qualitative data. One respondent stated that “This issue is not considered age appropriate for consideration in the context of class work. If children ask questions of this nature they are given a brief factual answer, if appropriate, and advised to ask the question of their parents,” whilst another stated “Questions of this nature will be directed to the home.” Further to this, the comment that “We don't feel Primary School is the place to address such delicate matters” suggested a possible feeling for this respondent in particular, that dealing with the issue of sexual orientation was complex and underlines the previously stated views that either home or later on in life are the places for these questions to be answered. Comments such as these suggested a possible feeling amongst some respondents that it was within the home and with parents in particular that the

responsibility rested for teaching children about different sexualities, and that the primary school was the place for teaching about conception and procreation.

This finding may be important when considered in light of the views proffered by DePalma and Atkinson (2010) as a result of their research, and as highlighted in the literature review, that the primary school may be considered a place where heterosexuality is regarded as the norm and sacrosanct, and any other sexualities may be deemed to be different and inappropriate. This may lead one to reach the possible conclusion that for some, alternative sexualities may not be regarded as “legitimate” (Shai, 2011; p.161).

A number of respondents (17) were emphatic in stating that discourse about sexual orientation was totally inappropriate within primary education due to the age of the children. For example, “This is a primary school. If a question arises, the teacher will deal with it however, at this level, we do not believe that reference to sexual orientation is necessary or appropriate, and it is not part of RSE curriculum.” The fact that the children were 12 years old and under was stated as a significant factor for three of the respondents and a particular reason for not considering teaching about sexual orientation in RSE lessons. The inference that could possibly be drawn from these comments was that any alternative sexuality is ‘wrong’ or deviant in some way, and that children could be influenced in terms of their sexuality.

As DePalma and Jennett (2010) and Wallis and VanEvery (2000) argue, some people believe that discussion about sexual orientation often leads to an automatic assumption being made that it has to be associated with sexual activity, while others may perceive it to be dangerous to discuss sexual orientation in case it influences children to think a certain way. It could also be argued that some respondents seemed closed to the idea that children were aware of issues associated with sexual orientation at a very young age, even in primary school (Shai, 2011). As DePalma and Atkinson (2012; p.1670) assert, “children learn homophobia and transphobia at a very early age.” As part of their research project in UK primary schools they identified that being called ‘gay’ can be referring to something regarded as being ‘ugly’ or describing something that doesn’t work; that gay and lesbian family members are ‘best kept secret’ and that children engage in what could be termed ‘boy activities’ and ‘girl activities’ (Allan et al., 2008). Further to this, one respondent who stated that they “Probably felt it was more of a secondary school issue -i.e. that our boys were too young to have 'sexual orientation' raised as an issue in a primary school written policy!” gave a hint of a slight personal discomfort with the notion being introduced in a primary school possibly because of pupil, parents and /or personal reaction to such a topic being mentioned. The inference made by the respondent was that primary school boys were possibly too young to understand the issues associated with sexual orientation, despite the fact that many children who later identify themselves as being gay, recognised themselves as being different whilst at primary school (Milton, 2003).

The fourth data category which related to reasons why sexual orientation was not referred to in RSE policies was the role played by school ethos. A number of respondents (11) referred to school ethos preventing reference being made to sexual orientation within school policy. A number of respondents working in schools with a Catholic ethos drew attention to this in their comments about sexual orientation, and their reasons for it not being included in school RSE policies. For example, “As a Roman Catholic school we do not specifically teach about sexual orientation. It is addressed only if it arises through discussion with the children.” Another respondent assumed that because it was a Catholic school they were working in, referring to sexual orientation in any way would not be deemed acceptable, whilst another respondent stressed their dismay at not being able to refer to sexual orientation, suggesting that it would be of help to pupils who identify as LGBT. One respondent also highlighted the complex nature of addressing the issue in a school with a Catholic ethos and that it was an issue for parents.

In some cases these comments may be interpreted as an indication of conflict between how respondents felt on a personal level and the parameters within which they had to work. This was further highlighted by another respondent who stated “We are a Catholic school and we feel we are serving two masters i.e. Catholic ethos and DES recommendations. There is not one single uniform message from both (that I know of!).” Further to this one respondent proffered that, “I think that pupils are too young in primary school to know what their sexual orientation is and that it is not a topic that they are ready to address. There is also the issue of Patronage- the Catholic Church teaches that homosexuality is a sin so how can we then say to pupils that homosexuality is fine. I

don't have an issue doing it personally but it does present an ethos problem.” The literature review highlighted the significance of this aspect of school policy and the fact that it presented school leaders with difficulties in how their schools addressed any issues associated with sexual orientation, but particularly when drawing explicit attention to it through teaching within the subject of SPHE and the school RSE policy in particular, where a lack of confidence amongst teachers may also be an issue in dealing with the topic (Buston & Hart, 2001).

The data evidence in this study indicated the possibility that for a large number of respondents, coming from a Catholic school automatically increased the difficulty they faced in addressing issues associated with homosexuality in particular. It also underlined the previously mentioned notion that heterosexuality is regarded as the norm within primary schools and any other type of sexuality as at least “not desired” (Shai, 2011; p.161).

It is noteworthy however, that seven respondents, all of whom were administrative principals, and who commented about their own school RSE policy in relation to teaching about sexual orientation, were from schools with a different ethos and patronage, including Roman Catholic (4), Church of Ireland (1) and two from Educate Together (2) school, and also they were working in a mixture of co-educational and single sex schools. These data may be interpreted as indicating that ethos and patronage did not necessarily preclude discussion taking place about differing sexualities within individual schools, but perhaps that the personality traits and personal values of the

school leader, and the culture they promote, are more relevant in their decision to encourage and support teachers in how they approached teaching about different sexualities within schools. As Meyer (2008, p.562) states “it is the principal’s priorities and attitudes towards issues [that] permeate the school and shape the culture.”

The data evidence also provided an indication that some respondents believed that the established ethos and patronage of a school provided a legitimate reason for not teaching about alternative sexualities whilst others would possibly have challenged this view by engaging in discourse and covering material relating to different sexualities, including homosexuality as stated within the school RSE policy. This leads back to the point made by Fullan (1991), as referenced by Mannix-McNamara et al. (2010) in the literature review, that it is the principal as school leader who is the person most likely to influence the organisational conditions necessary for the development of shared goals, collaboration and school climate. The next section therefore considers how respondents reacted to and approached homophobic bullying, the organisational role school leaders perceive they played in addressing homophobic bullying, and how they responded to it on an emotional level.

Section three: The response of school leaders to homophobic bullying

This section examines the response made by respondents to incidents of homophobic bullying. This response is considered under two headings. Firstly, the organisational approach, which considers the steps respondents took when dealing with

homophobic bullying, and secondly what level of emotional response respondents experienced when dealing with bullying incidents of this nature. The effectiveness of any schools response in dealing with bullying of a homophobic nature is possibly contingent to a large extent on the leadership style of the school leaders. Leadership style in this context is therefore researched under the two aforementioned concepts. An organisational perspective considers the specific actions the respondent took in response to an incident of homophobic bullying (research question 3), and in so doing, also considered the level of support they felt was required from other stakeholders such as teachers and parents in addressing homophobic bullying (research question 4). The emotional response considered the level of emotion that respondents felt in relation to different aspects of homophobic bullying, for example, the level of empathy respondents felt in relation to the victims and perpetrators of homophobic bullying, and another example may be what level of emotion they displayed to others when addressing this form of bullying. Further to this, the section also outlines the feelings respondents had surrounding homophobic bullying, but also tried to establish whether a link could be made between these feelings and the feelings they had regarding the sexual orientation of staff and themselves as individuals (research question 5).

The initial part of this section now considers the organisational response of respondents to homophobic bullying, in terms of the role they perceive they played in addressing homophobic bullying.

Organisational approach: Information gathering and staff input

The data evidence in Table 6 demonstrate that the vast majority of respondents gathered information about an incident of homophobic bullying and also that just under four fifths of respondents trusted individual teachers to deal with any homophobic bullying situation.

Table 6

Response of School Leader when Dealing with Incidents of Homophobic Bullying

How do you respond to an incident of Homophobic bullying:	% selecting	
	Agree ⁺	Disagree ⁺
Gathering information (n=213)	92	1
Not trusting individual teachers to deal with it (n=217)	10	77
Overall n=283		

These findings suggest the possibility that both respondents and their individual teachers in schools often worked together to resolve a situation where homophobic bullying was in evidence. The fact that respondents seemed to gather information about incidents of homophobic bullying follows the recommendations made in the recently updated DES anti-bullying guidelines in which best practice recommends that as much information is gathered about an incident prior to any decisive action being taken and that

individual teachers are required to address, record, and report incidents of bullying when they happen and share the information accordingly.

As referenced within the literature review, James et al. (2007) perceive that constructive leadership involves allowing staff to participate in the decision making process and adopt a leadership role when such a situation arises. In this way, staff working together to resolve a bullying situation demonstrate what Spillane (2005) refers to as distributed or shared leadership. Although the majority of respondents seemed to trust individual teachers to deal with a situation of homophobic bullying, the fact that over 1 in 10 respondents didn't trust individual teachers was possibly a cause for concern. We can speculate that there are a number of reasons for this apparent lack of confidence in individual teachers. These could include the relationship the respondent may have had with an individual teacher; the respondent might have found it hard to relinquish any control over such matters and felt they had to be in control of issues pertaining to discipline and bullying behaviour; or the respondent may have cause to have felt that an individual teacher was not able to deal with such situations following previous experiences of same.

Table 7

Frequency of Different Types of Response Made by School Leader to Incidents of Homophobic Bullying

How often did the following occur in response to incidents of *homophobic bullying/^ homophobic language use:	Almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a year	Never
	% selecting				
*Addressing staff meeting (n=255)	-	-	-	7	93
*Talking to class (n=256)	-	-	-	14	86
^Talking to individual parents (n=256)			3	24	73
^Talking to individual pupils (n=257)		3	9	49	40

* refers to incidents of homophobic bullying
^ refers to the use of homophobic language
Overall n= 283

It is evident from the data presented in Table 7, that 61% of respondents in the sample had spoken to children in primary schools about their use of homophobic language, with the majority (49%) occurring once or twice a year, whilst nearly 1 in 4 respondents had spoken to parents of individual children about the use of such language.

As previously highlighted, this language may have been targeted at someone because they didn't like a certain element of their personality or behaviour, or it might have been used to describe something they didn't like or that was different. The fact that a number of respondents had spoken to both parents and pupils about the use of this language, perhaps provided some indication that the use of words such as gay and lesbian may have been more common in schools than previously realised, and importantly it could also indicate that respondents were perhaps willing to challenge the use of the homophobic words which they deemed as being unacceptable. It is not clear from the

data however, at what point respondents made this intervention. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note, that the data obtained from section 2, question 10 of the questionnaire, revealed that respondents maybe approached individual pupils about their use of homophobic language rather than them choosing to frequent individual classrooms to talk to the class about homophobic bullying. The data shows that nearly 1 in 7 school leaders had spoken to a class once or twice in the year about homophobic bullying in particular, whilst more than 1 in 2 had spoken to individual pupils about their use of homophobic language. In making this comparison, it may be possible to conclude that respondents preferred to adopt a more low key approach to challenging the use of such language and not draw attention to it considering the sensitive and often sexual nature of the language used.

The fact that respondents were willing to challenge such language could be regarded as positive and underlines the point made by Harris and Hathorn (2006) that the leadership qualities shown by principal teachers in particular is critical in reducing and preventing bullying. This includes intervening directly. By addressing groups or individuals as the data suggests many respondents seemed prepared to do, indicate a willingness to address this form of bullying. However, the data appear to show that relatively small numbers of respondents addressed this issue formally within the parameters of a staff meeting. This might be due to respondents not identifying homophobic bullying or the use of homophobic language as an issue, or the behaviour not being recognised as occurring enough to warrant serious discussion, or preferring a more informal approach to dealing with it.

We may speculate that respondents approached individual teachers looking for information and tried to adopt this more informal approach to addressing homophobic bullying. However, in terms of other research evidence, the importance of simple verbal acknowledgement and subsequent intervention cannot be underestimated, as Meyer (2008) identified in her Canadian research with teachers. She found that where school leaders made no effort to intervene and support teachers in their efforts to challenge homophobic name calling in particular, individual teachers felt isolated and eventually gave up challenging the use of such epithets.

Table 8

Organisational Response to Homophobic Bullying

How likely are you to address homophobic bullying in the following ways:	Likely ⁺	Probably not ⁺
	% selecting	
Gather opinions from teachers (n=205)	86	2
Apply sanctions against perpetrator(s) (n=204)	83	1
Refer to National Anti-bullying website (n=204)	83	3
Gather opinions of non-teaching staff e.g. SNAs (n=202)	60	16
Raise awareness during e.g. Safer Internet Day (n=204)	60	10
Organise CPD for staff (n=203)	51	11
Organise 'Friendship Week' (n=203)	47	15
Organise training for Parents Association (n=201)	41	19
Organise training for BOM (n=201)	28	33
Gather opinions of non-teaching staff e.g. school secretary/caretaker (n=203)	25	46
Overall n=283		

The data in Table 8 show the different ways respondents were likely to address homophobic bullying. It does appear nonetheless from the data evidence presented in Table 8 that respondents regarded the opinions of their teachers as being important in relation to gathering information about the frequency and occurrence of homophobic bullying, however they chose to deal with it subsequently. More than four fifths of respondents seemed to recognise the importance of the role of individual teachers in providing salient information to the person(s) in a position of school leadership about incidents of homophobic bullying. In support of this notion, when respondents were subsequently asked in section 5, question 18, to rank order which stakeholders were in the best position to support school leaders in addressing homophobic bullying, the data from Table 10 reveal that more than 1 in 2 respondents identified that individual teaching staff were in the best position to support them. This finding may possibly be interpreted as respondents tending towards placing a great deal of trust in the opinions of individual teachers and that they possibly perceived that a situation such as this would be resolved through their own professional knowledge and expertise.

