AN EXAMINATION OF FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENT BYSTANDERS' DECISIONS REGARDING REPORTING CONCERNS ABOUT BULLYING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO STAFF

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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Last but not least, a very sincere thanks to my family and close friends for their belief in the value of my work and to my son Alan Kent for his technical help and expertise.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, John and Lucy Browne, who showed us the way.

Summary

This study was undertaken in order to discover if reasons, other than those described in the literature, might exist which would explain secondary school students' reticence in reporting bullying. The purpose of engaging in this study was to ascertain what, if any, further prevention or response procedures schools could include in their practice, beyond those which are generally applied under current Department of Education and Skills requirements. The initial phase of this two phased study sought an account from a total of 1,027 secondary school students regarding their experiences and observations of bullying in the school environment. Students' manner of dealing with these situations, especially as witnesses, as well as their willingness to approach teachers were of particular interest. Another point of interest was students' intentions, in the case of those students who had reported, as to whether or not they would report again. The findings from this phase of the study provided the framework for the second phase which involved discussions within a focus group setting. Within the initial piloted exercise and the formal group discussion, young adults, all of whom have been through the Irish secondary school system, offered their understandings and explanations for some of the responses given by respondents in the survey questionnaire

Before beginning the practical element of the research, some of the vast bank of literature on the topic of bullying was examined. Taking a two strand approach, the first part of this chapter examined the theme of bullying itself, beginning by distinguishing between bullying and violence. Within this section some of the concerns raised by groups involved with young people in Ireland, including some of the responses of Government and youth support services to these issues were examined. Literature from these sources describing types of bullying behaviour and perceptions of the roles played by the central characters in bullying situations were examined and findings regarding the negative effects of bullying, including the implications for the health and well- being of all those within the bullying environment were identified. In the second section of the chapter, the focus was on literature based on national and international research findings pertaining to the roles adopted by peers, the motivations for their taking on of these roles and some of the ill effects of their acceptance of these roles by the main participants, on the situation and on themselves. Research findings in relation to the effects on the physical and mental health and academic outcomes for all involved in bullying situations, particularly when peers did not engage in positive interventions were explored. Evidence from research which studied parental and teacher support roles was also examined. Findings which emphasised the ideal of parents and teachers acting as positive role models, providing a supportive listening environment and teaching and guiding students to act appropriately were examined.

The methodological approach to this study was outline and discussed in Chapter Three. The aims, research questions and objectives were set out and a justification was made to support the cross sectional approach to the first phase of the study. The procedure used to develop the survey questionnaire and for enlisting respondents was outlined and the process of data analysis described. The data from phase one of the study formed the basis for the second phase. The planning and procedures followed in preparation for the second phase of this study were set out in detail, as were details relating to the accessing of participants and the environment in which the piloted and formal discussion groups took place. Ethical concerns relating to both phases of the study were addressed and some of the methodological limitations identified.

Research findings were identified and examined in Chapter Four. An analysis of the responses in phase one revealed findings already acknowledged in the literature regarding types of bullying, locations where bullying happens and the nature of their involvement in the process, as reported by students. The stories that emerged from the discussion groups relating to the same

themes were also familiar, to a degree, but also gave new insights into students' reasons or excuses, particularly when it came to failure on their part to intervene in some way in an attempt to stop the bullying. Within these discussions it became clear that where school authorities may have believed that, by stating their stance through their anti-bullying policy and outlining procedures, they were offering their students support and stability, students on the other hand had not interpreted these policies and procedures in the same way. Participants in the discussions revealed that, on many occasions, they had not felt supported by their school systems and several, in fact, had felt uncertain and intimidated by some of those in authority. Participants reported no memories of anti-bullying lessons or awareness raising exercises and offered very few accounts of interventions in bullying situations by teachers where they (the teachers) were recognised as acting within a formal intervention system.

The final chapter discussed the results from the two phases of the study, drew conclusions and made recommendations regarding aspects of school planning in the development and evaluation of school anti-bullying policies and procedures. While, the formal requirements set out by the Department of Education and Skills (2013) encourage positive engagement on the part of all members of the school communities in the development and evaluation of anti-bullying policies and programmes of intervention within the school setting, concerns still exist regarding the potential for continued inadequacies of schools' anti-bullying procedures. Issues raised by the pilot and focus group participants included their failure to comprehend the language of school policy and the lack of clarity regarding school procedures which they proposed contributed to and fed into the culture of silence, so often bemoaned by adults. While the requirements set out that rules should be given in pupil friendly language, this study proposed that there should be no assumptions regarding students' understanding of such rules and recommended that students should be regularly engaged in classroom conversations on all aspects of bullying, including the school's response mechanisms and the reasons for them. The purpose of this would be that students should come to understand, feel comfortable with and to some extent feel ownership of their school process. Students failure to report to teachers, whom they regarded as uncaring or incapable also featured highly in the conversations. With these issues in mind and very conscious of the pressures on school administrators in the scheduling of the assortment of required activities during the course of the academic year, recommendations were also made regarding teacher training and the manner in which it might be delivered. As concerns still exist regarding school bullying and the relatively low level of positive bystander support behaviours, this study was regarded as a worthwhile undertaking in its quest to identify ways of involving students in the protection and support of their bullied peers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 - THE PROBLEM

Fox, Elliott Kerlikowske Newman and Christeson (2003) proposed that "Bullying has been with us forever. That may lead some people to conclude there is nothing that can be done to prevent it" (p.10). There can be little doubt but that whenever two or more people come together, there can be potential for bullying. Over the course of the last forty years or so there has been increasing awareness and understanding of the dangerous and damaging effect of bullying on the targets and the perpetrators. Findings from research support and justify the obvious and genuine concerns which are regularly expressed on this topic. In his statement to the Congressional Children's Caucus Briefing on Bullying in June 2001, Jerry Wiener, M.D., Past President of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry cited a report by Human Rights Watch highlighting the risk of suicide among gay adolescent due to chronic bullying and their strong criticism of school officials for their less than adequate and, at times, their total lack of action in this regard. He pointed out that the acceptance by some of bullying behaviours as being an almost necessary, if not normal, part of growing up was now rejected.

On 22 October 2010, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America made an address to the American people via You Tube and the White House website. Speaking as a parent, he expressed his shock and sadness at recent suicides of several young people who had been bullied and taunted for being gay, he stated "It's something that just shouldn't happen in this country".

With almost a decade between Dr Wiener's and President Obama's addresses media focus on anxiety about the welfare of young people continues to increase. Much research and school

based work has been done internationally in the intervening time, with studies completed or ongoing and policies and programmes in place in many schools, but still the toxic effects of bullying behaviour are very much in evidence. While findings from the large scale, internationally conducted, Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey of 2009, showed some decrease in bully and victim prevalence rates since the previous study (2005), the development of social networking as a means of instant and potentially intrusive communication means that for those who are bullied there may be a feeling that there is no escape.

Bearing in mind our understanding of the harmful and potentially dangerous effects of bullying behaviour on victimised students (see for example: Craig et al, 2009; Due et al, 2005; O'Moore & Minton, 2004), as well as on those who perpetrate the actions, the issues to be addressed in this study relate to the role of the significant others in the school bullying relationship – that is, of the witnesses or bystanders.

1.2 - BACKGROUND

Smith, Pepler and Rigby (2004) acknowledged Olweus for his pioneering work during the 1970's in relation to "the systematic examination of the nature and prevalence of school bullying" (2004, p.1). Initial research carried out on school bullying concentrated on the perpetrator of bullying and his or her target with many studies as to the reasons why people bully or are bullied and the impact of this bullying on them. Researchers, (for example, Boulton and Smith,1994; Olweus, 1984, 1994; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Osterman, 1996) sought to identify character traits of the perpetrators and targets of bullying with a view to designing programmes aimed at helping individuals to change their behaviour and thus lessen the incidence of bullying.

While the emphasis of this early work was focused on perpetrators and their targets there was also recognition that bullying rarely happened without an audience. From their study of the responses of members of the social group to bullying, Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (1996) proposed that their findings supported the concept of bullying as a group phenomenon, where most children within the group can be identified by their Participant Role. Using a "bully circle" illustration, Olweus (2004) identified roles adopted by members of this audience group most of whom, by their actions, support or give permission to the perpetrator. Interest in this audience group has grown as their roles have been more closely scrutinised and their choices of action became more clearly defined.

Studies by Gini (2006), Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, and Bonanno (2005), Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (1996), Twemlow, Sacco, and Williams (1996) and others have pointed to the critical role played by those non initiators of bullying situations. In 2004, Rigby, Smith and Pepler proposed that there was a moral imperative for those involved in education to work to reduce bullying and a moral imperative on researchers to provide the most informed advice possible.

1.3 - POSSIBLE IMPACTS ON INDIVIDUALS OF WITNESSING BULLYING

In order to address the issue of bystander behaviour it is necessary to understand their role in the context of their experience and perspective. It is also important to try to identify some of the impacts that bullying may have on the often silent majority and thus to gain insights for the motivation for their response to these situations. In recognising their presence there is an acknowledgement too that in genuine cases of bullying it seems highly unlikely that being a witness to bullying has no effect on that witness. Komendant-Brodowska referred to bullying as "a process and not an act" (2009, 1). She cited Olweus (1993) in her two dimensional portrayal

of the bystander role where she simply distinguished, on the one hand, the active bystanders – the followers, henchmen or supporters of the perpetrator and the defender of the target and on the other the passive bystanders, who include the supporters of the perpetrator, disengaged onlookers and possible defenders. In her interpretation of the mind- set of non-participant bystanders, who she referred to as "disengaged onlookers", she suggested that they think themselves to be unaffected by the process but argued that they have to be mistaken. She queried how bystanders could be oblivious to an "atmosphere of terror" (p.3) that may exist, which "limits the scope of their activities (e.g. playing with some friends is not possible anymore), affects the quality of education (students are more concerned with their social problems than with study topics) and preserves passive social attitude" (Komendant-Brodowska, 2009, p.3). Twemlow and Sacco (2008) also recognised that regular exposure to violent behaviour being perpetrated on others will have effects on the witnesses' sense of safety.

Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, and Bonanno (2005) observed that moral disengagement happens gradually and in such a way that those who undergo the change do not notice it in themselves. They proposed that ways should be found to guide students away from this attitude and efforts made to develop in by-standing students' feelings of empathy for their targeted peers and a "sense of moral *agency*, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will intervene on behalf of victims" (p. 8). They warned, however, that "Such effects may be difficult to achieve" (p.8).

1.4 - RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

In spite of the development of numerous programmes to counteract or prevent bullying in schools, concerns regarding consistent levels or, at times, growing accounts of bullying continue to be expressed. Questions regarding the response (or lack of it) of students who, in the same environment, witness this bullying and do not act to support the target have, in many ways, taken

centre stage. While the main concern must be for the bullied student, there is also an awareness of the impact that bullying behaviour can have in a variety of ways on others who are witness to victimisation of their peers and so further concerns have grown to include the effects of bullying on the non-involved witnesses.

Much research has already been done to discover response behaviours of peers in bullying circumstances and the effects these responses have on the situation. Findings from research has indicated the positive effects of bystander intervention but there are still, however, many knowledge gaps and questions remaining regarding motivations for the actions or lack of actions on the part of many student bystanders (see for example, Garandeau, Lee, & Salmivalli, 2014; Hymel, Rocke-Henderson & Bonanno, 2005; Pozzoli & Gini, 2012; Pöyhönen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, (2012); Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing, & Salmivalli, 2011). Decisions on the part of bystanders regarding the best course of action to take is often, understandably, driven by the consideration of their own best interest. As I will describe in my review of the literature in Chapter Two, bystanders may be found in any or all of the school community membership and anyone who is aware of bullying situations can fall into this bystander category. As suggested by McGrath (2007), members of this group can play multiple and concurrent roles, including students, staff members and parents. By defining bystanders as, not only those who are witness to the behaviour but also, those who are aware of it, this group could then include members of the wider school community, who may or may not be present in school. This bystander group could consist of peers, sometimes staff (specifically teachers), siblings who may be aware of the situation in school or in whom the targeted person might confide, or even parents who, in whatever way, also become aware of the situation.

Thus queries regarding peer bystander behaviour could also, equally well, be addressed to some of the adult population (staff and parents) in and around the school environments. For the purpose of this study however, the term bystander refers to peer or student bystander.

1.5 - THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

As interested parties, including teachers, parents and survivors of bullying among them, seek to find solutions to the ongoing scourge of bullying, this study sets out to explore the role of the bystanders and to identify the part they might play in countering and reducing bullying. My motivation for this study comes from my personal experience which has been gained through working in the area of school bullying and my lack of understanding regarding the mismatch between students' often stated negative attitudes to bullying and their practical responses. This study will examine in depth different behaviour choices made by students, as described by a sample of 1,027 students representing seven schools from within the Irish post-primary school setting and will seek to understand their reasons for their chosen responses in these circumstance. For the purposes of identification, the secondary school students who complete the survey questionnaire in the first phase of this study will be referred to as the "respondents".

Any lack of clarity or unexplained reports can be used to form the basis of a follow-up discussion with six young adults who had recently left school and for whom, the benefit of the time away from school might provide a greater understanding of their experiences of these situations when they were in school. The young adults who made their contributions in the discussion forum will be referred to as the "participants". In the course of this information gathering, some of the effects that being in a bullying environment can have on the general well-being of witnesses will also be revealed through survey responses and follow-up discussions. An examination of details provided by respondents to the survey and participants in the discussion

will be undertaken with a view to gaining an understanding of how secondary school students interpreted their school structures, in particular those which are there to support and empower bystanders to be proactive in bullying situations. In undertaking the study in this way it is intended to engage students and former students in a project where their views and experiences are paramount in informing the outcomes. This approach, is in line with recommendations contained in General Comment No. 12 (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009) entitled "The right of the child to be heard" which included eighty-seven instances where references were made to the right of the child to be heard. This document emphasises the value of children's participation in the "creation of a social climate in the classroom, which stimulates cooperation and mutual support needed for child centred interactive learning" (p.22).

1.5.1 - Aims of this Study

1. To explore with secondary school students through a survey questionnaire and with young adult participants, in a follow-on discussion, their understandings of their own roles as bystander to bullying.
2. To study and attempt to interpret their reports of these roles from the students' standpoint as opposed to that of the adults.
3. To examine reports of their bystander actions (including inactions) and to reflect upon the reasons for such actions.
4. To discuss with participants, the effects of bullying, both long and short term, on them as bystander.
5. To seek to discover reasons why students adopt passive bystander roles in bullying situations. By interpreting students' reports of their experiences of bullying in the questionnaire survey and those identified by participants in the discussion to investigate what schools might do to encourage more positive bystander action.

6. To identify additional supports required by bystanders with regard to teacher or school procedures in order to encourage positive bystander action.
7. To make recommendations regarding the provision of support for bystanders to bullying so as to facilitate and encourage them to be proactive in bullying situations in order for them to provide positive backup to their targeted peers.

1.6 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research was exploratory in nature. Significant research has already been carried out with regard to identifying the most common bystander behaviour responses by school students to bullying and to examining the reasons why they choose these actions. This research set out to investigate students' perspectives on the anti-bullying or bullying prevention procedures in their school environments. The purpose of this enquiry is to determine if some element (s), other than those already identified in other research, influences students' bystander behaviour choices, while recognising, as Reiter (2013) asserts, that the aim of this type of research is to "establish plausibility among different variables, previously defined by the researcher - not to add to the factual, historical knowledge of the cases" (p. 15). Thus, I intend, in a "structured, transparent and honest way" (Reiter p.16), to explore this problem with respondents through the questionnaire survey and participants in the Focus Group. It is envisaged that the findings and insights which result from this study can be utilised to make recommendations regarding further research on outcomes that emerge from this study. Furthermore, it is hoped that these findings can be used to engage bystanders to bullying in the mission of bullying prevention.

1.7 - ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

In Chapter One, I have given an introduction to the research study, including a statement of the problem, setting it within the context of work already carried out in the field. I have identified the population of interest and the significance of the study in relation to the wider school going population. I have described the rationale behind the study and set out the research questions to be addressed.

Chapter Two contains a review of some of the vast bank of literature and explores

- The concept of bullying, including the difference between bullying and violence;
- A variety of behaviours and participant roles in the process; and,
- Consequences for all involved in the area of school bullying.

As the focus of this research was school bullying in post-primary schools in Ireland, the review contains an examination of some pertinent official Irish government and Irish voluntary or non-governmental organisations' research and recommendations. Chapter Three, the Methodology chapter, is divided into two independent sections and explains the rationale behind conducting a two phase study. This chapter gives details of the procedures used to collect and analyse data gathered in the two phases of this study. The results of analyses and findings to emerge from the study are contained in Chapter Four. Chapter Five contains a summary discussion of the study and findings, setting out conclusions drawn from the findings and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

EXAMINING DIFFERENT ROLES, BEHAVIOURS AND CONSEQUENCES IN THE AREA OF SCHOOL BULLYING

2.1 - EXAMINING THE LITERATURE

While focus of this research is on bystanders' behaviours and their motivations for their actions in the context of school bullying, it would seem to be inadequate to review only literature relating to bystanders since the process of bullying and the individuals who are central to the process create the context for these bystanders**.** Thus, in an attempt to review some of the vast bank of literature on this topic, in a structured way, this chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section of this chapter will concentrate on examining concerns more recently expressed by individuals and groups within Irish society and will highlight recommendations, guidelines and directives put forward to address the issue. Research which explores definitions and descriptions of different methods of bullying, including some of the more traditional methods and cyber bullying will be discussed and gender differences in methods of bullying will be examined. Some of the characteristics of the perpetrator and the target will be identified, as will some of the possible effects of bullying on all concerned. The second section of this chapter will focus on some of the available literature relating to research on different bystander roles among school aged children and will examine it particularly for insights into motivations for their behaviour, as expressed by students, effects on bystanders of the choices they make and implications for further work with peer bystanders.

2.1.1 - Identifying the Issue

It is clear from the wealth of material available that many topics relating to school bullying have already received considerable attention. Among the issues examined and discussed have been:

- The nature of bullying, (as examined by Smith, Cowie, Olafsson and Liefooghe, 2002; Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland and Coyne, 2009; Andreou and Bonoti, 2010).
- Participant roles and actions, (eg. Fekkes Pijpers and Verloove-Vanhorick. 2005; Gini, 2006; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen, 1996).
- Motivations and effects (eg. O'Moore and Kirkham 2001; Bonanno and Hymel 2010).

Yet concerns relating to bullying seem to be increasing. When tragic events occur, as for example in the cases of suicides which are directly linked to some types of bullying, articles on bullying in schools and in society appear in newspapers and magazines and the topic is discussed on radio and television. Research carried out at NUI Maynooth by McGilloway and Cotter and reported on in the Irish Examiner by Noel Baker (1/12/ 2012) highlighted that cyberbullying was judged to be worse than traditional forms of bullying by teenage participants. Their study also found that rates of cyberbullying were lower in Ireland than in other countries. In spite of this reality, recent media accounts have mainly concentrated on the effects or consequences of cyberbullying. A feature article in the Irish Independent written by Katherine Donnelly (30/11/2012) described how Ciara Pugsley (15) took her own life in September 2012 in Co Leitrim and Erin Gallagher (13) did so in October 2012, in Co Donegal. Both teens were reported to have taken their own lives after a vicious campaign of online bullying. Lara Burns Gibbs (12) took her life at home in Kilcock, Co Kildare, in November and again her death had

been linked to cyber-bullying. Whether bullying behaviour is increasing or not is open to question but the means by which to bully have expanded with access to technology.

2.1.2 - Official Responses to Bullying in Ireland

In 1993 the Department of Education and Science in Ireland published the first official response to bullying in Ireland. Within this document they provided a set of guidelines and recommendations for schools which had been developed to support schools to address the issue of school bullying. In its introduction, the document stated

> Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. As such, it is an issue which must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. (p.2)

In 2012, almost twenty years after the guidelines were first published, they were reviewed. An Anti-Bullying Forum was organised and a working group set up to examine, consult on and identify strategies to deal with specific forms of bullying (for example. Homophobic bullying, cyberbullying and racist bullying). In consultation with interested parties and stakeholder in Education, the members of the working group collaborated to develop an Anti-Bullying Action plan (2012). In September 2013, following these consultations, the Department of Education and Skills issued a document outlining new *Anti-bullying procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which included detailed definitions and descriptions of types of bullying and some characteristics of those involved. They detailed some of the effects of bullying on those involved and set out a number of requirements to be met by schools.

Regarding the Irish National Guidelines of 1993, O'Moore (2004) had proposed that while many aspects of the guidelines were commendable, failure at Government level to engage with stakeholders, particularly teachers, in the initial stages of the development of these guidelines was significant in the failure to achieve support for their implementation in schools.

Thus, the consultative process prior to the publication of the new procedures was an effort to address the shortcomings of the original guidelines.

During the twenty-year period between the publication of the DES (1993) *Guidelines* and the 2013 *Procedures*, numerous studies were sponsored and carried out by government departments, boards and other groups with a view to helping schools to formally address this problem behaviour. As this study is focused on the experiences and observations of Irish students it was considered that it was important to acknowledge some of the official endeavours made in Ireland in the area of bullying prevention and intervention. The identification of some of the more recent work by state, semi-state private or voluntary organisations as set out below was an attempt to place this research in context. Details and recommendations from some of these studies are described in the following section.

SECTION 1

2.2 - MAKING A DISTINCTION BETWEEN SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL BULLYING

As the purpose of this study is to explore by-standing students' experiences and observations in relation to various aspects of their role, mainly within their school environment, it is important to distinguish between being witness to a violent or aggressive incidents as opposed to witnessing bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour is usually understood to be some kind of negative behaviour, perpetrated more than once, and carried out with the intention of hurting or undermining the target. Thus, it is necessary to explore some differences between these two types of aggression.

2.2.1 - Violence

Smith (2005) highlighted two common characteristics in definitions of interpersonal violence which were that "violence is (a) harmful or damaging, or at least threatens such harm or damage, and (b) is intended (accidental damage or hurt done by someone is not usually thought of as violent)" (p. 15). O'Moore (2006) proposed that many people considered bullying and violence to be indistinguishable and stated "It is surprisingly rare to find a definition of violence" (p. 1). She pointed out that the dictionary definition of violence described it as physical in nature, thus supporting the view of violence as expressed by Olweus' (1999) when he defined it as "aggressive behaviour where the actor or perpetrator uses his or her own body or an object (including a weapon) to inflict (relatively serious) injury or discomfort upon another individual" (p. 12). Olweus (1999) illustrated the relationship between different types of aggression by means of a Venn diagram. He illustrated two subsets, Violence and Bullying intersecting, within the Universal set which he labelled as Aggression. By identifying the intersection of these two sets as *bullying with violence*, he demonstrated how all violence is not bullying and equally so, how all bullying is not violence.

Describing the overlap between the two concepts Blazer (2005) commented "Bullying is the most common form of violence in our society" (p. 1). *The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools* (2006), published by the Department of Education and Science, addressed the issue of violence and pointed out that "Aggression and violence, as our society currently experiences them, are relatively new foci, but the reality is that they are features of contemporary Ireland, and the country is the more diminished for that" (p.30). The authors alluded to a range of reasons for violent behaviours which included lack of self-discipline, use or abuse of substances including alcohol, violence as a means of protest and violence as a learned behaviour. While specifically excluding violence in the context of bullying

from their study, the Task Force group referred to the prevalence of bullying under the two distinct headings of school violence and disruptive behaviours.

Identifying the school as an integral part of the wider community, Christie and Christie (1999) commented that, as such, it reflects the social problems experienced within that community. In Unit B1 of the Violence in Schools Training Action, Deboutte, Deklerck, O'Moore and Minton (2006) also examined disorderly behaviours, describing them as being complex in nature and rooted in a variety of causes. They emphasised the importance of the individual traits and the predisposition of those involved, the quality and nature of interpersonal relationships and the quality of their experiences within their working, social and living environments. On a similar theme, McEvoy and Welker (2000) had also stressed the importance of relationship building between students, families and schools. Highlighting the link between academic achievement and student behaviour, they proposed that it is often the case that these two elements are approached as separate issues but that academic success or failure are to a very great extent dependent on the climate existing in the school, which itself is influenced by the environments from which the students come. Thus they argued for the benefit of schools working to forge positive relationships with students and their families in order to guide away from anti-social behaviours which would, they proposed, result in more positive academic outcomes. It is worth noting however that such social challenges do not have to be viewed in a fatalistic way as the expected outcome for students, suffering disadvantage, and their teachers. Oliver and Candappa (2003), for example, found that not all schools, whose students came from backgrounds of social disadvantage, were dominated by concerns of misbehaviour and bullying. They proposed that some schools had shown themselves to be more capable than others when introducing, developing and maintaining efforts in relation to bullying prevention.

Farrington, Baldry, Kyvsgaard and Ttofi (2010) differentiated between bullying and violence stating "Bullying is different from aggression or violence; not all aggression/violence involves bullying, and not all bullying involves aggression/violence" (p. 2). This view was shared by Smith (2004) who drew attention to the fact that aggression or hostility towards others may lead to bullying but that it was not inevitable. Tallavaara (2003), for example, described how the constant irritating and name calling within a group can be a form of play and as such, it is just a game. She said it should be seen as a "part of the position game, determining and testing the pecking order without physical violence" (p.34). She emphasised the importance of maintaining one's calm and not getting upset as the group's expectation then is for this "game" to spill over into violence in order for the insulted party to avenge themselves.

Fraser, Burman, Batchelor, and McVie (2010) illustrated some of the complexities in understanding and range of types of youth violence, explaining

> While some forms of violence are negatively construed as being hurtful or harmful, other forms of 'violence', such as 'play' fighting, may be seen as playing a more positive role in developing group solidarity. This emphasises the complexities of young people's approach to the meaning of violence, and frequent divergence from official definitions (viii)

Thus these authors highlighted scope for flexibility in understanding youth violence pointing out the camaraderie which can be forged through the interactions of young people engaged in the activities. Deklerck (2009) also emphasised the difference between bullying, as the targeting of individuals, and other forms of "problematic" or anti-social behaviours, describing this as "a very broad concept for all kinds of behaviour that causes problems in social interaction" (p. 8). He pointed out that, by not stigmatising the offenders, an opportunity can be made to open up lines of communication.

2.2.2 - Bullying.

Early research into bullying had identified many of the characteristics of the behaviour regarded as central in distinguishing bullying from other types of violence or aggression among

peers. In her speech, *Defining Violence: towards a Pupil Based Definition*, O'Moore (2006) remarked that, due to the many similarities between them, there had been much, uncertainty as to how to distinguish between violence and bullying. Olweus (1991) highlighted the repetitive nature of the behaviour, while, Smith and Sharp (1994) referred to an abuse of power, and Roland and Idsøe (2001) commented "bullying always involves hurting someone who is not quite able to defend himself/ herself (p. 467). Marini, Fairbairn, and Zuber (2001) proposed that bullying is "the abuse of physical and psychological power for the purpose of intentionally and repeatedly creating a negative atmosphere of severe anxiety, intimidation, and chronic fear in victims" (p. 171). Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland, and Coyne (2009) suggested that "bullying is distinct from general aggression in that it is repeated and characterized by an imbalance of power in which the target is in the weaker position" (p. 152). This point was made by Minton (2010; 2012) when he highlighted the failure on the part The Department of Education and Science's (1993) Guidelines on Countering Bullying in Primary and Post-Primary Schools to include the imbalance of power as an element of the bullying relationship. While acknowledging the feelings of "hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by the person engaged in bullying behaviour" (para 6.3.3, p.24) the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools (Department of Education and Skills, 2013) also failed to highlight the issue of the imbalance of power. Thus while there was some agreement regarding the constituents of bullying and the distinction between bullying and other forms of violence, O'Moore (2006) acknowledged that differences of opinion regarding the criteria for bullying still existed and suggested that "as interest in bullying increases there will undoubtedly be more discussion on what constitutes bullying" (p. 3).

Salmivalli (2009) described bullying as a "subtype of aggressive behavior, in which an individual or a group of individuals repeatedly attacks, humiliates, and/or excludes a relatively

powerless person" (p. 112). The authors of the *Children First guidelines* (2011) stated that bullying can be "verbal, physical or psychological" (p.61) and identified a variety of behaviours to support their definition, including the use of technology by perpetrators of bullying as a means to this end. They emphasised the repeated nature and intentionality that such behaviour would hurt or intimidate the target of the aggression.

2.2.3 - Some Queries and Reservations Regarding Certain Elements of the Definition of Bullying

Smith (2005) drew attention to common ground in respect of definitions of bullying saying

> Everyone agrees that bullying need not be physical, but can be verbal or indirect in nature. It is necessarily against a person. It is also usually agreed that bullying is a form of aggression characterised by two particular aspects: imbalance of power, and repetition (p. 16).

However, Smith then went on to raise several reservations about the implications of accepting these conditions and asked

> Does intentional simply mean an intention to do the act that is aggressive (without necessarily understanding the consequences), or a full intention to hurt the victim? Is the aggression, or hurt, judged by an outsider, or does it rely on the perception of the victim? Does repetition mean more than once, or over some (unspecified) duration of time? Can imbalance of power be inferred from the subjective perception of the victim, as well as from more objective criteria such as strength, or number of bullies? (p. 98).

Findings from Guerin and Hennessy (2002) showed that fifth and sixth class primary school children did not hold the same views as researchers in relation to definitions of bullying. Children did not include repetition of the behaviour, nor the intention to hurt, when labelling behaviour as bullying. In addition, Thornberg, Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, Jungert, and Vanegas (2012) who examined the motivations of some student bystanders to intervene, noted that, in some cases, these students explained their actions on the basis that they considered the bullying to be morally wrong. Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt and Lemme (2006) also

identified significant differences in students' and teachers' perceptions of bullying. They highlighted differences relating to types of bullying, where many students did not recognise exclusion and social isolation as bullying, whereas, the majority, though not all of their teachers had done so. The recognitions of this type of bullying by students increased with age and was also influenced by the gender of students involved. They also pointed out, as Guerin and Hennessy had done, that many students did not adhere to the view that there had to be repetition of the abuse in order to define it as bullying. Farrington and Tofti (2009) also questioned the necessity for there to be repetition of the behaviour in order for it to be defined as bullying. They commented that "many definitions also require repeated incidents between the same children over a prolonged period, but we do not require that, because many studies of bullying do not specifically measure or report this element of the definition" (p. 15). However, O'Moore (2010) stated that "bullying is rarely a single incident" (p. 43). While Minton (2012), who described bullying as "repeated or systematic in nature" (p. 100), quoted Roland's (1989) description that "bullying is longstanding violence" (p. 100). Recognition of the various types of bullying behaviour, both direct and indirect and the elements of repetition and intentionality became features with which to identify bullying. O'Moore (2006) observed that it was only in 1987, following the first European seminar on bullying, that the Scandinavian definition of bullying had been generally adopted. She proposed that based on Olweus's (1999) definition the basic characteristics of bullying included that:

- Bullying can be verbal, psychological or physical in nature;
- the behaviour is repeated over time;
- there is an imbalance of power between the target and the perpetrator; and,
- the behaviour is intentional (p. 3).

As highlighted above (subsection 2.2.2), neither the *Guidelines on countering bullying behaviour in primary and post-primary schools* (Department of Education and Science, 1993) nor the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Skills, 2013) included the imbalance of power within their definitions of bullying behaviours.

2.3 - TYPES OF BULLYING

Over the course of the last decade concern has grown regarding the devastating effects of cyber-bullying. While technologies have provided additional opportunities for those who wish to abuse others to do so, it should be borne in mind that it is not the technology, but the attitudes that drive this use, which is the problem. Thus, it is these bullying attitudes which should be the cause for concern and, as long as the attitudes remain, there is no reason to believe that the traditional forms of bullying would have decreased.

2.3.1 - Traditional Bullying

Bullying perpetrated on others by physical, verbal or psychological means are now sometimes referred to as *traditional bullying* or *face to face bullying*. Physical bullying and verbal bullying, as depicted by Blazer (2005) in her literature review on bullying, could also be described as direct bullying. Behaviour referred to as physical bullying which include hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing stealing and destruction of property is perpetrated by males and females. Making the distinction between aggression and bullying – where bullying is recognised as being repetitive in nature, Minton (2010) also reaffirmed findings (see Olweus, 2003; O' Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997) which showed that male students are more likely than females to experience and perpetrate physical bullying. Glover, Gough, Johnson and Cartwright (2000) pointed out however, that though girls are usually less inclined to physical bullying than boys, when fights do occur between girls they are generally very serious.

Fekkes, Pijpers and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) reported that responses to surveys by young people showed students had experienced many different types of physical aggression from reports of their possessions being taken or damaged to serious physical assaults. Verbal bullying includes behaviours such as taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, and making threats. O'Moore (1997) and Minton (2006; 2014) found that homophobic references or comments of a sexual nature directed at individuals were features of much of the verbal taunting described by students. Norman, Galvin and McNamara (2006) found that young people "used words such as 'gay' 'fag' and 'queer' to slag their peers who were not gay or lesbian, thus ensuring that anyone who might be thinking about breaking away from the heterosexual norm will think twice before doing so" (p.26). Verbal taunts may include reference to family members, including sexual comments in relation to mothers or sisters. Within the discussions on bullying which is sexual in nature, authors, including, Espelage, Polanin, and Low, (2014), Lehtonen, (2002) and Mishna, Pepler, and Wiener (2006) have raised concerns regarding the fact that sexual bullying in the form of crude or sexual language often seemed to be accepted by adults as being part and parcel of growing up. Norman and Galvin also highlighted the lack of education in schools on the theme of sexuality and the fact that teachers seemed to expect their students to behave in a homophobic manner.

Research carried out among adults by Rosen, Underwood, Gentsch, Rahdar, and Wharton (2012) found that 70% of those who participated in their study (on the basis that they had experienced peer victimisation during their time in middle school) indicated that they suffered some form of social bullying. Social aggression can come in many forms, including behaviours such as gossiping or spreading rumours, social exclusion and friendship manipulations and all are designed to impact negatively on the targeted person's social status. Xie, Swift, Cairns and Cairns (2002) examined non-physical bullying and highlighted the subtle differences between

social, indirect and relational aggression. They described social aggression as non-confrontational behaviour, including gossiping about and exclusion of individuals from the group where the purpose of this behaviour is to harm an individual's friendships, social status, or self-esteem. They pointed out that by this means the perpetrators made use of the social community to achieve the effect of damaging interpersonal relationships. They described indirect and relational aggressions as involving mechanisms of, for example, threats to friendship, social exclusion and isolation and gossiping. Coyne, Archer and Eslea (2006) described indirect and relational aggression as being "more similar in practice than their definitions indicate" (p. 295). Significantly, Xie, Swift, Cairns and Cairns (2002) found that "high levels of indirect aggression were associated with high levels of social intelligence while confrontational aggression (i.e. physical and verbal aggression) was not" (p. 207). Psychological bullying may be direct or indirect. It includes spreading rumours, exerting power over social relationships, exclusion of individuals from a peer group, extortion, and intimidation. Kowalski, Morgan and Limber (2012) described how perpetrators of traditional bullying are known to their target and that the majority of their bullying occurs in school, while one of the features of indirect non-physical bullying behaviours is that the perpetrators or instigators may not be visible to or present with the target.

Allen (2008) proposed that it is useful for researchers, students and teachers to have an agreed understanding as to the types of behaviours which constitute bullying, thus facilitating their work in this area. She warned however, that it would be appropriate to be cautious about too strict a definition of bullying as this could serve to hinder responses to the behaviour, when some kind of response would be obviously required. Minton (2012), however, emphasised the necessity for the school community to have well defined and shared understanding of bullying for fear that "the vulnerable may fall through the gaps" (p. 99).

2.3.2 - Cyber-Bullying

Recently, the definition of bullying as stated by the Department of Education and Science (1993) was updated and made available on the Department of Education and Skills (2013) website to include "Bullying can also take the form of racial abuse. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices." Thus official recognition was given to racial diversity in Irish society and new methods of bullying covered by the blanket term of cyber-bullying involving the victimisation of individuals through the use of different forms of technology.

Robinson and McPherson (2010) described cyber-bullying "as an acute form of bullying, because of the potential of participants, the extension of the locus of bullying, and the invisibility of the audience" (p. 31). Initially the term cyber-bullying described bullying using mobile phones and the internet with the focus on the prevalence of text message and email bullying. More recently, the growth of awareness regarding the misuse of social media networks and gaming sites has been highlighted and concerns raised regarding the insidious nature of communications therein. Acknowledging the potential for these to spread beyond the target to a wider audience, Robinson and McPherson cautioned that through cyber means "bullying and ostracism could still be sustained, and the audience created, in the absence of the person who is the target" (p. 36). This warning was supported by Kowalski, Morgan and Limber (2012) who suggested that those who bully by cyber means can reach their target anywhere, can do so at any time and consider themselves to have the protection of anonymity. Other criteria which are considered to be central elements of bullying are the repetitive nature of the actions and the power imbalance between perpetrator and target.

Slonje and Smith (2008) found few significant gender differences in cases of cyberbullying and that photographs or video clips caused more upset than texts or emails. They

suggested that this was due to the public nature in which these were posted. Dooley, Pyżalski and Cross (2009) suggested that the requirement for there to be repetition in relation to cyberbullying creates difficulties. They pointed out that while frequent unpleasant texts or emails can constitute bullying, it could be argued that the posting of a single comment on a website is a one off unpleasant act. However, they highlighted that this single act can have ongoing consequences causing humiliation and upset for the targeted person. Thus this aggressive act falls into the category of bullying. Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) found during their focus group discussions with students that the power imbalance, another condition for the definition of bullying, was imposed on the targeted person, due to not knowing the perpetrator of the cyber-attacks and that this added to their sense of powerlessness.

Hinduja & Patchin (2009) who defined cyberbullying as ‘‘willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices’’ (p. 208) found that these harmful behaviours often coincided with other unkind behaviours offline. Examining the overlap between students who bullied and who were bullied by traditional means and online, Corcoran, Connolly and O'Moore (2012) also found that the frequency of the reported admissions of behaviours and experiences indicated a connection between online and traditional forms of bullying. They identified that perpetrators of bullying used online means to supplement their offline tormenting, thus leaving their targets with no safe place. With this in mind, O’Moore (2014), pointing out the potentially very damaging nature of all forms of bullying, advised against the practice of schools focusing on the prevention of one form of bullying over another. Instead, given the overlap and strong connections between traditional forms of bullying and cyber-bullying she advocated the whole school community approach, to include the teaching of safe and respectful use of internet facilities. In this regard, concerns in relation to the lack of practical support for teachers in the form of training were highlighted by O’Moore et al (2013).

When commenting on their large scale evaluation of school policies in relation to cyberbullying, specifically in the area of guidelines for teachers, they noted that the emphasis appeared to be on teachers modelling positive behaviour rather than the facilitation or support of teachers to develop relevant skills to deal with the reality of the issue.

O'Brien and Moules (2012) found that young people's attitudes to bullying and cyberbullying varied. While almost three quarters of their sample thought cyberbullying was as serious as traditional (face to face) bullying and a small number thought that it was more so, while a small number also suggested that it was not serious or even that it was non-existent. This latter attitude was explained by participants on the basis that insulting comments could be laughed off or turned into a joke. Over half of the of those surveyed claimed not to worry about cyberbullying and half of those who reported having been cyberbullied also claimed not to worry.

2.3.3 - Gender Differences in Bullying Behaviours

Fekkes, Pijpers and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) summed up their findings regarding gender and bullying by saying that while boys are more inclined to physical bullying, girls too bully, but more often in indirect ways. They commented that boys and girls were equally likely to be targeted, that boys bullied both boys and girls, while girls who bully were more likely to bully girls. These findings were supported by Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland, and Coyne (2009) who observed more boys than girls in the *bully* category, but that the sexes are somewhat equal in terms of being bullied. They also remarked that boys engaged in and experienced more physical bullying, while girls experienced and engaged in more indirect and relational bullying. Blazer (2005) pointed out that "the frequency with which boys and girls are involved in bullying may have to do with how bullying is defined or identified (overt physical aggression only or the inclusion of more subtle forms of bullying)" (p. 2). Focusing on the phenomenon of physical bullying most often associated with boys, Huuki's (2003) studied schoolboys' social interaction

and the ways in which they worked to build and maintain their position in the group. She found that approval and acceptance were very important to them and the desire for these motivated them in their actions. Thus violence or targeting of the vulnerable was used to exert control over others and to place oneself in the dominant position. Examining the propensity towards violence of boys in mixed gender class groups, Manninen (2003) suggested that "most of the power was used by the tough guys, of whom one dominated the whole class" (p. 75).

Owens, Shute and Slee (2005) examined boys' aggression towards girls and pointed out that boys believed that girls and teachers took teasing and commenting too seriously where as they, the boys, were only having fun. Boys also targeted girls in response to what they perceived as unpleasant or unkind behaviour directed towards them. Gini (2005) differentiated between boys' and girls' perception of and attitudes to bullying and suggested that "girls usually have more positive attitudes towards victims and are more empathic with and supportive of them than boys tend to be" (p. 5). On this issue, Owens, Shute and Slee (2005) found that girls were often unsympathetic to other girls who were bullied, indicating the belief that, they brought "aggression upon themselves through their own annoying or aggravating behaviour" (p. 149). O'Neil (2008) pointed out that most of the research into bullying had focused on boys and aggression, but, more recent evidence suggested that girls' engagement in bullying, though often less obvious, featured largely in the lives of some young people. Owens, Shute and Slee had indicated *fun* and *friendship issues* as a motivation for same sex bullying by girls and O'Neil (2008) suggested that girls' "aggression and bullying behaviors emerge from the jealousy, disappointment and anger which emerge from their failed or betrayed relationships with other girls" (p. 38). Duncan (2004) also identified rivalry between girls in their quest to be the dominant female in their group. As the manner of their engagements are generally subtler or more discreet than the often more physical assertions of boys, it can often go unnoticed. Gini's (2006) findings confirmed those of

other researchers indicating that, boys were more inclined towards acts of direct aggression, whereas, girls were more likely to engage in relational bullying, for example, gossiping about or isolation of their target.

2.4 - RECENT POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN IRELAND

As can be seen from the sample of reports referred to below, consideration has been given to bullying as an inappropriate behaviour as opposed to *a normal part of growing up*. It is clear that, in the twenty years since the *Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools* (1993) were issued by the Department of Education and Science, awareness has grown regarding various aspects of the health and well-being of young people in Ireland and the duty of the agents of the state (including health boards and schools) to provide protection. Significant time and energy commitments have been made to examining various aspects of the behaviour, including participants, reasons or motivations for bullying, reasons why someone may be a target for bullying, types of bullying and where it happens. The importance of the emotional and psychological well-being of young people in school has been recognised and there is clear acknowledgement of both the damaging effects of bullying and the responsibility of schools to act to prevent it.

School Matters - the Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools was published in 2006. The group, chaired by Dr Maeve Martin, had been tasked to examine the challenges posed by in-discipline in schools in Ireland. The authors noted that violence in school has become a global concern and highlighted the prevalence of bullying, which they considered within their discussion on *the growth of violence in school* and also under the heading of *disruptive behaviour*. The authors referred to concerns raised by schools in relation to bullying, commenting that it had "been stressed to the Task Force that bullying

behaviour is a serious issue in some schools, and particularly distressing and potentially damaging for victims" (p. 96, 2006).

Many of the forms of indiscipline referred to by the members of the Task Force were similar in nature to descriptions by Christie and Christie (1999) of violent assaults, often taking the form of verbally aggressive derogatory commenting and extreme physical roughness. The authors of the report commented that "bullying behaviour is a serious issue in some schools, and particularly distressing and potentially damaging for victims" (p. 96). They recommended that students should be encouraged to watch out for and support their vulnerable peers and that there should be mechanisms in place to enable safe disclosure of concerns. The authors also proposed participation by students through their Students' Council in the creation of school policy and "Generating codes of conduct and anti-bullying policies which are owned by the students" (p. 82).

The Equal Status Acts (2000-2008) aimed to promote equality of opportunity and to protect against discrimination for people living and working in the State. While the term *bullying* is not specifically used, the duty of school personnel relating to the protection of students was clearly stated.

> Principals, teachers and others in positions of responsibility in a school may not harass or sexually harass students at the school or anyone who has applied for admission. They must not permit students – or anybody else who has the right to be in the school, such as parents – to harass or sexually harass other students. This protection for students also applies to visiting students (Equal Status Act, 2005 p. 8).

Guidelines issued by the National Education Welfare Board (2008), aimed at supporting primary and post primary schools in the development and writing or the strengthening of their codes of behaviour, specified the responsibilities of school management in relation to bullying. These guidelines stated "The Board of Management of a school must have policies to prevent or address bullying and harassment" (N.E.W.B. 2008 p. 51).

The stated aim of the *Children First: National Guidance* is "to promote the safety and well-being of children" (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011, p.2). Within the document bullying was defined as "repeated aggression – whether it be verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools" (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, p. 61). The authors expanded on the theme of bullying by defining and describing behaviours considered to be harmful or damaging for children and young people and provided guidance or strategies for responding to these behaviours. They included bullying among the categories of abuse and, while acknowledging that bullying can also be perpetrated by adults against children, they focused specific attention on student to student bullying in the school setting. The responsibility of the school to have policies and procedures for dealing with bullying was clearly defined within the document. (See: Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011, p.61).

In their 2013 report to the Minister for Education and Skills, the Anti-Bullying Working Group highlighted that "in addition to the broader national framework, the Education Act 1998 and other education specific legislation set out duties and responsibilities which are aimed at encouraging and enabling schools to create safe, positive, respectful and inclusive environments for learning" (p. 52). The working group rejected proposals seeking further legislation to deal with school bullying which had been included in submissions to them and expressed the view that further legislation was unnecessary. (Legislation proposed in the Daíl by Jonathan O' Brien TD, during a private members' session earlier in the year, which sought to provide legislation to support school authorities to better manage the issues of bullying in school had been voted down by the government parties). The authors of the report pointed out that the *Education (Welfare) Act 23 (3)* (2000) gave legal status to the requirement on schools to have policies and procedures

in place to deal with matters of indiscipline, including bullying, and recommended the implementation of existing legislation. They also recommended that schools' Anti-Bullying Policy should list all the grounds of harassment as set out within the Equal Status Acts (2000; 2004) pending further analysis in this regard.

2.4.1 - Existing Concerns

In spite of the deliberation and resulting guidance on this issue, research and reports have indicated that bullying is still very prevalent and the cause of great concern. Data drawn from the *Health Behaviour of School-aged Children (HBSC)* surveys (1998, 2002 and 2006) examining Children's relationships which were included in the *State of the Nation's Children* (2010, p.58) revealed little change in bullying trends over the eight-year period. Findings from these surveys conducted among children aged from 10 to 17 indicated that 24.6 % (1998) and 23.3% (2002) of all children reported having been bullied at some stage. The same survey conducted among children aged 9 to 17 in 2006 found that 24.5% of all children reported having been bullied at some stage. (State of the Nation's Children 2010, p. 58)

In 2011, Headstrong- the National Centre for Youth Mental Health pointed to an increase in reports by young people of being bullied and warned of the risks to mental health and well-being that can result from being bullied. The continuing concern regarding bullying among young people was identified in the report issued by the Office of the Children's Ombudsman (2012) which highlighted, following a series of workshops with young people from primary and post primary schools, that 40% of complaints to the Children's Ombudsman in Ireland related to school and that bullying was as one of the main five issues

Concerns for the impact that bullying has on the mental and emotional well-being of those who are targeted was supported by Dooley and Fitzgerald (2012) whose study revealed that "adolescents who reported being bullied were more likely to report moderate to severe depressive

symptoms, while those who reported not being bullied were more likely to fall within the normal range for depression" (p. 41).

2.5 - IDENTIFYING AND UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE CENTRAL PARTICIPANTS

Thus far, some of the methods used by some to bully others have been considered, including the difference in approaches to bullying of boys and girls. Some of the more recent attempts in Ireland to officially address the issue of school bullying through policy and legislation supported by the Department of Education and Skills have been highlighted. Notwithstanding most recent efforts to address the issue of school bullying, serious concerns continue to exist regarding the prevalence of bullying with warnings of the potential for damage to health, well-being and academic success from this behaviour. In the examination of the literature below, an attempt will be made to identify and understand the part played by those at the centre of the process and the effects on them of their involvement.

While regarding all who are present when bullying occurs as participant players it was important to attempt to differentiate between the individual and his/her behaviour. By distinguishing between the doer and the deed, the hope is, that students who bully but are not identified as *bullies* may be encouraged to change their way of behaving and those who are targeted are not subjected to the label of *victim*. O'Moore and Minton (2004, p.8) suggested that "labelling people 'bullies' is generally unhelpful" and with this in mind, the person who bullies will be identified as the perpetrator of the bullying and the one who is bullied, as the target.

Definitions, descriptions and stereotypical images abound of the perpetrators and targets of bullying with acknowledgment of the many and varied roles of others in the environment. When contemplating the dynamics within the bullying relationship it is clear that neither

perpetrator nor target has any meaning without the other. Others who, initially are on the edge of the event, take on their role as the situation unfolds.

2.5.1 - The Perpetrator

> Researchers, educators, parents, and communities are struggling to understand how it is that our adolescents, most of whom we believe to be good, caring individuals, behave in ways that condone and maintain bullying, with a substantial number of students engaging directly in bullying behavior or failing to do anything to stop it. (Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, and Bonanno, 2005, p 1)

Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, and Bonanno (2005) proposed that the origin of these behaviours exist in complex mix of reasons that are not easily identifiable. They proposed a closer examination of the peer group within the social climate of the school in terms of their contribution to bullying and harassment of their fellows. In all of these investigations the attitudes and beliefs of those involved (or those who choose not to be) are paramount. They highlight the fact that those who bully are more likely to see violence or aggression generally as the means of achieving what they want or as a response to many situations. Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, and Bonanno proposed four different reasons as to why good people allow themselves to do bad things, including moral justification, following instructions, denying the reality of the harm being inflicted and blaming or dehumanising the target. Moral disengagement, the process by which the perpetrator removes him or herself from the possible damage they may cause to their target was identified by Pornari and Wood (2010) as being a significant factor, particularly in the realms of cyberbullying. They suggested that, young people who would not normally engage in traditional bullying, can do so with more comfort via text or social networking sites. They proposed that “the anonymity, the distance from the victim, and the consequences of the harmful act do not cause so many negative feelings (e.g. guilt, shame, self-condemnation), and reduce the chance of empathizing with the victim” (p. 89).

Examining research regarding characteristics of perpetrators of bullying, Gini (2006) referred to findings by Crick & Dodge (1994) which revealed a young person lacking in social skills. Using the term "oaf children" (p. 22) to describe these children, he suggested that this model proposed perpetrators of bullying to be lacking in social intelligence. He compared this view, however, with that of a similar study by Sutton, Smith and Swettenham (1999) in which they described the perpetrator of bullying as cold and controlling, leading his/her supporters in order to achieve personal goals. Gini proposed that this is true "especially during early adolescence, when youngsters seek to raise their social status in order to enhance their own self-esteem and gain dominance over peers" (p.4).

Many explanations are given as to why students bully. Some researchers have attributed responsibility or blame to their parents and to their experiences within their homes, the company they keep, lack of discipline in school or to their own sense of self. Nation, Vieno, Perkins and Santinello (2008) examined and discussed the role of parents and educators in influencing the behaviour choices of their young people. They pointed out the importance of the example given by these adults with regard to their relationships and how they behaved within them. Ross, Horner and Higbee (2009) emphasised the importance of parents and teachers teaching respect and modelling positive ways to respond to bullying.

One of the criteria for bullying is the existence of the imbalance of power between perpetrators and targets. (See for example: Smith and Sharp, 1994; Roland and Idsøe, 2001; Marini, Fairbairn, and Zuber 2001; Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland and Coyne 2009.) In their discussion on bullying and empowerment Nation, Vieno, Perkins and Santinello (2008) distinguished between two types of power. They referred to "power to" which could be described in positive terms as a means to personal autonomy but warned that it could also have negative connotations, in the bullying context, where those with this power could subtly impose their will

on others. The authors also highlighted "power over" which could be more clearly observed, leading to fear and intimidation of others. Thus, it would seem that some perpetrators of bullying may be driven by their need or desire to exert power over others and to be seen to do so. Further studies considering motivations for bullying identified the need for status, power and dominance and rewards, often coming in the form of the acknowledgement by the peer group. For example, Veenstra, Lindenberg, Munniksma, and Dijkstra (2010) considered the "goal framing" approach and suggested that it is safe to assume that "bullies like other human beings want to realize status and affection" (p. 481) while Olthof, Goossens, Vermande, Aleva and van der Meulen (2011) described bullying as a "coercive social strategy that is aimed at reaching or maintaining a socially dominant position" (p. 354). Allen (2010) highlighted the gratification experienced by perpetrators of bullying describing how they "enjoy the discomfort and shame of the victim as if in a sadomasochistic ritual enacted for the perverse public enjoyment of an audience of bystanders who do nothing and may vicariously be aroused as bullies or victims" (p. 278).

Salmivalli (2010) found that those who bully were perceived to have superior status within their group. She distinguished between acceptance for and popularity of the perpetrator, suggesting that those who bully were often only rejected by others who feared them. She pointed out that perpetrators' anti-social attitudes were often admired by peers in their apparent challenge to adults and society. Salmivalli, Voeten, and Poskiparta, (2011) noted that "bullies are more sensitive to the positive feedback provided by reinforcing than to the support provided to the target of bullying" (p. 674).

Whether bullying behaviour is motivated by low self-esteem or not has been a topic for discussion for over twenty years. In the main, there is agreement that those who bully have an unhealthy sense of themselves. Peel (2002) suggested "bullies certainly play with and undermine the self-esteem of their victims/targets, but frequently display arrogance and self-importance" (p.

50). Research by Baumeister (1999) in the area of self-esteem and aggression lead him to believe that individuals with a high level of self-regard could turn on others when they felt this positive view of self was being challenged and Baumeister, Bushman and Campbell (2000) argued that threats to an individual's ego could be a precursor to violence or aggression.

Allen (2006) suggested that findings by O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) indicated that perpetrators of bullying may have "sort of low self-esteem" (p. 4). In fact, O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) had returned to data from a nationwide study which had been carried out in Ireland in 1993 – 1994 involving 8,249 primary and post primary students in which they focused their attention on the relationship between self-concept and bullying behaviour. They found, using different tools to measure self-esteem - *the Olweus self-report questionnaire on school bullying* (1993) and *the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale* (1984) that it appeared "reasonable to refer to children who bully as having lower self-esteem than children who do not bully and that this may to some extent contribute to their bullying behaviour" (p. 270). They further commented that the self- esteem of those who bully is "significantly lower than that of those who do not bully. Thus, it appears reasonable, to refer to children who bully as having poorer self-esteem than children who do not bully" (p279).

While disagreement exists regarding these findings, students themselves have given voice to this view. In a survey carried out among students in Donegal (O'Moore and Minton, 2004), the respondents themselves indicated that a reason why someone might bully another would be in order to feel better about themselves. Student participants in a survey distributed by Frisen, Jonsson, and Persson (2007) also indicated their belief that those who bully suffer from low self-esteem. Veenstra, Lindenberg, Munniksma and Dijkstra (2010) described how "bullies will avoid loss of affection by choosing victims that are not cared for by significant others" (p. 481)

In her study of emotional literacy and bullying, Harris (2009) referred to the work of Andreou, Vlachou and Didaskalou (2005) who suggested that it was simplistic to attempt to label children as either bullies or victims, highlighting the situations of those who both bully others and are targeted for bullying. Children in this category have been found to be both proactively and reactively aggressive. Harris (2009) suggested that "these children are different again with what appears to be lower levels of social acceptance and higher levels of Machiavellianism and negative self-esteem" (p.17). This view was supported by Salmivalli (2010) who identified as a distinct group those who act as perpetrators and are themselves also targeted. She suggested that characteristics of these individuals indicated lack of self-control and self-efficacy. Salmivalli noted that "there is some support for the assumption that (non-victimized) bullies are driven by a quest for high status" (p. 114). Gini (2006), Rigby (2003), Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Osterman, and Kaukiainen (1996) and Sutton, Smith and Swettenham (1999) all emphasised the importance of the social context in which bullying occurred and highlighted how the dynamics within this context, including teachers' attitudes (see Byers, Caltabiano and Caltabiano, 2011) impacted on the central participants and student bystanders' attitudes, actions and responses to the events. In this regard, O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) recommended that, in relation to the self-esteem of the main participants in bullying relationships, parents and teachers should be aware of how bullied children and those who bully are regarded and valued within their peer group. They suggested that this" might provide a greater understanding of the motivational forces that prompt children to bully" (p. 281). O'Moore and Kirkham found that "the more frequently the children bullied others the lower was their global self-esteem" (p.273) and that targets and perpetrators of bullying "share feelings of inferiority and that age and frequency of involvement in bullying is associated with the nature and level of self-esteem" (p.282). These authors also noted the benefits of knowing if the self-esteem of the perpetrator and his/her view

of the self-esteem of their target was a factor in their choice of target and if it was also a feature in the nature of their bullying behaviour.

2.5.2 - The Target

According to Rigby (2005) those within the group for whom there is a positive regard are less likely to be bullied. Sullivan, Cleary and Sullivan (2004) proposed that anyone can be bullied but acknowledged that circumstances or characteristics of individuals make them more vulnerable to bullying. For example, students who perform less well academically or who have been diagnosed with special educational needs have been identified as being vulnerable to bullying. Mishna (2003) and Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland and Coyne (2009) identified children with special education needs as being particularly vulnerable to being bullied. While Card and Hodges (2008) also reported that it was evident that students who were members of special education class were more likely to be victimised than their peers in mainstream. Rose, Monda-Amaya and Espelage (2010) highlighted that students diagnosed with low-incidence learning disabilities (for example, physical disability, autism, hearing or vision impaired) are more frequently targeted and less likely to perpetrate bullying than those diagnosed with high-incidence learning disabilities (for example, mild learning difficulties) or their mainstream peers. Students whose sexual orientation or family or ethnic background differs from the majority in the group have also been identified as being more vulnerable to being bullied. *Excuses* may be found for targeting students based on nothing more than the desire for a victim and the misfortune of the victimised student who may simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time. O'Moore (2010) advised that children appearing timid or submissive with few friends are particularly vulnerable to being bullied. Thus recognition by the perpetrator of the lack of support for their target can encourage them in their activities. Mishna and Alaggia (2005) warned that students who are vulnerable to bullying are made more so by their unwillingness or inability to

report and seek help. They suggested that those who receive learning support may come to believe the slurs aimed at them of being failures or stupid (see for example, Minton, 2004; 2014 and Twyman, Saylor, Saia, Macias, Taylor & Spratt, 2010). They may also be unwilling to accept that they are being bullied as they consider some of their peers making these kinds of comments to be their friends.

Fekkes, Pipers and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) voiced concerns regarding the health effects on targeted students. They found that "Victims usually have lower self-esteem than non-victims, are less assertive, tend to be more anxious, are more withdrawn, are physically smaller and weaker, and tend to have lower grades." (p. 82). They questioned whether these traits led to or resulted from being victimised. O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) found that "Children of primary and post-primary school age who reported that they had been victims of bullying had significantly lower global self-esteem than those who stated that they had never been bullied" (p.273). While Allen (2006) noted that "No study has ever shown that victims have high self-esteem" (p.2) but questions which comes first? She queried whether low self-esteem identified someone as an easy target, or occurred as a consequence of being bullied? Salmivalli and Isaacs (2005) argued that a negative self-perception put children at risk of victimization and that it was therefore an antecedent rather than a consequence. Thus they asserted that the choice of target is often someone who has been identified due to their vulnerability.

Thornberg (2007) discussed the psychological distance between the targeted student and others affirming the view that those who are targeted for bullying are often perceived to be weaker with fewer allies or friends, less likely to stand up for themselves and may have traits or characteristics making them different to the perpetrator and others in the group. Research by Twemlow, Sacco and Williams (1996) revealed how those who are bullied are often despised although, in theory, there is sympathy for their predicament. They further noted that the more the

individual is victimized the less able is he/she to stand up for him/her self. Gini (2006) found that a minority of children (approx. 15-20%) voiced dislike of the target for being weak. Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing, and Salmivalli (2010) found that those who were vulnerable to bullying and often undefended were further isolated within their peer group.