It is somewhat surprising to note that considering the role special needs assistants have been charged with in terms of looking after the care needs of individual children, and the role they play in terms of monitoring behaviour in and around the yard area and other environs of the school, particularly during break times, that just under two thirds of respondents would gather the opinions of SNAs about incidents of homophobic bullying. There may be a myriad of possible reasons why this was the case including a possible perception held by the respondents of a lack of professional training pertinent to the

SNA, in terms of being taught about bullying behaviour. Another reason could be because the respondents felt that it was not their role to provide such information, or that the respondents simply did not regard the SNA as trustworthy or their opinions of any value. Similarly, the data evidence in Table 8 indicates nearly half the respondents would not consider the opinions of other non-teaching staff such as the school caretaker or secretary when gathering information about homophobic bullying. This is perhaps because of a lack of trust that the information would not be passed on to others in the community or that the respondents did not want to place the individual in a compromising position whereby they had to disclose information about a child who may be related to them or a friend, or once again that there was a possible level of mistrust between the member of staff and the respondents.

Overall the data evidence seem to indicate it was more likely that respondents would rely on the opinions of teaching staff first and foremost, which was perhaps to be expected considering the role of the teacher, and the day to day interactions they have with pupils. However, it was perhaps a cause for concern that there was a perceived lack of information to be obtained from ancillary staff considering that quite often, ancillary staff are based within the local community and often have an awareness of what is happening locally. Research evidence from O'Moore et al. (1997) indicates that some bullying incidents occur outside school, and it is possible they occur within the wider local community and are never brought to the attention of school authorities. When incidents subsequently happen inside school, an investigation by the school leader may

reveal this to be the case, finding that bullying might even begin outside the school and then there is a continuation of the problem within the school.

These findings therefore have possible implications for the role played by school leaders in dealing with homophobic bullying. The literature review highlights the work of Eslea and Smith (1998) and Smith et al. (2008) to accentuate the benefits of a comprehensive whole school approach to bullying which involves the awareness and opinion of every staff member. A comprehensive school policy requires all members of the school community to be vigilant and aware and as the new DES (2013) guidelines suggest, all members of the school community need to be involved in the creation and implementation of the policy, which the data in this study conceivably suggests is not necessarily the case. If, as Harris and Hathorn (2006) perceive, that the role of the principal in particular is critical in addressing bullying by providing clear direction and establishing the climate of the school, then gathering the opinions and hearing the voice of all personnel in school is relevant. In ensuring everyone has a voice to speak about bullying and opinions are regarded as being valid, leadership is truly distributed and centres around “not only on what people do, but how and why they do it” (Spillane, 2005; p.143).

Individual actions of school leaders

When respondents were asked about the different ways they would seek support to address homophobic bullying in section 5, question 19, the data evidence, as shown previously in Table 8, reveal that many respondents seemed to adopt a wide variety of

strategies in order to help them address the issue. In what was seemingly an apparently positive approach to dealing with a situation of homophobic bullying, over four fifths of respondents recognised the possible benefits of finding out more information about homophobic bullying from the national anti-bullying website, which the DES was endeavouring to set up during 2013, at the time this data was collected. Similarly, in what also seems to have been a positive step in addressing homophobic bullying, 3 in 5 respondents would apparently raise the profile and awareness of homophobic bullying by participating in an event such as Safer Internet Day. This day provides schools with a possible opportunity to draw attention to the dangers associated with homophobic cyberbullying in particular, and to teach children in an age appropriate way about the positive steps they can take to help protect themselves when they enter cyberspace. The data indicate that nearly one in two respondents would also organise a 'Friendship week' to raise the awareness of homophobic bullying. This finding also suggests the possibility that respondents were willing to engage in positive profile raising events which may help children themselves to deal with homophobic bullying.

In what seems to be a possible contrast to the positive approach outlined previously and the adoption of an apparently more negative approach, four fifths of respondents would also seek to apply sanctions against a perpetrator(s) of such an incident. Although it may be regarded as an understandable reaction that such an approach be adopted and sanctions administered, bearing in mind the serious nature of the behaviour, it is also possible that this kind of approach could be regarded as counterproductive considering that pupils would possibly be blamed for their actions, and

punishments meted out without any effort being made to understand the reasons why someone may engage in homophobic bullying in particular. It could be argued that as a consequence of reacting to such a situation with a punitive approach it is possible that no discourse was encouraged about homophobic bullying itself, that the language was simply regarded as being unacceptable and therefore not spoken about in any meaningful way. It could be asserted that by simply punishing someone there is no common or shared understanding of the issues involved, and a chance that the victim of such targeted behaviour would become more isolated and prone to further attack.

Respondents highlighted that they would seek increased training for stakeholders such as school staff and to a lesser extent members of the parents association, and to an even lesser extent the Board of Management. This is an interesting, if somewhat surprising finding. It seems apparent that over half of the respondents felt that staff working in school would possibly benefit from further professional development and training in this area, whilst not as many respondents felt this was the case for either the parents association or the BOM in particular. It could be argued from the data evidence provided in Table 8 that nearly half the respondents probably wouldn't seek to organise training for the BOM in particular. This could be because they believed there was no need for such training to take place, or it was difficult to facilitate as there were possibly few venues and little opportunities for this kind of training to take place, or they may have equated facilitating training for BOM members with spending their own time and energy organising it.

This could be considered to be an important finding however, considering that the recently updated DES guidelines are very much about placing an emphasis on the responsibility of the BOM to deal with issues of bullying behaviour in schools and that the principal teacher has a duty to report any bullying matters in the confines of BOM meetings. In addition, where a successful outcome has not been reached in a particular bullying situation, a written report is submitted to the BOM which will include particular reference to different types of bullying such as identity based homophobic bullying. Therefore it may seem prudent that the BOM understand and are made familiar with the issues associated with homophobic bullying. In terms of the parents association, the fact that parents have children attending school possibly means that a greater number of respondents felt some form of training for the parents association would be of benefit for both parents and children alike, but even so it is perhaps surprising that it was only two fifths of respondents who would probably seek training in this regard. Respondents might have felt it was the responsibility of the parents association itself to arrange such training and may not have wanted to interfere in this regard. As the next section shows, respondents looked to parents in particular, as stakeholders, to provide support to them in dealing with homophobic bullying. It was perhaps therefore surprising that it was not a higher number of respondents who would seek to organise training for the parents association in this regard.

Role of stakeholders

The data evidence shown in Tables 9 and 10 provide a strong indication that respondents looked towards many different stakeholders for support in addressing homophobic bullying. As previously mentioned earlier in this chapter, respondents indicated that the role of the teacher seemed to be critical in providing support to them as school leaders in addressing homophobic bullying.

Table 9

Organisational Response of School Leaders to Homophobic Bullying

How likely are you to address homophobic bullying by seeking support from the following stakeholders:		
	Likely ⁺	Probably not ⁺
	% selecting	
Parents (n=203)	95	4
Pupils (n=203)	94	-
In school management team (n=203)	90	4
Chairperson of BOM (n=205)	82	4
Colleagues e.g. principal/deputy principal (n=205)	72	7
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) (n=203)	58	12
Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) (n=205)	46	20
Inspector (n=201)	10	62
Overall n=283		

The evidence indicated that nearly three fifths of respondents ranked individual teaching staff in the number one position, and further to this nearly a third more respondents ranked teachers in second position when asked in question 18, section 5, to place them in order of importance in terms of which stakeholders were best placed to

support respondents in addressing the issue. This is perhaps an important finding considering the recognised significance of the teachers' role in successfully addressing bullying generally (Siann et al., 1993).

In addition, nearly a fifth of respondents rank ordered the in-school management team in position one with a further two fifths in rank order two (see Table 10).

Table 10

Rankings Awarded to Stakeholders Regarded as Best Placed in Positions 1 and 2 to Support School Leaders in Addressing Homophobic Bullying

Which stakeholders are in the best position to support you in addressing homophobic bullying :	% selecting	
	Ranking 1	Ranking 2
Individual teaching staff (n=206)	58	29
In school management team (n=206)	20	44
Parents (n=206)	10	12
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) (n=206)	5	2
Board of Management (BOM) (n=206)	4	4
Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) (n=205)	1	7
Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) (n=206)	1	1
Inspectorate (n=204)	1	1
Overall n=283		

Similarly, the vast majority of respondents as indicated in Table 9, stated they would seek support from their in-school management team in addressing homophobic bullying. These teams could include a teacher with a post of responsibility who maybe oversees efforts to address bullying behaviour by, for example, organising activities

during friendship week or ensuring that teachers are provided with appropriate curriculum material to address homophobic bullying. These graded A and B posts are regarded as middle management positions. When consideration is given to the data evidence which indicated the significance placed by some respondents on their in-school management team, it must be pointed out that there are many individual schools which do not have any form of in school management team. This may in part be due to the size of the school. In addition, many in school management teams in both large and smaller schools have had reductions in the numbers of such posts due to an embargo placed on such appointments in schools by the DES. We may speculate from the data evidence gathered that school leaders relied very much on a sense of teamwork and a collegial approach to leadership. It is possible that respondents recognised the importance of the whole school approach to dealing with bullying and perhaps relied on the support of both individual teaching staff and where appropriate, the in school management team; an approach which research identifies as the most successful in addressing homophobic bullying (Meyer, 2008).

The fact that the data indicated respondents were advocating turning to their own staff in school, draws on the most recently updated anti-bullying guidelines (DES, 2013) issued to schools which stresses this collegial and whole school approach to dealing with bullying. The guidelines, as outlined in the literature review recognise the difficult and delicate nature of dealing with bullying behaviour and the fact that teaching staff in particular are in the most appropriate position in schools to deal with such behaviour. The necessary interactions this approach entails between staff and school leaders perhaps

underline both the adaptive nature of leadership required (Lipsky & Lawrence, 2011) and how the idea of leadership practice has to be distributed amongst staff (Spillane, 2005) in order to successfully address homophobic bullying.

The data also seemed to indicate that the parents of children who were either victimised or perpetrators of homophobic bullying were ideally placed to support school leaders in dealing with the issue. Table 9 shows that parents and pupils alike were considered extremely important in dealing with homophobic bullying. It is possible that respondents focused on parents in order to bring incidents of homophobic bullying to an end and successfully resolve a situation by bringing both children and parents together to try and rebuild positive relationships between all parties. The data in Table 10 show for many respondents the rank position they afforded to parents was significant in supporting them when an incident of homophobic bullying occurred. This finding may be important considering that research conducted in Ireland within second level schools, as highlighted in the literature review, identified that parents not only believed there to be high levels of homophobic bullying amongst pupils but also they expressed the belief that schools are reluctant to challenge homophobic behaviour (McCormack & Gleeson, 2010). The data from this study however, do seem to indicate that school leaders recognised the significance of informing parents and also regarded the relationships between all parties in any bullying situation as being extremely important in addressing it. As the literature review highlighted, school leaders are required to carefully negotiate their way through many different personal relationships (Drea & O'Brien, 2001), and to deal with bullying requires particular care being taken during these negotiations.

The data evidence suggested that personal relationships between the chairperson of the BOM and school leaders in particular were extremely important, and that respondents recognised that the BOM had a limited but important role in providing support in addressing homophobic bullying. The data in Table 9 indicate that more than four fifths of school leaders initiated informal contact with the chairperson if an incident of homophobic bullying occurred. The data evidence also indicated that although some respondents seemed to recognise the importance of the role and position of the BOM in providing support to them, it seemed much more likely that much of the response to bullying situations would be done informally between the respondent and the chairperson of the BOM. This situation may change with the advent of the new guidelines which stress the role of the BOM and its importance in both cataloguing incidents of bullying, including homophobic bullying, but also in dealing with bullying generally. The data suggested that a much more informal approach was adopted by school leaders in addressing homophobic bullying, by seeking advice and providing information rather than formalising the issue within the BOM structure. This finding may be important in demonstrating how respondents constantly negotiate through personal relationships and “create and monitor organisational structures appropriate to the fulfillment of the legitimate interests and aspirations of both internal and external stakeholders” (Day et al., 2001; p.26).

In terms of success rates in addressing homophobic bullying in particular, Meyer (2008) found that the more teachers were supported by management and school administrators/ structures, the greater the chance of dealing with an incident of

homophobic bullying. Therefore the fact that predominantly respondents seemed to defer to their Chairperson is perhaps an important finding from this study, and underlines the importance of “relationships that are built both within school and in the wider community” (Crawford, 2007; p.88).

It seems to be evident from the data that respondents looked to other colleagues in leadership positions for support and informal advice, and to a much lesser extent would seek formal advice from their own professional support organisation, the IPPN, when dealing with incidents of homophobic bullying. The data indicated that respondents were perhaps looking to others for support, which suggests that some of them were possibly unsure about how to deal with and address incidents of homophobic bullying, or that they may have needed clarification or advice about how best to proceed. It may be that respondents felt that talking about the particular issues they were dealing with helped them to actually cope with the situation in the most appropriate manner. It is interesting to note that although respondents seemed to place such a high regard on seeking the advice of other colleagues, they rank ordered the IPPN very low down in terms of the position they placed the organisation in providing support to them, as Tables 9 and 10 indicated, and it may be they did not necessarily want to formalise the advice seeking process, which would be officially noted when contact was made with the IPPN.

We can speculate that respondents needed and desired advice but it was perhaps only obtained after information gathering from children, other colleagues, and staff members about a particular incident, and once an incident had developed and some

response had been in order, then seeking clarification and confirmation to ensure that the correct procedures were being followed. Research in UK schools from Day et al. (2001) shows that school leaders choose to work within a framework that is in fact collegial and an emphasis placed on teamwork and decision making, whereby the school leader constantly focuses on relationships within school and the wider community. It is therefore understandable why respondents in this study would seek the opinions of others as both a way of supporting the process but also helping to clarify the steps and decisions that may be needed.

In terms of support from agencies external to the school, the data evidence presented in Tables 9 and 10 seem to indicate that some respondents looked to NEPS for support when incidents of homophobic bullying occurred whilst very few would seem to consider the possibility of contacting the inspectorate. These data may not be surprising considering that the role of the inspectorate does not seem to be regarded as advice giving, but rather one which is seen more as scrutinizing the workings of the school. The role NEPS plays in schools may be of help and support to respondents in addressing homophobic bullying. It is interesting to note that within the roles of these two bodies, NEPS are more about providing emotional support and advice to schools, whilst the inspectorate are not in the habit of providing such support. This perhaps underlines the emotional nature of the response required in addressing homophobic bullying as school leaders, and how respondents may seek emotional support from external sources to deal with the issue.