Roland and Idsøe (2001) referred to the *provocative victim* whose behaviour may irritate their peers but suggested that these students may just be convenient targets for those who seek to bully. The response to being bullied of those whose behaviour would fit this category could make them ideal targets for perpetrators seeking to exercise their power. In her examination of subtypes of victimization in school bullying, Bakker (2010) identified three specific victim groups and of these she found that the *provocative victims* were more aggressively reactive than either the *passive victim* or the *bully-victim*. Bakker (2010) commented that students in this group were described by their teachers as being "irritable, restless and hostile" (p. 2). O'Moore (2010) also referred to this group commenting that they are sometimes referred to "as 'aggressive victims' or 'bully-victims'." (p. 61). She affirmed Bakker's findings regarding their traits and commented that individuals in this group are more impulsive and proactively aggressive than those who are classified as *pure victims* while being more reactively aggressive and less proactively aggressive than those who bully but are generally not targeted. Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey, and Gargus (2009) referred to the fact that individuals identified in the *bully/victim* group are less accepted that those who are *pure bullies* and are often regarded by teachers and peers as being deserving of the treatment they receive.

2.6 - EFFECTS OF BULLYING

Considerable research has been carried out regarding the effects of bullying on both the perpetrator and the target. de Wet (2007) proposed that bullying affects everyone, the

perpetrator, the target and the school community. Citing Cowie, Starr (2003) remarked "Bullying poisons the educational environment and affects the learning of every child." Nicolaides, Toda and Smith (2002) proposed that "a school climate in which bullying is permitted is likely to be damaging to social relationships generally" (p. 106) and that such a climate does little to support the education for citizenship of their students. Referring to the context in which bullying occurs, Huitsinga, Veenstraa, Sainiob, and Salmivalli (2010) proposed that "individual outcomes might depend on the interaction between the individual and the social context" (p. 1).

Flaspohler, Elfstrom, Vanderzee, Sink and Birchmeier, (2009) referred to the fact that those who bully and/or are bullied indicated a lower life satisfaction than those who were not actively engaged in the process. They emphasised that these findings would justify or support the implementation or provision of supports to those caught in these situations for longer term positive effects. The authors highlighted the damaging impact on individuals resulting from either being bullied or victimising others and pointed out that those who both bully others and are themselves bullied are most negatively affected.

2.6.1 - Effects of Bullying on the Target

Observation and research has provided a bank of knowledge regarding some of the more tell-tale signs that a young person is being bullied. Among these can be the obvious signs of physical harassment of either the student or their property, an unwillingness to go to school or meet with friends, a deterioration in school grades, requests for or stealing of money, changes in mood or habits and problems eating or sleeping. Monks, Smith, Naylor, Barter, Ireland and Coyne (2009) listed a number of symptoms indicative of a child being bullied and suggested that "the experience of being bullied correlates with anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem" (p. 149). Bullying may impact on the health and well-being of the target who may become withdrawn at home and in school, suffer social isolation, loneliness and depression and in some

cases bullying may lead to suicidal thoughts or actions (see for example, Bonanno & Hymel 2010; Duncan 2003; De Wet, 2007; Rigby & Slee, 1999; Salmivalli, 2012). Rigby (2003) proposed that there are serious implications for the psychological well-being and social adjustment of those who are bullied by their peers. His examination of results from cross-sectional surveys indicated that students targeted in this way suffered high levels of distress which effected not only their psychological but also their physical health, because high levels of distress undermine the immune system. He supported these findings stating that retrospective studies confirmed the causal nature of these conditions.

Fairbairn (2010) stated that

> Bullying, perhaps the most important ethical issue in the modern world, always involves the same human emotions. Those who bully enjoy the feeling of power they get from dominating others, and take pleasure in watching them suffer. Those who are bullied suffer, both from the cruel treatment they receive, and because they are either powerless or unwilling to do anything about it, because they fear the possibility that doing so could worsen their situation (p. 65).

Bonanno & Hymel (2010) commented that "the more time children spend worrying about their safety, the less time they have to spend on their studies, and missed school leads to missed learning opportunities" (p.436). Salmivalli (2005) warned of some of the risk factors for students who are bullied. She highlighted fewer friendships and "low friendship quality" (p.2). This "low friendship quality" resulting from the student's unwillingness or inability to trust others, due to having been bullied, has the potential for long term effects on the formation of relationships in adult life. On the same theme, Rosen, Underwood, Gentsch, Rahdar and Wharton (2012) examining the longer term effects of school bullying on the adult participants in their study, highlighted the various forms of maladjustments which young people who are bullied in school can carry into adulthood. Among their research participants, peer victimisation and social isolation in their youth resulted in the coexistence of high levels of conditions such as social

anxiety, depression and eating disorders, as well as low self-esteem. These authors also identified feelings of "badness" (p.10) in some of their participants.

Salmivalli (2005) warned of the association between bullying and depression and bullying and suicidal ideation, including suicidal behaviours. van der Ploeg, Steglich, Salmivalli and Veenstra. (2015) found that students who are frequently bullied feel uncomfortable in their school setting, have a lower status within their group and are more likely to suffer loneliness and depression and harbour thoughts of suicide. Bonanno and Hymel (2010) distinguished between hopelessness and social hopelessness (p.420), warning that social hopelessness, a state of mind whereby individuals, dwelling on their own inabilities to manage their current relationships, despair of their interpersonal relationships for the future. They found that social hopelessness was "found to be significantly related to both victimization and suicidal ideation" (p.433) and emphasised the importance of ensuring strong social supports for students who are targeted. They stressed the necessity to give special attention to students who feel unsupported in this way in the family.

Due to concerns regarding the vulnerablility of young people who feel hopeless and helpless and to the links between bullying and suicide, Klomek et al (2008) proposed that, in the case of both targets and perpetrators of bullying, bullying should be treated as a public health issue and bullying prevention should be a feature of school programmes in the early years. Sourander and Gould (2010) proposed that the most effective method of suicide prevention among young people is to reduce risk factors such as peer victimisation and bullying. While emphasising the need to include suicide prevention within a bullying prevention programme, Hinduja & Patchin (2009) stressed the care that should be taken with such work. They suggested that, rather than causing suicide, bullying "tends to exacerbate instability and hopelessness in the minds of adolescents already struggling with stressful life circumstances" (p. 217).

2.6.2 - Effects of Bullying on the Perpetrator

Eslea et al (2003) stated that their research showed "few social consequences for bullies" (p. 82). This should not be understood however to indicate that there are *no* consequences. The impact on perpetrators of their own bullying behaviour has been studied in depth and concerns regarding the impact of their behaviour on themselves (as well as their targets) have been well documented.

Over two decades ago research by Rigby (1993) and Rigby and Slee (1995) found levels of depression and suicidal ideation among perpetrators of bullying that was not evident in those who did not bully. Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Rantanen, & Rimpelä, (2000) proposed that those who bully are equally likely (as those who are bullied) to suffer from anxiety and depression. Alcaraz, Kim and Gendron (2010) also highlighted findings indicating the susceptibility of perpetrators of bullying to psychiatric problems, including depression, and referred to research which indicated that those who bully may experience difficulties in their friendships and romantic relationships. As referred to above, (subsection 2.6.1) perpetrators of bullying, have also been identified as being at risk of suicide.

Research by Olweus, (1997) and Sourander et al. (2006) revealed that those who bullied were more likely to be involved in criminal activities by the time they reached young adulthood than their peers who did not bully. Rigby (2003) reported that long term UK studies indicated links between engagement in bullying and further involvement in violent crime. Alcaraz, Kim and Gendron. (2010) also referred to findings which indicated that perpetrators of bullying may engage in other aggressive or anti-social behaviours and have fewer genuine friendships as what they perceive to be friendships may, in part, be based on fear. Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Rantanen, & Rimpelä (2000) included poor academic results when describing some of the negative affects experienced by perpetrators of bullying. Their comments in this regard were

supported by de Wit (2007) who remarked that "disproportionately high number of bullies under-achieve in school and later perform below potential in employment settings" (p. 192).

2.6.3 - Effects of Bullying on the Bystander

The effects of bullying on some bystanders has been described as being as traumatic for them as for the target of bullying (Twemlow, Sacco and Williams,1996) and as having implications for the long term mental health and well-being of student witnesses. As this study is focused on the bystander to bullying a description of the some of the effects of bullying on bystanders is set out below (subsection 2.10.2).

2.7 - SECTION 1: CONCLUSION

In the first section of this chapter some of the concerns raised by groups involved with young people in Ireland and some of the responses of Government and youth support services to these concerns have been examined. An examination of a relatively small sample of the research findings recorded in the literature showed accounts of types of bullying behaviour and perceptions of the roles played by the central characters and those in the bullying environment. These findings confirmed general agreement on how the negative effects of bullying, which remains a significant problem for many school students, has the potential to impact on the health and well- being of all those within the bullying environment. While progress has been reported in specific areas, it appears that in general, there is still much more to be done to improve the lives of targeted students. Many programmes have been tried and tested in various locations with different measures of perceived success, determined mostly by students and gauged by the effect, if any, on the level of bullying. Ttofi and Farrington (2011) who conducted a large scale review of literature in which they evaluated the success of anti-bullying programmes over a time span of twenty years highlighted the variety of outcomes in relation to the effectiveness of

different programmes and found that "the most important program elements that were associated with a decrease in both bullying and victimization were parent training/meetings, disciplinary methods, the duration of the program for children and teachers and the intensity of the program for children and teachers" (p. 69). Farrington and Tofti accepted that many of the programmes they had evaluated indicated some measure of success but disputed the weight some programmes put on working with peers. They emphasised putting greater stress on working with perpetrators and targets and highlighting with perpetrators that their behaviour is wrong.

SECTION 2

2. 8 - AN EXAMINATION OF THE LITERATURE RELATING TO BYSTANDER IN SCHOOL BULLYING SITUATIONS

In her review of bullying prevention programmes, Lanigan (2015) commented that "bullying prevention programs have been shown to be generally effective in reducing bullying and victimization" (p. 2) and described how "many school-based intervention programs have been implemented in an attempt to reduce school bullying" (p. 5). In their review and evaluation of forty-four school based bullying prevention programmes, Farrington and Tofti (2009) described a variety of programmes delivered in Europe, Australia and America. Several of these (for example; the Dutch anti-bullying programme, the American, Expect Respect programme, the Dare to Care; Bully Proofing Your School programme in Canada and an anti-bullying intervention in Czechoslovakia) were based on the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme (OBPP). This programme was one of the first and most widely known of these programmes which had been developed and implemented in Norway in response to the tragic suicide of three teenage boys over a short period of time. The OBPP was initially run as an addition to the Norwegian Nationwide campaign (1983) and was evaluated by Olweus in forty-two schools in

the Bergen area. A later evaluation in the Bergen area became known as the First Bergen Project against Bullying (1983 - 1985). Sixteen of the programmes reviewed by Farrington and Tofti (p. 139) identified the crucial and potentially positive role of the bystanders. In their evaluation of the Kiva anti-bullying programme, Kärnä, Voeten, Little, Poskiparta, Kaljonen and Salmivalli (2011) referred to findings which suggested that many bullying prevention programmes were inconsistent in their outcomes but also found that well planned programmes, for example their Kiva programme, were effective in reducing bullying. One of the main features of the Kiva programme, as in other programmes, is the role of the bystander in the bullying process and their provision of some kind of support to the targets of bullying. While acknowledging the success benefits of many bullying prevention programmes, Galloway and Roland (2004) proposed that, as bullying is one among many problem classroom behaviours within the climate of the classroom, working to manage general classroom misbehavours, including bullying, could have longer term beneficial effects than programmes specifically focused on bullying prevention. They promoted further training for teachers, within a programme of professional development, where teachers would be equipped to be sensitive to these behaviours and provided with skills in behaviour management. They recommended a whole school approach directed at improving the school environment as a means of changing the dynamics in school and reducing the risks of bullying.

It is clear from a review of the literature that the search for a resolution to the *bullying dilemma* persists. Many researchers, among them Olweus, Salmivalli, Smith, Cowie and O'Moore, to name but a few, have dedicated significant parts of their working lives to searching for a system or process that will lead to changes in attitudes and behaviours and lessen the incidence of bullying. These experts, and others, have focused attention on the role of the bystanders and the influence they may have on the bullying process. My own experience, though

very local, has led me to believe that student bystanders can play a crucial role in determining both the length and the outcome of a bullying event.

The next section of this chapter consists of a review of some of the literature available regarding different bystander roles among school aged children, motivations for choosing these roles, effects on bystanders of the choices they make and implications for further work with peer bystanders. While acknowledging that it is essential in bullying situations to give direct attention to the central characters, target and perpetrator, and to address the issue of behaviour frankly with the perpetrator, as highlighted in section one of this chapter, I believe that there is much to be learned through engaging with peers.

2.8.1 - The Bystander Effect

Before beginning the main work of examining some of the literature relating to bystanders to school bullying it is worth looking briefly at the bystander effect as researched by Latané and Darley (1964 – 1980). As will be highlighted later in this chapter there are many similarities between Latané's and Darley's early findings and more recent understanding of choices and motivations of bystanders to school bullying.

During the course of their research, spanning a period of almost twenty years, Latané and Darley examined the environment in which incidents occurred, where the outcome might have been significantly different if there had been positive intervention on the part of outside parties. They examined motivations for actions or inactions of witnesses, and conducted a variety of experiments in order to discover what witnesses would do and why they would do it. Their work revealed how the influences of societal or group norms played a major part in the decision making process of bystanders to emergency incidents.

These researchers were prompted to undertake their work by reports in the New York Times of the circumstances surrounding the brutal murder of Kitty Genovese in 1964 in front of,

what the newspaper described as, a large number of witnesses. These newspaper reports described how three savage attacks were perpetrated on Ms Genovese in front of 38 witnesses. Later however, these details were contradicted and were revised to two attacks with perhaps twelve or so witnesses who had heard, though not seen the attack, as had been reported by the New York Times. Latané and Darley (1968) examined this case and, between 1968 and 1980, conducted many experimental tests, using their findings to interpret bystander behaviours and their motivations for their actions. They found that bystanders were less likely to intervene if, there was *ambiguity* and watchers were unsure as to what was actually happening. They found that, in the case of the attack on Kitty Genovese, some of those watching the assault gave the excuse that they thought it was a lovers' quarrel. Failure of witnesses to act was also indicated by an awareness of the presence of others who were not helping. The authors referred to this as *diffusion of responsibility* and further highlighted that bystanders were less likely to help the greater the number of unhelpful bystanders who were there and more likely to offer support if there were fewer *potential helpers* present. Gleitman (1991) referred to this diffusion of responsibility as "social loafing" (p. 479) where helping out was regarded as someone else's duty. Latané and Darley identified *pluralistic ignorance* where individuals are misled by the inaction of others to think that action is not necessary although privately they believe that it is and finally they acknowledged how potential helpers were guided in their action when they weighed up the *potential (social) cost* to themselves of helping. Examining the bystander effect of Latané and Darley within the context of school bullying, Pozzoli and Gini (2012) identified parental and peer expectations of bystanders and the importance of the bystanders' relationship with or attitude to the targeted student as being significance factors in their decision to act. Importantly, however, the students' sense of their own ability to make a difference was the deciding factor in their decision to intervene or not.

2.9 - IDENTIFYING THE BYSTANDER

Throughout the course of this thesis any reference made to the bystander, unless otherwise stated, will be indicating peer bystander. There may be many others who through their awareness of a bullying situation in school could be classified as bystanders, including teachers, ancillary staff, parents, siblings, other family members or others in the community. Some of these individuals may have a greater or lesser influence on the choices that peer bystanders make but, for the purpose of this study, the emphasis will be on examining the behaviour of peers in school with a view to delving more deeply into the reasons for their actions within the context of their school or community environment. Understanding peers' perspectives could provide vital information regarding the elements necessary in a programme which would provide support and promote positive action among the peer group. Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi and Franzoni (2008) emphasised the importance of having a discussion with peer groups to discover the pressures they feel to join in with bullying behaviour. It was with this end in view that, this study sought to discover how young people interpret the supports available to them through their schools in relation to this whole issue. In addition, the research sought from students their suggestions regarding the supports school authorities could offer, beyond what may be available to them already, which would encourage and facilitate their engagement in more positive proactive bystander behaviours.

2.9.1 - Peer Bystanders

As highlighted in the first section of this chapter, the essential elements of the bullying relationship are the perpetrator and target. In most cases however the peer group is essential to the process which requires witnesses to these acts in order for the perpetrator to gain status. In the majority of cases when the aim of the perpetrator is in some way to exert power over another, it is important that this exercise is visible to others. Varsamopoulou (2010) proposed that "the

phenomenon of bullying relies for its persistence on the tolerance of the community/group in which it takes place" (p. 50). Burns, Maycock, Cross and Brown (2008) found that few of their study participants admitted to initiating bullying as it was regarded as a socially undesirable behaviour. However, many of them reported that they had got drawn in to the bullying. The authors described these admissions by their participants as attempts to diffuse the blame for the bullying by sharing it with the group. Salmivalli (2010) pointed out that just as peer bystanders' responses could encourage the perpetrator to continue their bullying behaviours, a negative response to bullying behaviour on their behalf can result in the cessation of this behaviour. Thus the critical function of peer involvement and its influence in determining the outcome to the process has been acknowledged.

Just as there are reasons why students bully and are bullied, there must also be reasons for the behaviours chosen by those who do not instigate but are present when bullying happens. The review of the literature in this section of the chapter will examine peers' bystander roles in the context of their chosen behaviours, exploring some of the influence these actions or inactions may have on bullying situations and their impact on the perpetrators, their targets and on the bystanders themselves. Of significant importance in this examination of literature will be the search for explanations for possible motivations for bystanders' choice of actions.

Identifying bystanders initially as those who do not instigate or are not the target of bullying, Wilson-Simmons, Dash, Tehranifa, O'Donnell, and Stueve (2006) referred to the context in which bullying happens suggesting that, to some extent, it is this context which influences bystanders' choice of behaviour. They proposed that the environment in which the bullying occurs may determine the choice of behaviour of the onlookers. In their examination of motivations for bystander behaviour, Pöyhönen, Juvonen and Salmivalli (2012), commented "Results supported the idea that the motivational underpinnings of defending the victim,

remaining passive, and reinforcing the bully do, indeed, vary" (p. 733). In their examination of the same theme, Wilson-Simmons, Dash, Tehranifa, O'Donnell and Stueve, (2006) suggested that whatever their reasons, it is "essential to understand students' perceptions of the support–or lack of it–they receive from adults" (p. 5). Studies by researchers, including Komendant-Brodowska (2009), Lodge and Frydenberg (2005), O'Connell, Pepler and Craig (1999) and Thornberg (2007), found reasons given by young people for joining in, walking away or attempting to defend, included fear of being targeted or making the situation worse, dislike of targeted peer, not caring, or in the case of those who do something in a more proactive way (or even those who don't), dislike of the behaviour and recognition of the injustice or unfairness of the situation.

2.9.2 - Early Research on Bystanders to School Bullying

Early studies on the subject of bystander behaviour in the context of school bullying recognised the importance of the presence of witnesses and the affect their behaviour might have on the process. For example, Sutton, Smith and Swettenham (1999) highlighted the importance of the social structures in which the bullying occurs, proposing that bullying must be seen as interactions within a social group. They suggested that by-standing children joined in when they judged that they would benefit from doing so. Their findings were in keeping with Pikas' (1975; 1989) theory that bullying occurs as a group activity where the behaviour of the perpetrator is reinforced by others.

Olweus too (1991, 1994) acknowledged the presence of bystanders when he promoted whole class meetings to address the issue of bullying. Identifying the perpetrator (s) and the one who is targeted as being centre stage, he also recognised the importance of the attitude and response of others present in bullying situations. Twemlow, Sacco and Williams (1996) argued that it is bystanders "who would clearly influence the pathological victim-bully balance" (p. 301). They used the analogy of a drama to describe the bullying process, where the lead roles of villain

and prey are played by those central to the drama and outcomes are influenced by the applause of the audience. Olweus' (2001) *Bullying Circle* illustrated a variety of ways in which students who are in the environment may act or react. He stressed the importance of the creation of class rules aimed at discouraging others from joining in with the perpetrators or ignoring their behaviour, while, at the same time, encouraging and guiding peers within the group to give their support to targeted students.

In their research to determine how students' attitudes to bullying compared with their actions, O'Connell, Pepler and Craig (1999) undertook a study in which they compared their observations of students' behaviours to students' stated views, within a social learning context. Their study of peer relations in the school yard found that, in 75% of the bullying situations, bystanders, either through their actions or inactions, were identified as re-enforcers of the behaviour. They pointed out that joining in or laughing may have encouraged the perpetrator but, importantly, so too did remaining silent or walking away. Through their observations, they concluded that students who stood by as bullying happened and who, when challenged, denied that they had done anything, had in fact provided reinforcement to the bullying in 54% of the cases. They commented "the problem of bullying is systemic, extending beyond the bully and victim. Like other forms of aggression, bullying unfolds in a set of social contexts: the dyad, the peer group, the playground setting, and the school environment" (p. 438).

Considering different bystander roles, Twemlow, Fonagy and Sacco (1996) compared the helpless watcher, growing up to witness further abuses, with the individual who gets sadistic pleasure from watching others suffer while shielding the perpetrator from teachers' view. Later, Twemlow, Fonagy, and Sacco (2004) identified the presence of bystanders as an essential element in the bullying dynamic referring to them as active participants in what they defined as "the social architecture of school violence" (p. 1). Smith, Cousins and Stewart (2005) also shared

this view stating "Bullying, no longer viewed simply as a dyadic interaction between a perpetrator and victim, is increasingly situated within larger social systems like peer groups, families, and schools" (p. 741). Similarly, findings from their study in the area of social aggression prompted Xie, Swift, Cairns and Cairns (2002) to stress the role of the bystander as an enforcer or supporter of the perpetrator. Their research showed that the majority of social aggression interactions, which they described as behaviours that cause hurt but are not obvious to those who are unaware of the situation, involved more than the perpetrator and target, and they proposed, that the actions and interactions of others were central to the progress and outcome of these situations and to interpersonal relationships. Xie, Swift, Cairns and Cairns emphasised that social aggression can be non-confrontational in nature and is dependent on "the social community as the vehicle to attack" (p. 206). Thus, they described the process where the manipulation of the bystanders by the perpetrators encourages them and draws them into their supporting role.

2.9.3 - The Growth of Understanding Regarding the Importance of the Part Played by Bystanders

As awareness developed regarding the significance of the presence of bystanders in the bullying context, researchers and commentators began to highlight evidence pointing to the influence and power of those who are present when bullying occurs. Tsang, Hui, and Law (2011) referred to peer bystanders, as the biggest group in school bullying and emphasised how the roles they adopt as individuals and as members of their groups can impact directly on both the intensity of the bullying and its outcome. The observational research mentioned above involving studies of bullying incidents in schools carried out in Canada by Pepler and Craig (1995). O'Connell, Pepler and Craig (1999), and Hawkins, Pepler and Craig (2001) further found that, when bullying occurs in the presence of bystanders, their response to these situations is central to the outcome of the process. Pepler and Craig (2000) referred to peers as "the audience in the theatre of bullying"

(p. 9) describing how they often get drawn into the aggression in some way as to reinforce the bullying. They highlighted that bystanders' contributions to the situation can increase the problem or aid its resolution. It is important to bear in mind when considering the presence of students (and the roles they come to adopt) in the bullying environment that, as highlighted by Salmivalli (2010), students do not choose to be members of their class groups and when bullying occurs within that group, they do not have the independence to leave. So, to all intents and purposes, it could seem to the target and the bystanders that they are trapped in their situation.

Sullivan, Cleary and Sullivan (2004) referred to findings from their research which revealed that "bystanders are more important in the end solution than either the bully or the victim. Without the positive participation of the bystanders, there is no solution to bullying; and at the same time, bullying can only go on if bystanders let it" (p. 19).

Twemlow, Fonagy and Sacco (2004) suggested that bullying should be recognised as "an interaction effect between bully, victim, and bystander in which the responses of each directly affect the harmfulness of the outcome" (p. 9). They commented that the perpetrator is not alone in their actions but rather acts as "an agent of the by-standing audience, which fuels the fire, so to speak, and perhaps even intensifies the harm" (p.9). Fekkes, Pijpers, and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) proposed that bystanders who watch the process beginning are confronted with several choices including, to assist the perpetrator, to try to support the target, or to ignore the situation. Their research findings indicated that most often bystanders did not intervene to stop the bullying and that this "may be interpreted by the bully as a reinforcement to continue the bullying" (p. 81). Smith, Schneider, Smith and Ananiadou (2004) referred to the possibilities for positive peer involvement in supporting the target of bullying but suggested that in most cases this does not happen and that peers are more likely to support the perpetrators by affirming their behaviour through their laughter or encouragement or by joining in. Thornberg, Tenenbaum, Varjas,

Meyers, Jungert, and Vanegas (2012) also highlighted findings which showed that bullying occurred more often in schools where bystanders had been observed as being more inclined to reinforce bullying behaviour by supporting the perpetrators than to be defending of the target.

Wilson-Simmons, Dash, Tehranifa, O'Donnell and Stueve (2006) argued that the term "innocent bystander", often applied to others who are present when an incident or event occurs but who are not actively involved, is no longer an appropriate term in relation to bullying. Their research also found that although those on the periphery may not have been actively participating, their very presence influenced the process where passive non-intervention was interpreted as acceptance of the situation by those who were central to the process. Regarding those situations where bystanders stand back from the situation, Barton (2006) proposed that just as perpetrators take non-involvement on the part of the bystander as a silent permission to continue their behaviour, so too does the target of the bullying who may regard those looking on as supporters of the perpetrator. Gini (2007) reiterated Samivalli's (1997) findings in this regard highlighting the power of the bystanders through other actions to influence the behaviour of the perpetrator and Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi and Franzoni, (2008) remarked "Children who are neither bullies nor victims can be part of the problem and part of the solution" (p.634).

2.9.4 - More Precise Definitions of Different By-Standing Behaviours

Experts and practitioners have attempted to reach a shared understanding of the roles played by peers who find themselves within the bullying environment. Over time, the focus on individuals in the bullying environment widened, and, while the perpetrators and their targets remain at the centre of attention, a very real awareness has evolved regarding different stances taken by witnesses to bullying and their impact in the situation when bullying occurs.

Considering participants in the process who engage in bullying others, the Participant Roles Scale (PRS) developed by Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen

(1996) was designed to investigate students' self-evaluation of their part in bullying situations. This method distinguished six participant roles adopted by children in bullying situations as follows: the bully (ringleader; initiator of bullying episodes), their assistant (actively involved in bullying episodes: assisting a ringleader) and the reinforcer (provides an audience and possibly encouragement). Also, within this peer behaviour evaluation, participants identified potential victims (target of bullying behaviour), defenders (supporter of a victim) and outsiders (a child who remains uninvolved).

Through his painstaking and in-depth study of the bullying process Olweus (1996) identified very specific behaviours of individuals caught within it and described how these behaviours can affect the situation. Recognising the central characters of perpetrator and target, Olweus (1993; 1995; 1996) labelled bystanders to bullying according to the roles they adopted. He identified three categories of witnesses who provide real and obvious support to the perpetrator. Closest to the perpetrators are the followers or henchmen who do not initiate but actively participate in the act of bullying once begun. Next are those, he identified, who support or bully passively by giving encouragement to the perpetrator by watching the event and showing their enjoyment of it. He pointed to other passive participants who, though not taking active part and less open in their demonstration of their enjoyment of it, also support the bullying. Olweus then highlighted three other types of witnesses. He labelled them as, the disengaged on lookers who, holding back, take a "wait and see" stance. Olweus described possible defenders who, while unhappy with the situation, for their own reasons fail to act and finally the defenders who, disliking the bullying, take some kind of action to try to bring it to an end. His *Bullying Circle* (2001) illustrated in detail the parts played by all those within the bullying environment.

Outside of possible adult witnesses, Barton (2006) identified three types of peer witness groups whose presence has an influence on the process. *Bully supporters* who do not engage in

the bullying behaviour but incite the perpetrator and sustain a bullying environment, *Interveners* who either attempt to stop the bullying or provide some form of comfort after the event and *Passive supporters* who, she asserted, are typically regarded by both the perpetrator and the target as supporting the bullying behaviour.

Unlike Olweus with his very specific definitions of the participant roles or Samivalli with her similar casting, Komendant-Brodowska's (2009) study focused on three kinds of behaviour – bullying, ignoring or defending. She did not distinguish between the instigator of the bullying and those who join in as, in her opinion, once they are all engaged, they are all bullying. Neither did she refer to those who choose not to defend whatever their reasons, beyond that they are passive, noting the negativity of this choice.

2.9.5 - Supporters of the Perpetrator

Much research has been carried out as to why student bystanders adopt their positions which so often appear as support for the perpetrators. Frey (2005) pointed out that, while the majority of school students do not engage in bullying, 80% of those who join in, do so, on the side of the perpetrator. Olweus' followers or henchmen and the assistants of Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (1996) join in the behaviour or watch out for possible adult intervention. Passive supporters, though they may not apparently join in, are re-enforcers of the bullying behaviour. They may encourage perpetrators with smiles or gestures or they may ignore the behaviour and its consequence. Their laughter or smiles are like applause for a performer, giving tacit encouragement to the perpetrator to persist. Their responses seem to give permission to the perpetrators to continue in their destructive and disrespectful activities. Salmivalli (2010) found the level or frequency of bullying was greater in classrooms where there was a perception of support for perpetrators of bullying and less in classrooms where peers were more liable to intervene on behalf of targeted students.

Many reasons have been offered for offering these types of support including, friendship with the perpetrator, dislike of the target or fear for their own safety. Twemlow, Sacco and Williams (1996) referred to "the interdependent nature of the roles of the bully, victim and bystander" (p. 1) and suggested that these roles are interchangeable depending on circumstances. They made reference to research carried out among Australian students by Rigby and Slee, (1991, 1993) showing that bullying boys "have more friends and are often more popular and admired than non-bullying boys, but the bullies were unhappier than the non-bullies and did not like school" (p. 298). Twemlow, Sacco and Williams suggested that fear, rather than friendship, may be the basis of this popularity and cited research which showed that those who regularly bully are encouraged to do so by the reinforcement of their peers. Barton (2006) proposed that those who join in with bullying behaviour do so because they value the apparent appreciation of the perpetrator and enjoy the suffering of the target. She referred to the hierarchy among participants and suggested that bystanders who join in may recognise the higher status of the perpetrator and choose to align themselves accordingly. Salmivalli (2010) suggested that the apparent popularity of the perpetrator weighed up against the low status of the target will most often sway students, if they do act, to do so in support of the architect of the bullying. Their response may seem to be nothing more than a smile at a hurtful comment or gesture but she suggested that "By such small acts, many more children than just the active bullies contribute to the harm caused to the victim" (p. 118).

Remarking on the positive status afforded to bystanders by the perpetrator when they offer some level of support for their bullying, Salmivalli, Voeten, and Poskiparta, (2011) recognised the benefit to bystanders who support or reinforce the bullying and thus need not fear retaliation from the perpetrator for offering support to, or defending, the targeted student. Salmivalli (2010) reflected on findings which indicated bystanders may feel themselves trapped

in a social dilemma and commented that “On one hand, they understand that bullying is wrong and they would like to do something to stop it — on the other hand, they strive to secure their own status and safety in the peer group" (p. 117). She remarked that in spite of the fact that the majority of young people, when questioned, reject bullying, in reality, very few respond in a helpful way when it happens in their midst. Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi and Franzoni (2008) noted that the presence of defenders within the group, bolstered feelings of safety of bystanders, but, if members of the group supported the perpetrator of the bullying then this sense of safety was reduced. Thus students who were not targeted and did not engage in the process felt unsafe.

Pepler and Craig (2000) suggested that peer bystanders may become desensitised to the effects of what they observe and may also feel protected by the position to which they have committed. Alternatively, they may feel threatened if they consider responding in a defensive way, fearing that they too will be targeted. Manarina (2003) also found fear of reprisals among the reasons for lack of positive peer intervention. She highlighted feelings of embarrassment and the uncertainty that peer bystanders feel regarding the best course of action to take. In their summing up of their finding from two studies investigating bullying within the peer group, Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi and Franzoni (2008) commented that, in general, the majority of students rejected bullying behaviour and stated their disapproval of it. They observed, however, that about 20% of witnesses appreciated the macho aspect and justified the bullying behaviour by indicating their dislike for the target. They also documented that as children get older their sympathy for the targeted student decreases often resulting in targeted students being blamed for their own misfortune.

2.9.6 - Defender of the Victimised

Olweus (1996) and Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (1996) labelled those who dislike bullying and take action in order to bring the situation to an end, as

defenders. The power of these defending peers to make a difference to the situation was highlighted by Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, (2001) who found that 57% of the time when young people intervened on behalf of their bullied peers they were effective in stopping the bullying. Hunter, Boyle and Warden (2004) suggested that "seeking help can be viewed as a coping behaviour, and coping processes such as appraisal and emotion may be important predictors of whether pupils ask for help" (p.1). Ahmed (2005) suggested that little is really known about bystanders who try to prevent bullying "because so few studies of bullying have been undertaken from the bystander's perspective" (p.23). She proposed that for bystanders to intervene in a positive way so as to counteract bullying they need to know what to do and be able to do it and warned that sympathy for their targeted peer is not enough. She further argued that for peers to intervene they need to be equipped with emotional competence and social skills. Bystanders who want to stop bullying happening need skills which include being able to adapt their behaviour to the particular circumstances in which they find themselves.

Rigby and Johnson (2005) found that students intervened when they believed that by doing so they could influence the situation. This view was supported by research by Gini, Albiero, Benelli and Altoe (2008) who concluded that, while students who demonstrated a high level of empathy were more likely to respond to other students' difficult situations, others, including *outsiders* showed empathetic traits also. They commented that those who went to the defence of victimised peers represented only around twenty percent of the group. Thus they proposed that more than empathy is necessary for peers to intervene. Other factors such as self-efficacy, the sense of confidence in one's own social ability, were also necessary for positive defending action. Pozzoli and Gini (2012) found that students who had a positive attitude towards their victimized peers were less inclined to adopt the role of passive bystander and more likely to intervene on their behalf.

Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi and Franzoni (2008) found that passive bystanders often admired those who defended their bullied peers and also highlighted factors such as self-efficacy as being necessary for positive defending action. They proposed that the provision of some kind of assertiveness training for young people might be helpful in increasing their sense of self-efficacy and empowering them to act in a pro-social way on behalf of others. Pointing out that researchers have mainly focused on the characteristics of defenders, Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing and Salmivalli (2010) called for further study into the characteristics of the defended person and for an examination of the relationships between the victimised person and their defenders. They found, during the course of their research in this area, that those who had been victimised and who identified others who had come to their aid, may have done so based on only on personal experience. They cautioned that the same students identified as defenders may not have intervened on behalf of everyone they witnessed being targeted. The authors also noted, significantly, that those who took on the role of defenders were liked by the target and their peer group generally and had a high status within the group. They queried whether the status of the defender might influence the outcome of the situation and whether those who were less popular or had a lower status in the group might not have been as effective in their defence of the target. Manarina's (2003) findings also revealed the respect of peers for their defending counterparts, highlighting that 80% of students surveyed expressed admiration for peers who intervened.

2.9.7 - Outsiders or Disengaged Onlooker

Accepting his award of the Nobel Peace Prize (1986), Elie Wiesel a Romanian born Jewish survivor of the holocaust, spoke of his harrowing experience while interned in labour and death camps, including Auschwitz, saying 'Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented'.

Commenting on bystanders' responses in general, Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse and Neale, (2010) suggested that it is unclear as to why young people respond as they do when bullying occurs. Among various studies aimed at understanding reasons for actions, researchers have sought to determine the motivation or the mind-set of the silent participants – those who know the bullying is happening but do not engage in any way in the process. While denying any responsibility in the activity, it is clear, as mentioned previously, that their very silence can be taken as permission or encouragement to continue the bullying by both the perpetrator and the targeted student (see for example, Gini, Albiero, Benelli and Altoe, 2008**;** Komendant-Brodowska, 2009; Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse and Neale, 2010). Thornberg and Jungert (2013) found that "children and adolescents who have low basic moral sensitivity are less resistant to moral disengagement than those who have high basic moral sensitivity" (p. 10). Moreover, Hymel and Bonanno (2014) proposed that, the more often students disengage when witnessing bullying, the less likely they will be to intervene on behalf of their bullied peers or to include them in their social groups. Thornberg, Tenenbaum, Varjas, Meyers, Jungert, and Vanegas (2012) described this disengagement as bystander irresponsibility, where the bystander simply felt he/she had no responsibility to intervene. They described how participants in their study took their positions based on their relationships with participants. If friends with the perpetrator, they might join in the bullying, if friends with the target, they might help in some way, but if socially detached from either and not wanting to become involved, they might just walk away.

2.9.8 - Non-Helping Onlookers

Before considering *non-defending peer bystanders* it may be useful to consider some reasons *non helping onlookers* give when they avoid offering support to a peer in distress.

Thornberg's (2007) study of 5th graders set out to study the response of students to the distress of one of their peers in a non-apparent bullying situation. In this situation, the actions of

the non-helping students in a bullying situation were not the issue. Thornberg's interest lay in discovering how students in a class could justify their responses to the distress of their class mate. Reasons given for not coming to the aid of their crying peer included the view that the cause of the upset was not serious (trivialisation) and as respondent students had not been involved in the original incident or were not friends with the crying student, so they had no responsibility to help (disassociation). Thornberg (2007) commented that students who proposed *fear of causing further embarrassment* as their reason for not helping could have been demonstrating some form of empathy but that there could also have been an element of avoiding personal embarrassment too.

Other responses included, following the example of others by choosing not to get involved, engrossing themselves in their work and following teacher's instructions to take their seats. Having made their decision with regard to their classroom behaviour, the most favoured response was to transfer the responsibility to deal with the situation to the teacher whose job it was to respond to students who were upset or to his friends who should respond in friendship. Regarding two non–passive onlookers who enquired the reason for his upset of the crying student, Thronberg (2007) referred to the "care questioning", motivated by "curious empathy" (p. 11). Having asked their questions, to which there were no responses, the students sat down as they regarded the teacher as the person most competent to deal with the situation. He suggested therefore that "curious empathy is not a guarantee for pro-social behaviour" (p. 15) and proposed that

> the school should educate and help the students to develop moral sensitivity (to avoid trivialisation), empathy, moral responsibility (to avoid dissociation, audience modelling and responsibility transfer), and moral character as well as a competent repertoire of pro-social or moral actions (to avoid "stage fright" or non-intervention as a result of embarrassment association) (p. 17).

This advice would also be appropriate when guiding students towards behaving in a positive, pro-social supportive manner when they witness a peer.

2.9.9 - Non-Defending Bystanders

As the reactions of peers are essential to the bullying process, those who are witness to the initiation of a bullying exercise can therefore be highly influential in the way the process evolves. They have the power, whether they recognise it or not, to close down or exacerbate the situation. *Non-defending bystanders*, unlike their *non-helping* classmates, are deemed to be aware of a situation where one of their peers is being targeted by others. Olweus (2001) differentiated between *disengaged on lookers* who held back taking a *wait and see* stance and *possible defenders* who though unhappy with the situation chose not to act. Olweus (2007) suggested that lack of action on their part was deemed to be "a silent permission" (p. 62) consequently lending support to the perpetrators of bullying. Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (1996) referred to these individuals as *outsiders* who remain uninvolved in the situation.

The identification of uninvolved peers as critical to the bullying process is supported by research findings regarding the impact of those who take on this role. Twemlow, Fonagy and Sacco (2004) considered the bystander to be "an active and involved participant in the social exercise of school violence and not a passive witness" (p. 2). This view was also supported by Manarina, (2003) who reflected that the actions of peers can have a positive or negative effect on the bullying behaviour of others and that they can act as either friends or bystanders in a bullying situation.

2.9.10 - Motivations for Non-Involvement

Comparing school and workplace bullying, Varsamopoulou (2010) suggested there is little difference between the two. She identified reasons for peer bystanders' choices which she

remarked could apply in either situation saying "These include: fear; indifference; individualism; the autonomy of the agents in an institutional setting; personal interest; vicarious pleasure; a repressed desire to bully; personal dislike of the target/victim; an inability to make decisions for oneself" (p. 50). Although research evidence points to a majority response condemning bullying (see for example: Gini, Albiero, Benelli, Altoe 2008; Salmivalli and Voeten, 2004), fear of consequences of retaliation from perpetrators is often cited by bystanders as the reason they do not defend their victimized peers. This fear coupled with the wish for help from others to support positive action seems to hold peers back from coming to the defence of those in need.

When considering motivation for choosing to do nothing, it has been acknowledged that, doing nothing can have far reaching consequences (see for example: Larsen, 2014; Manarina, 2003; Olweus, 2007; Salmivalli, 2009). Targeted students are aware when no active refusal to accept bullying exists and with peers indicating that they are more likely to join in than offer them support, the suffering endured by the victimised student will continue with no promise of relief. Salmivalli (2009) suggested that the behaviour of the peer group who are not directly involved can be satisfying and encouraging to the perpetrator (while at the same time humiliating to the target). Thus reinforcing bullying as a rewarding behaviour for those who are that way inclined. Unfortunately, this may not be so readily understood or even intended by young people who choose not to be involved in the bullying framework.

Speaking at the *American Medical Association's Educational Forum on Adolescent Health: Youth Bullying* (2002), Richard L. Gross, MD remarked that everyone has the potential to play some role in bullying, either as perpetrator, target or bystander. Referring to his own school days he suggested that he was fortunate in being physically large enough not to be targeted. He admitted to playing the part of non-defending bystander, motivated by his fear of loss of status within his group. Dr Gross' explanation of his own behaviour choices while in school illustrated

a decision made from fear. Fear of loss of status, while not indicating fear of physical harm, nonetheless illustrated the power the perpetrators held over him and others who thought as he did. This concern on the part of the bystander has been highlighted by others including Lodge and Frydenberg (2005) who identified fear of retaliation from perpetrators and a desire for support from others as commonly expressed reasons for bystanders' non-intervention. They referred to a student's comment that "If someone else had stuck up for her I would have stuck up for her as well" (p. 333). Barton (2006) also found that peers in middle school years who witnessed bullying and generally did not become involved were motivated by "their concern with issues such as power and hierarchy" (p. 5).

Lodge and Frydenberg (2005) referred to passive bystander characteristics which indicate that they (bystanders) may feel no connection with either the perpetrator or the target and experience little emotional impact when close to bullying events. As noted above, Gini, Albiero, Benelli, and Altoè (2008) suggested that students who do not intervene on behalf of their bullied peers may not be lacking in empathy but may have a low sense of their own self-efficacy. This was consistent with Thornberg's (2010) findings in which he noted that the perceived status of bystanders within the group affected their willingness to help. Students who did not believe in their own power to influence the situation failed to do so and, as he had discovered in his prior experiment (2007), by-standing students weighed up the costs and rewards to them of their intervention. Research by Pöyhönen, Juvonen.and Salmivalli (2012) confirmed these findings as they also found that students' sense of self efficacy, as well as their beliefs about the possible consequences of their practical responses to witnessing bullying, were determining factors in the course of action they might take. For example, they highlighted the fact that students might be satisfied that they had done their best to comfort a bullied friend, even though they had not tried

or managed to stop the bullying and at the other extreme that students might take on the role of supporter of the perpetrator as they enjoy watching the bullying

While those who work with young people in the area of bullying prevention would like peers to decide to intervene in support of their victimized peer, the reality is that, this type of decision making process is quite complicated. Komendant-Brodowska (2010) suggested that "If bystanders were simply indifferent and lacked moral values, these decisions would not be complex" (p. 22). She proposed that "Several factors influence the behaviour of bystanders: the power of the bully/bullies, the power of the bystander, and the bystander's perception of how effective their action would be" (p. 23). Her research revealed that, just as there are different types of bullying so too, there are many different characteristics among those who are responsible for the bullying. The peer group looking on, who profess a dislike or disapproval of bullying behaviour, will be influenced in their actions by what they perceive in the character of the perpetrator. While Latané and Darley showed experimentally, that once one bystander intervened, other bystanders were quick to do so, Piliavin, Rodinand and Piliavin (1969) found that the number of bystanders did not impact on the speed with which individuals went to help and that there was no evidence of the "pluralistic ignorance" or "diffusion of responsibility" described by Latane and Darley, where the more bystanders are present the more individuals depend on others to intervene. In their field study comprising of 103 trials, Piliavin, Rodinand and Piliavin created a scenario, played out by student actors, to test the responses of bystanders to personal emergency type situations involving the collapse of an individual on a subway train. They found that influences such as empathy for the victim and reflections on the costs and benefits to one self of helping were motivators in individuals' decisions to act. They also reported that it was not altruism that drove bystanders to act but their desire to rid themselves of the negative feelings they experienced as a result of being present at the emergency. Examining

these findings in the context of school bullying revealed that, in research carried out by Pöyhönen, Juvonen and Salmivalli (2012) involving children between the ages of nine and twelve, children's decisions regarding defending peers in bullying situations depended on what they thought they could achieve by their defence of them and on the value they placed on these actions. The more they thought they could achieve positive outcomes, the more likely they were to intervene. Importantly, the positive outcomes related not just to relieving the distress of the targeted peer, but also to the effects on their own status within the group. Thus, it seems imperative to return to Rigby's (2005) recommendations regarding the harnessing of students' positive attitudes through the facilitation of student discussions and to include an examination and acknowledgement of the value of their intervention both to the target of bullying as well as to themselves, to well-disposed onlookers in the course of this discussion.

2.10 - THE INFLUENCE OF BY-STANDING CHOICES

When making their decisions regarding what side to stand on, in the bullying divide, it is likely that bystanders have spent little time deliberating on the consequences of their actions, beyond perhaps the implications for themselves in relation to self-protection. Nonetheless, research has shown that decisions made by those who do not initiate bullying or are not targeted may have a strong influence on the situation and far reaching consequences for all involved.

2.10.1 - On the Situation

Findings by Storey & Slaby (2008) indicated that, the presence of peers during most bullying episodes is crucial to the outcome of the process and that their presence affects the prevention or the promotion of bullying. Manarina, (2003) observed that "Peers serve a role as both friends and bystanders in a bullying system. The nature of how these roles are played out can have either a positive or negative effect on bullying behaviour" (p. 7). The non-intervention

on the part of those who are present when bullying is happening has been described in a variety of ways as indicating a silent permission to the perpetrator. Thus, without active refusal to accept it and with peers indicating that they are more likely to join in, the suffering endured by the victimized student will continue. Salmivalli (2009) suggested that the behaviour of the peer group who are not directly involved can be satisfying and encouraging to the perpetrator, while at the same time humiliating to the target. By their actions or inactions, peers reinforce bullying as a rewarding behaviour for those who are that way inclined. On the other hand, those who intervene in a preventative or defending way have been found to have more positive influence on the situation. Rigby (2005) cited Hawkins, Pepler, and Craig (2001) who found that bullying behaviour was often stopped when student bystanders raised objections to it and he suggested using this recognition of the power of positive intervention by peers as a basis for engagement with students in the area of bullying prevention. Maycock, Bryan, Carr and Kitching (2009) gave examples of the benefits of peer support. While lamenting the lack of support often evident in school settings, they focused their attention specifically on the social and health experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people (LGBT) in a non-school setting. They described the growth of organisations, developed to support young members of this community, which were welcoming and inclusive and how within these settings, where young people can feel safe and secure, their self-esteem and resilience can flourish.

2.10.2 - On Bystanders

Darley and Latane (1968) observed that non-intervening bystanders do not necessarily decide not to respond or seek help but suffer internal conflict regarding whether or not they should. They found that the emotional and biological responses of the participants in their study were not indicative of bystanders who were apathetic but who were in a quandary, due to the weighing up of what was necessary for the victim and the effects for themselves. Twemlow,

Sacco and Williams (1996) proposed that witnessing bullying events can cause trauma to the bystander, who can also feel disempowered by their experience, becoming "victimized without physical participation" (p. 301). They advocated further consideration of the various pathologies behind bullying behaviour and, in proposing continuing interventions, the authors promoted the necessity of modelling positive behaviour for young people to follow. Thus they placed the responsibility on parents, schools and the wider community to demonstrate respectful relating skills to their young.

A fact sheet produced by the Centre for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, which cited the 1999 *Voices for Children* study, indicated that, while 90% of students who witnessed bullying expressed their discomfort at seeing someone bullied, 33% said they would join in, and in fact, peers participated in 85% of the bullying episodes. Pepler & Craig, (2000) noted that young people in these situations, who observed repeated targeting of their peers, were affected in much the same way as the victimised children themselves. Rivers, Poteat, Noret and Ashurst (2009) also found that young people who witnessed bullying and were neither the perpetrator nor the target reported higher rates of depression, anxiety, and drug abuse than others who had not witnessed such events. The authors warned about the risk to witnesses who had been previously victimised, suggesting that their experience as witness was similar to a psychological re-victimisation. They further suggested that those who had not been victimised, but felt vulnerable, could also suffer feelings similar to those of the targeted individual. A United States, Department of Education (2010) report indicated that children and young people often experienced feelings of guilt and hopelessness as a result of witnessing bullying.

Salmivalli (2010) highlighted studies which indicated that, in spite of anti-bullying attitudes among students, they nonetheless are more likely to encourage the bullying behaviour, if they do anything. Noting the lack of empirical study done on the influences of bullying on the

classroom group, Salmivalli referred to a study by Bukowski and Sippola (2001) in which they found that when individuals within a group were victimised, not only were they damaged, but so too were the other members of the group. Referring to concerns regarding potential negative effects of school bullying for the psychological and academic well-being of those who are bullied and those who bully, Salmivalli cited evidence produced by Nishina & Juvonen, (2005) to suggest that peers who witnessed bullying attacks could also be negatively affected. Coloroso (2002) suggested that those who do not join in may become traumatised or desensitised, depending on the seriousness and longevity of their experience. Batsche & Porter (2006) proposed that being witness to bullying incidents can induce feelings of anger, fear, guilt, and sadness. In its reference to the impact of bullying on the bystander, the information detailed in a pamphlet issued by UNICEF (2007), entitled *Stop Violence in Schools*, was in agreement with other research regarding the feelings of fear, helplessness, guilt and anger and the experience of nightmares induced by feelings of fear or insecurity.

Rivers, Poteat, Noret and Ashurst (2009) found that individuals who witnessed bullying at school were more at risk of mental health issues than those predicted for students who had been directly involved in the bullying process, either as a perpetrator or a target. Their findings were supported by Huitsinga, Veenstraa, Sainiob and Salmivalli (2010) who observed that, a side effect for the majority of students, in a group where some individuals were victimized, were that all students (who were targeted or not) appeared to be more depressed or have lower self-esteem. They suggested that this may stem from feelings of guilt for the fact that they did not support their victimized peers. Their non-intervention may have many reasons including a lack of social skills in knowing how to do so effectively, a lack of confidence in one's own ability to put a stop to the bullying, uncertainty regarding to whom they should report and fear of making things worse or drawing the attention of the perpetrator onto themselves. Awareness of these concerns

supports Salmivalli's (2006) emphasis on the importance of guiding bystanders in the use of *safe strategies* which would allow them to go to the aid of their targeted peers.

Thus, it is clear from the insights above, that while the main focus for damage or harm prevention in bullying situations is on the target and the perpetrator, more recent awareness of the effects on the peer group point to the need for intervention on the part of these students also.

2.11 - THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Yeung and Leadbeater (2010) pointed to the importance of the role of parents and teachers in supporting students who are targeted. They reported that young people who suffer relational bullying, but are well supported by their teachers, were" less likely to experience both emotional and behavioural problems compared to adolescents with low levels of teacher emotional support" (p. 94). Dowling and Carey (2013) identified students reporting to teachers and parents as being the most effective action to take in order to stop bullying. In spite of this view of their effectiveness, reporting, especially to teachers, was the least popular option taken by students. Talking to friends, while least effective, was the most popular strategy.

2.11.1 - The Influence of Parents and Teachers on Students' Behaviour

Mestry, van der Merwe and Squelch (2006) promoted the whole school approach where parents, teachers and administrators come together to support and encourage students in positive by-standing behaviour. While Ttofi, Farrington and Baldry (2008) expressed reservations regarding placing the emphasis entirely on a whole school approach (see section 2.7 above), Galloway and Roland (2004), O'Moore and Minton (2004) and Smith, Salmivalli and Cowie (2012) promoted a whole school, pro-social environment approach as the ideal. Richard, Schneider, and Mallet (2012) described the whole school approach as one where a firm anti-bullying policy exists and is implemented consistently throughout the school. Pepler and Craig (2000) also referred to these

factors and to the necessary changes which must occur when such programmes are being implemented. They pointed out that the changes required must be universal and that changes in adult behaviour are often necessary. Even where such a programme does not exist teachers are in a position to play a key role in managing and defusing or resolving bullying situations. O'Moore et al (2013) emphasised the need to support teachers to competently and confidently work in the area of bullying prevention and effective intervention when bullying occurs. They proposed that teachers must be provided with opportunities to "gain a good understanding of group dynamics and conflict management skills as part of their pre-service and professional development training" (p.18). Pepler and Craig argued that without the force of the whole school approach students may not recognise that individual teachers can provide them with the help they need.

While finding that positive messages regarding by-standing behaviours from parents and teachers to their children were effective in encouraging pro-social behaviour on the children's behalf, the authors voiced concern regarding the fact that often parents and teachers do not see or choose to ignore bullying behaviour. On the other hand, Rigby and Johnson (2006) proposed that relationship skills acquired within the family, through experience and observation, influenced students' judgement and decision making processes when they applied them within the school and social setting. They found that expectations of their parents or friends featured highly among the reasons why students intervened on behalf of their victimized peers. Rigby and Johnson further noted that parental expectations had a greater influence on students' behaviour than teachers' expectations, which did not necessarily produce the same outcomes**.**

Gini (2006) referred to the role of the teacher within the classroom setting suggesting that "As the only classroom authority figures, teachers exert a direct influence on the degree to which different behaviors are enforced or inhibited" (p. 6). James, Lawlor, Courtney, Flynn, Henry and

Murphy (2008) similarly commented "Teachers play a highly important role in the management of bullying, first and foremost by modelling appropriate behaviours as well as by dealing with bullying between students" (p. 170). Gini (2006) cited Chang's (2003) observation that "teachers who are tolerant of aggression communicate their lenience to students, who may also act more positively towards aggressive peers" (p.56). As Jo Brand pointed out in her Introduction to Marr's and Field's (2001), Bullycide, Death at Playtime, "in this day and age, the adult world is not a very impressive provider of examples of kindness, tolerance and understanding" (xiii). In their research on bullying within secondary school football teams, Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette and Steinfeldt (2012) found that morale within the group influenced the level of bullying and tolerance or acceptance of this by members of the team. Low team morale was indicative of the risk of higher levels of bullying. They emphasized the importance of the example of male authority figures, such as fathers, brothers and sports coaches in guiding adolescent males away from, not only the behaviour but, the tolerance of it.

While there are many means used by those who set out to bully, the benefits of support of adults for the targeted student remains constant. Examining the effects of homophobic teasing on the psychological health and well-being of high school students who identified themselves as gay or lesbian, or who were questioning their sexuality, Espelage, Aragon, Birkett and Koenig (2008) highlighted that these students were more likely to be targeted for forms of homophobic bullying more than their heterosexual peers, but that they were equally likely to suffer other types of targeting as these peers. With regard to homophobic bullying and taunting, Lodge, Gowran and O'Shea (2008) found that, teachers generally felt uneasy dealing with this type of behaviour and did not feel they were adequately trained on issues around sexual orientation. In such circumstances, the SPHE teachers or guidance counsellors were regarded by their colleagues as being the most appropriate individuals to confront this behaviour. Acknowledging the benefit to

all students of, what they termed as, "parental communication supports" (p. 213), the authors found that among those students who reported experiencing homophobic bullying and who also reported high levels of support from parents the likelihood of some of the mental health problems associated with being bullied was less. Espelage, Aragon, Birkett and Koenig also emphasised the importance of a positive school environment, which in conjunction with parental and family support would offer protection from the adverse effects to the mental and emotional well-being of all bullied students. Identifying the particular vulnerability of questioning students (those unsure of their sexual orientation), Espelage, Aragon, Birkett and Koenig stressed the need for very active prevention programmes presented and supported by an informed and capable staff.

With regard to the role of the adult in offering support when online bullying occurs, Robinson and MacPherson (2010) described a system of bullying made up of perpetrators, the target and "the audience (which provides the context for bullying) and which may include authorities" (p. 33). In their description of their workshop on cyberbullying, which they delivered in the whole school setting, the authors highlighted the responsibility of and power held by site moderators to act when abuse was perpetrated online. They noted, however, that these abuses are usually ignored.

In situations where bullied students may be unsupported or under supported by parents, Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey and Gargus (2009) stressed the importance of teachers engaging with bullying situations, even when the teachers themselves feel less than adequate to intervene. They suggested that teachers' support may compensate for the lack of parental support experienced by some students and that, whatever the outcome, their teachers' willingness to intervene could help to ward off depression in students which may otherwise result from being involved in bullying situations.

2.11.2 - Young People's Judgements Regarding Helpfulness of Adults

In school bullying situations teachers, rather than parents, are in a position to be aware of bullying as it happens and yet, as Pepler and Craig (2000) and Guillory (2013) pointed out school staff members are often unaware that bullying is happening. Pepler and Craig found that many teachers could be disinclined to intervene believing that *bullying is a normal part of growing up* and that children inclined to bully others usually grow out of it. They also found that some teachers hold the belief that children should learn to negotiate and to resolve their own conflict issues and do not come to much harm as they do so. Yeung and Leadbeater (2010) referred to a lack of research focussing on the protective effects of relationships between students and their parents and teachers in reducing peer victimisation. Frisén, Jonsson and Persson (2007), who sought adolescents' opinions regarding what they thought could be done to counteract school bullying, noted "Unfortunately, few mention interventions by adults as a way to stop bullying" (p. 760). Young people's views on the topic of adult intervention were also examined by Flaspolher, Elfstrom, Vanderzee and Sink (2009) who found that those who were bullied and who felt they had both peer and teacher social support were, in some way, protected from the negative effects of bullying. Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey and Gargus (2009) also found that parents and teachers who were available to their students when bullying occurred afforded them a protection from other negative consequences of being involved. Their research to explore the influence of adults' in young people's bullying situations indicated

> that in all four bully status groups, children reported fewer symptoms of depression when support from parents was high compared to when it was low. For all groups except victims, when parental support was low, support from teachers was associated with fewer symptoms of depression. When parental support was high, the impact of support from the teacher was not significant (p. 593).

Emphasising the value of adult support for bullied students, Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey and Gargus (2009) described findings which illustrated how support, in the form of listening or guidance, from parents and teachers, may be protective for those students who were most at risk of experiencing depression as a result of having been bullied, even in cases when students did not recognise this benefit to them. Carroll- Lind and Kearney (2004) found that 79% of students who told someone they were being bullied, told their friends, with 38% telling parents and 32% telling a teacher. When invited to give reasons for not telling adults (parents or teachers), students indicated fear of the situation worsening or of not being believed. Fear of deteriorating circumstances was a main consideration in Pikas' (1989, 2002) method of Shared Concern, the aim of which is to empower the targeted student and draw the perpetrators of the bullying into working out a mediated solution. By interviewing the suspected perpetrators, one at a time, and the targeted student when these interviews have been completed, the interviewer seeks the help of the suspects in finding a solution to the distress of their bullied peer. Interviews of those suspected of engaging in bullying occur prior to any contact with parents, because, nothing has so far been proven and the aim is to encourage these students to find alternative ways of interacting with peers. By involving students in this type of help seeking forum, where there is recognition of the distress of the victimized student(s), Pikas proposed that concern of placing vulnerable students at further risk is lessened. Carroll-Lind and Kearney proposed that "Teachers who get to know their students and the 'peer ecologies' in which they operate are the most successful in reducing the incidence of bullying" (p. 5).

Fekkes, Pijpers and Verloove-Vanhorick (2005) found that 75% of students who were regularly bullied told an adult. Of these, just over 50% told their teacher while around 67% told a parent. In such cases, the majority of adults, once informed, tried to help. It was noteworthy, however, that with respect to teacher or parental intervention with a child who bullied others only

52% of teachers and 33.3% of parents, discussed the matter with the perpetrator. Carroll-Lind and Kearney (2004) noted that students often do not view their teachers as being particularly effective in resolving bullying issues and that they preferred not to voice their concerns to teachers because they perceived that it could worsen the situation overall as well as leaving those who reported in a vulnerable position. Research by Dowling and Carey (2013) on students' beliefs when seeking someone with whom to discuss their concerns about bullying, revealed that students regarded teachers as being among the most difficult people to approach in this regard and that they also thought that teachers were unlikely to make the bullied students feel better. This may not be too surprising if this view is examined alongside findings by Bauman and Del Rio (2006), described by the authors as "alarming", particularly with regard to relational bullying. Their results showed that teachers and student teachers are often seen to ignore bullying or to trivialise these events.