Considering the fact that the inspectorate does officially fulfill an advisory role to school leaders, it is interesting to note how the data suggests that respondents perceived the role of the inspectorate in relation to homophobic bullying behaviour to be quite different. It may be that respondents felt that the role of the inspectorate has no bearing on the issue of bullying and that there are other people such as NEPS psychologists who may understand the emotional nature of bullying and therefore deemed to be in a much better placed position to advise them. This may be borne out by the fact that when asked to rank order both bodies in terms of providing support to respondents in a situation of homophobic bullying, the inspectorate hardly features at all as the figures in Table 10 indicate.

The data perhaps underline the importance of what Brennan and MacRuaric (2011, p.136) describe as “emotional competence” in both collaborating with others and recognising the emotional aspects of leadership. By its very nature homophobic bullying engenders an emotional response and clearly respondents in this study would turn to the NEPS psychologist for emotional help and support. Homophobic bullying, like all forms of bullying impinges on the emotional climate of schools, and the actions and decisions taken by school leaders in addressing it are inseparable from and influenced by emotions (Crawford, 2007; 2009). The next section therefore now considers what level of emotional response respondents would make to homophobic bullying.

Emotional response

Table 11 presents data on issues pertaining to respondents' emotional responses to homophobic bullying. We may surmise from the data that respondents report that they experienced varying levels of emotional response to incidents of homophobic bullying, both in relation to their specific role as school leaders and their own personal feelings about the different issues which were involved. Question 17 in section 4 of the questionnaire asked respondents about their level of agreement in relation to statements about their feelings regarding issues associated with homophobic bullying.

Table 11

Emotional Response of School Leaders to Homophobic Bullying

How do you feel about the following in relation to homophobic bullying:	Agree [^]	Disagree ⁺
	% selecting	
Damaging to emotional health of pupils (n=218)	93	3
Empathy towards a victim of homophobic bullying (n=216)	90	4
Understanding personal feelings (n=213)	67	9
Emotion helping decision making (n=215)	64	7
No distinction made from other types of bullying (n=218)	59	24
Empathy towards perpetrator of homophobic bullying (n=214)	39	40
Caused by difficult relationships amongst children (n=216)	38	26
Emotional involvement (n=216)	26	43
Displaying emotion personally (n=216)	25	39
Strong emotions arise in school personnel (n=214)	24	35
No relevance to primary school (n=217)	12	68
Homophobia is not relevant (n=216)	20	59
Overall n=283		

The data showed that 1 in 4 respondents perceived that homophobic bullying leads to strong emotions arising in school personnel whilst more than a third of respondents would disagree with this notion. This suggests the possibility that the emotional response of staff in school may be dependent on the personality type of individuals, the specific nature of the incident of homophobic bullying or possibly the culture operating within the school in terms of how bullying was dealt with generally.

In terms of individual respondents' emotional response, the data showed that 1 in 4 displayed no emotion when dealing with an incident of homophobic bullying, whilst nearly two thirds suggested they did. In addition to this, the data demonstrated that more than two thirds of respondents felt it was important to understand their own feelings when dealing with an incident of homophobic bullying. The data pointed to the possibility that for many respondents they may have believed it was important to understand their own feelings but then didn't necessarily let these feelings affect their dealing with any incident that may have arisen. The data evidence suggested the possibility that some respondents reacted to incidents of homophobic bullying by displaying outward signs of emotion, whilst a smaller number did not. It could be argued that for some respondents, internally they experienced some degree of emotional response but then managed to detach themselves emotionally from a situation.

Interestingly, as reported in the literature review, Beatty (2000) discovered in her qualitative research with principal teachers in Canada, that many school leaders felt in order to maintain control and power and to protect themselves from feeling hurt, they

managed to both control their emotions internally and how they displayed their emotion when dealing with different situations. It is therefore interesting to note how the data from this study indicated that 1 in 4 respondents agreed that they did not feel emotionally involved when dealing with incidents of homophobic bullying whilst just over two fifths disagreed and clearly did feel emotionally involved. This finding has possible future implications for school leaders and how they respond to an incident of homophobic bullying, especially as Rivers (2011) in his research identifies, that victims of homophobic bullying often experience a very high level of emotional pain in later life. It is possible that respondents who maybe did not acknowledge and recognise both their own emotional response and the emotion contained within a situation of homophobic bullying may also have missed the opportunity to recognise the pain that is caused to others.

However, despite the evidence pointing to the possibility that respondents differed in their views regarding their emotional response to homophobic bullying incidents, the majority of respondents seemed to recognise that homophobic bullying was damaging to the emotional health of pupils. This finding, when coupled with those mentioned in the previous paragraph, perhaps indicate that respondents differentiated between their own emotional response to a situation and the effect homophobic bullying had on the pupils. It is possible that some respondents may have felt that although they recognised the effect on pupils, by allowing their own emotions to come to the fore, this might hamper their ability to effectively deal with the situation, whilst others may have felt that relying on

their emotions to deal with a situation generated a more efficacious response and was not counterproductive.

It is arguable whether the ability to respond to a bullying situation of this nature required an understanding of the emotion displayed by an individual child or children when they have been bullied. It is also worth considering that an appropriate and measured response to this could have required respondents to understand the display of emotion by the child and respond through their own display of emotion such as facial and verbal expressions. This may subsequently have helped to reassure the child who was being victimised and may have also conveyed a message to the perpetrator of such actions that their behaviour was unacceptable and damaging. George (2000) found evidence from his neurology research to suggest that the feelings people experience internally are necessary to make good decisions, which has implications for respondents and their reaction. Although displays of very intense emotions can make decision making more difficult as Crawford (2009) argues, recognising and managing this emotion rather than suppressing it in a situation such as homophobic bullying, can lead to a much better outcome for the children concerned. Displays of emotion reveal how someone is feeling, how they see the world, and how they relate to others (Crawford, 2009).

The implication therefore of these findings for respondents, is that by recognising the emotion displayed by children and their own feelings around it, they could respond appropriately. The literature review highlighted the work of Plaford (2006) who considered the relationship between neurology and bullying, and who asserts that

emotions are a major influence in decision making and that the emotional understanding of adults is the key to helping children resolve and understand bullying situations.

When asked about whether or not respondents felt empathy towards both the victim of homophobic language and the perpetrator of the use of homophobic language in section 4, question 17 of the questionnaire, the results indicated varying degrees of empathy were felt towards children who were victimised and those who perpetrated the use of homophobic language towards others. Interestingly, as Table 11 indicates, 9 out of 10 respondents felt empathy towards children who were victims of homophobic bullying, with the vast majority of both males and females who were questioned, feeling empathy in such a situation. However, when respondents were asked about whether they felt empathy towards a child who bullied another child using homophobic language, the number who felt empathy was reduced by nearly two thirds to nearly two fifths. It was surprising to find that nearly 1 in 25 of all respondents felt no empathy towards the victims of homophobic bullying. Although the data revealed a slightly higher figure for males not feeling empathy for perpetrators, there was only a slight difference between male and female school leaders in their levels of empathy towards victims and perpetrators of this form of bullying. We can speculate that other factors such as personality traits, general life experience and leadership style were important factors in determining the level of empathy respondents felt towards both victims and perpetrators when dealing with such situations. In view of this finding, Beatty (2000, p.335) concluded as a result of her research that school leaders react differently to difficult situations, with many school leaders often adopting a “professional demeanour” and seeking to control their emotions both internally and in displaying emotion in order to

both protect themselves and maintain their self belief about their leadership role. The fact that some respondents in this study did not feel empathy towards perpetrators of bullying in particular, would perhaps tie in with what Beatty (2000) suggests. By feeling empathy in a situation that presents as an act of indiscipline, respondents may have felt that they would be regarded as 'being soft' when such acts were perpetrated.

The data evidence may lead us to the conclusion that the variations in levels of empathy shown towards victims and perpetrators of this form of bullying behaviour indicated that a strong emotional response was in fact made by respondents when this form of bullying occurred. These findings therefore have implications for how homophobic behaviour is dealt with. Plaford (2006) asserts that perpetrators of bullying often fail to develop aspects of their emotional intelligence. This includes the inability to show empathy towards others which further leads to an incapacity to form healthy social relationships. Therefore, if respondents fail to be empathetic towards perpetrators of homophobic bullying, they may become even more socially isolated and prone to further bullying behaviour.

The data in Table 11 denote that three fifths of respondents agreed that homophobic bullying should not be distinguished from other forms of bullying. Open ended comments provide possible reasoning as to why some respondents believed no distinction should be made.

For example:

Homophobic bullying is bullying. I don't believe it should be distinguished from other forms of bullying. All bullying is damaging to the victim. All incidents of bullying, no matter what form it takes need to be thoroughly investigated, the incident discussed with the parents of the children involved and sanctions put in place according to the school policy for the perpetrators (Administrative principal, female, 31-40 years, 0-2 years experience).

Bullying of any kind should not be tolerated. At Primary Level, I believe that children should be taught how to recognise and to deal with bullying but I don't necessarily believe that types of bullying should be categorised or specified. If there is a particular instance of homophobic bullying, it should be dealt with in a calm, unemotional manner in the same way as any other instance of bullying (Administrative principal, female, 41-50 years, 3-10 years experience).

It is important to consider these findings in light of the updated anti-bullying guidelines for schools (DES, 2013) which recognise and stress the importance of the delineation of different bullying types within school anti-bullying policies in both primary and secondary schools. The guidelines recommend that schools do in fact keep a written record of the different types of bullying that are perpetrated, and as alluded to in the literature review, Meyer's (2008) research identified that the distinction made between homophobic and other more generic types of bullying is important in being able to address the issues associated with homophobic bullying such as reference being made

to specific homophobic language. Similarly, Smith et al. (2008) also identify in their research that anti-bullying policies which are the most successful in addressing bullying, delineate different types of bullying.

The data evidence show in Table 11 that some respondents agreed with the notion that homophobic bullying is of no relevance in the primary school, whilst a higher percentage of respondents believed that homophobia is of no relevance in the primary school. These figures point to the possibility that some respondents made a distinction between homophobic bullying and homophobia. We may speculate from the data evidence presented, that respondents believed homophobic bullying was more relevant than homophobia within school. This finding may be important in light of the argument put forward by Shai (2011, p.150) that teachers often lack understanding about terms such as homophobia, and sexual orientation, and often perceive homophobia as being associated with “violent hate crimes.” Similarly, as DePalma and Jennett (2010, p.16) perceive, culturally homophobia is also often misrepresented and portrayed as homophobic bullying, where the focus is placed on “isolated acts committed by certain types of people (bullies) against others (victims).” Ultimately DePalma and Jennett (2010) suggest this kind of misrepresentation is found within primary schools where because sexuality is not generally associated with young children and misunderstood, the idea that homophobia exists is dismissed as irrelevant. One of the respondents commented, “I feel that homophobic bullying is not an issue at primary level. Words such as ‘gay’ are used as derogatory terms but children are only repeating words heard without fully comprehending their meaning.” It could be surmised from this type of comment, as

Shai (2011) recognises, that because children are believed to be too young to understand the concept of being gay, their behaviour may subsequently be ignored. As DePalma and Jennett (2010) concluded from their research, in primary schools there is often silence associated with different sexualities. These findings may therefore be important in the context of this thesis because the data gives an indication that the view proffered by DePalma and Jennett (2010) is feasible, that homophobia may not be regarded as relevant to the primary school, and this could be because of the assumption being made that children of this age are not yet aware of their sexuality, and subsequently it might lead school leaders to dismiss the use of homophobic language as being irrelevant.

If as the data indicate, that some respondents dismissed homophobic bullying as being irrelevant in the context of the Irish primary school, then it might be important to consider this in light of the argument Shai (2011) puts forward. He asserts that there may be a tendency for teachers to legitimise the notion that it is developmentally inappropriate to discuss sexuality, including homosexuality, with young children; that this creates a silence and fear about sexuality, and ultimately allows homophobia to take hold. We might speculate that if homophobic bullying is dismissed as irrelevant, as the data suggests some respondents did, then it is possible that very little discussion occurs about sexuality within the primary school amongst staff and pupils alike. Therefore the next section considers how respondents actually felt about sexuality and the sexual orientation of both themselves as individuals and their colleagues, together with how comfortable they felt talking about this issue with their pupils.

Sexual Orientation

The data presented in Table 12 stipulate that there were differing levels of comfort felt amongst respondents in talking to other members of staff about their own individual sexual orientation, talking to pupils about sexual orientation, and talking about the sexual orientation of staff members. The data reveal that fewer than half the respondents felt comfortable talking to staff about their own sexual orientation, but less than two fifths of them felt comfortable talking about the sexual orientation of colleagues. We may interpret this difference as being possibly due to the fact that some respondents might have felt that the sexual orientation of others could have been regarded as a very private and personal matter.

Table 12
Emotional Response in Relation to the Issue of Sexual Orientation

How comfortable do you feel talking to the following about sexual orientation:	Agree [^]	Disagree ⁺
	% selecting	
Staff members and your sexual orientation (n=217)	45	24
Pupils (n=215)	42	36
Staff members and their sexual orientation (n=216)	37	33
Overall n=283		

In considering these findings we may look to the research of VanEvery and Wallace (2002, p.420) in the UK who concluded that primary schools operate in a private

space, particularly in the staff room, and that primary schools are “asexual” in nature. In other words, they observed very little discourse about sexuality within the schools they conducted their research in. It might also be that respondents in this study were reluctant to talk to others about the sexuality of individuals for fear of not wanting to be accused of sexual discrimination/harassment or saying something that could be misconstrued or offensive. It is interesting to consider this possibility in light of research conducted in Ireland by Neary (2012) which identified high levels of fear amongst LGBT teachers in schools in relation to their own sexuality and the response of other staff members. Neary (2012, p.9) found when teachers “came out” to their colleagues a “new silence” emerged where colleagues became careful in everything they said which “policed the boundaries” of sexuality.