One of the major deterrents to reporting bullying highlighted by researchers is the unwritten but internationally recognized code of silence among students. Unnever and Cornell (2004) compared the dilemma faced by a student who wants to report bullying to teachers with that of victims of violent crime who first weigh up the benefits and cost of seeking help before reporting to the police. Sullivan (2010) referred to the two worlds that exist in most secondary school settings, where teaching staff and students come together to share the one world in the classroom. He highlighted how school culture often ensures that reporting bullying is regarded as a negative action and he advocated the promotion of school leadership programmes among students with a view to, among other things creating a safe school and classroom environment.

Referring to his earlier research, Thornberg (2010) recalled how children are often disinclined to help due to their previous experiences in similar situations and to their presumptions of their current teacher's attitude based on the comments of their former teacher

and his/her classroom rules. Studies by Owens, Shute and Slee (2005), Thornberg (2010) and Novick and Isaacs (2010) which investigated the role of the teacher within the social setting of the peer group, showed that teachers' attitudes and responses to bullying, as perceived by their students, were found to determine students' own responses to bullying situations. Novick and Isaacs, further described how teachers were regarded as being more likely to act when they observed incidents of bullying than when students reported their concerns to them. While Ellis and Shute (2007) also expressed concern about with the manner in which teachers intervened in bullying situations. They found that teacher intervention occurred most often based on how they assessed the seriousness of the behaviour. With or without reports from students, once the teachers became aware of bullying it was their (the teachers') perceptions of the harmful nature of the behaviour which determined their actions. The authors found that physical bullying (spitting on someone) was considered to be more serious than verbal bullying (name-calling), which was rated as being considerably more serious than social bullying (dirty looks). They also found that it was this judgement of level of seriousness that determined teachers' intervention, or not. Thus teachers were much more likely to intervene when physical bullying was occurring than when the bullying was social, leaving students in the latter dilemma to face it alone.

2.12 - SECTION 2: CONCLUSION

In this section of the chapter, literature relating to bystander roles adopted by peers as described and defined by Olweus (1996), Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman and Kaukiainen (1996), Barton (2006) and others were reviewed. Research findings from studies of students' motivations for the positions they adopted and some of the ill effects of these behaviours on the main participants, the situation and on themselves were examined. The literature revealed significant evidence to indicate potential for negative consequences, in relation

to physical and mental health and academic outcomes, for all involved in bullying situations when peers did not engage in positive interventions. Evidence was also highlighted which emphasised the importance of parental and teacher support with regard to the modelling of respectful behaviour, providing a supportive listening environment and teaching and guiding students to act appropriately when they observe disrespectful or harmful behaviour among their peers.

2.13 - LITERATURE REVIEW: OVERALL CONCLUSION

By dividing this literature review into two sections the intention had been to place the questions relating to bystander decision making within the framework of theories of bullying. By first and foremost outlining some of the theories on bullying behaviour, types of bullying, the effects of bullying and the role of the main participants in the process, the context was set in which to consider others who were present and aware of the bullying and so to examine theories relating to different bystander roles and most importantly research findings regarding students own views of their place in these events. Thus, this review provided a clear theoretical framework which supported the investigation of the research questions regarding student bystanders' motivation for their choice of actions, including their decision regarding seeking adult intervention in such circumstances.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 - INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study, which was conducted within the context of the Irish secondary school system, was an exploratory one, undertaken to delve more deeply into students' understanding of their own behaviours in circumstances when school bullying occurred and their motivations for these behaviours. There were two phases in this study. The first phase involved the completion of a questionnaire survey circulated to a number of secondary schools throughout the Republic of Ireland and an analysis of the information therein. The second phase took the form of a formal group discussion, during the course of which a group of young adults who had left school within the previous two to four years recalled and evaluated their views and experiences in the same context. The purpose of this chapter is to describe in detail the methodology used during the course of this research. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section one deals with phase one of the research and will include:

- A statement of the research questions;
- A restatement of the research aims;
- A description of, and the rationale, behind the choice of research design used in the first phase of the research;
- An explanation for the choice of participants, including a description of their age, gender and geographical location;
- A description of materials and their sources used in the design of the pilot and final questionnaire surveys which were carried out during the first phase of the study;

- Details relating to the procedures involved in the construction of the questionnaire survey, including drafting the survey questionnaire, piloting it and the final document; and,
- A description of the process of data analysis.

Section two of this chapter will describe the processes involved in planning and conducting phase two of the study. It will set out:

- A review of the research aims for this part of the study influenced by data revealed (or not revealed) by respondents to the survey questionnaire in phase one;
- A description of, and the rationale, behind the choice of research design used in this phase of the study;
- An explanation for the choice of participants, including a general description of their age, gender, types of school they had attended and geographical locations;
- A description of materials and their sources used in the design of the pilot and final focus group discussion;
- Details relating to procedures leading up to the construction of the draft of the prompt questions, the pilot discussion, the final prompt questions and the discussion itself;
- A description of the process of analysis of the themes of the discussion;
- Ethical concerns related to the methodologies involved in the two sections of this study; and,
- Methodological limitations of the approaches used in the two phases of this study.

3.2 - RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This section sets out the questions of interest in this research and gives a brief explanation for the reasons for the methodological approach adopted in this study. The research questions provide the framework for the project. Within the stated aims I have described what is to be

achieved and the intended or expected outcomes. Included in the list of objectives are the steps which were taken in order to find answers to the research questions and which supported the use of the questionnaire method used in the first phase of the study.

3.2.1 - Background

For some time, the issue of peer bystander behaviour has been central to discussions on the topic of school bullying (see for example, Murphy and Faulkner, 2011; Salmivalli 2010; Salmivalli, Voeten & Poskiparta 2011). Many bullying prevention programmes focus on the power and influence of these bystanders. Bearing in mind expectations with regard to positive peer bystander behaviour expressed by adults involved in bullying prevention and concerns regarding failure of many young people to meet these expectations, it seemed likely that if students were asked, as suggested by Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio and Salmivalli (2014), they too would express similar disappointments about their unmet expectations in relation to support from their adults. As described in the previous chapter, several studies have highlighted how students' beliefs or perceptions of their adults' attitudes or competencies in the area of bullying, in particular those of their teachers, had a strong influence on decisions students made in relation to seeking help. (See for example: Carroll-Lind and Kearney, 2004; Stueve, Dash, O'Donnell, Tehranifar, Wilson-Simmons, Slaby, & Link, 2006; Frisen, Jonsson & Persson 2007; Thornberg, 2010). By inviting post-primary students and young adults who had left school relatively recently to express their opinions regarding the supports and services they understood to be available to them through their school, which by their nature could have influenced students' reactions or responses when faced with bullying situations, it was expected that recommendations would emerge which would influence the strengthening of existing support systems already in place in many school bullying prevention programmes. For the purpose of

this study, student bystanders were defined as all those who were present and aware that it was happening, but, who were not directly targeted or did not instigate bullying.

3.2.2 - Research Questions

This study will focus on three main questions which are as follows:

- What are, or were, the experiences or observations of pupils, both present and past, regarding levels of disrespectful or bullying behaviours in their school environments?
- To what extent did witnessing bullying motivate them to act on behalf of their bullied peers?
- In situations where bullying occurred in their school setting, what features or characteristics of their school systems influenced student bystanders' decisions to seek adult intervention to resolve the situation?

3.2.3 - Research Aims for Phase 1 of this Study

The importance of clearly defining the research aims is key when contemplating methods to be used in any research, thus considerable time was spent on this definition. The initial aims of this research project were to:

- Encourage students to think about the atmosphere in their classroom environments resulting from the manner in which students relate to or with each other and how this might impact on their learning, and, having done so, to reflect more specifically upon their experiences of being bullied and the level of their awareness regarding the bullying of others;
- Learn what students think and feel when they witness the bullying of others;
- Ascertain from students the type and level of support they offer to each other in these situations, and their reasons for their actions; and,
- Interpret students' views regarding the roles of adults in bullying situations.

3.2.4 - Objectives

In order to accomplish the research aims as defined above, it was important to set out specific research objectives showing how these aims would be achieved. Thus, by analysing information gained from a pen-and-paper self-report survey questionnaire completed by students in participating schools, this research sought to determine:

- The nature and extent of the effect on the bystander of being witness to or aware of the bullying of others;
- The motivation(s) for, and nature and extent of, the roles played by those bystanders who joined in with the bullying;
- The motivation(s) for, and the extent of, the pro-social action on the part of some bystanders;
- The motivation(s) for, and nature and extent of, the roles played by those bystanders who did not join in but remained silent on the issue; and,
- The frequency of help-seeking by students in their school setting and, if they had sought help, their willingness to seek help in the future.

3.3 - RESEARCH DESIGN

One approach adopted by researchers when investigating bullying behaviours in school is an observational approach method (see for example: Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Lynn Hawkins, Pepler & Craig, 2001; Frey, Hirschstein, Snell, Van Schoiack Edstrom, MacKenzie, & Broderick, 2005). A key advantage of conducting observations is that the person in the role of observer can see what people actually do or hear what they say, as opposed to having to accept individuals' reports of their own behaviours and that of others. Observations can be made in real life situations, allowing the researcher access to the context in which people's actions and conversations occur.

There are, however, some problems associated with observational research and while they may offer a picture of events or behaviours within a school, they do not necessarily facilitate the understanding of thoughts or emotions which motivate actions or inactions or the interpretations of the "victimised" of their experience. Identifying observers as participants in the research, Stake (2010) referred to the difficulty of being adult participants in a youth centred study, commenting that "the eye sees a lot (and misses a lot)" (p.90). There is also the additional problem of being able to write an account, as a researcher, when one has been immersed in a situation or culture. This personal immersion on the part of the researcher may lead to criticisms regarding bias in the findings. A final deterrent to the use of an observational method of studying the phenomenon was that the research was cross sectional in nature while observational studies are generally longitudinal studies, carried out over longer periods of time.

Having reflected on and rejected the use of an observational approach, consideration was then given to the idea of collecting the initial data by means of a questionnaire survey. Creswell (2013) described a survey design as a means by which to discover "a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p.14). The importance of questioning students was highlighted by Frisén, Jonsson, and Persson (2007) who found that students often disagreed with adults, not only on the prevalence of, but also with regard to, the types of behaviours they believed constituted bullying. Dahlberg, Toal, Swahn and Behrens (2005) emphasised the importance of the researchers' need for clarity of purpose when developing their questionnaire. Goossens, Olthof, and Dekker (2006) endorsed using peers as informants, though they cautioned that, students may often portray themselves in a more positive way and be less than honest regarding their participation in bullying behaviours. Dr Susan Swearer also promoted the benefits of surveying students, when speaking at a White House conference on bullying in April 2010. She drew attention to the fact

that data from schools will be somewhat different as processes and procedures in place in each school to address the issue of bullying vary.

McLeod (2007) promoted the use of questionnaires, including open and closed questions, as a form of written interview in order to explore stressful life events. Enquiring about bullying can be a sensitive exercise, bearing in mind the apparent reluctance of young people to report or, in the vernacular of many school students, to rat. Though there were visible drawbacks to solely using this method as indicated above, for example, students' self-reported information obtained from questionnaires may be inaccurate or incomplete and not everyone invited to respond to questionnaires will be willing to write their true views on a questionnaire, there was sufficient support from the literature to adopt this approach.

Hong and Espelage (2012) voiced concerns about an over reliance on the use of quantitative methods when studying bullying. They outlined some of the lost opportunities, mainly relating to understanding the aspect of the phenomena being studied, attached to the sole use of quantitative methods. They highlighted how mixed methods approaches, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, have become more widespread as these offer an opportunity to delve more deeply into the reality of the bullying experience. Bryman (2008), on the other hand, urged caution regarding the use of solely qualitative research. His main concern related to the "reliability and generalizability" of findings from this method alone. He too cited benefits from the use of a mixed methods approach. Using a mixed methods approach in this type of research was supported too by Boeije (2009) who remarked "Descriptive questions deal with the 'what' of social phenomena, while explanatory questions deal with the 'why' of these phenomena" (p 25). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) identified the core value of the mixed method approach as being in the potential to develop a better understanding of research problems

wrought by a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the collection and analysis of data.

In his paper supporting an exploratory research approach, Reiter (2013) argued that this method offers an attractive alternative to confirmatory research which he suggested "has become highly efficient in attesting the reliability of its own methods" (Reiter, p.3. 2013). He described exploratory research as a gradual, structured and theory-led investigative process based on previous studies. Thus by not proposing hypotheses, with nothing to confirm or reject, the aim was to deduce students' attitudes, beliefs and expectation from their answers.

3.3.1 - Rationale for a Cross Sectional Approach in the Use of a Questionnaire

As the time frame for this study was relatively short, it was determined that a cross sectional examination of students' views and experiences would be undertaken. Cross-sectional research studies are based on observations that take place in different groups at one time. This means there is no experimental procedure and no variables are manipulated by the researcher. Instead of performing an experiment, the information furnished by the participants, as in a questionnaire, are simply recorded. An analysis of this information can be used to describe the characteristics that exist in the group, but not to determine any relationship that may have occurred. Thus this method was used to gather information only. By accessing different groups of young people, with their attendance at secondary school as one of their shared characteristics, the use of a survey allowed for an examination of information relevant to this study. The information sought included, opinions on and experiences of many aspects of bullying and the frequency of same within the population. Other basic, but important, details such as age, gender and school level were also gathered during this process. Cross sectional approaches are employed in areas of educational, psychological and medical research and this method is used for example, by the world Health Organisation (WHO) in their large scale, repeated cross-sectional

surveying of 11, 13 and 15 year olds for their Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) studies. Similarly, Due, Holstein, Lynch, Diderichsen, Nic Gabhain, Scheidt, and Currie (2005) used a cross sectional approach, including the HBSC survey, in their examination of the health status of adolescents who reported that they had been bullied. In their review of a large number of cross-sectional studies, relating to the effects of peer-victimisation on children, which had been conducted over a twenty-year period, Hawker and Boulton (2000) referred to limitations to the use of this type of design. However, they also commented on the fact that findings from these types of studies were beneficial as guides to further research into the effects of bullying on the psychological well-being of the targeted child and treatment of victims' distress**.** deVaus and deVaus (2001) also recommended the use of cross-sectional design as it allows for the completion of research studies in a relatively short period of time.

3.4 - PARTICIPANTS

The questionnaires were sent to schools prior to the October mid-term break and conducted in most schools after that break. (In two school, the survey was conducted after Christmas, due to the illness of one school Principal during the previous term and the oversight of another). For the purposes of this research, target groups were chosen from within first year and fifth year post-primary school students. First year students were selected for participation in this study as they were in a particular stage of transition in their lives. In the discussion document produced after the INTO (Irish National Teacher's Organisation) Consultative Conference on School Transfer (2008), the authors highlighted that 68% of primary school students transferring to secondary school feared being bullied. Thus it was considered, that first year students who had just entered into their new learning and social environment, would be seeing their secondary school setting with fresh eyes and be more alert to bullying if bullying was happening around

them. Fifth year students were also involved in their own transition phase. My own personal experience shows that the core group arrangements that exists for students at Junior cycle level usually changes and students are regrouped into subject groups, according to their subject choices. Recognising the limitations of time and other resources, it was decided to approach ten post-primary schools using the criteria described below with a view to obtaining responses from between 1,500 and 2,000 students. By working to ensure involvement of students from each school level, in a variety of locations and school types, the aim was to have a group as representative as possible of the school level cohort of interest. The difference in age of respondents between the two year groups was considered to be sufficient to illustrate attitudes among junior cycle and senior cycle students and, to give some indication of students' experience at the two levels of junior cycle and senior cycle in school. Of particular interest in this regard were, students' opinions in relation to the role of their teachers in reacting or responding to school bullying situations and, whether or not, first year students or fifth year students would see reporting concerns or seeking help from a teacher as a realistic option either now or in the future. Students were given the opportunity to give reasons for their choice of action.

In order to achieve a balance of student opinion in Ireland, among the identified age cohort, in a survey about which anyone in this group can have a valid opinion, it was considered to be important that views from a cross section of this student society be obtained. By accessing the school population data from the Department of Education and Skills website (Appendix J), I attempted to achieve a rural/urban and gender balance. With regard to gender balance in schools, the most up to date information available came from research commissioned by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), as part of the NCCA Review of Exploring Masculinities published in May 2002. This report identified that, at the time of the review, the majority of boys (67%) attended mixed gender schools, while at the same time the figure for girls

attending mixed gender schools was 56%. Thus, approximately 61% of students overall, in 2002, were receiving their education in mixed gender schools. The authors of this report highlighted that, while the move towards mixed gender schooling had been slow to begin with in Ireland, the trend was underway. Thus, when seeking to determine location and type of school, it was deemed necessary to consider students' experiences in their single sex or mixed gender classrooms. Among participants in this study, approximately 29% of participants attended single sex schools with just over 70% attending mixed gender schools. This figure compared reasonably well with the figures from 2002-2003 and the comments relating to the trend towards mixed gender education.

More recently, the Department of Education and Skills website gave details regarding the number and type of schools countrywide (see Appendix J). My intention was that this sample should be as representative of the general student population as possible at the designated age or academic levels in Irish schools. Details available on this site supported decisions regarding choice of location and type of schools. The types of school invited to participate varied to include a large (>1000 students) suburban mixed gender Community School, a large (> 700 students) urban Private Girls School, a non-fee paying Boys School in a midlands town, a mixed gender Private School in the suburbs, and several rural and town based Community Schools or Colleges. Schools within the Republic of Ireland, in three of the four Provinces were approached. Seven schools responded to the request to participate in the research and the total number of students surveyed was approximately 1,000. Of those who responded the participants came from schools in the following areas:

Munster

- A fee-paying, mixed gender, private school in a city location;

- A non-fee-paying, VEC in a town with population > 8,000, catering for students from the town and surrounding countryside;

Leinster

- A co-educational Community School in a heavily populated suburban area;
- A fee paying, girls' school in a suburban area;
- A large non-fee paying boys' school in a midlands town with population > 7,000;
- A co-educational secondary school in a town with population >12,000; and,

Connacht

- A co-educational Community School in a town of population >2,500.

3.4.1 - Approaching Schools

As indicated above, an examination of the website of the Department of Education and Skills revealed statistics relating to the types, and student populations, of schools throughout the Republic of Ireland. With the help of my supervisor, Dr Stephen James Minton, a number of schools were identified nationwide and the process of approaching schools began. An introductory letter (Appendix B) was sent via email to the Principals of the targeted schools requesting their participation in this study, and in particular, in the survey process. It was explained to Principals that these surveys would be the initial step in an attempt to further understand young people's bystander roles, and, that they would be completed anonymously by their students, with nothing to identify either the students or the schools participating in the process. These letters were accompanied by two copies of the questionnaire, one with comments included which gave explanations of the rationale behind the questions, (Appendix D) and the other a copy of the questionnaire to be completed by their students (Appendix E). All Principals who agreed to participate indicated that, on the basis that strict anonymity had already been

promised, it was unnecessary to seek parental permission. They all requested general feedback from the survey as a means of informing future planning within their schools.

Envelopes containing the required number of survey questionnaires along with a letter addressed to administering teachers were posted to the participating schools. Envelopes addressed and stamped for return were also included. The letter to teachers outlined guideline instructions for those who would be responsible for conducting the survey with their student groups (Appendix C). This guide incorporated a description of "bullying" as defined on the web site http://www.antibullyingcampaign.ie, of which I was co-founder and a brief explanation of the reason for the survey. Teachers were requested to read this definition to students prior to their completion of the questionnaire and to explain the purpose of the exercise to them. A request was also made to arrange students' seating in such a way as to afford them privacy when answering, and, to provide assistance to any student who may appear to have difficulties in understanding any of the questions. Finally, teachers were invited to indicate at the end of this guide sheet, their own history or experience with the particular survey group, in keeping with the instructions included in the English version of revised Bully/Victim Questionnaire (1996).

3.5 - MATERIALS

Within this section, the process leading to the development and piloting of the survey questionnaire will be outlined.

Dawson (2009) advised the researcher, when planning to survey, to ensure the relevance of the questions to the respondents. As bullying in schools is a topic that is very much to the forefront, in terms of media and public awareness, this topic was one with which most students would be familiar – either directly or indirectly. Thus giving students the opportunity to respond to questions concerning their own experiences and feelings was the first step in further

exploration of their role. By going beyond the identification of common traits or behaviours, and, the labelling of peers according to their behaviour, the aim was to ascertain from respondents the reasons for their actions and their views regarding adult supports which they perceived to be available to them.

3.5.1 - Background to the Development of the Questionnaire

Before beginning the process of drafting the questionnaire, I sought help from a group of six Transition Year students in my school. We came together for an informal conversation during which they shared their views and experiences of school bullying with me. Our school has an active Anti-bullying Programme in place and they were very familiar with the prevention and intervention processes involved. These students were also quite used to engaging in conversations, with me or other teachers, around various bullying related topics. From their first week of entry to secondary school; these students had participated regularly in discussions on the issue of bullying.

3.5.2 - The Programme

The programme these and other students experienced during their time in school consisted of a two strand approach. The first strand involves teaching lessons for the purpose of prevention, while the second strand consists of a formal process of response procedures to incidents of bullying.

The lesson themes include:

- Defining and understanding bullying;
- Describing what it might look like;
- The means by which people bully and the effects it might have on all involved;
- The reasons why people bully - recognising that there are explanations but understanding there are no excuses; and,

- Bullying behaviours as an expression of discrimination towards others of different backgrounds, races, creeds and sexual orientation are among the lesson topics.

Lessons are age appropriate and conducted throughout the school – from 1st to 6th year. Teachers may verbally introduce a topic for discussion, or may introduce the topic for discussion by showing a film. Most lessons involve the use of worksheets and students are encouraged to work together. These lessons conclude with a confidential survey in which students have the opportunity to describe any concerns they may have about issues raised during the lesson. Students are also regularly reminded that any concerns about unkind or disrespectful behaviours towards themselves or others can be reported confidentially. The issue of bullying is also addressed in a cross-curricular fashion mainly by teachers of Religion, English and SPHE.

When reports are made, there is a well-defined response system. As a matter of course, if a concern is raised by a student, parent/guardian, teacher or any other individual, the class group where the concern exists is surveyed. The aim of this is to garner any other information that might be available. The alleged perpetrator is interviewed and encouraged to tell his story. In the majority of cases, students have been found willing to *own their behaviour*. The method of interview does not begin with an accusation but rather a question enquiring of the student as to why he thinks there would be concern about his behaviour. Most often, when guided to reflect with a few more questions, the student reaches the point of being able to describe what he thinks others might be talking about. The student's behaviour is examined with him and he is encouraged to think about and describe the effect that his behaviour is having on his target, as well as on himself, his friends and his classmates. If a student is willing to give an undertaking that he will change his behaviour, he is advised that his behaviour has been a *mistake* and is not to be repeated. He is also aware that the details of this interview (and any further interview) have been transcribed and will be filed safely as a record of the conversation in which he has

acknowledged his behaviour and given his undertaking. Should the student repeat his bullying behaviour, the same system of survey and interview occurs and in most cases, in addition to the interview, his parents are made aware of his behaviour. The aim of this is to seek support for him from his parents. A further breach of promise results in the student being reported to his Year Head. At this stage, repetition (unless otherwise determined) is generally perceived as a matter of discipline.

Having progressed through school, supported by this programme, the Transition Year students involved in the session were considered to have a more subtle awareness of the reality of bullying in their own school than the researcher and greater knowledge of bullying in schools attended by some of their friends. In their regular reference to their friends' experiences in other schools, it was clear that the issue of bullying was a topic for discussion or conversation between these young people and their friends in their social or other activities (e.g. sports) outside of school.

3.5.3 - Students' Views

By way of introduction to the exercise, students were given a page containing twelve simple conversation prompt questions concerning their experiences and observations of bullying in school, and, encouraged to use these to guide their discussion among themselves (Appendix A). With little participation on my part, the six students discussed the issue of bullying over two class periods – 80 minutes. During the course of this conversation, I sought clarification of any ambiguity of meaning in statements made by students.

At this stage of the debate around bullying (locally, nationally and internationally) there were few surprises from the students' conversation in this small group discussion. They identified bullying behaviour in the way it had been described to them, recognising that it can be physical, verbal or social in nature and that, within each of these categories, there are an

abundance of harmful and hurtful actions that students (and others) may take against each other. The notion of repeated negative behaviour being a necessary constituent of defining the bullying was rejected by one student who proposed that the behaviour does not have to be repeated. He argued that the effect of a one off incident may be forceful enough to ensure long term damage. Informed by their personal experiences, and comparing it with that of their friends in other schools, the general view among the group was that, there is always a potential for bullying to happen but, it's what happens next is the big issue. They agreed among themselves that talking about it before it happened (teaching about bullying), and not ignoring it until it happened, made their own experiences somewhat different compared to that of some of their friends.

When considering the effects on the classroom atmosphere of explicit actions or undercurrents of bullying, the common consensus was that this creates general unease, lack of focus on the topic being taught and a sense of watchfulness. Among these six students four stated they would watch the event unfolding, thus being distracted from their work, while two others were confident enough in this group to admit that they would be watching out for themselves. All said that if it was a case of someone's possessions being taken and passed along that they would try to avoid participation – indicating that they would not take it to return to the rightful owner. When asked about the option of holding on to the item to return to its owner, all agreed that it would be the right thing to do, even though none of them was sure that he would do it.

The final issue to be addressed within this conversation related to students' views of reasons for non-reporting of incidents and the actions they would like from the adult population in the school. The notion of "ratting", as being an excuse not to tell, did not feature highly for this failure in their school. This was due to the programme in place there where students inform on the basis that the perpetrator of the bullying will be spoken to and, if he is willing, guided to

change his behaviour. Thus, he is given the opportunity to reform and the consequence of his actions is a meeting with a member of the Anti-bullying team and not a punishment. They identified this initial report as being a means of guiding someone away from his harmful behaviour and helping him to avoid further trouble for himself. Two students suggested that anyone who regularly bullied others should face more rigorous responses than a conversation with a member of the Anti-bullying team. They were aware of the progression of consequences within the system, but nonetheless wanted to highlight their shared view that punishment, as a consequence, was often an appropriate response. The fact that regular general surveys were a feature of their school schedule, also provided opportunities to raise concerns, should they exist, and in some way seemed to minimise the idea in this conversation, that one might be telling tales. Through this general survey, the opportunity was regularly afforded to them to highlight any worries or anxieties they may have had for themselves or others regarding issues of safety or security. According to one of the participants, "you know that others besides yourself will mention if something is wrong".

Discussing experiences of friends who attended other schools, they were in agreement that being seen to be "ratting" was still a very common deterrent to many students in their friends' schools. While this concept seemed less of an issue in our school, it was something we referred to when seeking information regarding bullying concerns. These six students all agreed on the importance of the role of adults in resolving school bullying, and, they highlighted very clearly how, the response of one adult could deter a student from approaching any adult. When asked about situations where someone might report that he or someone else was being picked on, where in fact no hurt was intended, these students agreed that it would still be important to investigate the matter and that the thoroughness of the investigation was important to ensure that no one would be falsely accused, or even more importantly, punished for bullying when there

was none. During the course of this conversation students recognised that the bullying prevention message came from all members of staff in their school which meant that, even the less observant teachers would still co-operate in passing on or supporting the message. They were quite clear that friends in other schools would not feel so assured and would be unlikely to report to anyone beyond perhaps a trusted tutor or respected teacher. The views these students expressed, highlighted the importance of a whole school approach for the successful implementation of any Anti-bullying policy.

3.5.4 - Materials Used in the Compilation of the Questionnaire

A number of different resources were used in the development of this questionnaire. These included the 2005 Compendium of Assessment Tools compiled by Dahlberg,Toal, Swahn and Behrens drawing, in particular, from the *Classroom Climate Scale – Attitude and Belief assessment* (p.46) . In addition, elements from the 2011 Compendium of Assessment Tools in Hamburger, Basile, Vivolo, which included questions adapted from *the Bystander, Bully, and/or Victim Scales, D1 Bully Survey (BYS-S)* (Swearer and Carey, 2003 ;Turner, Givens and Pollack 2008, p.68) were used. These followed the formatting style of the *Olweus Bullying Questionnaire* (Solberg and Olweus, 2003, p.53). Having examined the above mentioned questionnaires in their entirety, with the exceptions of the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire, which was not included in full within the Compendium, items were chosen from each of the other questionnaires which best suited the purpose of the enquiry. The answering format of this questionnaire (see Appendix E) consisted of a series of declarative statements in which students were asked to mark the box beside their preferred answer, with the options to make their own personal statement on the topic if none of the given answers communicated their views. The terminology within the original questions was directed, for the most part, towards American students with terms such as “home room” and others being used. In order to avoid confusion, the

questionnaire was tailored to the Irish context in its use of language. There was no specific mention of cyber-bullying. Students were invited, when answering questions 8 and 11, to identify other ways of bullying, besides the traditional methods mentioned, and, had the opportunity to highlight bullying by technological means here. Minton (2007) identified cyber-bullying as an issue of great concern and deserving of a study in its own right. Since then, it has been the topic of research (see for example: Corcoran, Connolly and O'Moore, 2012; O' Moore and Minton, 2010; Perren and Gutzwiller-Helfenfinger, 2012).

3.5.5 - Developing the Questionnaire

In their capacity as editors, Hamburger, Basile, and Vivolo introduced the Compendium of Assessment Tools, designed to measure Bullying Victimization, Perpetration, and Bystander Experiences (2011), with the advice that, when attempting to create a tool to examine bullying it is important to focus on the particular aspect of the phenomenon one is trying to measure or explore. Thus, when embarking on the search to source a questionnaire, the priority was to locate an instrument that would be as effective as possible in gaining an understanding of students' experiences and perspectives. The procedure for the completion of the questionnaire was designed so that the supervising teacher would explain the purpose of the questionnaire, beginning with a definition of bullying (Appendix C). Students would then be asked to answer questions about bullying and being bullied which were formatted in a style similar to the questioning in *the Olweus Bullying Questionnaire* as presented in Hamburger, Basile, Vivolo (2011, p.53). Bearing in mind a central element of this research, relating to reasons for the choices made by by-standing students, questions pertaining to students' perceptions were modelled on questions from *the Classroom Climate Scale – Attitude and Belief assessment* in Dahlberg, Toal, Swahnand Behrens (2005, p.46). This survey measures three components of students' or teachers' perceptions of their classroom climate: student-student relationships,

student-teacher relationships, and awareness/reporting. Further guidance for the choice of questions was taken from *the Bystander, Bully, and/or Victim Scales, D1 Bully Survey (BYS-S)* in Hamburger, Basile, Vivolo (p.69), in which students are invited to indicate their responses in four areas: being bullied by others, observing other students getting bullied, being a perpetrator of bullying and their thoughts about bullying.