The literature review highlighted research which shows that talking about homosexuality generally within school staffrooms is rare, and that discourse within schools both formally through the curriculum and informally within the ‘staffroom’ refers generally to heterosexuality and associated behaviours such as dating between different sex couples and procreation rather than same sex couples often because of the fear and perceived association with sexual activity (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Neary, 2012).

The data indicate that more than two fifths of respondents felt comfortable talking to pupils about sexual orientation, whilst more than a third of respondents did not feel comfortable. We may speculate from this finding that some respondents felt the pupils

were too young to be taught about different sexualities, or respondents may have felt that school ethos prevented the issue being spoken about. When asked to add any comments in relation to the questionnaire, one respondent stated that both these factors influenced whether they felt comfortable talking to pupils about sexual orientation. The same respondent declared, "Secondly children in primary school are prepubescent so sexual orientation is not an issue I feel at that stage...anyway in a Catholic school homosexuality is not discussed it's referred to parents to discuss with their children in an age appropriate way." It is noteworthy here that when the data for the level of comfort respondents felt talking to pupils about sexual orientation was cross-tabulated with the prescribed ethos of individual schools the data indicated that religious ethos did not necessarily influence the level of comfort respondents experienced talking to pupils about sexual orientation. Unfortunately there is little scope here for recording this data.

The data show that a third of respondents were not comfortable talking about the sexual orientation of individual staff members, and nearly 1 in 4 respondents were uneasy talking to other members of staff about their own personal sexual orientation. However, the fact that more than a third did not feel comfortable talking to pupils about sexual orientation may be an important finding when consideration is given to the fact homophobic bullying by its nature and etymology is associated with the language of different sexualities. From the data it may be possible to conclude that there were a large number of respondents who were in positions of school leadership, who felt uncomfortable talking about the issue of sexual orientation with staff or pupils. The reasoning behind this may be as DePalma and Atkinson (2010, p.1672) assert, that non-

heterosexuality has been constructed as “hypersexual” and at the same time sex has been constructed as “irrelevant or dangerous knowledge for children.” By implication it could be argued that dealing with homophobic bullying or indeed any aspect of homophobic behaviour or homophobia may be extremely difficult to confront and deal with in an appropriate way because of the fear about what to say and how to say it.

In the current context of schools and for the purposes of this study it is important to recognise that school leaders operate in a system in which 92% of the 3200 primary schools in Ireland are under Catholic patronage (McNamara & Norman, 2010; Neary, 2012). This has a bearing on how the issue of sexuality is approached in schools, because as referenced within the literature review, although the Catholic Church does not condemn someone who identifies as being gay, it does refer to the practice of sexual acts within homosexual relationships as being morally wrong (Salzman & Lawler, 2009). The Employment Act (1998, 2004) and the Equal Status Act (2000, 2004) have included sexual orientation as one of the nine grounds of discrimination, and as previously stated these nine grounds form the basis of the updated DES anti-bullying guidelines for schools (DES, 2013). However, as Neary (2012) highlights, paradoxically, Section 37.1 is an exemption clause of the Employment Equality Act (1998, 2004) that allows dismissal of an employee on the grounds of non-compliance with the ethos of an institution. Consequently this means that if a teacher or school leader identify as LGBT, whether openly or not, and are deemed to be acting in a way which is regarded by the school authorities as being non-compliant with the prescribed ethos of a school, they can be dismissed. This not only has implications for members of staff but also for how

homophobic bullying is subsequently dealt with, and perhaps explains in part why there has been a reluctance to distinguish between different types of bullying, and also the reluctance to address homophobic bullying (O'Higgins-Norman, 2005). Similarly, Neary (2012) identified from her study here in Ireland, that primary school teachers were reluctant to discuss issues around sexual orientation because of ambiguities about what was appropriate for discussion and there ever present fear of management response. As the data reveal in the next section, there are respondents who are gay who are afraid of tackling homophobic bullying for this reason and who are afraid to draw attention to themselves for fear of sanction.

Recently, the previous education minister, Ruairí Quinn set about trying to divest schools away from religious patronage towards a more pluralistic model, and commissioned a forum on patronage and pluralism in the primary school sector, with the intention of enhancing diversity within the Irish education system. This may have implications for how new and established schools in particular are structured and managed in future years, and subsequently may allow for more open discussion to be possible about different sexualities and homophobia.

The final section of the chapter considers key themes which emerged from the analysis of all the data.

Key themes from the data

In terms of the overall findings of this study, key themes emerged when the descriptive analysis from this quantitative study was viewed in relation to the qualitative data from section three of the questionnaire, relating to both the school anti-bullying and RSE policies, and also Q20, which provided respondents with the opportunity to raise any issues about the survey itself, and perhaps more pertinently, the specific topic being investigated. These qualitative comments revealed some interesting findings which subsequently led to the identification of three key themes which are significant in relation to this study. These themes were identified as the prevalence of homophobic bullying, silences and homophobic bullying, and leadership and homophobic bullying. These themes are now considered in relation to both descriptive analysis and qualitative data.

Prevalence of homophobic bullying

As previously indicated, and highlighted within the earlier part of the chapter, nearly a fifth of the respondents (19%) identified that they had experience of homophobic bullying occurring in their schools to varying extents, and in addition to this finding, some respondents had experience of dealing with incidents of physical abuse amongst their pupils (6%) and exclusionary behaviour (12%) because others perceived certain pupils to be gay/lesbian. In addition to this, some respondents had experience of dealing with homophobic cyberbullying (8%) amongst their pupils. Significantly, this data reveal that homophobic bullying occurred during the specific time period in question, but in

terms of the qualitative comments from respondents in the final question of the questionnaire, there was a wide variation in terms of views regarding its nature and prevalence. It was very clear that a number of respondents claimed that they had never dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying, and were referencing this on factors such as their number of years teaching experience together with their geographical location. One respondent for example, stated “I have spent over 22 years as a primary school principal, and have worked in three different schools (urban and rural settings). I have never come across any issue of homophobic bullying in that time. I feel that it is not a major issue in Primary Schools, but perhaps other Principals would think differently.” This comment underlines the possibility for this respondent that homophobic bullying exists despite it not having been an issue for them. The notion of a rural or urban setting seemed to be significant for a number of respondents, with one respondent also stating that they had never dealt with homophobic bullying in a rural setting, but had done so in an urban setting. This implies there is a belief that homophobic bullying was more likely to occur where there was a greater density of population or that children in an urban setting were more likely to use language that was homophobic in nature.

In terms of the use of homophobic language it was evident from the descriptive analysis that respondents had experience of their pupils using homophobic language to label other pupils behaviour (71%) and to describe things they regarded as different (68%). However, the qualitative comments reveal the significance of this language, how it is possibly used, the reasoning why there is a danger this language may be dismissed by school leaders, and the importance of increasing the knowledge about this form of

behaviour with those in positions of school leadership and the wider school community. Comments such as “using words without a true understanding of their meaning in relation to another child does not constitute homophobic bullying” and “I feel that homophobic bullying is not an issue at primary level....words such as "gay" are used as derogatory terms but children are only repeating words heard without fully comprehending their meaning” underline the significance of the finding pertaining to the frequency with which school leaders dealt with such issues. Similarly, as one respondent suggests, “Children use 'gay' as if it were 'fool' they were saying.....many don't have a clue what it means.....just a word....like 'ejjit'.....etc.” which implies that the language can be dismissed because children are not really referring to anything too serious and don’t understand the meaning of the words. To underline this point one respondent stated: “I feel that homophobic bullying is not an issue at primary level. Words such as "gay" are used as derogatory terms but children are only repeating words heard without fully comprehending their meaning.” In expressing such terms these respondents seem to be dismissing homophobic bullying as irrelevant in the primary school setting, because in their view children do not understand the meaning of the words, when the descriptive analysis of the data suggests it is clearly an issue for a significant number of respondents in terms of the frequency their pupils use homophobic pejoratives. This suggests that for some respondents there is a lack of awareness and understanding about homophobic bullying in primary schools in Ireland, but as the next section highlights there are indications from the data that this may be on quite a large scale as there seems to be an uncomfortable silence associated with homophobic bullying and the primary school here in Ireland when we consider how homophobic bullying is named and addressed.

Silences and homophobic bullying

The data from respondents reveal that within school policies such as the anti-bullying policy and RSE policy both homophobic bullying and teaching about sexual orientation were conspicuously absent from their content. It is clear that the majority of respondents (78%) did not refer to homophobic bullying in their school anti-bullying policy and that further to this, 74% did not make reference to teaching about sexual orientation in their RSE policy. This suggests that the occurrence of homophobic bullying is not considered a real possibility for the majority of these respondents from within the primary school sector, or at least there is confusion around the issue, and also that respondents are not in schools where there is teaching about homosexuality and different sexualities other than heterosexuality. To underline this point one respondent stated: “Sometimes a lack of understanding of [the] language of homophobia leads to misunderstandings” whilst another stated: “Unless the whole concept of homosexuality can be dealt with properly in school, and I doubt if it can within the time constraints, I think touching on the topic can provide children with half-baked ideas and misunderstood language that can be mis-used.” Further to this one respondent stated: “Focusing on homophobic issues in primary school when children's sexual development is only beginning is inappropriate. How can we say that a 10year old child is gay? How do we tell parents that we have decided that their child is gay? Do we have to address all society's issues in Primary school?”

It is clear from these respondents comments that they have made a connection between homophobic bullying and sexuality, and that they recognise the different levels of complexity associated with this topic, but also from the latter statement in particular, that homosexuality is 'other' and seemingly because it is non-heteronormative it doesn't seem relevant to the primary school setting. One respondent makes the connection between homophobic bullying and wider society, stating: "I think homophobic bullying is widespread in Irish society and although I feel that schools can be lumbered with addressing every social problem that arises I feel it is our duty to broaden pupils' minds. We are in a prime position to change this country's narrow mindedness in relation to homophobia." This respondent clearly suggests that primary schools could break the silence and take a clear leadership role in addressing the issues.

Leadership and homophobic bullying

It is clear from the data, as alluded to earlier in the chapter, that school leaders from this study responded in a variety of different ways to addressing homophobic bullying and this includes gathering information (92%) and relying on individual teaching staff to deal with incidents (77%), whilst also looking to parents (95%), pupils (94%) and their in-school management team (90%) for support in addressing the issue. It is also evident that respondents adopted an informal approach, looking to colleagues (72%) and the chairperson of the BOM (82%) for support, whilst also applying sanctions against perpetrators (83%). These organisational responses are however met with some very forthright words when respondents commented about their role as school leaders and

the sense of conflict they feel with this issue, which reinforces the finding that for a large number of respondents, homophobic bullying leads to varying degrees of emotional response when dealing with it. For example, “I think as a society we give far too much airtime to these matters and I strongly feel a more balanced approach to acceptance of people for who they are [versus] what they do is more likely to help us all get along” and also “I feel as a school leader it is more relevant that I teach children to cognitively understand why a certain behaviour is unacceptable has more to do with teaching them a different perspective outlining how our behaviours impact on others will teach them how to get along in life. Simple but has gotten me through many tricky situations as principal and more importantly worked to address issues for longer term solutions than punitive shaming redress.” These comments reveal frustration and what seems like a sense of fear in discussing the issue, which is further reinforced by another respondent who stated: “There is a real fear among principals that they could make a mistake far too easily and that the administration will overshadow the crucial objective of dealing with the situation on the ground.”

Similarly, respondents present a real conflict between their role as leaders in addressing homophobic bullying and the issue of teaching about sexuality when considered in relation to the religious ethos of the school, both in terms of teaching about sexual orientation but also in terms of identifying oneself as being gay. For example, “children in primary school are prepubescent so sexual orientation is not an issue I feel at that stageanyway in a Catholic school homosexuality is not discussed its referred to parents to discuss with their children in an age appropriate way” and “Perhaps I am

wrong in thinking that as a "Catholic" school, we are not supposed to deal with homosexuality. I would love if this issue was clarified", whilst a further comment stated "The Catholic Religion curriculum does not allow for the teaching on homophobia, most schools are Catholic. Am I within my remit to teach such issues?"

Likewise, and poignantly the following respondent refers to the difficulty in employing a teacher who identifies themselves as being gay whilst also looking for the RSE curriculum to allow for discussion about sexuality : "I can talk openly to pupils regarding sexuality but would rather it were in an "official" RSE programme. It also bothers me that I would not hire an openly homosexual teacher." To reiterate this point and to present what seems to be an issue of great conflict and perhaps one of the most poignant comments in this study, one school leader states: "It can be quite awkward dealing with homophobic bullying in a school as a gay teacher when I am not actually protected by employment rights in relation to my own sexuality. While I am completely comfortable about my sexuality and my abilities as a Principal Teacher, there is a level of discomfort, a jarring, if you like, between the two due to section 37. It's trying to balance protecting children in my school in a fair and reasonable way without opening the can of worms that is my own sexuality in my own school. The removal of section 37 will have the greatest effect on homophobic bullying in schools." This statement underlines the importance of these study findings and the role played by school leaders in addressing homophobic bullying, but it also highlights the difficulty which this issue presents for school leaders in doing so.

Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter revealed that a small but sizeable number of respondents (19%) experienced dealing with incidents of homophobic bullying during the academic year 2012-2013. However, their responses also revealed that a considerable number of pupils used language deemed to be homophobic in nature to label other pupils behaviour and/or describe things they did not like or they perceived as being different. In terms of school policies, there was evidence that the majority of respondents possessed both anti-bullying and RSE policies but very few of them referred specifically to homophobic bullying in the former, and teaching about sexual orientation in the latter. Also, there was evidence that the reaction to incidents of homophobic bullying by respondents from an organisational perspective, involved gathering information from teaching staff, and also that respondents exhibited varying degrees of emotion in response to homophobic bullying.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

Introduction and summary

This thesis set out to establish if homophobic bullying was an issue in primary schools in Ireland. The fact that the recent anti-bullying guidelines for schools (DES, 2013) stipulates that schools are to include specific reference to homophobic bullying within their school policies would suggest that it is. However, there has been no research conducted within primary schools to either confirm or dispute the need for the inclusion of homophobic bullying.

The main aim of this thesis was therefore to find out if homophobic bullying had occurred in primary schools. However, this was only considered in relation to the experience of one group of stakeholders identified as school leaders. This group included teachers employed in positions of principal, deputy principal or acting principal. This research was conducted just after the publication of the DES guidelines, but the respondents were asked about events which occurred prior to this publication during the 2012-2013 academic year.

With these issues in mind, a conceptual framework was created which comprised of three main sections, 1) conceptualising homophobic bullying, 2) the impact of homophobic bullying and 3) the role stakeholders play in supporting school leaders to

address homophobic bullying (see Appendix A). In addition, the lack of consensus regarding an actual definition of homophobic bullying led to the formation of a definition which was used specifically for this study. This was stated both in the literature review and within the questionnaire used for the study.

This final chapter begins with a summary of the main points within each of the first three chapters. It then sets out the limitations of this study and summarises the main findings detailed within chapter 4. The conclusions are drawn together and evaluated and the implications of the findings are discussed. This is followed by recommendations for further studies, and finally an epilogue which is a personal statement about this work.

The initial introductory chapter highlighted the main aims of this study which was to investigate whether respondents had experience of dealing with homophobic bullying during the period of one academic year. Further to this, the chapter set out the rationale behind this study and highlighted the difficulties associated with defining bullying and homophobic bullying in particular, both from a research perspective and within schools. The fact that human sexuality is not addressed through the formal RSE curriculum and children are not taught about sexual orientation was highlighted with a view to establishing how respondents addressed the issue if there was no discussion centred on the concept of sexual orientation and the meaning of homophobic language.

The literature review highlighted the rationale for this thesis and considered each element of the conceptual framework underpinning the study. It was divided into three

sections. Section one considered the difficulties associated with defining bullying and in particular homophobic bullying. It also acknowledged the effects of bullying, including homophobic bullying on pupils. Section two examined the implications of the lack of research in relation to homophobic bullying in primary schools in Ireland, and outlined the findings from other jurisdictions, together with research from second level schools in Ireland, in order to make inferences about the possible impact of homophobic bullying at primary level, should it exist. Section three considered the role of primary school leaders and their response to homophobic bullying, including their role in policy formation and implementation, and their response from an emotional perspective and their style of leadership. In addition, it also acknowledged the role played by other stakeholders in addressing homophobic bullying.

Chapter 3 highlighted the chosen methodology and the reasons for selecting a quantitative survey approach. It was regarded as being important to use a research method which was quick and convenient in obtaining large quantities of data. The pilot study findings and the subsequent data were used to create the final version of the questionnaire. The details of the main study were examined, including the details surrounding questionnaire distribution, and the effort made to ensure both reliability and validity were achieved. Ethical and political considerations were also made, especially given the sensitive nature of the topic under scrutiny. Although this approach could be considered useful there are limitations to it and ultimately to the study itself, as discussed in the following section.

Limitations of the study

One of the major limitations of this study was the poor response rate. Considering this included 2978 member schools of the IPPN, with a total of 2839 principal teachers and 2190 deputy principal teachers who received the escéal with the link to the questionnaire, the response rate of just less than 6% or 283 was disappointing. However, the IPPN report a maximum response rate of 10% for any survey they undertake using this method, with the number of respondents rarely exceeding 600.

In addition to the low response rate, a number of respondents did not complete the entire survey. As highlighted in Chapter 3, the fact that the response rate was low and that a number of surveys were not completed, reduced the internal validity of the instrument, whilst the low response rate also meant that the findings could not be generalised, therefore reducing the external validity of the study. However, despite this limitation the findings of the study are important. Though not nationally representative, the data indicate that while homophobic bullying was not widespread, there was a considerable amount of it reported as having occurred by a number of respondents, during the specific year being investigated.

The low response rate may have been caused by a number of factors, including the length of the questionnaire. Although it was stated that the questionnaire took 10 minutes to complete, in reality the length of time may have been longer, especially as there were five sections spread over six pages. There were a number of places were

individuals stopped. The fact however, that section three requested comments pertaining to individual policies, might have deterred some respondents from completing the survey. In addition, concern about the sensitive nature of the topic and a reluctance to share their views, and possible anxiety about respondent anonymity might have resulted in a poor response rate. Conceivably, as the survey was conducted at a time when respondents had competing demands on their time at the start of the academic year, including familiarising themselves with the new anti-bullying guidelines, they may have thought completion of the questionnaire was redundant or presented a conflict of interest.

Although the publication of the updated DES guidelines (DES, 2013) coincided with the administering of the questionnaire used in this study, the lack of response rate was nevertheless surprising considering the guidelines were advocating inclusion of homophobic bullying. It suggests that the population under scrutiny had possibly reached the point where they had become saturated with the discourse and media attention that had coincided with the publication of the guidelines, and the thought of completing a survey about bullying, on top of the stipulation within the guidelines that schools were to review their own policies, might have resulted in a lack of motivation to complete the survey.

The pilot study effected some items being removed from the survey due to the length of it. These items requested respondents to indicate whether their pupils had been bullied based on gender specific behaviours such as a boy being effeminate. Nonetheless, with hindsight these items may have generated useful data. It would also have been

useful to include an item about restorative justice considering that the data reveal such high numbers of respondents would apply sanctions to perpetrators of homophobic bullying.

Further to this, surveys such as this one provide limited data as they insist on respondents giving a restricted answer, generally providing only data that is requested. In addition, respondents of surveys might perceive there to be a desired response and answer accordingly, especially in this case, as the researcher had identified himself as a fellow school leader.

Synopsis of findings

This section provides a short summary of key findings from each section detailed in Chapter 4. It is a synopsis of the main findings only.

Following the analysis of the data, the evidence showed that a number of respondents had experience of dealing with incidents of homophobic bullying during the academic year 2012-2013. These incidents included pupils being physically attacked and pupils being excluded from play because others thought that they were gay and lesbian. It also involved incidents of cyberbullying involving the use of text and/or use of a social networking site. Although it seemed like the number of incidents were comparatively low, the data revealed that respondents were faced with a much higher occurrence of their

pupils using homophobic language to both label other pupils' behaviour and to describe things they did not like or perceived as different.

More or less all respondents who completed the questionnaire had an anti-bullying policy. However, it was evident that the majority did not include any reference to homophobic bullying as a specific form of bullying behaviour within this policy. It was also evident from the qualitative comments that the nine grounds of discrimination highlighted within the Equality Act (2004), and subsequently which formed the basis of the updated anti-bullying guidelines (DES, 2013), were regarded as one of the main reasons for including reference to homophobic bullying within school anti-bullying policies. Respondents recognised that homophobic bullying was relevant within the primary school but believed homophobia was a less important issue.

The majority of respondents adopted an RSE policy but very few of them referred to teaching about sexual orientation. The qualitative comments revealed there were a number of reasons why teaching about sexual orientation was not included in RSE policies. These included the lack of direct inclusion within the curriculum documents; the fact that teaching about such matters was both age and developmentally inappropriate, and more a matter for parents; and also that the particular ethos of a school, such as a particular religious denomination, prevented teaching about it. In contrast it was also made apparent that the curriculum could be flexible and inclusive in terms of teaching about sexual orientation through the use of story books in particular.

In terms of how respondents both reacted to and addressed situations of homophobic bullying, it was evident from the data that they perceived that teaching staff played a key role in supporting them deal with incidents of homophobic bullying. In general respondents trusted the ability of teaching staff to support them in resolving such situations and to deal with it. In addition, they perceived the in-school management team had an important role in supporting them addressing a situation involving homophobic bullying.

Evidence showed that respondents began a process whereby they gathered information, particularly from teaching staff rather than other staff members, and also that they tried to deal with homophobic bullying informally by contacting individual parents and speaking to individual staff members about reported incidents, but would not necessarily address either a whole staff or class grouping. Similarly, respondents would also discuss an incident of homophobic bullying informally with the Chairperson of the BOM, and consult colleagues in a similar position, rather than making formal contact with organisations such as IPPN or NEPS, whilst to an even lesser extent, the inspectorate.

In response to homophobic bullying it was evident that sanctions would serve as a consequence for pupils, whilst an effort would be made to raise awareness of homophobic bullying and homophobic cyberbullying by following initiatives such as 'Friendship Week,' 'Safer Internet Day' and utilising the DES anti-bullying website once it was available. It was also recognised by respondents that on-going professional

development was important for school staff, but in terms of both the parents association and BOM, this was less of a consideration for them in organising such events.

Respondents recognised the effect of homophobic bullying on the emotional health of pupils, and showed high levels of empathy towards the victims of homophobic bullying, but to a much lesser extent towards the perpetrators of such actions. With this in mind, it was evident that respondents recognised the importance of understanding their own feelings in relation to homophobic bullying, and not only did they believe human emotion helped in the decision making process but also many of them became emotionally involved when dealing with it. These findings were interesting considering that some respondents were uncomfortable talking about their own and other staff members' sexual orientation, and even less so when it came to talking to pupils about sexual orientation.

Conclusions

The findings may lead us to conclude that respondents reported dealing with what appears to be a relatively low but notable number of homophobic bullying incidents. However, the conclusion can also be drawn that the frequency with which pupils used homophobic language was much higher than the number of incidents of homophobic bullying identified by respondents, and importantly that they were aware of the language being used and its frequency, whether it was within earshot of them or reported to them by others. Critically, the respondents in this study did not necessarily view this behaviour

as homophobic bullying, even though we might conclude this use of language was pervasive. Research findings from other studies indicate possible reasons for this including that the frequent use of homophobic pejoratives may be dismissed as banter and horseplay (Duncan, 1999) or minimised by adults (O'Higgins-Norman, 2009), and that pupils often use such terminology to both negotiate their position within their own social group and in so doing also negotiate the acceptable boundaries of masculinity and femininity (Renold, 2000; 2002).

Other studies have also shown that the use of homophobic pejoratives by pupils is not always regarded by adults within schools with the same seriousness as for example, racist labelling (Thurlow, 2001), and similarly that adults do not always intervene when they hear such pejoratives being used (Guasp, 2009), which may be as McCormack (2011) argues because “we have been socialized into [Western] culture where almost all colloquial language relating to homosexuality has been homophobic.” (p.666). It is also asserted by McCormack (2011) that use of the word ‘gay’ is sometimes to express displeasure and that there is a need to explore this language use and be careful in naming it as homophobic. Despite this observation, McCormack (2011) also suggests the frequent use of homophobic language in bullying behaviour is evidence of what he calls “pernicious intent” (p.665) on the part of those who perpetrate it which is designed to marginalise or degrade someone.

In sum, it is not clear from the study why pupils’ directing such language towards each other was not regarded by some respondents as homophobic bullying, but as Buston

and Hart (2001) suggest, the use of homophobic language maintains a negative social effect in terms of the culture of the school and the impact is enormous (Rivers, 2011). Therefore addressing this use of language is extremely important.

The data findings might lead us to conclude that the majority of school leaders utilised their school policy to help them address homophobic bullying but the fact that the majority of policies (78%) made no reference to homophobic bullying is noteworthy, and presents as a similar finding to the research study conducted in second level schools in Ireland (O'Higgins-Norman, 2005), which also identified a lack of reference to homophobic bullying within policies. We might conclude that respondents adopted a more generic approach to dealing with homophobic bullying, which included the application of sanctions. Respondents also seemed to place an emphasis on this generic type policy document to aid them in addressing any homophobic bullying situation, especially as many respondents (59%) believed that homophobic bullying should not be distinguished from other forms of the behaviour. We could conclude that this lack of reference to homophobic bullying and the belief that it should not be distinguished from other forms of bullying in particular, could be because of what Shai (2011, p. 152) terms the "silence" that is associated with homophobic behaviour. By not including reference to it within policies, this allows for the possibility that such behaviour could be dismissed or ignored.

It is important to note as Meyer (2008) demonstrated in her study of schools in Canada, that despite a willingness to address homophobic bullying, a lack of policy and

clear guidelines prevented teachers from addressing the issue within their own classrooms. Further to this, research by Smith et al. (2008) in the UK, showed that anti-bullying policies were likely to be more successful in addressing bullying behaviour when they defined exactly what behaviours constituted bullying and also when they made reference to specific forms of bullying such as homophobic bullying.

The findings and timing of this study is important since a change of approach to dealing with bullying and homophobic bullying in particular followed the recent publication of the DES guidelines, when it was stipulated that schools needed to delineate homophobic bullying from other types of bullying. The evidence from this study showed that because so few respondents highlighted homophobic bullying as a separate stand alone form of behaviour within their school policies, a great many would have to change and adapt their school policies to reflect the DES recommendations.

We might also conclude from the data that the majority of respondents prefer to adhere to the principle requirements of the SPHE curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999) and focus on procreation and sexual intercourse between people in heterosexual relationships, rather than deviating from this towards teaching about 'same sex' relationships. This is noteworthy because where there is evidence of homophobic bullying occurring in schools, it would seem to be more difficult to be able to address the issue if there is limited or no discussion taking place about what the word 'homophobic' actually means. Research evidence from other studies, such as the UK study by DePalma and Atkinson (2010), revealed that although individual teachers were willing to respond

to homophobic bullying, including reacting to the use of homophobic language, very few were prepared to engage in curriculum work around this subject and that of different sexualities. This is important because, as the findings in the previous section alluded to, claiming that it is developmentally inappropriate to talk to young children about sexuality, and thereby making it difficult to talk about the subject of homosexuality with young children, there is a danger as Shai (2011) believes, that educators inadvertently encourage homophobia to develop through the ‘silence’ that surrounds the issue of sexuality, and homosexuality in particular, within primary schools. This subsequently could increase the tendency for homophobic bullying to occur if the issue of homosexuality is ignored.

As previously identified, respondents adopt a more informal, low key approach to dealing with homophobic bullying, whereby consultation and information gathering is at the centre of the process rather than formal meetings, with different stakeholders such as parents, pupils, colleagues and BOM chairpersons being consulted in the process of intervening to resolve a situation of homophobic bullying. A particular responsibility is also placed on both individual teaching staff and the in-school management team to help deal with it. This is important in light of the recently updated guidelines which stress the importance of a whole school approach to dealing with bullying involving all members of staff and the wider school community and is consistent with previously mentioned research findings (see Meyer, 2008).