The exploration of attitudes, values and perspectives began with questions in which students were asked initially to consider their level of contentment within their school setting. With the exception of questions 3 and 4 respondents were asked to indicate with a series of declarative statements their preferred answer by marking the box beside that answer. Questions 3 and 4 afforded students the opportunity to describe in their own words what behaviours in a class distracted them from their work (question 3) and what behaviour made them feel uncomfortable (question 4).

Questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 invited comments regarding students' own social experience, including the number of friends they had, and their sense of comfort or security in their school and enquired of them regarding their own experience of being bullied. Questions 3 sought to discover the kind of interactions which they may have experienced or observed between pupils or pupils and teachers in the classroom which served to disrupt work or disturb concentration. Question 4 enquired about the behaviours in the classroom which may have caused the student to feel uncomfortable. These two questions gave students the opportunity to describe their own experiences within the classroom as well as their observations of what they may have witnessed in relation to the treatment of others. Questions 9, 10, 11 and 12 asked about students' observations of bullying among their peers, including types and locations of bullying. Questions 13 down to 22 focused on the level and nature of their own participation in bullying situations. Students were asked to consider their own choice of action, their reasoning behind these choices

and their thoughts and feelings when they observed bullying happening. In questions 20, 21, and 22, adapted from Dahlberg, Toal, Swahn and Behrens (2005 p 46), students were invited to express their views regarding the kind of adult participation and support they felt was available to them within their school. Students were asked, if they had sought help from an adult,

- Why they had done so?
- What was the adult's response?
- How did this response make them feel?

The information obtained from the latter three answers would be of particular interest bearing in mind that students' opinions may not support teachers or managements' views regarding how well their schools performed in offering support to students in bullying situations.

Students were not asked directly if they had instigated bullying of others. The aim of these questions was to identify bystander actions during incidents of bullying. Students were invited to express their thoughts or feelings in this section thus, hopefully, contributing to an understanding regarding the motivation for the chosen behaviours. The questionnaire gave students scope to answer in a variety of ways including that they had joined in the bullying, walked away from bullying, tried to intervene or sought help from adults. In this regard, the questionnaire looked for tendencies towards the types of bystander behaviour referred to by Salmivalli (1996), for example, as reinforcers, assistants, outsiders and defenders.

3. 6 - PROCEDURE

Within this section, the process leading to the piloting and sending out of the survey questionnaire to schools for completion by students will be outlined.

3.6.1 - Piloting the Questionnaire

Following the initial deliberation by the six Transition Year students in my school, using the materials described above, I developed a draft questionnaire which I piloted, with a group of ten male students, ranging in age from 12 years to 16 years of age and from class groups which included 1st, 2nd, 3rd transition and 5th years in the same school. The final construction of the questionnaire was designed to take into account different standards of literacy and students' abilities to understand the questions being asked. It was explained to the students involved in the piloting exercise that this was a trial run of a survey to be done in other schools, and, that the purpose of the questionnaire was to discover the experiences, observations and attitudes of young people in relation to bullying in schools. Students were advised that any suggestions they might have to make regarding the questions which could add to this understanding, or help in the exploration of these views, would be very welcome. No suggestions were made and students answered the questions to the best of their abilities.

These students were unanimous in their expression of satisfaction with the formatting of the question and answer style as a means of expressing their views. There were no obvious difficulties for participants in the piloting exercise regarding comprehension of, or ability to answer the questions. As might be expected, the junior students (1st Years) took slightly longer to complete their surveys. No changes were deemed necessary and the decision to begin the process of requesting schools for their assistance in this aspect of the research project was made.

3.7 - DATA ANALYSIS

As described above, declarative type answers were offered to survey respondents, with the option to write their own responses if what was available did not suit. An excel document, which was designed which took into account all options, including "other" to record responses.

Within this section the method of recording of student responses and the different approaches used in the analysis of data will be described.

3.7.1 - Recording the Data

Understanding students' perceptions of relationships and social interactions within their school environment, specifically in the area of bullying, required developing an understanding of some sense of the impact of these social interactions on them. As the completed surveys were returned by participating schools, the response sheets were numbered and data was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet which had been created to allow for all possible answers to questions in the survey, including students' own views, to be recorded. The information provided by individual questionnaire respondents were recorded alongside details of the age, gender and school level of respondents. This allowed for an examination of students' reports of their experiences and their emotional and practical response behaviours and of a comparison of these results by age, gender and school level. The data was inputted on a school by school basis so that answers, given by junior and senior cycle students from the same school, were recorded one group after the other. While all students and their schools had been assured of strict anonymity, in entering of the data, I recorded the school name, so therefore type of school. This particular detail was later altered on the document by assigning a capital letter to each school, in order to honour the assurance given. The purpose of the numbering of sheets was to ensure that students' responses to questions 3 and 4, in which students were requested to describe their experiences in their own words would, when coded, be assigned correctly to their contributors.

Once recorded, a closer examination of the details collected was undertaken, including an investigation of the age and gender profile of participants, their statements regarding their experiences and awareness of bullying, the most prevalent form(s) of bullying and their responses to being witness to bullying. As will be highlighted in Chapter Four, several schools had

conducted the surveys with classes other than the targeted first and fifth year groups. In one school the survey had been completed by second years instead of first years and, in another, by Transition Years as well as fifth years. The excel document indicated thus and further discussion referred to Junior and Senior Cycle students.

In the main the questions were qualitative in nature, concerned with developing an understanding of students' opinions, feelings and experience leading to a greater awareness of their social world. Schutt (2012) acknowledged the different and valuable outcomes achieved by both Qualitative and Quantitative methods. She highlighted the difference between the work of the qualitative data analyst who, as an active participant, strives to develop a deep understanding of the contributors or participants of the study and the quantitative data analyst whose role is that of a detached investigator of specific relations among distinct variables. The review of the data acquired from students' responses to the questionnaire survey involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative analysis procedures in a mixed methods approach.

3.7.2 - Quantitative Data Analysis

Using this approach, the descriptive details and responses given by students were examined and account taken of what was said and how many said it. Thus this phase of the enquiry consisted of recording, counting and comparisons. Goossens, Olthof, and Dekker (2006, p.343) advocated the use of absolute criteria (percentage scores) rather than relative criteria (z-scores) when considering methods to measure involvement in bullying gained from peer information. Thus, the early analysis of the research involved noting the frequencies of the variables – as in, for example, students' year group level and gender in relation to their stated attitudes to bullying, inclinations to look for help and other behaviour choices. Responses were then examined seeking to identify differences or similarities in students' responses.

3.7.3 - Qualitative Data Analysis

Marsland, Wilson, Abeyasekera, and Kleih (2000) promoted quantitative approaches as helpful when attempting to organise qualitative information. In this case, the quantitative analysis could be regarded as the numeric representation of the details returned in the survey and would be the basis of the qualitative interpretation, description and explanation of opinions and experiences reflected in the data. When the information gained from students' responses had been documented, a further examination of the results was carried out which sought to identify, for example, the number of students whose stated views could be interpreted as anti-bullying, pro-bullying or indifferent. It was important to be aware that this latter interpretation could not be confirmed.

Bearing in mind that the survey responses provided by students had to be accepted at face value, the aim of this early stage analysis was to examine the information provided and to consider if it would be possible to interpret and to understand more clearly, their motivations regarding their own bystander behaviour choices and their perceptions of supports available to them within their school. Thus examination and comparison of the responses made by junior students and senior students in the same school, sought to determine how, or if, the experience of juniors, in relation to their perception of the help that was available to them in their schools when bullying happened, tallied with the behaviour choices of the seniors in a bullying context in the same school. Similarly, an examination, of the responses to questions 5 through to 12 (see Appendix E), given by students in each level in the same school, sought to determine how these students perceived their own bullying experiences and that of their peers in terms of regularity and type. A further analysis of this data on gender basis examined the experiences as described by male and female students to see what differences, if any, existed in terms of experience or observation.

To develop an understanding of each responding students' participation in the bullying process, question13 asked about students' own level of participation in a bullying role, while questions 14 and 17 sought motivations for their involvement, if they had indicated that they had engaged in the process. Question 15 was designed to explore the students' emotional responses when they witnessed bullying and question 16 attempted to discover if, influenced by these emotions, students took any particular form of action. Questions 18 and 19 sought specific reasons for these actions.

Finally, questions 20, 21 and 22 were included to elicit from students their perceptions of the help that was available to them in their school and whether or not, those who had sought help when concerned about bullying would do so again. As stated above, comparison was made between the responses given by junior students who reported trying to help a bullied peer (see questions 21 and 22 Appendix E) and the responses of senior students in the same school. It was clear that any apparent link between answers could not be verified as further questioning of this element had not been included in the survey. Neither, however, could it be ignored if there were a sufficiently large number of students indicating similar responses.

Following the initial analysis in which responses from junior and senior students in each school were compared and contrasted, a further comparison of responses from students within the same school was made on a gender basis, where it was appropriate. The purpose of this was to identify what, if any, differences existed in the experiences and behaviours of male and female students.

Having studied data from individual schools in these ways, the next step was to compare data between schools. The aim of this was to discover if the attitudes and behaviours of students from the different types of school, single or mixed gender, community and non-fee paying or private fee paying schools, differed to any great extent. Thus, analysis of this aspect of the data

was to determine if type of school could be said to influence students' behaviour choices. In this examination, a comparison was made between the responses of junior students across all schools and also of senior students across all schools. As the majority of the schools were mixed gender schools, another area of interest was in the comparison of the experiences and opinions of students in single sex schools against those in mixed gender schools. 151 of the 507 girls (30%) attended a single sex school and 143 of the 509 boys (28%) did likewise.

Similarly, the experiences and observations of students in private schools compared to those of students in the community and voluntary school sectors were examined. In the private school sector there was one all girls' secondary school and one mixed gender school, both located in city areas. Responses of students in schools located in the suburbs of cities and those located in towns catering for students from the town and surrounding countryside were also examined and compared.

3.7.4 - Developing a Coding System

In the logging of responses to the questionnaire survey, data from all but two of the questions were recorded, stored and categorised using descriptive coding. The demographic details were included in this data entry process, to be examined and quantitatively analysed at a later date as described above.

Richards (2009) described coding in qualitative research as a method of data reduction whereby data is retained and understood within an iterative type process and emphasised that coding is purposeful and part of a process. Suter (2012) explained the purpose of qualitative data analysis as being the means to discover "emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings" (p.344). Chenail (2012) referred to qualitative data analysis as a form of "knowledge management" (p.248) and quoted Davenport & Prusak, (1998) who described it as a means to "transform data into information and information into knowledge and knowledge into

wisdom." The purpose of the analysis of the data provided in the survey questionnaires was to understand the classroom and peer group experiences of respondents on their own terms rather than in terms of predefined measures and hypotheses.

As previously mentioned, Questions 3 and 4 sought to discover the kind of interactions which students may have experienced or observed, among pupils or between pupils and teachers in the classroom, which they found to be disruptive to their work and concentration, or, generally discomfiting. When answering these questions respondents were given the opportunity to describe their own experiences or behaviours within the classroom as well as their observations of how they may have witnessed others behaving or being treated. Unlike the other questions in this survey, students were given no suggested answers but were invited to express themselves freely. As Schutt (2011) proposed, the analysis of text, such as the descriptive answers to questions 3 and 4, was "a way to understand what participants "really" thought, felt, or did in some situation or at some point in time" (p. 321). When all other responses had been recorded into the excel document, the process of coding the information provided by students in their responses to questions 3 and 4 was begun.

Prior to the initial coding exercise, the descriptions given by the students in answer to questions 3 and 4 were read and transcribed. In doing so, the response from each student to questions 3 and 4 were written side by side. For example:

Survey number:	Q. 3 behaviour that distracts you	Q 4 behaviour makes you feel uncomfortable
1	Loud noise/ students talking	Teacher giving out/ students fighting

The aim of this exercise was to develop an awareness of the various types of activities in students' classroom environments which caused them to be distracted or to feel uneasy. Having transcribed all of these responses, the descriptions of behaviours were loosely linked by type and by their effect. For example, behaviours which were understood to be not directly targeted at the respondent were highlighted and grouped together. These included loud or unruly behaviours, physical contact with others and disrespectful behaviour towards teachers and other students. Responses indicating behaviour that was directed in a more personal way towards others such as unwanted attention from peers or bullying of peers or of oneself were considered to fall into a different category. The social isolation of students by their peer group was a category in its own right. Having divided these responses into subgroups of social interactions between students or students and teachers which could cause unease or discomfort to others, I began the process of coding behaviours.

When developing the method for coding behaviours within the structure of the table of other results, it was necessary to allow for recording of multiple behaviours as a number of students had described two or more distracting or discomfiting behaviours. In allowing for multiple responses the aim was to ensure that, in so far as possible, all students' views had been taken into account. Responses to question 3: What kind of behaviour between students distracts you from your class work? included mention of a variety of disruptive behaviours, including loud noise, shouting, talking, throwing papers and other unnamed objects (one student described the throwing of missiles), insubordinate behaviour where students refused instructions by teachers or interrupted their teaching and arguments or disagreements between teachers and students, or between students and students. A small number of respondents also indicated bullying behaviour. While this question enquired about behaviour between students which could cause distraction, several respondents introduced pupil- teacher conflicts as being a cause of such

distraction. Any student who identified bullying as a distraction had used the expression but had not expanded on their statement in any way to indicate what type of bullying had, or was occurring. Disruptive behaviours or behaviours that distracted a student from their work which were identified in question 3 were assigned the codes alphabetically from a) to h).

Responding to question 4: *What kind of behaviour between students makes you feel uncomfortable in class*? fewer students than those who claimed to be distracted indicated feelings of discomfort within their group. Among the responses were references to whispering among students, personal comments directed towards self or others, as well as inappropriate sexual conversation. Students also mentioned being stared at by others and being poked with pencils or other objects. The issue of students' disrespect towards teachers was also raised and teachers losing their temper or raising their voices to individual students also caused unease. The behaviours that caused discomfort were also coded alphabetically with the same allowance for multiple answers. Students who indicated that nothing distracted them or made them feel uncomfortable were coded with an *upper case* N to distinguish from those students who did not answer the questions at all. In these cases, the sections were left blank during the recording process.

The purpose of coding this qualitative data was to;

- Reflect on the information within the coded segments, to identify common themes with a view to drawing conclusions about the different classifications of responses, and their meanings within the project;
- Encourage questions about how the categories related to others within the data, and to construct theories about those relations;

- Gather expressions of thoughts and feeling from different pupil sources, in order to develop some understanding of students' classroom experiences and to compare, where possible, their attitudes to, and evaluations of, these experiences;
- Make further categories by finding different dimensions in the data gathered by the first coding; and,
- Examine combinations of categories in order to find patterns in attitudes or experiences on this topic. For example, by gender, age or different types of schools and to search for stereotypical characteristics of behaviour, specifically bullying and students' emotional or attitudinal responses.

Categorizing students' responses in this way facilitated the representation of the same information quantitatively alongside the other recorded data contained within the excel document.

3.7.5 - Amending the Coding System

As stated above, all responses to questions 3 and 4 had been read and transcribed. Once fully transcribed, these answers were gathered into sets of different types of behaviour with common behaviours which, as Gibbs (2008) described, "belonged together" being coded by assigning a letter. However, as the process of coding continued, it became clear that the types of behaviours identified by students were not adequately explained within this system. The system, as initially set out, was too loose and failed to distinguish clearly the subtle differences between behaviours and their effects. As the goal was to understand both the emotional and the practical experiences of students, it was essential to ensure an appropriate coding mechanism would be applied. Thus, while aware of their potential failure to aid this understanding, the decision was made to continue the process as it had been constructed in order to try to identify more precise groupings.

When 60% of the responses had been alphabetically coded, the process of recoding began. By this stage of the process clearer distinctions had been made and a new system of coding had emerged. While the initial examination of distracting and discomfiting behaviours had indicated differences in the types of behaviour which caused these feelings, these differences now seemed insufficient to warrant separate categories of codes for each set of answers. The process of recoding has been supported as a necessary exercise in order to try to extract as much information as possible from the research (see for example Saldana, 2008 and Schutt, 2011). Consequently, a new method of coding was developed and assigned to both sets of answers. As with the initial set of codes, the alphabetical application of letters to behaviours was used so as to easily determine the number of students who reported having been distracted from their work (question 3) by certain behaviours or who indicated behaviours played out by others which made them feel uncomfortable (question 4) within their class group. On occasion reciprocal behaviours, for example, "they are always slagging each other" were mentioned. Even though two or more parties engaged in this behaviour and there was nothing to indicate that anyone was being bullied, if it was enough to distract a student from their work or to make them feel uncomfortable, it was worth noting. Thus, the coding system was revised as set out in Appendix G.

The various types of behaviour were grouped into categories according to the following criteria. Behaviours in category *a* created a sense of unease for respondents, but with no certainty that the individual who felt uneasy was in fact being targeted. With regard to category *b Talking or messing:* unless students gave more detail of the type of behaviour, the comment *messing* was interpreted to mean a behaviour, like talking, which would distract or disturb but was not necessarily intimidating or, at least, intended to be so. Thus behaviours as described in *b, c* and *d* all had potential to disrupt learning or concentration and even to frustrate but, with a few exceptions, there was generally nothing to indicate students feeling they were being targeted in

order to cause them upset. Once the behaviour became physical, category *e,* students could more easily interpret these actions as specifically directed or even hostile to them.

It was clear from students' answers that argumentative or confrontational relationships between teachers and pupils or among pupils or unkindness of any sort impacted on others in the group looking on. These types of negative interpersonal relationships were grouped according to type of behaviours into categories *f* to *n.* The final two categories allowed for descriptions of other behaviours, rarely or seldom repeated as in category *o* and category *p* where students' indicated that they found the distress of others to be a distraction or a cause of discomfort to them. Individuals who identified unique, or almost unique, responses to interaction between their peers in the classroom, were assigned *"O"* (upper case) and their responses were recorded in Appendix F.

Further in-depth examination of the transcribed responses continued until a comprehensive review of the initial method had been completed. While some of the statements by students were straightforward and fitted easily into categories, others required closer scrutiny. Some of the responses could have been assigned to more than one category and in these cases, a judgement was made regarding the code to be applied. For example, when a student described that she felt uncomfortable when asked about her personal relationships, but had not indicated previously in her response to question 5 in the survey (see Appendix E) that she felt she had been bullied during that term, I assigned the code letter *p) Being the target of unwanted attention* and not the letter *k) Me being bullied,* as I felt it was more appropriate. When, following this type of procedure, the exercise of recoding had been completed the data was entered into the excel document of survey results.

3.8 - CONCLUSION TO PHASE 1

As outlined in the limitations section below several inadequacies in the questioning became obvious during the analysis of students' responses. What was clear from the data, however, was a general sense that the majority of students were reluctant to seek support from adults when bullying was being perpetrated. From the over one thousand second level students who had been surveyed four hundred and fifty-four students indicated that they had witnessed others in their group being bullied, while five hundred and fifty-one students indicated that they had not. Of those who witnessed others being bullied, one hundred and eighty, almost 40%, reported that they had never asked an adult for help and, of those who reported experiencing bullying as well as being witness to the bullying of others, thirty-three, just under 30%, responded that they had never reported their experience or observations to an adult. Fourteen students who had reported bullying to a teacher said they would be careful to whom they would report again and seven more replied that they would not report to an adult again. These findings were important as one of the main elements of interest in relation to this research focused on school students' attitude to seeking adult help in an attempt to resolve or close down bullying situations.

As a final review and before beginning phase 2 of the study, I read the official school policies of schools attended by responding students. This was to identify if students' responses indicated an awareness of, or confidence in, their system and to examine some of their responses within the context of their schools' stated support procedures. An overview of the contents of these policies is described briefly in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.6. This description is limited in its content, highlighting only the main themes, in order to ensure the anonymity of all schools is preserved.

METHODOLOGY PHASE 2

3.9 - INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

While providing important information regarding the attitudes and values of second level students on the topic of school bullying, and thus being a valuable research tool, the format of questioning within this survey only provided limited feedback. The analysis of data provided confirmed findings already highlighted in previous studies with regard to students' experiences of, and participation in, bullying behaviour, (see Minton, 2010) and indicated reluctance on the part of many students to report incidents of bullying and to seek help from adults (see O'Moore, Kirkham and Smith, 1998 Yeung, and Leadbeater 2010). Rosen, Underwood, Gentsch, Rahdar, and Wharton (2012) had cautioned that "Victims may go unrecognized if their experiences are not reflected in the questionnaire items used or if they do not perceive themselves to have experienced traumatic bullying". Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt and Lemme (2006) also warned that since teachers' definitions of bullying differed from that of their students, there was a continuing risk that teachers would miss incidents of bullying.

In a study conducted among 830 school children in Scotland, Hunter, Boyle and Warden (2004) found that children were most likely to seek help if they thought there was a possibility of a successful outcome. In a follow up study to one in which students had been asked to identify their experience as being *a victim, an escaped victim* or *a non-victim*, Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor, and Chauhan (2004) found that those who perceived themselves as still being victimised had experienced similar types of bullying to those who *had escaped* . They noted however that, those who continued to be victimised highlighted that they were less likely to report the fact that they were being bullied.

Dillon, writing in *The Principal* (September/October 2010), proposed that, when bullying occurs in school, despite the anti-bullying beliefs of the vast majority in the school community, no one is to blame but all are responsible. He highlighted the fact that most school bullying is unseen by staff and that the most common official response in schools comes through the discipline structures.

As described in the literature concerns have been raised regarding students' perception on the lack or inappropriateness of support offered to them by teachers in school (see Carroll- Lind and Kearney,2004; Frisen, Jonsson and Persson 2007). On the other hand, Eliot, Cornell, Gregory and Fan (2010) highlighted findings indicating greater engagement of students in bullying prevention in schools where school staff worked to provide a supportive climate, while Way, Reddy and Rhodes (2007) proposed that, students' perception of their teachers as competent, caring and respectful, generally resulted in more positive classroom behaviours by their students but cautioned that this positive attitude may reduce as they progress through school. If students are not going to seek help, either on their own behalf or on behalf of others, it is essential for their adults to be sufficiently sensitive to the fact that bullying is happening and confident enough to act. Scarpaci (2006) advised that "teachers must learn to recognise the indicators of bullying, in both the victims and the bully" (p. 172).

Following the analysis of students' responses in the questionnaire surveys, which had been distributed to and returned by seven secondary schools countrywide, it was deemed necessary to undertake further enquiry. An examination of the data garnered from the returned surveys had revealed more questions than answers, specifically in the area of students 'reluctance to seek help for their bullied peers, when they had indicated that they found bullying of others to be distressing. As stated previously, one very obvious limitation in the design of the survey questionnaire was the omission of a question querying students' reasons for some of their

responses. Thus the next phase of the enquiry would seek to discover what prevented students from taking positive action. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to describe in detail the approach taken during the course of the second phase of this research. This section will include:

- An explanation of the rationale behind the second phase of the study involving a focus group discussion with young adults who had left secondary school in the previous two to four years.
- An account of the work carried out prior to this discussion, including the choice of prompt questions and a piloting of the exercise.
- A description of the process of engaging and a profile of the participants.
- An outline of the process of the group discussion.
- A description of the procedures used in the examination of themes in the discussion.
- Ethical concerns relating to both phases of this study
- Methodological limitations of the approaches taken in Phase 1 and Phase 2.

3.9.1 - Justification for Continuing the Study.

As pointed out in the conclusion to Phase1 of this study, information gleaned from the questionnaire survey, supported by the research findings cited above, indicated that further engagement with participants in this study should seek to discover what action students who found themselves being targeted for bullying, or who witnessed and felt unable to act, would have liked others, both students and staff to take. The survey, as constructed, had enquired of students regarding what they did but, as it transpired, the opportunity to express why they did it was inadequate. This could have been due, in part, to some students' lack of ease with writing or unwilling to do so. Whatever the reason, it was clear, the latter question, enquiring of students as to what supports they would like to have been offered, is one that may have been addressed less often. It is likely that many schools, through their Anti-bullying or SPHE programmes, have

already addressed the issue of positive bystander behaviour, although, inviting students to adopt the role of targeted student and asking them to consider what support they would like from others may happen less often. It could also be less likely that students have been invited to offer suggestions or make requests of the adults in their schools in relation to mechanisms for responding to or dealing with bullying among students.

When contemplating possible approaches to be utilised in an effort to investigate further to discover these views, one method considered was the initiation of a discussion with young adults, who had recently left school, either individually or in groups. It was possible that, as these young people were no longer in the school system, they could have greater clarity, or at least a different understanding, to that of students still at school. This change in perspective being the result of hindsight and their ability to examine their experiences from their position outside the school system. Bearing in mind the limitations due to time constraints and the value of the flow of ideas and memories which can occur in small group conversations, the preferred next step involved a focus group discussion including participants of different educational experiences and backgrounds.

3.10 - RATIONALE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP METHOD

While focus group sessions have been proposed as a practical and cost effective way (both time and money) of gathering information it has also been recognised for the potential it offers to pursue lines of enquiry and develop new insights and understandings. Powell and Single (1996) described a focus group as consisting of a number of individuals, with some level of shared experience, who have been selected and brought together by researchers to engage in conversation and express their views on aspects of that shared experience which is the topic of the discussion. Goss and Leinbach (1996, p 116) proposed that "The main advantage of focus

group discussions is that both the researcher and the research subjects may simultaneously obtain insights and understandings of particular social situations *during* the process of research." Nagle and Williams (2013) suggested that focus groups offer a forum for group interviews during which the researcher has the opportunity to capture deeper information more economically than through individual interviews. They proposed that, with the encouragement of a skilled facilitator, participants can engage together and provide very important information regarding their attitudes, values and experiences. Thus, by undertaking the second phase of this research and conducting this type of discussion, it was possible to avail of the opportunity to enquire about their school experiences with the participants and to clarify or further investigate any issues arising. This had not been possible when surveying students. Morgan (1998) pointed to the combined use of focus groups and surveys as being one of the leading ways of relating qualitative and quantitative methods while cautioning that "such designs also raise a complex set of issues, since the two methods produce such different forms of data" (p. 134).

3.10.1 - Research Aims for Phase 2 of this Study

As described in section 3.2.1 above, the aim of this study was to gain an understanding of young people's interpretations of their role, or options to act, in an environment where bullying had occurred and to determine from them their reasons for their actions or inactions in these situations. It was intended that students' responses in relation to seeking adult intervention could provide an understanding of their impressions of their schools' support for and commitment to bullied students. The details gathered through the questionnaire was useful in its confirmation of information already available in the literature on the types and effects of bullying behaviour. It did not, however, provide any new insight into reasons why the vast majority of responding students either did not indicate that they had reported their concerns to an adult or else, specified that they had not done so. Using findings from data provided by the survey responses in Phase 1

to guide the course of the conversation, the aims of Phase 2 were, by means of a focus group discussion forum, to give young adults, who had relatively recently left school, an opportunity to explain, in a general way, many of the issues which had emerged during the course of the reading and recording of the survey data. Thus the aims of the second phase of this study were to explore with participants:

- Their memories of relationships in their classrooms, their own sense of comfort therein and the level and types of bullying that occurred;
- Their view of how students who were targeted responded or were supported by others in the group;
- The kinds of actions others in the group (by-standers), who witnessed bullying, might have taken and their understanding as to why by-standing students would choose these response actions;
- Their memories of their own participation, within their class groups, in bullying awareness raising or bullying prevention exercises or lessons in school and their opinions on the benefits gained from participating in these exercise;
- The level of their awareness of their schools' policies on and response procedures to bullying and how they saw these acted out; and,
- Their views of the kinds of teaching or support procedures they had experienced in their schools and their perceptions of the manner in which these supports were offered and availed of.

With regard to the last stated aim above, it was considered that as the school experiences of the second level students, who had been surveyed for phase one of this study, and the focus group participants had all occurred within a similar time frame, which was, prior to the new directive issued by the Department of Education and Skills in relation to anti-bullying procedures

(Circular 0045/2013), the contribution by members of a focus group might offer some helpful insights into the reasons for some of the responses provided in the survey and provide guidance in relation to implementation of procedures as directed in that circular.

3.10.2 - Objectives

As stated above the focus group forum, was regarded as a good setting in which to discuss issues raised through a review of the survey results, while also providing the opportunity to follow up and further examine issues that would arise naturally during the course of the conversation. Thus, concentrating on questions raised, rather than answered, by respondents to the questionnaire in Phase 1 relating to their reports and descriptions of discomfort within their class group and the relatively low levels of self - reports of having offered practical help to targeted students, I began to develop a series of prompt questions to guide the group discussion. Thus by engaging in this discussion the objectives were to determine from these young adults:

- Their personal experiences which would include, identifying oneself as having been targeted for bullying (or not), their observations of the manner and the frequency of bullying of their peers and their willingness to seek help on their own behalf or that of others, when bullying had occurred;
- Their knowledge of the types of bullying response mechanisms in their schools and the nature of supports provided to students who were bullied;
- Their motives for seeking to, or not seeking to, access adult support in bullying situations and the level of ease with which it could be done; and,
- Any additional recommendations they might offer regarding school based activities, which they believed could limit the frequency and effects of peer-victimisation.

3.10.3 - Materials Used

The analysis of survey responses proved helpful in developing a framework upon which to base the group discussions. In this analysis it emerged that there had been omissions in the questioning which contributed to a persistence of ignorance regarding the reasons for aspects of students' behaviours or attitudes.