Furthermore, it could also be inferred from the evidence that the majority of respondents would actively seek the involvement of pupils, parents, staff and other members of the school community in an effort to successfully resolve incidents of homophobic bullying, thereby demonstrating a strong commitment and willingness to lead others in order to bring forward a resolution, but not necessarily that they would address any of the underlying attitudes or values that allow homophobic bullying to exist in the first place. As the data showed, respondents would speak with individual pupils about an incident but to a much lesser extent, they would address a whole class or staff formally about an incident of homophobic bullying. We could conclude from this that respondents might not necessarily want to talk about the wider issues involved and chose to speak with individuals concerned instead of a wider audience. This is supported by research undertaken by Harris and Hathorn (2006) in the US, which showed that reducing bullying was dependent on the commitment and leadership style of the principal teacher in terms of leading policy development, and successfully resolving bullying situations was also coupled with the attitudes and beliefs of other teachers and parents within the school community towards bullying behaviour.

In terms of trying to prevent homophobic bullying it could be concluded from the data that there is a willingness and commitment on the part of respondents to prevent homophobic bullying and cyberbullying, through their readiness to organise continuing professional development for staff members and participating in 'Safer Internet Day'. However, the finding that less numbers would raise awareness of homophobic bullying during 'Friendship Week' could lead to the conclusion that some respondents may not

have wanted to consider the issue of exploring the language associated with homophobic bullying in the public space of the school community for fear of a negative reaction from members of the wider school community. This conclusion is important in view of previously mentioned research (see O'Higgins-Norman, 2005) which identified that teachers recognised trying to deal with issues associated with homophobic bullying and associated gay and lesbian issues were hindered by fears of disapproval from parents, pupils, BOM, teaching colleagues and patrons. Therefore at primary level, it would be even more likely that these fears would exist, thereby preventing such efforts from taking place.

This study highlighted the ability of respondents to recognise the emotional damage caused to pupils who experience homophobic bullying. This is important in view of research evidence from other studies which show the extreme pain caused to victims of homophobic bullying (Rivers, 2001; 2011). However, the reduced feeling of empathy that respondents felt towards perpetrators of homophobic bullying is important in view of research conducted by O'Brennan et al. (2009) in the US, who found that many children prone to bullying others, often experience worry and anxiety, and feel unsafe in school themselves. The fact that many respondents recognised the importance of understanding their own feelings, that human emotion helped them in making decisions and that many become emotionally involved is key, especially in view of various authors stressing the importance of school leaders being able to demonstrate their leadership skills through using their own emotional capacity (Beatty, 2000; Crawford, 2007; Brennan & MacRuaric, 2011). As Brennan & MacRuaric (2011) point out, school leaders need to be

emotionally competent and be able to manage the emotions at the heart of the process of collaboration with others, which ultimately helps to reduce situations of conflict.

Considering the important link between sexual orientation and how it relates to dealing with homophobic bullying, we could conclude from the data that there is a degree of discomfort experienced by a number of respondents when talking about their own sexual orientation; talking about the sexual orientation of other staff members and critically, talking to pupils about sexual orientation. This finding is important when examined in relation to previously mentioned research (see Neary, 2012) which identified that some primary school teachers who themselves identified as being gay or lesbian were reluctant to discuss issues pertaining to sexual orientation because of the ambiguities about what was appropriate for discussion.

In light of the findings and the conclusions from this study there are several implications to be considered.

Implications of the study

There are several key implications of this study which can be divided into six areas. These include 1) the prevalence of homophobic bullying in primary schools in Ireland; 2) the need to develop an understanding of the language associated with homophobic bullying; 3) the importance and justification for the development of a new and updated anti-bullying policy within each primary school; 4) the need for a debate on the possible

expansion of RSE to include teaching about sexual orientation; 5) the need for the consideration of all stakeholder views in developing a deeper understanding of homophobic bullying, and finally 6) to develop further research into homophobic bullying from other perspectives. Each implication is now considered in more detail.

The prevalence of homophobic bullying in primary schools in Ireland.

This study has shown that the respondents comprising one stakeholder group, namely school leaders, who were identified as being in the position of principal, deputy principal or acting principal, had experience of dealing with homophobic bullying during the academic year 2012-2013. In addition, this same group of respondents identified that they had dealt with different forms of homophobic bullying, such as children being physically attacked because others perceived them to be gay or lesbian. Furthermore, some respondents identified that they had experience of children being excluded from playing with their peers for the same reason, and some had also dealt with incidents of homophobic cyberbullying. The frequency of occurrence for each of these events suggest that homophobic bullying did occur in a number of primary schools in Ireland and this has implications for how school leaders and the wider school community respond to bullying behaviour.

The question of whether or not bullying is homophobic in nature is an important one to ask. If there is evidence to suggest that a child is being bullied it is important to

consider what type of bullying it is, especially as this study has highlighted, that bullying behaviour including homophobic bullying, is destructive in terms of the damage it causes to pupils emotionally, physically, mentally and psychologically.

The fact that this study has identified that respondents have had experience of dealing with incidents of homophobic cyberbullying is significant and warrants further investigation. This finding alone has considerable implications for how school leaders and the wider school community understand homophobic bullying and how it is vital to teach children and adults, including teachers, parents and other education stakeholders, about the importance of internet safety and keeping children safe, by teaching them about the hidden dangers associated with 'surfing the web' at home, in school and via portable and mobile internet devices.

The findings of this study justify and warrant the specific inclusion of homophobic bullying as underlined by the recently updated anti-bullying guidelines for schools (DES, 2013). The fact that this document stipulates that all schools include reference to homophobic bullying within each individual school anti-bullying policy endorses the importance of the findings from this research study.

With this in mind it is also important, as the next section shows, that school leaders are made aware that children are clearly using language that should be deemed homophobic.

The need to develop an understanding of the language associated with homophobic bullying.

This study has shown that respondents have had experience of their pupils using homophobic language such as the words gay, poof, faggot or lesbian to both label another pupil's behaviour and/ or to describe things that they did not like or that were different. However, this finding did not compare with the frequency with which respondents in this study had dealt with incidents of homophobic bullying. The prevalence of homophobic language used by children was much higher than the number of homophobic bullying incidents reported by respondents. This indicates that the pupils' use of homophobic language was not commonly associated with homophobic bullying by respondents, which subsequently means that it could have been dismissed as innocent banter or folly, or ignored because the children were deemed not to understand what they were saying.

The implication of this finding is that all education stakeholders involved with primary school education need to understand how the use of homophobic language commonly occurs and that it may be that children are using it to establish themselves within a group, or because they are using it as a form of banter, or in an attempt to cajole someone, or simply to label an object. However, making a distinction between each one is not possible here. The simple fact is that using such language is negative in its social effects and in how it affects the inner human person. It is destructive, and accepting the use of such terminology reflects the view that it reproduces a form of cultural and institutional homophobia within the school environment and wider school community.

All stakeholders need to be made aware that the use of such language is unacceptable whatever the stage of primary school the pupils are who use it. This can be made clear within individual school anti-bullying policies which should be formed with the agreement of all stakeholder groups.

The importance and justification for the development of a new and updated anti-bullying policy within each primary school.

Evidence from this study has shown that nearly all the school leaders in this study have created their own anti-bullying policy and that the vast majority have not included specific reference to homophobic bullying within these policies. This finding has implications for this study in light of the updated DES anti-bullying guidelines which, as previously mentioned, stipulate the need to include homophobic bullying.

The implication of these findings are that since so many respondents did not include specific reference to homophobic bullying, the requirement of their schools to refer to homophobic bullying in their anti-bullying policies will inevitably lead to a process of change in both referring to and including it within the written document. A further review might also be necessary within the culture of some schools to establish how this specific form of behaviour is regarded and the terminology associated with it.

It could also be argued that referring to the term 'homophobic' and its associated language requires an understanding of the terms. To do this necessitates RSE policies to also undergo change and include reference to teaching about sexual orientation.

The need for a debate on the possible expansion of RSE to include teaching about sexual orientation.

The findings of this study have shown that the vast majority of respondents have an RSE policy but very few refer to teaching about sexual orientation. The fact that schools are required to include specific reference to homophobic bullying within their anti-bullying policy paves the way for a debate about whether schools should teach children about sexual orientation. To understand homophobic bullying and to know how to deal with it requires knowledge of homophobia and what the word means.

The finding in this study that some respondents believed homophobia was not relevant within the context of the primary school underlines the need for both pupils and staff to further explore this under-researched area. As the findings in this study also showed, many respondents were not comfortable talking about sexual orientation with other staff or pupils. This highlights a further implication of this study that a debate needs to be opened amongst all education stakeholders involved in primary schools, about the benefits of teaching children about sexual orientation at an early age in an appropriate way, and by doing so this would lead to a more balanced view of sexuality in favour of

all sexualities being regarded as equal, rather than the scales tipped towards heterosexuality as the norm.

The need for the consideration of all stakeholder views in developing a deeper understanding of homophobic bullying.

This study also showed the important role played by individual stakeholder groups in supporting respondents to address homophobic bullying. This included teachers, parents and other groups. The implication of this is that it is possible to involve many different stakeholder groups in sharing knowledge and ideas about dealing with homophobic bullying behaviour and the different forms it takes within primary schools, and understanding how homophobic bullying can begin at a very early age through the use of sexualised language. Providing continuing professional development for teaching and non-teaching staff and training for other stakeholder groups within the wider school community is clichéd but an important consideration in view of the fact that teachers and parents may both misinterpret or ignore the use of such language. It is an easy recommendation to make, that all stakeholder groups would benefit from the input of outside agencies and expert personnel regarding homophobic bullying and this does have merit, but simply by stakeholder groups coming together and talking about the experiences of children regarding homophobic bullying behaviour and talking about sexuality may be just as valid and useful; if not more so. There is no doubt that conducting further research will reveal more.

To develop further research into homophobic bullying from other perspectives.

This study has shown that homophobic bullying has occurred in primary schools and has been dealt with from the perspective of one stakeholder group. The implication of the findings are that yes, homophobic bullying has happened but it is imperative that other stakeholder groups such as, pupils, parents and teachers are given a voice to share their experience and understanding of homophobic bullying. Although the specifics of these studies are outlined in the next section, it is important to recognise that because no previous research has been conducted in Ireland about homophobic bullying in the primary school, the findings of this study are to some extent groundbreaking and pave the way for future research.

Recommendations for further studies

This study collected predominantly quantitative data which allowed for descriptive statistics to be compiled. It also provided the data which was used to answer the main research question in terms of finding out about the frequency of homophobic bullying according to the experience of one group of stakeholders in school. Other stakeholder groups such as parents, teachers and pupils could also be considered in relation to conducting further quantitative studies about the frequency of homophobic bullying from different perspectives. Careful consideration of the needs of children

participating in research would need to be embedded in any future study which involved them.

The finding that homophobic cyberbullying has been dealt with by school leaders is fundamentally important and warrants further investigation. This could include a mixed methods study whereby a questionnaire is distributed amongst parents to gain insight from them about the experience of their children using the internet and social media, and then forming a focus group with older pupils to discuss their experience of internet usage and cyberbullying, with a questionnaire also circulated amongst teachers to assess the same in relation to their pupils.

A very recent study conducted from Dublin City University Anti-Bullying Centre has been conducted into cyberbullying amongst teenage girls (O'Higgins-Norman & Ging, 2014). This same mixed methods approach could also be adopted with 6th class pupils at primary level to investigate the impact of homophobic cyberbullying on younger pupils.

Teachers could also be asked to evaluate the success of individual school policies on homophobic bullying and the frequency with which they had dealt with homophobic bullying in particular; their perception of the role of school leaders; and about their feelings in relation to teaching about sexual orientation and homophobic bullying. Older pupils in 5th and 6th classes could be asked to complete a questionnaire in which they are required to identify the frequency with which they experience homophobic bullying and

to highlight their feelings in relation to this form of behaviour. Similarly, parents might be asked to complete a questionnaire in which they identify their feelings in relation to homophobic bullying, their child's experience of it, if any, and how comfortable they feel about their child learning about sexual orientation and different sexualities in school. All these stakeholder groups could provide useful insights into homophobic bullying which might corroborate or refute some of the findings in this study.

Following the outcome of this quantitative study, a further qualitative study could be conducted in which school leaders could be interviewed about their experience of dealing with homophobic bullying. Following the analysis of the current quantitative data, the main findings could form the basis of a series of qualitative interview questions. This could be extremely valuable, particularly in view of some of the comments made by some respondents to question 20 who expressed wide ranging views about different aspects of the study. The scope of this study did not allow for further analysis but provided the researcher with useful insight into their views which may warrant further investigation. It might also be useful to investigate further the views of respondents, through a short questionnaire, about their experiences of completing the questionnaire. Some of the issues surrounding this study such as the level of emotion experienced by respondents could also be explored in depth, as could issues surrounding teaching about sexual orientation and the inclusion of homophobic bullying in school anti-bullying policies.

Epilogue

The impact of homophobic bullying like all forms of bullying cannot be underestimated. As this study is the first to consider homophobic bullying at primary school level, the implications of this study are extremely important. For a child who experiences homophobic bullying, the impact can be life changing and life threatening. I know this because I was one of those children who had the misfortune to know what the experience of homophobic bullying was like, and in my case it was from the time I was in primary school right through until the end of secondary school. The legacy of that experience has affected me greatly. I write this not to seek sympathy for what happened to me but to emphasise the importance of all school leaders playing an active role in preventing children's lives being destroyed by bullying in general and homophobic bullying in particular.

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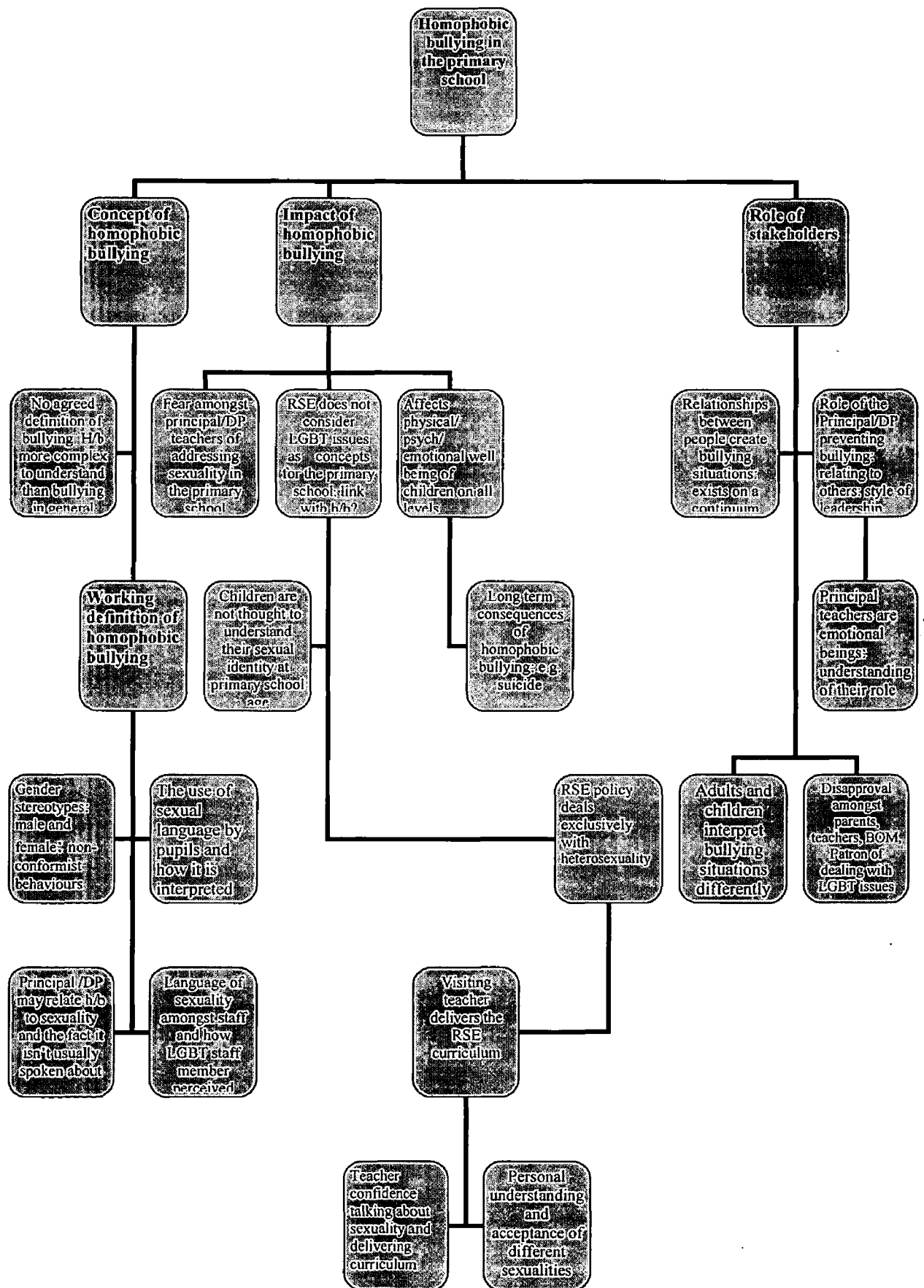
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Appendix A
Conceptual Framework



Appendix B
Copy of the Questionnaire

Introduction to the Survey on Homophobic Bullying

I am a school principal who needs your help. It will take 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire.

This research seeks to ascertain whether homophobic bullying is an issue in primary schools in Ireland. Through the administration of an online questionnaire, the research considers the views of principal, acting principal and deputy principal teachers. Questions are posed about bullying in general, the incidence of homophobic bullying in Irish primary schools and policies regarding Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE). In addition, consideration is given to how respondents perceive their role and then roles of other stakeholders in relation to homophobic bullying. The intention is that the data will be used to help guide future policy making on bullying in Irish primary schools. The outcomes of the study will be brought to the attention of school leaders and other interested parties such as the DES and the INTO, together with the Parents Council and other stakeholders within primary education. The researcher also intends to publish the findings in educational journals both nationally and internationally.

When completing the questionnaire you will be asked to provide biographical data about your school type, the number of pupils, your experience and gender etc. No identifying information such as names is requested and it will not be possible for the researcher using your data to identify you in any way. All results will be reported in the aggregate and individual responses will not be reported.

Survey data will be reviewed and analysed by Gerard Farrelly as part of his doctoral work at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, and the Anti-Bullying Centre, DCU. The work will be monitored by Dr. Michael O'Leary of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dr. James O'Higgins-Norman of Dublin City University (Supervisors). The research will also be subject to review by an external university examiner. The outcomes of the study will then be disseminated as outlined above.

The findings of this study may help principal teachers/acting principals and deputy principals have an increased awareness of homophobic bullying in the primary school and may lead to improvements in school practice and policy. In that context the study has the potential to benefit those who experience homophobic bullying in schools.

While you are strongly encouraged to participate, your engagement in the process is entirely voluntary and no negative consequences will accrue from your non-involvement. Please note the following:

Your completion of this questionnaire confirms that you understand the purpose of this study and that you freely consent to participate in it.

Section One : Background

All information will be treated confidentially. Findings will be reported in a way that will ensure no individual school or person can be identified.

Please indicate which categories are applicable to you and your school by ticking the appropriate boxes:

1. Principalship

- ☐ Teaching principal
- ☐ Administrative principal
- ☐ Deputy principal
- ☐ Acting principal

2. If you are a Teaching/Acting principal or Deputy principal, please indicate which class (es) you currently teach? Please tick all that apply (If you are an Administrative principal please go to Q3)

- ☐ Junior infants (Naíonáin Shóisearacha) (age 4-6)
- ☐ Senior infants (Naíonáin Shinsearacha) (age 5-7)
- ☐ First class (Rang a hAon) (age 6-8)
- ☐ Second class (Rang a Dó) (age 7-9)
- ☐ Third class (Rang a Trí) (age 8-10)
- ☐ Fourth class (Rang a Ceathar) (age 9-11)
- ☐ Fifth class (Rang a Cúig) (age 10-12)
- ☐ Sixth class (Rang a Sé) (age 11-13)

3. Is your school

- ☐ Roman Catholic (single sex boys)
- ☐ Roman Catholic (single sex girls)
- ☐ Roman Catholic (co-educational)
- ☐ Church of Ireland (co-educational)
- ☐ Educate Together (co-educational)
- ☐ Gaeilscoil (co-educational)
- ☐ Community school (co-educational)
- ☐ Special school (co-educational)

Other (please specify)

4. Number of pupils

- ☐ 200+ pupils
- ☐ 100-199 pupils
- ☐ 1-99 pupils

5. Type of school

- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Combined juniors and seniors
- ☐ Up to 18 yrs (special school)

If junior/senior school please specify at which level school ends/begins e.g. junior school may end with second class and a senior school start with third class.

6. School status (DEIS- Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)

- ☐ DEIS Band 1 school
- ☐ DEIS Band 2 school
- ☐ DEIS Rural
- ☐ Non DEIS school

7. Years of experience in your current role as Principal/Acting principal/Deputy principal

- ☐ 0-2
- ☐ 3-10
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 30+

8. Age

- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 60+

9. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Section Two: Understanding homophobic bullying

I am interested in learning more about homophobic bullying in primary schools. Homophobic bullying may be defined as bullying that occurs when pupils use terms like queer, faggot, gay, lesbian and other such terms, in a negative sense, or when these type of words are used in conjunction with other aggressive or negative behaviour.

10. Please provide an estimate of how frequently the following events occurred in your school during the 2012-2013 academic year?

	Almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once or twice in the year	Never
a) Pupils used words such as gay, poof, faggot or lesbian in a negative way to label other pupils behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) Pupils used words such as gay, poof, faggot or lesbian in a negative way to describe things they don't like or that are different.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I spoke to pupils about their casual use of words such as gay and lesbian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) I dealt with an incident where one pupil was physically abused because others thought they were gay or lesbian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) I dealt with an incident where one pupil was excluded from play because other pupils thought they were gay or lesbian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) Teachers spoke to me about pupils who use words such as 'gay' and 'lesbian' against others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) I spoke to parents about their child using homophobic language in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) I dealt with an incident that I would describe as homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i) I dealt with an incident of homophobic cyberbullying involving text messaging and/or use of a social networking site.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j) I compiled a written record of an incident of homophobic bullying which happened in school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k) I informed the BOM about an incident of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l) Parents/guardians complained to me that their child was being called gay or lesbian.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m) I formally addressed a staff meeting in our school about an incident of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n) I spoke to a class of pupils about an incident of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section Three: School Policies

I am interested in finding out more about school policies which may be used to address homophobic bullying, and your attitude towards them; for example, the school Anti-bullying policy and the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) policy. The term sexual orientation is used in this section, meaning 'the gender to which a person is attracted emotionally, physically, romantically and erotically'.

11. Does your school have an anti-bullying policy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (If your answer is no, please go to Q13.)
- ☐ Don't Know

12. Does your anti-bullying policy make specific reference to homophobic bullying?

- ☐ No (If your answer is no, please go to Q13.)
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Don't Know

If yes, please state what the policy says in relation to homophobic bullying

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13. Does your school have an RSE policy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (If your answer is no, please go to the next section resuming at Q17.)
- ☐ Don't Know

14. Does your RSE policy make specific reference to teaching about sexual orientation?

- ☐ Yes (If your answer is yes, please go to Q15)
- ☐ No (If your answer is no, please go to Q16)
- ☐ Don't Know

15. If yes, please state what the policy says in relation to sexual orientation.

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16. If no, please explain why no reference is made to sexual orientation?

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Section Four: Role of Principal/Acting principal/ Deputy principal.

I am interested in learning more about the role of the principal/acting/deputy principal in relation to homophobic bullying and the level of emotional response when such an incident occurs.

I am also interested in learning more about your attitude towards human sexuality, including sexual orientation and homophobia, and their relevance within the primary school setting. (Sexuality in this context relates to an individual's sex, gender identity and/or expression, and sexual orientation. Homophobia relates to the fear or hatred of those assumed to be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender.)

17. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with these statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a) I respond to an incident of homophobic bullying by gathering information about the incident.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) I do not trust individual teachers to deal with any homophobic bullying situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) I feel human emotion helps in my decision making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) I display no emotion when dealing with an incident of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) I feel it is important to understand my own feelings when dealing with homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) I do not feel emotionally involved when dealing with an incident of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) I feel empathy towards a child who is a victim of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) I feel empathy towards a child who bullies another child using homophobic language.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i) Dealing with homophobic bullying causes very strong emotions to arise amongst school personnel.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j) I feel homophobic bullying is due to difficulties in relationships between individual children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k) I feel homophobic bullying is damaging to the emotional health of pupils.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l) I feel homophobic bullying should not be distinguished from other types of bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m) I feel homophobic bullying is not relevant to the primary school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n) I feel the sexual orientation of a child's teacher is important to parents.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o) I feel pupils are adequately informed about sexual orientation through RSE lessons.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p) I feel homophobia is not a relevant issue in primary schools.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q) I feel comfortable talking to staff members about their sexual orientation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
r) I feel comfortable talking to staff members about my own sexual orientation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
s) I feel comfortable talking to pupils about the issue of sexual orientation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
t) I feel the issue of sexual orientation of teaching staff is irrelevant to me as a school leader.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section Five: Role of other stakeholders

I am interested in learning more about your perceptions of the role played by other education stakeholders in relation to dealing with homophobic bullying. These stakeholders include groups such as parents, the principals' network (IPPN), the inspectorate and the school psychological service (NEPS).

18. Please indicate which stakeholders you feel are in the best position to support you in addressing homophobic bullying by rank ordering them from 1 to 8, with 1 being the most important.

<input type="text"/>	Individual teaching staff.	<input type="text"/> N/A
<input type="text"/>	In school management team.	<input type="text"/> N/A
<input type="text"/>	SNA's.	<input type="text"/> N/A
<input type="text"/>	BOM.	<input type="text"/> N/A
<input type="text"/>	Parents.	<input type="text"/> N/A
<input type="text"/>	Inspectorate.	<input type="text"/> N/A
<input type="text"/>	Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN).	<input type="text"/> N/A
<input type="text"/>	National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).	<input type="text"/> N/A

19. Please indicate how likely you would be to seek support and address homophobic bullying in the following ways?

I would.....

	Very Likely	Likely	Maybe	Probably not	Definitely not
a) refer to our school anti-bullying policy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b) rely on support from the in-school management team inside school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c) rely on support from people outside school, e.g. IPPN.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d) contact the school psychological service (NEPS).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e) contact other principal/acting principal/deputy principal colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f) gather the opinions of teaching staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g) gather the opinions of non-teaching staff e.g. SNAs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h) gather the opinions of non-teaching staff e.g. school secretary/caretaker.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
i) speak to the individual parents of pupils involved in any incident.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
j) speak to all the pupils involved in any incident.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
k) apply sanctions against the perpetrator (s) of any incident.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
l) discuss any incident informally with the Chairperson of the BOM.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
m) recount any incident at BOM meetings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
n) contact our assigned school inspector for advice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
o) seek to organise continuing professional development for all staff in relation to homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
p) seek to organise training for the BOM around the issue of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
q) seek to organise training for the parents association around the issue of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
r) refer to the new national anti-bullying website (site to go live in 2013).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
s) organise a 'friendship week' to raise awareness of homophobic bullying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
t) raise awareness of homophobic cyberbullying during e.g. Safer Internet Day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Do you wish to comment on this survey and/or elaborate on any of the issues it raises?

Thank you for your assistance with this survey.

Appendix C

Plain language statement and informed consent

Homophobic Bullying Survey

What is the research about?

This project seeks to ascertain whether homophobic bullying is an issue in primary schools in Ireland. Through the administration of an online questionnaire, the research considers the views of principal, acting principal and deputy principal teachers. Questions are posed about bullying in general, the incidence of homophobic bullying in Irish primary schools and policies regarding Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE). In addition, consideration is given to how respondents perceive their role and then roles of other stakeholders in relation to homophobic bullying. The intention is that the data will be used to help guide future policy making on bullying in Irish primary schools. The outcomes of the study will be brought to the attention of school leaders and other interested parties such as the DES and the INTO, together with the Parents Council and other stakeholders within primary education. The researcher also intends to publish the findings in educational journals both nationally and internationally.