When beginning the process to devise the prompt questions with which to guide the conversation, reference was made to the TAC (Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Actions during Conflict) questionnaire developed by Aceves, Hinshaw, Mendoza-Denton and Page-Gould (2009). These authors had pointed to the dearth in knowledge relating to students' perception of their teachers' abilities to address conflict situations or bullying and suggested that some research indicated the importance of these perceptions in relation to students' coping mechanisms in bullying situations and their decisions regarding seeking help from their teachers. With this in mind, they devised the TAC survey in which students were invited to grade their responses using a 1 – 4 Likert type scale ranging from completely disagreeing (1) to completely agreeing (4) with each presented statement. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section one dealt with *General conflict items* and section two related to *Incident specific- victimization items*. As the central theme of this research related to bullying, issues of conflict resolution were not considered as being appropriate to the conversation and so conversation prompts were phrased as questions relating to school bullying. These questions were set out in Appendix F and included queries regarding the most prevalent forms of bullying witnessed or experienced by participants, their knowledge and their level of awareness of the application of school procedures when bullying occurred, their evaluation of the effectiveness of staff in the use of these systems and the impact of this aspect of school life on their overall memories of school.

3.11 - PILOTING THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Before inviting participants to engage within this type of process, and with the benefit of experience gained during the development of the survey questionnaire used in Phase 1 of this study, the discussion was piloted following the procedures set out below. The aim of this was to ascertain if any oversight had occurred in identifying the topics with which to guide the course of the discussion in the focus group session.

3.11.1 - Participants in the Pilot Discussion

Personal contact with one young man resulted in one young woman and three other young men aged between 20 and 23 responding to an invitation to participate in the piloting exercise in preparation for the formal focus group discussion. In accordance with Creswell's (2008) advice regarding giving written information about the research project to the Gatekeeper, in this case my initial contact person, I had given this young man a brief overview of the research findings from the questionnaire survey and based on this an explanation of the purpose of our group discussion. He had passed this information to his contacts who agreed to participate. The participants in this conversation were identified by number, 1 – 5, and R represented my input into the conversation. Three young men, numbered 3, 4 and 5, had attended all-boys secondary schools. Numbers 3 and 5 had attended the same school. The other young man had attended a mixed gender private school, while the only female participant had attended an all-girls secondary school. All of the contributors were attending or, in the case of one young man had just finished, University. The meeting took place in a warm, comfortable and private environment where we were seated around a table.

3.11.2 - Opening the Discussion

Bearing in mind that a focus group is not a group interview but a group discussion reliant for its success on the fact that participants are able to talk to each other about the topic of interest,

it was important to create an environment which allowed the participants the opportunity to disagree or agree with each other. To ease the participants in the pilot group into the discussion, they were provided with a copy of the prompt questions (See Appendix F). These questions formed a template to guide the course of the conversation. It was explained that the object of this pilot exercise was to determine what, if anything, had been omitted from the plan of the conversation, the aim of which was to understand, in a general way, the points of view of young adults who had left school within the previous two or three years regarding formal or informal responses to bullying within their school systems. Some participants chose to make notes on their prompt sheets as they read down through them. By handing out a copy of the prompt questions it was hoped to ensure a flow in the conversation where there would be no surprises and a thread connecting the various elements could help to draw the conversation together and also protect against wandering off the topic.

In my introduction to the conversation I explained my research aim and described how my information to date had been generated by an analysis of information gained through responses to questionnaire surveys which had been conducted in a number of second level schools, among junior and senior cycle students, in locations around the country. I further explained that, having studied students' responses to the survey questionnaire, it had become clear that a vital piece of information had not been sought from respondents. This related to the fact that, while expressions of disappointment by some adults regarding apathy or inaction on the part of some student bystanders were not uncommon, I had not included an opportunity in the survey which would have allowed for an expression of emotions regarding the level of support students felt were available to them from their adults in these situations. Perhaps, students would have expressed similar disappointments due to feeling that they had been, in some way let down by the responses of some of their adults? I told the group that several previous studies had

sought to discover the role of adults, particularly teachers, in school bullying situations and that survey respondents in this study had been asked one question in the survey which specifically related to their expectations of their teachers in this regard. I explained how I felt that, during the course of my development and construction of the questionnaire, I had missed an opportunity to enquire more deeply into students' perceptions of these adult roles. While it could have been inferred from some students' responses that teachers' reactions to reports of bullying had been, in some way, unsatisfactory (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.9.3) I had not tried to query the reason for this in the original questionnaire survey. However, the information which had been sought and provided had provoked further curiosity regarding young people's ability or willingness to identify or describe some personal qualities in their teachers or procedures in place in their schools which they found to be helpful or which they believed, had they been available, would have encouraged and facilitated them to seek help when they became aware of bullying happening.

I indicated that, as a result of what I had discovered through the survey, my research question had changed from a quest to understand the reticence of school students to come forward to report bullying and had become instead a mission to identify, with the help of the young adults in the next phase of the study, the procedures, practices and structures which, if available in schools, would act as possible supports to report concerns about bullying.

The piloted discussion was not recorded but all points made were noted precisely and confirmed with the speaker. The need to respect confidentiality of and by all members of the group was raised and a guarantee given that no individual or their school would be identified in the writing up of the minutes of this meeting. In the event that the discussion might provoke some memory or feeling in them that, at a later stage, they might like to discuss further, I confirmed my personal contact details with all participants.

3.11.3 - Debriefing

When the conversation concluded, I checked with participants regarding their feelings on having been involved with this pilot exercise. All were upbeat and none expressed anxiety or concern regarding anything we had discussed. I reminded them that they could contact me at any stage should they think of anything later. Two of the young men were very enthusiastic regarding the project, as they understood it, and asked me to call on them at any stage if I needed further help.

3.12 - REVIEWING THE PROMPT QUESTIONS

In preparation for the formal focus group discussion and with the benefit of the pilot exercise to guide me, I examined the eleven prompt questions in the context of the discussion in order to assess their value to the conversation and to identify if any topic had arisen in the discussion which had not been included in the prompts. If so, it could be necessary to insert it into the list in order to guide the flow of any following conversation.

In this regard, the initial query regarding types of bullying had proved to be an effective ice-breaker, where individuals engaged in conversation, highlighting common and different experiences. In the pilot, the second prompt had asked participants to comment on the procedures followed by their schools when bullying occurred. On reflection, it seemed to be appropriate to first enquire of group members regarding what, if any, type of bullying prevention programme had been run in their school. This topic had emerged in the course of the conversation but was in fact very important as it was relevant to school pupils' understanding of their schools' position on bullying and worth including in the formal group discussion. All of the participants had remembered their schools' annual anti-bullying week, with one student remarking that two days after the events it was all forgotten. With some encouragement, they also recalled lessons

on bullying during SPHE (Social, personal and health education) but one pointed out that this was in junior cycle and a long time ago. Thus, in the revision of the prompts, a question enquiring about experiences of awareness raising or bullying prevention lessons was inserted.

Questions 2- 10, relating to the themes of school procedures, types and effectiveness of teacher or organisational responses to bullying were reworded and were retained. The final question, enquiring as to how their experiences or observations had coloured group members' memories of school, was rewritten. The scope of the final prompt was extended to seek recommendations for school authorities, from former students, regarding gaps to be filled in school systems in order to support all students in a respectful and safe environment.

The revised prompt questions are set out in Appendix F.

3.13 - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Having reviewed and revised the prompt questions with a view to introducing queries of significance to this research into the discussion, I began to seek out participants.

3.13.1 - Participants in the Focus Group Discussion

Sourcing participants for this discussion group proved to be quite difficult. An initial thought had been to make a request to students through the School of Education in Trinity College in order to access members for the group. However engaging students, all of whom had undertaken to study Education seemed narrow in its focus and so, instead, efforts were made to engage participants by means of an invitation issued through one of my former students. This proved to be of limited success. Personal contact with this young man resulted in two further volunteers coming forward. A conversation about this project with a guidance counsellor working in a Post Leaving Cert College in the city centre resulted in two further volunteers coming forward, one of whom brought a friend. This latter group of three young adults had only

met at third level and had not shared their secondary school experiences. Hence the group of six contributors to the discussion was formed. The participants included four young men and two young women, aged between 19 and 22, all of whom had left school between two and four years previously. Three of the male participants and one of the females had attended single gender schools in the suburbs of the city. Two of these young men had attended schools in the private sector (one run by a religious order and the other a non-denominational school), the other young man and the young woman had attended single gender schools which were under the trusteeship of religious orders in the non-fee paying voluntary sector. Each of the remaining two participants (one male and one female) had attended large community schools in towns close to their homes in rural areas of the country. As in the case of the pilot exercise, the young people were identified by number.

3.13.2 - Conducting the Focus Group discussion

As before, we enjoyed privacy in a warm and comfortable room with members of the group seated around a table. The prompt questions were handed out to the participants as a conversation guide. The group discussion was recorded and notes were also taken. The need to respect confidentiality of and by all members of the group was raised and a guarantee given that no individual or their former school would be identified in the transcripts of the discussion. In the event that the discussion might provoke some memory or feeling in any of the participants, then or at a later stage, I furnished all group members with my personal contact details.

3.13.3 - Debriefing

It was acknowledged in the planning of this phase that the discussions that would emerge could raise issues for some of the participants. Some of these could be painful. Bearing this in mind, it was important to ensure that any participant who felt in any way uncomfortable after the session would not be left to his or her own devices. At the beginning of the session, prior to the

introduction of the topic, all participants were made aware again of my contact details and invited to make contact at any stage, following the discussion, it they felt disturbed or distressed by any issue that would arise. When the formal discussion had concluded and the recorder had been switched off, a general chat ensued during which participants exchanged thoughts and feelings on matters which had arisen. During the course of the conversation one young man referred to feelings of shame at his own lack of action on the part of his bullied peers. In the conversation that followed, during which he was quizzed gently on his reasons for not intervening, he realised that he too had been bullied - into silence. His failure to act was due to feeling intimidated, believing that those who were bullying his peers would turn their attention on him. He described how his guilty feelings had effected his interaction with some of his former school colleagues who had been targeted, but stated that he would feel more comfortable in their presence in the future.

3.14 - EXPLORING THE THEMES OF THE DISCUSSION

As stated, the Focus Group discussion template had been piloted and issues that had arisen, which had not been included in the original discussion guidelines were inserted for use with the Focus Group. When preparing to analyse the material produced by the formal group discussion, I was aware that comments made by participants in the pilot session could also make a valuable contribution to the findings that would emerge from this study. Thus comments made during the pilot session, which had helped to refine the template for the group discussion, were also considered in the final analysis.

Ryan and Bernard (2010) refer to the work of analysing data as involving several different complex tasks. The first of these they described as finding themes and subthemes which would

provide the foundation for a description of themes on which to build a code. This code in turn would be used further explore the text and analyse its content.

In a similar process to the coding of information from the two open questions in the questionnaire survey, the recording of the focus group conversation was listened to several times and the transcript read and re-read. The initial scrutiny sought and identified repetitions of words or phrases. These were then examined in relation to the context in which they were used. In identifying recurring words or phrases, expressions of opinions or descriptions of experiences, either shared or different, it was possible to generate a list of headings or categories. Before working through this process, based on my own experience in the field, I was conscious of certain headings which I considered would be likely to emerge and was also open to other new ones. Themes that had not been considered prior to the discussion emerged on the first study and re-reading of texts produced themes within themes. Thus using this process, the coding system was refined.

3.15 - ETHICAL CONCERNS

The Trinity College School of Education Guidelines on Ethical Research Practice for Students stipulates that good research is not only about the quality and the quantity of data gathered but the means by which it was gathered. When undertaking this research respect for the rights, well-being, protection and safety of individual participants were paramount. Before beginning the survey process, I completed a research ethics checklist of the University of Dublin, Trinity College, School of Education, in consultation with my supervisor, Dr Stephen James Minton, who forwarded it on my behalf to the Research Ethics Committee.

When approaching the schools seeking assistance from students for the project, Principals and administering teachers were in the position of Gatekeepers or protectors of their students. In

this role, they could have refused access to students from within their student population, if they had deemed it to be appropriate or they could have decided to seek permission from the parents and guardians of their students. However, Principals in all of the schools approached, who had agreed on their school's involvement in this project, were of the opinion that seeking parental permission was unnecessary, since the findings of the survey would not disclose the name or location of their schools, and the anonymity of their students would be preserved.

Permission having been sought and granted for the completion of the questionnaire, it was important that all students who would complete the survey would feel comfortable during the procedure itself. On this basis, an accompanying letter, addressed to the teachers who would oversee the survey exercise, included a request to monitor the process and to ensure in so far as was possible that students would be afforded a comfortable environment in which to answer the questions. When inviting students to confide their personal experiences and observations through the questionnaire survey it was important to bear in mind Stake's (2010) comments on the considerable ethical risks attached to these types of qualitative research exercises. While accepting the need for professionals to enquire and engage with their participants in order to understand a student's view of their world he questions whether such research can be ethical. While a study may be conducted giving the student total anonymity and with his/her consent, he expresses uncertainty, asking "aren't we giving voice to youth who need to be heard? I just don't know" (p.290). His dilemma and that of all researchers involved in this type of work may be that, while mindful to preserve their privacy and to ensure, through their teachers' support, that students felt secure in their participation, respondents are being used in some way as a tool in this quest for knowledge. This ethical dilemma can thus be assumed to be attached to any such study and must be given equal consideration to the benefits that it is hoped will be gained from the research. It was borne in mind, when inviting students to participate in this way, that responding

students, having been given the opportunity to express themselves through the survey, would indicate issues troubling them and that their expression of distress could go unnoticed. The welfare of the respondents being the principal concern, it was decided that before formal recording or analysis of the data would begin, all surveys would be read as they were returned, and the Principal (or the Gatekeeper) of the school notified if any respondent answered in a way that could cause serious alarm. This decision having been taken, it was felt appropriate to notify the contact person in two schools where the levels of a specific form of bullying were judged to be a cause for particular concern based on students' responses.

On conclusion of the research, Principals of participating schools will be furnished with findings relating to their individual schools, in order to support them to a further understanding of their own school community dynamics in relation to the issue of bullying.

3.15.1 - Ethical Concerns in Phase 2 of the Study

As described above, the questions raised in the analysis of the survey responses, returned by schools, raised further questions relating, in particular, to motivations for students' actions. It was therefore considered necessary to conduct some kind of follow up investigation. After some deliberation, conducting a focus group discussion with a group of young people who had left school relatively recently was considered to be the most efficient approach.

Having discussed with Dr Minton the procedures involved in conducting this type of exercise I sought his advice with regard to the ethical considerations therein. We reviewed the research ethics checklist which I had completed prior to circulating the questionnaire surveys. Dr Minton was satisfied that any issues which might arise during the second phase of this study had already been covered in my original application which had been accepted by the Research Ethics Committee as adhering to the regulations of the University of Dublin, Trinity College, School of Education.

3.15.2 - Practical Applications of Ethical Considerations

In so far as it was possible, it was important to offer the same type of protections to the focus group members as had been offered to the secondary school students in the first phase of the study. Homan (1991) proposed that considerations for focus groups are the same as for most other methods of social research. For example, when seeking to involve participants, researchers must ensure to clearly and honestly describe the purpose of the gathering and explain how the participants' contribution will be used. The researcher, as facilitator of this discussion, must ensure that members of the group do not feel pressured to contribute to the discussion. Seidman (2012) distinguished between the formal and the informal gatekeeper. He pointed to teachers and those in administration as formal gatekeepers in the secondary school setting and identified individuals, such as my former student, as an informal gatekeeper in the focus group exercise. Seidman described how such an individual was one who held moral sway over his group and whose own willingness to participate indicated that it was a worthwhile project and thus others would be encouraged to do likewise.

Gaining informed consent from these young people who had been invited to participate in the focus group discussion element of the research was regarded as central to ethical research practice. In order to explain as fully as possible, and in terms meaningful to them regarding the central theme of the discussion, potential participants were given a summary of the results of the questionnaire survey information as gathered and the questions raised by these results were outlined. Thus the rationale for the follow up focus group work was explained and possible participants were informed regarding the topics to be addressed within the session.

A particular ethical issue to consider in the case of focus groups is the handling of sensitive material and confidentiality given that there will always be more than one participant in the group. At the outset it was important to explain how the focus group would work and to

clarify that each participant's contributions would be shared with the others in the group as well as with the moderator. This included emphasising the need for confidentiality regarding what they would hear during the course of the discussion and my own responsibility, as researcher to anonymise data from the group. Another primary concern was for the well-being and comfort of participants. In discussions such as this, where distressing situations which occurred in childhood or youth are recalled, it is possible that participants might become upset or at least be affected by their memories. I raised this issue with the group, prior to the discussion and ensured that all had my contact details and knew that they could contact me to talk about their feelings at any stage after the event. One of the students who had come to the group as a result of my contact with the guidance counsellor offered to keep in touch with me, as did my former student. Thus, watching out for each other and having easy access to me.

Regarding the study itself, this research aimed to offer a reasonable benefit to the population involved in the study and to avoid causing harm. Research findings will be shared and made publicly accessible with a view to the provision of further understanding of, and support for, the ongoing development of supports in the area of bullying prevention and intervention.

3.16 - LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY USED IN THIS STUDY

Following consideration of several approaches to research design it was decided to adopt a cross sectional design approach. This is like a snapshot in time and as such is relatively quick and inexpensive to conduct. Outcomes of these studies are helpful for generating hypotheses and inspiring future research. When analysing data and drawing conclusions, however, it was important to exercise caution regarding conclusions of possible changes over time, bearing in mind that the data in cross-sectional analyses are collected at a single point in time. The format

of the questioning meant that the answers tended to be limited in information thus potentially impacting on the validity of the study. There was also limited depth in the scope to answer.

Applying a cross sectional approach facilitates description of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours without necessarily relating these to any particular factors. Thus, it may be argued, it is possible to show associations but not necessarily causality. The initial phase of this study, for example, might illustrate differing attitudes across age groups, but may not be conclusive enough to support arguments regarding reasons for changes in attitudes as a student grows older, or assertions that students' experiences in relation to bullying in first year in a particular school, may have impacted on decisions taken or attitudes held by fifth year students in the same school.

A further limitation which may have existed, particularly in the use of a once off questionnaire such as this, may be in error of recall or the decision by some of the respondents to provide silly or inaccurate answers. What some students reported about their own behaviour might not actually have been representative of their actions. It is possible that they may have been less thoughtful or truthful, portraying their behaviour in a more positive light than the reality. For example, in relation to coming to the aid of a bullied peer, or, not joining in, students may not have regarded themselves as others did and may have falsely reported their behaviour choices.

As highlighted in the description of the questionnaire survey (Appendix E) above, the questions did not include any query or question relating to cyber bullying. Opportunity was provided for students to include methods different to those stipulated in questions 8 and 11, when types of bullying were listed. Bearing in mind that the way in which we access and use technology, bullying by cyber means widens the range of places where individuals can be targeted and thus individuals can be vulnerable to bullying at any time and in any place. This point was not made by any respondents who could have included something of this nature in

answering queries relating to places where bullying occurred in questions 7 and 12. It may, therefore, have been an incorrect assumption that all students would have known to mention something that had not been offered in this list. Students were given the option of identifying *other means* of bullying and a small number of them referred to *Facebook* and *text messaging* but, it is possible that students generally interpreted the survey to relate to person to person bullying and so might have chosen not to mention any of the technological means. It was clear too, during the course of the data analysis, that the survey could have yielded more important information, relevant to the study, with the inclusion of additional questions seeking from students the reasons for some of their responses.

It is possible that some of the limitations of the methods used in this study also reflected their strengths. While small sample sizes can undermine opportunities to draw useful generalizations or make broad recommendations based upon the findings, on the other hand, the relatively small sample size allowed for a thorough investigation of the research questions. As will be described in following chapter, analysis of the data confirmed much of what had previously been found about different aspects of school bullying, including the nature of bullying, reasons why people bully and locations where bullying is more likely to occur. The examination of the data also revealed omissions in the question content of the survey which could have afforded opportunity to query students on the reasons for some of their answers. Thus as stated above, following the analysis of the data, further issues needed to be addressed. These topics formed the basis of the conversation with the Focus Group in Phase two of the study. In this forum it was possible to take the opportunity to investigate and explore with young adults their thoughts on these topics relating to school and reasons for their actions.

As a teacher working in the area of bullying prevention, I came to this project with some depth of knowledge and understanding of students' bullying experiences. While useful as a prop

with which to begin the research process, it was necessary to be conscious of how this experience and the knowledge gained through working in the field could increase the opportunity for bias to enter into the way data was gathered, interpreted, and reported.

3.16.1 - Limitations of the Methodology Used in Phase 2 of this Study

Although there are advantages to focus group research there are also limitations. Some can be overcome by careful planning and moderating, but others are unavoidable and peculiar to this approach. The role of the researcher using this approach is to facilitate and encourage participants to talk to each other, maintaining the ground rules, while having very little control over the interaction between them other than generally keeping participants focused on the topic. Morgan (1988) suggested that the researcher has less control over the data produced from work of this nature than in either quantitative studies or one-to-one interviewing. By its nature focus group research is open ended and cannot be entirely predetermined and as Bryman (2008) pointed out, it can be difficult to replicate or generalise. It is, however, the nature of this type of qualitative research that, if carefully and formally planned, processed and analysed, can provide the opportunity to gain new understandings of social relationships and insights into interactions between parties, beyond the predetermined categories used in quantitative research

Limitations to the second phase of the study were specific to the nature of the focus group method. In general, bringing participants together for this type of exercise can be difficult. In particular, for this study, this was the case. Several attempts were made, before both the pilot session and the formal group session, before these groups were assembled. In arranging the formal focus group session, an invitation issued through a former student, though still narrow in its scope, produced a snowballing effect and three young adults came forward who were willing to participate. Three others were invited on my behalf by a guidance counsellor in a college of further education in the city centre. Thus in the end, six young adults, four of whom were from

the city and two from more rural areas agreed to participate. While all efforts were made to ensure the members were as representative as possible of their peer group, it is clear that they were not.

In this type of research, which is dependent on the self-reporting of its participants, it was necessary to be conscious at all times of the potential of bias in the accounts being given. This was not to imply any mal-intent on the part of the participants but to acknowledge that any of the normal recall experiences listed below could occur.

- Selective memory - remembering or not remembering experiences or events that occurred at some point in the past;
- Telescoping - recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time;
- Attribution - the act of attributing positive events and outcomes to one's own agency but attributing negative events and outcomes to external forces; and,
- Exaggeration - the act of representing outcomes or embellishing events as more significant than is actually suggested from other data.

One of the main advantage of self-reports, either through questionnaire or discussion, is that they allow for respondents and participants to give their own perspective on the issue in question. It is important, however, to recognise disadvantages, such as those listed above, where there is the possibility that people may be less than truthful with themselves and others. In spite of the possibility that these memory biases might have effected some of the responses provided by individual students completing the questionnaire (subsection 3.16 above) as well as participants in the discussion groups, it was considered that, overall, the impact of these on the study would not have outweighed the value of students' contributions to creating an understanding of their classroom experiences of bullying and other behaviours. It can be seen in

Chapter Four (subsection 4.5) below that admissions by students of their participation, particularly in some of the bystander roles and the reasons they gave, are likely to be honest accounts and do not indicate a desire by these respondents to promote their role in a positive light by giving socially desirable answers. Similarly, participants' accounts of non-intervention on their parts and of their adoption of some of the types of classic bystander behaviours (for example, smiling or walking away) were indicative of attempts to focus on the reality of their experiences. So as to minimise the inclination of questionnaire respondents to provide the researcher with socially desirable answers it would be appropriate to emphasise the preservation of their anonymity while also stressing the value of their contributions to the research topic. In the case of participants in a discussion forum, it is possible for a skilled facilitator to question any doubts, uncertainties or lack of understanding in order to ensure clarity.

As one member of the pilot group was uncomfortable with his conversation being recorded, the details were only transcribed. The process of rewriting the piloted conversation and transcribing the recording of the formal group conversation was lengthy and due to the enthusiastic participation of one member of the latter group, who referred to her former school and other participants by name, the recording cannot be included with this final work. Finally, the confidentiality offered to the secondary school students was not as assured within the focus groups (both the pilot group and the formal group) because observations, experiences and opinions were shared with the others in the group. Agreements among members not to address each other by name, nor to identify their former schools, were occasionally forgotten in the enthusiasm of the conversation.

A priority consideration in the Focus Group setting was for the well-being and comfort of participants. As described in the account of this discussion in the Chapter below, the participants

were assured of the opportunity to meet and discuss their feelings if memories surfaced which caused them distress.

3.17 - CONCLUSION TO PHASE 2

Concerns are often raised regarding the validity of studies based mainly or solely on qualitative methods. The criteria used for judging findings from quantitative research, such as internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity cannot be applied in the same way to qualitative studies. The decision to use a cross sectional approach allowed for one opportunity to garner information from students. However, the failure of the questionnaire to seek deeper understanding from respondents for their reasons for some of their answers provided material for issues to be addressed within the focus group discussion. Piloting the discussion with the first group of volunteers provided very useful feedback and raised further questions. A review of the transcripts of this piloted session led to amendments of the prompts for discussion with the formal group. The formal group discussion provided many shared but also diverse experiences and views, revealing differences in school management styles and practices. It was clear that no assumptions could be made regarding transferability regarding some of the situations or experiences described by participants. Through thorough analysis, however, this study aimed to meet the standards of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which are the criteria for validity of qualitative research as outlined by Trochim (2006).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

PART ONE

4.1 - INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one presents an analysis of the research findings revealed in the survey questionnaire (see Appendix E) as described in the research design set out in Chapter Three (subsection 3.5.3). Part two gives details of the pilot and focus group discussions (subsections 4.9.1 and 4.10 respectively). The results are divided into four sections. Subsection 4.2 below describes the rationale behind the study and provides an overview of students' self-reports of their school experiences. Within this section, respondents' accounts of general behaviour within their classroom environment are recorded and their awareness and experiences of bullying are documented and displayed. The second section deals with the descriptive statistics, analysing data from the survey questionnaire (both closed and open-ended questions) and focuses particularly on those responses which have direct relevance to the research aims. As stated in Chapter 3, section 3.9 above, the format of questioning used within the questionnaire survey completed by second level students while providing limited feedback was also useful in guiding the development of the questions which would be used to lead the focus group discussions. While the majority of respondents had engaged well with the survey, with just 171 (16.7%) of respondents failing to address the issues around adult intervention in questions 20, 21 and 22 as described above (subsection 4.7), crucial issues relating to peer support and in particular, students' willingness to seek adult support to resolve bullying situations remained, for the most part, unanswered. Polanin, Espelage and Pigott (2012) referred to multiple roles played by bystanders and to the fact that between 60% and 70% of school student populations, while not instigators of school bullying, could at some stage fall into the category of bystanders. To a large

extent, students' responses to the questionnaire survey confirmed this. In spite of aspirations and expectations on the part of their adults and encouragement from these adults to support their bullied peers, the findings set out in Part one of this chapter indicated that, in the case of these respondents, many young people finding themselves on the periphery of bullying situations appeared to withdraw, rather than engaging in a positive way.

Part two of this chapter describes findings from Phase 2 of the research involving conversations between participants in both the Pilot and Focus Group discussions. As stated in Chapter 3 (subsection 3.14), the input and insights gained during the course of the piloted session were regarded as valuable to the overall findings. Information gleaned from these discussions is examined in section three. Section four presents a summary of the results.

Information gleaned from focus group discussions conducted during the second phase of the study is examined in section three. Section four presents a summary of the results.

4.2 - STUDENTS' OPINIONS OF THEIR WORKING AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT WITHIN SCHOOL

As set out in Chapter 3 (subsection 3.2.2), the research aims for phase one of this study were to determine, by means of a survey questionnaire, students' general perspectives on their relationships within the classroom environment, and, specifically their awareness of and feelings when bullying occurred there. As described in this section, an important element was to ascertain students' practical responses to witnessing bullying situations, including their willingness to seek adult support to resolve the situation. Included in this section is an examination of students' stated level of happiness, friendships and ability to concentrate on their studies within their classroom environment as well as an examination of students' comments on their own bullying experience, in so far as this was possible, within the structure of the questionnaire. These aspects

of school life were considered to be relevant to the study as students' own experiences of school may have influenced their perceptions and outlook in relation to life generally in school. The data is presented in both tabular and text form.

4.2.1 - Happiness in School

As referred to in Chapter 2 (subsection 2.4), the 2013 report to the Minister for Education and Skills, by the Anti-Bullying Working Group identified the importance of a "safe, positive, respectful and inclusive environments for learning" (p. 52). I thought it likely that students' feelings of security and belonging could influence their general view of school life and so questions one and two in the survey (Appendix E) asked students about their levels of contentment and friendships in their school setting. Table 4.1 sets out students' responses, expressed as percentages of the total sample, indicating their level of happiness and the quality of their friendships in school.

Table 4. 1:

Students' Self-Reported Levels of Happiness and Friendships in School

Level	Sex	n	Happy / Usually Happy	Seldom / Never Happy	2+ School Friends	1 School Friend	0 School Friend
J	F	270	80.4%	3.7%	94.4%	3.3%	1.5%
	M	234	77.4%	4.3%	94.0%	3.0%	1.3%
S	F	238	87.0%	3.4%	93.7%	1.7%	2.1%
	M	275	78.5%	6.2%	92.7%	2.5%	2.5%

As can be seen from this table, 78.9% of junior cycle students claimed to be very happy or usually happy with the atmosphere in their class while 0.8% of students from among this group indicated that they were never happy in the same setting. Junior cycle females were slightly more inclined to indicate happiness at 80.4% as compared to 77.4% of males. At the other end of the scale, 3.7% of junior females and 4.3% of junior males replied that they were seldom or never happy. It is clear from the table above that the difference between expressions by senior female and senior male of their level of happiness was greater than at junior level with 87% of senior females and 78.5% of senior males indicating that they were happy or usually happy with the atmosphere in their school. In total, 4.9% of senior students indicated that they were never happy with the atmosphere in their class with 6.2% of senior males and 3.4% of senior females expressing this view. Of the students who responded that they were never happy, 15.7% of them (0.3% of the total sample) went on to indicate that they had no friends in school. 96.6% of students, however, identified that they shared some level of friendship with others in school and 82.9% of these indicated that they had two or more friends. There was little difference between the responses of the genders or school levels in this regard.

4.2.2 - Distractions in the Classroom

Before being asked about their experiences or observations of bullying behaviour directed towards themselves or their peers, students were invited by means of two open questions (questions 3 and 4) to describe behaviours in their classroom environment which served to distract them or to make them feel uncomfortable. Across the four groups, only 6.9% of students responded that nothing distracted them from their work, while 22% said that they never felt uncomfortable in their group. Taking into account that a small number of students did not respond to this question, the majority of participating students, (90% of them) described experiencing or participating in a number of types of behaviours which distracted them from their

work. Though slightly fewer in number, but nonetheless concerning, 75% of respondents, stated that, at times, they felt uncomfortable with the behaviour of others in their classrooms.