What will the research involve?

The research will involve the completion of a questionnaire which is distributed via the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) organisation using Survey Monkey.

How long will it take?

The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Who are the researchers?

The researcher is Gerard Farrelly, a principal teacher, working in Kilkenny.

Who can take part?

Any principal teacher, acting principal or deputy principal who are in receipt of electronic material from the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) are eligible to participate.

What will be done with the results of the questionnaire?

Survey data will be reviewed and analysed by Gerard Farrelly as part of his doctoral work at St Patrick's College, Drumcondra. The work will be monitored by Dr. Michael O'Leary of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra and Dr. James Higgins O'Norman of Dublin City University (Supervisors). The research will also be subject to review by an external university examiner. The outcomes of the study will then be disseminated as outlined above.

Do I have to take part?

While you are strongly encouraged to participate, your engagement in the process is entirely voluntary and no negative consequences will accrue from your non-involvement. Please note the following statement that appears at the beginning of the Survey Monkey questionnaire: ***Your completion of this questionnaire confirms that you understand the purpose of this study and that you freely consent to participate in it.***

Will the questionnaire be anonymous?

When completing the questionnaire you will be asked to provide biographical data about your school type, the number of pupils, your experience and gender etc. No identifying information such as names is requested and it will not be possible for the researcher using your data to identify you in any way. All results will be reported in the aggregate and individual responses will not be reported.

What are the benefits of taking part?

The findings of this study may help principal teachers/acting principals and deputy principals have an increased awareness of homophobic bullying in the primary school and may lead to improvements in school practice and policy. In that context the study has the potential to benefit those who suffer from homophobic bullying in schools.

What are the risks from taking part?

I don't anticipate any risk to you or anyone else from participation in this research.

How can I get involved?

Simply log onto Survey Monkey using the dedicated URL and complete and digitally submit the survey.

Who can I contact if I have any further questions?

If you have any questions or if you wish to discuss any issues arising out of the research please contact the researcher, Gerard Farrelly (0863674389; GAFarrelly31@gmail.com) or Dr. Michael O'Leary (Tel. 01 8842065; Email michael.oleary@spd.dcu.ie) or Dr. James O'Higgins-Norman (Email james.norman@dcu.ie).

Appendix D

Findings of the Pilot study

Pilot study findings

The initial pilot study was distributed to all members of the IPPN National Committee in June 2013. These members were also included in the main study. The pilot study was distributed to the members of this committee through the IPPN Head Office, via a link to survey monkey sent by an electronically transmitted email. This was carried out in order to complete what Robson (2002) describes as “sorting out technical matters” (Robson, 2002, p.97). In this case, this was to ensure the questions were “understandable and unambiguous” (Robson, 2002, p.97), and that conceptually, the researcher was “capturing the phenomenon sufficiently well for meaningful data to be collected” (Robson, 2002, p.97).

Every county in the Republic of Ireland has 2 representatives on this Committee who meet 3 times during the course of the year. The committee numbers 52 people in total. This group is representative of the population of school leaders working within primary schools in Ireland who are members of the organisation.

The initial pilot study resulted in a poor response rate, with approximately 15 responses. Following a reminder issued by the IPPN, 26 people responded in total to the request for completing the survey. The lack of response suggested that there were possible difficulties with the instrument itself in terms of structure and content; with the topic being considered in the survey; or with the timing of the initial pilot study in June, a time when traditionally, school leaders are exceptionally busy. In addition to the lack of response, 7 of the respondents did not complete the survey which seemed to confirm

there was a structural problem with the instrument. In trying to ascertain the reasons for the lack of response, a second pilot study was conducted with 10 colleagues (known to the researcher) who were asked to complete the survey in hard copy and to respond to the survey candidly in terms of commenting about the structure and content material of the survey itself. Seven out of the ten responded, some of whom were forthright in their answers, which really helped in the reconstruction of the survey for the main study. Five females and 5 males were selected for the second pilot, all of whom worked in different size or type of primary school. Four males and three males responded to the request.

The seven principals who returned the survey gave general indications that the survey was fine in its current form, although there was some recognition from two of the respondents that it was long, despite them stating it only took ten minutes to complete. However, it emerged that individual questions were too long rather than the overall survey itself.

This second pilot study was extremely beneficial and revealing. In terms of comments made about the suitability and structure of the survey, 6 out of the 7 respondents commented that they had no issue with the survey itself, and one commented that it was well laid out and easy to complete. One of the respondents, who indicated that the survey was too long, also felt that there would be a particular reluctance within primary school leadership personnel in Ireland to answer any questions concerning homophobia and homophobic bullying, and that it was extremely important to stress the level of anonymity. One further respondent in particular, gives backing to the previous

respondent's statement, as they felt under pressure doing this particular survey, and that the survey 'elevates an issue to a level I've not encountered', also stating quite categorically that they have never had any incident reported or 'observed/encountered or investigated any incident of homophobic bullying.' Further to this, the same respondent stated that 'the topic and tone/angle of the questions are too private/sensitive for some' and also that 'certain generations of principals etc may be uncomfortable with the topic.' In addition they also stated that 'while the survey is anonymous it still feels intrusive, personal and private' and 'entering a private world.' This respondent also questioned whether or not this topic was more suited to second level education and whether or not children are aware of their sexual orientation at such an early age.

These comments indicate a complete discomfort with the subject being researched, and if this was replicated nationally within the main study it would be a significant finding. As a direct response to the above comments and the suggestion made by another respondent, a comment box was added to the final survey (Q20) to allow for any respondent to elaborate on their views and any issues they feel are worth raising. This is important and allowed the respondent to express an opinion about the topic and both to openly criticise the content of the survey, but more significantly to address their concerns about the topic itself. These comments imply this is a topic which may be irrelevant in the primary school, but the analysis of the results from the first pilot suggest otherwise, as the following paragraphs highlight.

It became apparent during the analysis of the first pilot that the survey item referring to gender had been omitted from the survey. It had been intended to ascertain whether respondents were male or female, especially as this variable may have a significant influence on attitudes towards homosexuality. It was simply an oversight, but it was included in the first biographical section (Q9) in the second pilot study.

It also emerged during the analysis of the first pilot study that there had been a technical glitch somewhere with the software resulting in the duplication of the items in Q10 in section two, as it appeared to the respondents. This made the question extremely long with an excessive number of items in one question. This may subsequently have been a factor in a number of respondents choosing not to complete the survey when they had completed this question and moved to the next section.

The aforementioned question (Q10) in the initial pilot study did however, provide some indication from respondents that the use of homophobic language in particular was an issue within schools. 92% of the school leaders who responded to the survey said that pupils used words such as gay, faggot or lesbian to label other pupils. This included 29% (7 out of 24) responding that there had been frequent incidents occurring in their school, up to and including more than 10 times in the twelve month period. However, as became evident from the second pilot in particular, judging the level of frequency of this specific form of behaviour was difficult. Four out of the seven respondents found the categories of very frequently (10+ times); frequently (7+ times); occasionally (3-5 times); seldom (1-2 times) and never as being problematic.

The reason for this was identified by one respondent as being due to difficulties separating homophobic bullying from other types of bullying, whilst a second respondent commented that it is difficult to know the level of frequency because the principal is probably not aware at all how often it actually happens. A third respondent commented that in looking for frequencies of occurrence, some children could actually fulfil the criteria for very frequently on their own and this would not be a true reflection in their particular school. This respondent also questioned whether or not the ascribed frequencies were evidence based. This is an interesting point because whilst constructing the questionnaire, it was extremely difficult to find such evidence within previous research of such frequencies. However, the national survey research conducted by O'Moore et al (1997) used a specific time frame of one term and classified being bullied as occasional and frequent occurrences, with the respondents being asked to make a subjective judgement call about the amount of times they regarded themselves as having been bullied. This could be once or twice up to and including several times a week. Meanwhile, a fourth respondent also felt it was impossible to know the frequency of occurrence. These comments are important in providing insight in to the frequency of homophobic language usage, because it highlights that it is difficult for principal/deputy principal teachers to distinguish one form of bullying from another, and also that much of this language usage occurs when the school leader is not there to witness it.

In trying to ascertain levels of frequency Fowler (1995, p., 157) suggests that there is often an 'assumption of some kind of regularity' of occurrence, whereas this

particular topic would perhaps lean towards a greater pattern of irregularity as being more common. With this in mind, further honing of the categories led to them being changed to daily, weekly, monthly or yearly events, allowing the respondent to consider the whole year time period in a more representative way.

In addition to the categories being changed, six items were removed from Q10 after the pilot study due to the fact that the respondents were predominantly indicating that the specific occurrences being questioned were never happening. This may have reduced the reliability of the survey overall (Robson, 2002). These items included a teacher ignoring an incident of homophobic bullying, and gender specific incidents of homophobic name calling. Although these factors may be important, it is first of all important to know whether there is an incidence of homophobic bullying in primary schools in Ireland and the length of this question overall needed to be changed.

In relation to section three of the initial pilot survey and school policies, the majority of the respondents who failed to complete the survey did so at this stage. It is not clear as to why this was the case. However, the notion of having to possibly check the details of school policies relating to anti-bullying and RSE to verify what was written in them, especially with regard to teaching about sexual orientation, may have put individual respondents off from answering. Research here in Ireland at secondary level suggests that there are difficulties with teaching this particular subject due to a lack of policy guidelines and training (O'Higgins-Norman, 2005), which suggests at primary level that it is even more likely due to the age of the pupils and the absence of the topic

being mentioned within the curriculum guidelines. In addition to this, the fact that both acting and deputy principal teachers were also being asked to complete the survey led to the addition of a 'don't know' response for these questions, as they may not have been up to speed with the content of the policies. In this regard, it allowed for any of the respondents to avoid answering questions they either didn't know or were uncomfortable answering, and encouraged them to move to the next section rather than not completing the survey.

Both section four and five of the survey seem to have been more straightforward for respondents answering the questions. However, in section four (Q17) four items were removed to reduce the overall amount of items being considered. These were items deemed to be of less importance in answering the research questions. They concerned whether or not respondents felt homophobic bullying was learned or innate behaviour and two items relating to the sexual orientation of non-teaching staff and the role of the BOM in relation to sexual orientation. In addition to this, within the overall question the word 'combating' was changed to 'address' in relation to school leaders dealing with homophobic bullying, as the former term may have been leading.

In section five, the role of other stakeholders is considered. Q18 asks the respondents to indicate which stakeholders they feel are important in supporting them addressing homophobic bullying. The pilot study indicated it was predominantly school community members. A category of 'other' was included in the pilot survey, but as this seemed to not only cause confusion to respondents, and to be regarded as being the

lowest or second lowest ranking, it was therefore deemed unnecessary in the final survey. The final question, Q19 was regarded as 'the best question' from one respondent in the second pilot study, and the results indicated in the first pilot that this was straightforward and would provided useful and important data in the main study.

The fact that the respondent who categorically denied having dealt with any incident of homophobic bullying also questioned whether this topic was 'an issue' or the 'most taboo of taboos' is significant and underlines the need for this research to be carried out. The second pilot study shows that school leaders are not necessarily comfortable talking to their pupils or staff about the issue of sexual orientation, and yet some of the respondents feel homophobia is an issue within primary school. In addition, rarely if ever do the school leaders state that they have dealt with homophobic bullying, yet there is a high level of frequency attached to the use of homophobic language. It is important that the main study determines whether this is representative of the population. It is noteworthy that a couple of the school leaders who completed the second pilot study may have demonstrated 'social desirability response bias' (Robson, 2002, p.233), and not indicated their true beliefs in relation to the questions around sexual orientation, choosing the neutral option for each, possibly due to the fact that they were personally known to the researcher and they did not want me to know how they felt about such a personal issue. From the results of the two pilot studies, perhaps it is not the structure which school leaders are wary of, but the topic itself.

Appendix E

Statistical tables in relation to biographical data

Table E1

Principalship

Which categories are applicable to you:

	% selecting
Teaching principal	37
Administrative principal	45
Deputy principal	16
Acting principal	1
n=283	

Table E2

Classes Taught as Teaching/Acting Principal or Deputy Principal

What classes do you currently teach:

	% selecting
Junior infants (Naíonáin Shóisearacha) (age 4-6)	17
Senior infants (Naíonáin Shinsearacha) (age 5-7)	5
First class (Rang a hAon) (age 6-8)	8
Second class (Rang a Dó) (age 7-9)	6
Third class (Rang a Trí) (age 8-10)	17
Fourth class (Rang a Ceathar) (age 9-11)	16
Fifth class (Rang a Cúig) (age 10-12)	24
Sixth class (Rang a Sé) (age 11-13)	8
n=283	

Table E3

Ethos of School

What ethos does your school have:

	% selecting
Roman Catholic (single sex boys)	9
Roman Catholic (single sex girls)	8
Roman Catholic (co-educational)	64
Church of Ireland (co-educational)	6
Educate Together (co-educational)	5
Gaeilscoil (co-educational)	4
Community school (co-educational)	5
Special school (co-educational)	1.5
Other	2
n=283	

Table E4

Number of Pupils

What size is your school:

	% selecting
200+ pupils	45
100-199 pupils	26
1-99 pupils	29
n=283	

Table E5

Type of School

What type of school do you work in:

	% selecting
Junior	4
Senior	8
Combined Juniors and seniors	86
Up to 18 years (special school)	2
n=283	

Table E6

School Status (DEIS)

What status is your school granted:

	% selecting
DEIS Band 1 school	10
DEIS Band 2 school	6
DEIS Rural	6
Non DEIS school	78
n=283	

Table E7

Years of Experience in Current Role

How many years experience do you have:

	% selecting
0-2	15
3-10	51
11-20	27
21-30	5
30+	2
n=283	

Table E8

Age

How old are you:

	% selecting
21-30	4
31-40	20
41-50	35
51-60	36
60+	4
n=283	

Table E9

Gender

What gender are you:

	% selecting
Male	29
Female	71

n=283