In their responses, students described types of both low level and high level disruptive behaviours as identified by teachers during the course of the research carried out by The Task Force on Student Behaviour, chaired by Professor Maeve Martin (2006). Students indicated in answer to question 3 how they found some of these behaviours, such as talking and messing, to be disruptive or distracting but referred to other behaviours, mostly related to more personal or targeted negative behaviours which also caused them to feel uncomfortable or uneasy. As described in Chapter 3, section 3.7.4, the initial coding exercise was undertaken with a view to developing a different system of coding for responses to each of questions 3 and 4. Further examination of students' answers however indicated that the two sets of responses had much behaviour in common and so, as a result a single coding system was developed to be applied to each set of responses.

Behaviours cited most frequently as being distracting to concentration on class work were covered by the term *messing.* Descriptions of "silly behaviour, asking too many questions, engaging the teacher in conversation and talking in class*"*, were most common with 48.4% of junior students and 60.6% of seniors referred to this kind of distracting behaviour. At 55.9% of those highlighting these types of behaviours, reports by female students were in a slight majority. Five students were prepared to admit to their own participation in these activities. 4.5% of junior students and 2.9% of seniors indicated in their responses to question 4 that they found this type of "messing" also made them feel uncomfortable.

Among the behaviours, coded in Appendix G, students identified a list of unruly, disrespectful and unkind behaviours, targeted at themselves and others, which served to distract them from their studies or make them feel uncomfortable. The most frequently commented on

specific types of behaviours causing distraction fell into the category of unruly or raucous behaviour with 28.3% of the participants' responses referring to this. From among these respondents, 56.3% of girls and 43.8% of boys at junior cycle referred to distractions caused by unruly behaviours. At senior cycle the experiences were slightly different with 51.4% of male students and 48.6% of female students describing these types of behaviours. 4.9% of students who had described unruly behaviour as being a distraction to them also indicated that they were uncomfortable when it was happening. Equal numbers of male and female students alluded to this and 64 % of students who responded in this way were from the senior cycle.

Disrespect or insubordination towards teachers and disrespect towards fellow students also featured as a concern for students. 7.7% of students commented on insubordination as a distraction and 2.3% of students indicated feeling uncomfortable when it happened. Considering insubordination as a form of disrespect and including this finding with students' references to disrespect being shown towards teachers and peers, overall, 13.4% of students described these types of behaviours as distracting, with 12.4% of these (1.7% of total cohort) also feeling uncomfortable with them. Overall 4.1% of the total student group said they felt uncomfortable when they witnessed insubordinate or a disrespectful attitude being directed towards their teachers or disrespect being shown to peers.

2.7% of students included bullying of others in their class among their descriptive answers, with almost all of these (97.5%) identifying it as a cause of both distraction and discomfort to them. Equal numbers of male and female students in both the junior and senior groups mentioned this, with slightly more senior students referring to it. 0.5% of responding students voiced their discomfort at being the target of bullying, writing simple statements such as "me being bullied" to illustrate this. All but one of the students was female, with almost equal representation from junior and senior cycle. 1% of the student sample, almost equal numbers of

males and females and equal numbers of juniors and seniors, commented on their discomfort at seeing others being isolated or excluded from the group, while 2% mentioned their own discomfort at being personally excluded. Of those who referred to their discomfort at their own isolation, 81% were girls and 19% were boys, 50% of whom were seniors and 50% juniors.

While much of the distracting or unsettling behaviour described in students' answers to these two questions related to the treatment of others within their class, it was noteworthy that 4.1% of their responses identified unwanted attention, in a variety of different guises, directed towards themselves. Among their answers, students described being asked questions of a personal nature, reference to their academic ability, comments on their appearance or comments on members of their family. A further 7.6% of students highlighted individual experiences, which were covered by the code "o" for other, which did not fit neatly into any category.

Having been given the opportunity to describe their experiences within their class groups, students were requested to continue and complete the questionnaire by means of a "tick box" exercise. (See Appendix E). The questions which followed listed option answers but there was scope for respondents to write alternative answers if the option answers provided did not fit what they wanted to say.

Details of these findings regarding distracting and discomfiting behaviours, as described by survey respondents are set out in Table 2A and Table 2B respectively.

Table 4.2A:

Distracting Behaviours				
Level		J		S
Sex	F	M	F	M
n	270	234	238	275
Whispering/gossiping/passing notes/texting	7.8%	0.4%	2.9%	0.4%
Talking, messing, complaining about work	58.9%	54.3%	52.5%	48.0%
Angry or unruly behaviour	30.4%	26.9%	29.0%	26.9%
Throwing things	1.5%	5.1%	4.2%	5.1%
Physical contact, taking others' belongings	1.9%	1.7%	2.1%	0.4%

Distracting Behaviours				
Level		J		S
Sex	F	M	F	M
n	270	234	238	275
Insubordinate behaviour	4.4%	4.3%	13.0%	9.5%
Teacher behaviour	1.9%	0.9%	1.7%	3.3%
Disrespectful behaviour towards others	5.2%	5.1%	8.0%	4.7%
Disrespectful behaviour towards respondent	1.9%	0.9%	0.8%	0.4%
Other students being bullied	1.1%	1.7%	0.0%	0.4%
Being stared at	1.9%	0.4%	0.4%	1.1%
Not otherwise classified	13.3%	6.0%	5.5%	8.7%
Unwanted attention	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
None	6.7%	10.3%	5.0%	6.2%

Table 4.2B:

Discomfiting Behaviours				
Level		J		S
Sex	F	M	F	M
n	270	234	238	275
Whispering/gossiping/passing notes/texting	5.6%	1.3%	5.5%	0.7%
Talking, messing, complaining about work	7.0%	6.0%	3.8%	3.6%
Angry or unruly behaviour	9.3%	8.5%	11.3%	12.0%
Throwing things	0.4%	1.7%	0.8%	1.1%
Physical contact, taking others' belongings	0.4%	4.7%	1.3%	0.7%
Insubordinate behaviour	1.5%	2.6%	4.6%	1.1%
Teacher behaviour	1.1%	0.9%	1.3%	0.7%
Disrespectful behaviour towards others	17.8%	7.7%	22.3%	16.7%
Disrespectful behaviour towards respondent	10.0%	6.0%	3.8%	3.3%
Other students being bullied	2.6%	3.0%	2.9%	2.5%
Respondent being bullied	1.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%
Students being isolated, excluded or ignored	1.1%	1.3%	0.8%	0.7%
Feeling isolated, excluded or ignored oneself	2.6%	0.4%	4.6%	0.7%
Being stared at	5.9%	3.0%	4.2%	2.9%
Not otherwise classified	11.9%	6.0%	5.5%	6.2%
Unwanted attention	1.5%	0.9%	2.1%	0.0%
None	23.0%	27.8%	18.1%	20.0%

4.3 - STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND/OR OBSERVATIONS OF SCHOOL BULLYING

As proposed in Chapter Two (subsection 2.2), in order to identify and understand the bystanders, about whom this research was conducted, it was important to explore students' own experiences of and thoughts regarding the level and types of bullying in their school environment. By stating specific types of bullying (see questions 8 and 11, Appendix E) students were guided to differentiate between bullying and other types of aggressive behaviour, as for example, fights between equals . Table 4.3 below displays percentages of students' responses to questions 5 and 9 in which they reported being witness to bullying, experiencing bullying or both from among the overall sample. While the study related specifically to witnessing bullying, it was considered important to allow students who felt they had been bullied to express this.

Table 4.3:

Students Who Were Bullied or Witnessed Bullying or Both

Level	Sex	n	Target of Bullying	Witnessed Bullying	Both
J	F	270	21.9%	47.8%	15.9%
	M	234	18.8%	42.7%	15.4%
S	F	238	8.0%	40.3%	6.3%
	M	275	9.1%	45.1%	6.2%

It was noteworthy that while the percentages of reports by senior students of being bullied were slightly less than half those of juniors, the number of witness reports did not reduce in the same manner and, in fact, reports from senior male students of being witness to bullying were more than from junior male students. Combining the two sets of data into one table facilitated

the display of the overlap between the experience of being bullied and observations of others being bullied. (See tables 4.6- 4.8 below)

4.3.1 - Reports of Having Been Bullied

In response to question 5, which asked students about their own bullying experience during the year and in the weeks prior to their completion of the survey, 14.3% of the sample indicated that they had been bullied. As is evident from the table and analysis of the data below, male students in the junior cycle were more likely than their senior cycle counterparts to report having been bullied. A similar analysis of female students' results showed that junior cycle girls were also more likely than their senior cycle counterparts to report having been bullied

Overall, 20.4% of junior cycle students responded that they had been bullied. This was somewhat less than the 25.2% of junior students identified in the State of the Nations' Children (2012) report. As illustrated in Table 4.3 above, more girls than boys at both levels felt they had been bullied and more girls than boys also reported that they had witnessed bullying. Considering this in the light of students' indications regarding their level of happiness in school, it was noteworthy that only 4% of junior students who indicated they had been bullied (0.8% of total junior cohort in the study) had previously indicated that they were never happy with the atmosphere in their class. The reduction in the number of reports by students of being bullied was considerable with an overall figure of 8.7% of senior students (compared to 21% identified in State of the Nations' Children, 2012 report) replying that they had been bullied. In this instance the decrease of reports of bullying was larger among the females than the males, with 8% of the senior cycle female sample and 9% of the senior cycle males reporting that they had been bullied. In an examination of data relating to senior cycle students' bullying experience and levels of happiness, 28.6% of students who said they had been bullied (0.4% of total sample) had also indicated that they were never happy with the atmosphere in their class.

Examining these responses by school type revealed that students' reports of being bullied were highest among junior students in the Community school sector where 39% of junior cycle female students and 36.9% of junior cycle male students made these reports. The next largest reporting group, at 17.6%, were junior cycle female students attending the private school for girls, followed by junior cycle male students in the boys' only school at 15.6%. Reports from junior students in the mixed gender private school were lowest, but not insignificant with 14.3% of male students and 7.1% of female students reporting they had been bullied. Across all school types and in the case of both genders reports by students of feeling that they had been bullied were much reduced at senior level.

4.3.2 - Frequency of Having Been Bullied

Question 6 invited students who had reported being bullied to indicate the frequency of this experience. Overall, with reference to the frequency of their own bullying experience 3% of all respondents reported that they had been bullied every day, 3.9 % replied that they had been bullied weekly, 6.8 % responded that they had rarely been bullied and 0.6% of students who replied that they had been bullied did not stipulate how often.

As can be seen from Table 4.4 below, among the junior students, girls felt they had experienced more bullying than boys, while at senior level the trend was reversed. Responses revealed a considerable decrease in the number of reports of being bullied from junior to senior level.

Table 4.4:

Percentages of students reports of having been bullied from total sample					
Level	Sex	n	Daily	Weekly	Rarely
J	F	270	4.8%	6.3%	9.6%
	M	234	4.3%	4.3%	9.4%

Percentages of students reports of having been bullied from total sample					
Level	Sex	n	Daily	Weekly	Rarely
S	F	238	0.4%	3.8%	3.8%
	M	275	2.5%	1.8%	4.7%

Self-reports of being bullied were higher from among female students than males. Overall, the analysis revealed that in the female group, junior cycle students were more likely than their senior counterparts to report having been bullied (21.9 per cent and 8 per cent respectively); the difference was significant ($\chi^2 = 18.7202$ (1 df), $p < 0.01$). Comparing the experiences, as reported by the male students, showed again that junior students were more likely to report being bullied than their senior colleagues (18.8 per cent and 9.1 per cent respectively); the difference was significant ($\chi^2 = 10.1772$ (1 df), $p < 0.01$).

4.3.3 - Witnessing the Bullying of Peers

Overall, 44.2% of students recorded that they felt they had witnessed bullying during the year. A breakdown of the data revealed that 45.3% of junior cycle students indicated they had witnessed bullying, of whom 42.7% of these were male were (19.8% of total junior males) and 47.8 % were female (25.6% of total junior females). At senior cycle, 42.9% of students responded that they had witnessed bullying. Of those who replied in the affirmative 45.1% were male and 40.3% were female, with the difference between the sum of these and 100% being of unidentified gender. These figures represented 23.3% (male) and 18.1% (female) of the total senior sample. Comparing by school level reports, showed that junior cycle boys were slightly less likely than their senior cycle counterparts to report witnessing bullying (42.7 per cent and 45.1 per cent respectively); this difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.2848$ (1 df), $p < 0.05$). By comparison, results of female students' reports of witnessing bullying, showed the trend reversed with junior cycle girls more likely than their senior cycle counterparts to report

witnessing bullying (47.8 per cent and 40.3 per cent respectively); again, this difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.2848$ (1 df), $p < 0.05$).

Table 4.5 below, shows the percentages of students who reported and the regularity with which they felt they had witnessed bullying.

Table 4. 5:

Frequency of witnessing bullying of others from total sample					
Level	Sex	n	Daily	Weekly	Rarely
J	F	270	8.9%	17.0%	17.0%
	M	234	12.4%	11.1%	16.7%
S	F	238	3.8%	13.0%	22.3%
	M	275	9.8%	15.3%	17.8%

Overall, 2.9% of the total sample, 20% of students who responded to the question, felt they had witnessed bullying on a daily basis. Of those who highlighted daily bullying, 62.6% were male and 37.7% were female. 12.4% of the junior male students reported witnessing daily bullying while 9.8% of their senior counterparts indicated the same, although, as stated above, the percentage of senior male students who reported witnessing bullying generally was higher than that of junior males. Numerically this difference in reporting daily bullying among the male students translated to a difference of only two reports. Among female students, over 2.5 times as many juniors as seniors responded that they felt that bullying was a daily occurrence. 31.9% of female students who reported witnessing bullying (14.1% of the total sample) said they felt they witnessed bullying on a weekly basis with 51% of these responses coming from senior students and 49% from juniors. An examination of the gender balance highlighted that at senior level, 56.8% of all those who indicated bullying was happening on a weekly basis were male students. This figure represented 15.3% of the senior male respondents, while at junior level 63.3% of

those who highlighted bullying on a weekly basis at junior level were female, representing 17% of the junior female group. 41.4% (18.3% of all respondents) indicated that, although they had reported witnessing bullying, they felt it was a rare occurrence and 53.7% of respondents denied having witnessed bullying in school.

An examination of these reports by school type revealed that, 60.8% of senior male students attending schools within the Community school sector reported an awareness of fellow students being bullied. This was the highest level of reporting and was closely followed by 58.8% of junior cycle students attending the private school for girls who also reported this. Continuing to analyse the results by sub-groups of school level and gender, with the exception of students, in the private mixed gender school where the level of reported witnessing of bullying ranged from 7.1% of junior level female students to 21.9% of senior level male, reported witnessing by 34.8% of senior students in the private girls' school and 35.7% of junior students in the boys' only school, over 50% of all students in the remaining similarly categorised subgroups indicated their awareness of peer bullying.

4.3.4 - Locations Where Bullying Happened

Students who identified their own bullying experience or felt that others in their group had been bullied were agreed that the most common places for bullying to occur were either in the classrooms or on the corridors. Of those who felt they had been bullied, 81.6% indicated that they had been targeted in the classroom and 83% referred to being bullied on the corridor. Students, therefore, felt themselves to be more vulnerable in these two places than either the school yard (50%) or the toilets (33.3%). This data was compared to information given by students of their observations of bullying. These showed that 75.1% of the students who indicated concern for their peers felt it happened in the classroom, 60.1% on the corridors, 33.7% indicated the school yard and 16% identified the toilets. 80% of students who felt they had been

bullied and 35.2% of students who felt some of their peers were being bullied marked the box labelled *other*. No one, however, described any other location, although it had been offered as an option response.

Students' reports regarding the locations where bullying occurred were consistent across the different school types with reports of bullying in classrooms and on school corridors featuring highly.

4.4 - TYPES OF BULLYING WITNESSED OR EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS

The most common forms of bullying described by students were already listed in the questionnaire. In their responses students from all school types highlighted experiences and observations of the most commonly defined forms of bullying (see Appendix E, questions 8 and 11). They also shared similar awareness in relation to locations where bullying most frequently occurred. Students from different school backgrounds identified verbal and social types of bullying as the most predominant forms of bullying and by comparison reports of physical abuse were comparatively low.

4.4.1 - Verbal Bullying

Overall, 38.8% of students who felt they had been bullied and 43% of students who observed others being bullied identified verbal abuse in the form of racial or sexual comments as the most prevalent of the bullying behaviours. Table 4. 5 below shows details of students' observations and experiences of verbal bullying

Table 4.6:

Students who (a) reported experiencing or witnessing bullying (b) in verbal form				
Level	Sex	n	Experienced	Witnessed
J	F	270	10.7%	25.9%
	M	234	11.5%	31.6%
S	F	238	2.5%	19.3%
	M	275	5.1%	32.4%

As can be seen from the questionnaire (Appendix E) questions 8 and 11 offered students a list of types of bullying which they might have experienced (question 8) or witnessed (question 11). 41.4% of targeted students and 42.5% of witnesses to bullying indicated some form of verbal offence. Bullying through the verbal abuse of family members was noted by 10.9% of targeted students and 11% of witnesses. From the details set out in this table, reports of experiencing verbal abuse was more common from junior cycle students with fewer seniors reporting that they had been targeted. However, reports of being aware of negative comments being made to or about their peers did not change dramatically from junior cycle to senior cycle, with similar percentages of students, junior and senior, male and female reporting witnessing these behaviours. The biggest change was among female students, with reports of witnessing bullying dropping from 25.9% to 19.3%. Thus less than 20% of senior female students reported witnessing bullying, while the percentage of reports increased slightly from junior to senior level among the males.

4.4.2 - Social Bullying

20% of students who reported being bullied described feeling isolated or excluded within their class group and 37.4% of students who had reported witnessing peer bullying highlighted exclusion of students as a method of bullying. 36.7% of students who felt targeted and 33.7% of students who witnessed bullying highlighted abuse through the spreading of rumours. Table 4.7 below gives details of students who reported being bullied or who had witnessed others being bullied, by isolation or exclusion or by subjecting them to being gossiped about, as a percentage of the total sample.

Table 4.7:

Students who (a) reported experiencing or witnessing bullying (b) in social form

Level	Sex	n	No one would talk to me	Rumours about me	No one would talk to them	Rumours about them
J	F	270	4.8%	9.6%	23.0%	19.3%
	M	234	1.7%	6.4%	7.3%	10.7%
S	F	238	2.9%	4.2%	19.3%	16.0%
	M	275	2.2%	1.1%	15.6%	13.5%

An examination of the results in the table above reveals that 14.4% of the total junior female group indicated that they had experienced social isolation or had been the target of gossip. This figure represented 38.8% of junior females who had previously indicated, in their answer to question 5, that they felt they had been bullied. Among the senior students, 7.1% of the female student cohort, which represented 36.4% of those who indicated they had been bullied, also highlighted these experiences. Among the male students, 8.1% of the total junior males sample (18.4% of junior level males who reported being bullied) and 3.3% of the total senior male sample (20.5% of senior males who reported being bullied) also reported being bullied by

students using this type of social manipulation. 42.3% of the total junior level female group who had indicated that they felt they had witnessed bullying, and 18% of the total junior level male group, who responded likewise, identified isolation or having rumours spread about them as a means by which their peers were bullied. 35.3% of the total senior female group and 29.1% of the total senior male group responded that they had witnessed these types of social bullying of their peers.

4.4.3 - Physical Bullying or Threats Thereof

By comparison with verbal or social aggression, responses relating to physical bullying directed towards self or others appeared less frequently than any other type of abuse with 16.3% of targeted students (2.3% of total) and 15.4% of observers reporting having experienced or witnessed physical hurt, as in hitting or kicking. From among the total female sample, all reports of being physical bullied, as in hitting or kicking, came from among the junior students with 3.3% of that total group responding in the affirmative. None of the senior female students reported being bullied in this way. Junior male students who reported having been physically bullied corresponded to 6% of the total junior male group. This figure was again low compared to other types of bullying. The senior male students, who reported being physically bullied, represented 0.4% of the total cohort of senior males.

Table 4.8 sets out details of reports of experiencing or witnessing actual or threatened physical bullying.

Table 4.8:

Students who (a) reported experiencing or witnessing bullying (b) in actual or threatened physical form

Level	Sex	n	Self Physically Hurt	Self-Threatened	Own belongings taken	Other Physically Hurt	Other Threatened	Other's belongings taken
J	F	270	3.3%	3.7%	4.4%	9.3%	5.9%	9.3%
	M	234	6.0%	3.4%	3.8%	9.8%	6.8%	7.7%
S	F	238	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%	2.9%	1.7%	6.3%
	M	275	0.4%	1.5%	2.9%	5.1%	4.0%	8.4%

As can be calculated from the breakdown of data in this table, 15.6% of targeted students and 10.6% of students who reported concerns regarding the bullying of their peers alluded to threats being made which could have included threats of physical attack. The largest reporting group for this kind of behaviour was the junior male group with those who reported witnessing this type of behaviour representing 6.8% of the total junior male group. The numbers of reports by students of experiencing or witnessing these kinds of physical abuses were less at senior level. Data also showed that, while there were fewer reports from students of having their possessions taken at senior level than at junior level, the number of reports of being witness to this behaviour was relatively high compared to other specified forms of bullying which had been examined in this section.

4.4.4 - Other Types of Bullying

The format of the questionnaire gave students, who reported their own experiences of being bullied and those who indicated they had witnessed bullying, a list of bullying behaviours and allowed them to mark as many types of behaviour as they deemed necessary (see Appendix E, questions 8). Item “j” in these lists which stated “Bullied in another way (please say how)”

gave students the opportunity to describe bullying incidents which they felt had not covered by the list. In all, 32.6% of students who felt they had been bullied (4.6% of total the total sample) took up this opportunity. One hundred and eighty four students who had not previously indicated that they had been bullied also took the opportunity to describe their experiences in this section. Many of the activities described by students could have been covered by items on the list, but it was clear that students wanted to give their own account of their experiences. Sixty students chose to write their experiences in this section. This included eleven students who had not previously indicated that they felt they had been bullied. The majority of bullying incidents described in this section were verbal in nature. Some students described being sneered at and others referred to disrespectful comments relating to appearance, academic ability, personal interests, racial origin and family members. A student described being teased due to his stammer. Exclusion from social groups and not understanding why they had been picked on were also referred to by students in this section.

Similarly, 7.6% of all students reported witnessing unkind or disrespectful behaviours directed towards others. The most common references to bullying behaviours, from those who reported witnessing it, included isolation of individuals, name calling, comments on personal traits (for example: a student's stammer) or personal habits. Reference to using students' academic ability as a means to target them were included, but it was noted that two students were also targeted due to their interests in learning and their high academic achievements.

As mentioned above, most of the disrespectful behaviour experienced or observed was verbal in nature. With regard to cyber-bullying, a phenomenon which causes great societal concern, 1.2% of all students identified it as an issue among the "other" types of bullying behaviours. One student referred to text and internet bullying of herself *and* others, while all other comments referred to self *or* others. With students free to provide as much detail as they

wanted, several students indicated more than one method of attack. 46.2% of the students who highlighted cyber-bullying (0.6% of the total sample) referred to comments on Ask fm, 23.1% of these students (0.3% of the total) referred to comments on Facebook and 46.2% (0.6% of the total) referred to text or online bullying.

4.5 - INVOLVEMENT IN PEER BULLYING

As highlighted in Chapter 3 (subsection 3.5.4), an essential element in this research was the desire to understand students' reactions when they became aware of bullying happening and their views of their own involvement in the process. Thus, students were not asked if they had instigated bullying but, instead about their engagement (if any) in the process that followed the initial event. Before being asked about their feelings when witnessing bullying, respondents were asked in question 13 whether or not they had been involved in the bullying of others and if so, question 14 asked them the reasons for their involvement. Table 4.9 presents details of the responses given by students to this question and shows that 81.6% of the respondents to this survey denied that they had even been involved in bullying others.

Table 4.9:

Bullying Others						
Level	Sex	n	Daily	Weekly	Once or Twice	Never
J	F	270	0.4%	1.9%	9.3%	85.9%
	M	234	1.7%	0.9%	19.7%	74.8%
S	F	238	0.4%	0.4%	5.0%	89.5%
	M	275	1.1%	1.5%	16.0%	76.7%

When examined more closely, these figures revealed that 75.8% of male students and 87.6% of females claimed never to have participated in the bullying of others. 12.5% of all respondents admitted they had bullied others once or twice and 1.4% of all male students and 0.4% of all females admitted to bullying other students every day. The majority of students who indicated response c) in question 13, that they had bullied others *once or twice*, were male. An analysis of results of male students' self-reports of bullying others, showed little difference between reports from junior cycle boys and their senior cycle counterparts (25.2 per cent and 23.3 per cent respectively); this difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.2599$ (1 df), $p < 0.05$). A similar comparison of female students' self-reports of bullying others showed a slightly greater difference in reporting between the junior cycle and senior cycle females (14.1 per cent and 20.5 per cent respectively); this difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.8446$ (1 df), $p < 0.05$).

The highest response rate in admissions of bullying others came from students attending the single gender school for boys and from male students attending schools in the Community school sector. The differences in response rates in the admissions of more frequent bullying from the genders were slight, with both male and female students from mixed and single gender schools willing to admit their part in bullying others. The one exception regarding self-reports of bullying others came from the cohort of students who attended the mixed gender private school none of whom disclosed any personal involvement in bullying.

4.5.1 - Reasons or Excuses Given for Participating in Bullying

In order to clearly illustrate the proportion of students who admitted their participation in bullying others and their reasons for doing so (as queried in question 14), the information relating to this topic is illustrated by means of two tables. Table 4.10A gives a breakdown of student respondents as percentages of the total student sample and Table 4.10B identifies student

respondents in percentage terms as derived when they are expressed as a fraction of those who admitted to bullying others.

Table 4.10A:

Percentage of students explaining their participation in bullying from total sample

Level	Sex	n	To not get picked on	Friends did it	Fun
J	F	270	7.0%	1.5%	0.7%
	M	234	12.0%	3.4%	1.3%
S	F	238	2.9%	1.3%	0.4%
	M	275	6.5%	4.4%	4.7%

Table 4.10 B:

Percentage of students explaining their participation in bullying from those who admitted to bullying

Level	Sex	n	To not get picked on	Friends did it	Fun
J	F	31	61.3%	12.9%	6.5%
	M	52	53.8%	15.4%	5.8%
S	F	14	50.0%	21.4%	7.1%
	M	51	35.3%	23.5%	25.5%

When asked for reasons as to why they bullied others, the majority of responding students, 77.9% ((11.3% of the total sample) indicated that they bullied others in order to protect themselves from being picked on, 16.1% responded that they did so because their friends bullied and 20.8% (3% of the total sample) replied that bullying was fun. It was noteworthy that 23% of those who joined in so as to avoid being bullied themselves had previously indicated that they had in fact been bullied. Three quarters of these students were in the junior cycle, with almost

equal representation from both genders. An examination of the figures in Table 4.10A, of those who indicated avoidance of being targeted as a reason why one might bully another student shows that the majority at both levels were male students. However, Table 4.10B, showing responses from those who had admitted to bullying others, highlights clearly that female students seemed to feel pressure to bully in order to protect themselves too with 61.3% of junior females and 50% of senior females, who admitted to targeting others, indicating this. Admissions of bullying in support of friends were higher among senior students with more males than females responding in this way. The percentage and actual number of senior males who indicated bullying for fun, at 25.5%, was considerably higher than in any other group.

Comparing these responses by school type, showed that while almost 16% of students who attended the mixed gender private school indicated an awareness of bullying, only 3% reported that they felt they had been bullied and 97% of both male and female students in this school marked answer d) *never* as their response to question 13, which had asked students about the level of their participation in bullying. On the other hand, 69.5% of male students in the Community School responded d) *never* to this question. Thus indicating that slightly over 30% of male students in this group acknowledged their part in bullying others. In relation to students' admissions of their participation in bullying, the highest response rate to this came from students attending the single gender school for boys and from male students attending schools in the Community school sector. Overall 17.7% of male students indicated c) *once or twice* in response to their involvement in the bullying of others and closer scrutiny of responses by school type, showed that 23.2% of male students in the Community School sector and 14.7% of students in the single gender boys' school admitted to this.

When giving reasons for joining in, the break- down of responses by school type was very much in keeping with the data displayed by gender and school level as shown in Table 4.10A and

Table 4.10B. In the display of the details by gender and school level above 9.8% of all male students gave a) *so, I wouldn't get picked on* as the main reason for students to join other. When examined by school type, the highest response rate indicating this was from male students in the Community School sector at 16.2%. Across all school types, 3.1% of the male student respondents indicated joining in because d) *it's fun*, with 7.3% of males in the Community Schools admitting to this.

4.5.2 - Summarising the Findings

A comparison of findings in relation to self-reports by junior cycle and senior cycle students of being bullied showed that, in keeping with the literature, junior students (both male and female) were more likely than their senior cycle colleagues to report being bullied. The results in this study showed a difference that was statistically significant. Comparing responses in relation to reports of having witnessed bullying on a daily or weekly basis however, indicated slightly fewer such reports from junior cycle male students than from their senior cycle peers. The reverse was the case among the females, with junior cycle females more likely than their senior cycle peers to report having witnessed bullying. When examining and comparing responses both by gender and school level (junior/senior) the differences were not statistically significant. Reports by junior female students showed only a slightly greater inclination on their part than on the part of the senior female students of attempting to help their bullied peers. On the other hand, the difference was statistically significant between the rates of reporting of trying to help by junior and by senior male students, with reports by junior male students showing they were more likely to help. When asked about methods of helping, seeking help from adults was low on the list of options chosen by any of the groups (male/female and junior cycle/senior cycle). While not statistically significant, the reports of doing so came predominantly from students in the junior cycle (67%), 60% of whom were female.

4.6 - A SELF- PROFILE OF BYSTANDERS AS PRESENTED BY THEM IN THIS STUDY

Having considered the experiences and observations of bullying as reported on by students who responded to the questionnaire, this section of the survey examined the information supplied by students regarding their responses to witnessing bullying in their school or class environment, their emotional and practical reactions to being witness to bullying and their reasons for any action they may or may not have taken.

4.6.1 - Emotional Response to Witnessing Bullying

It is likely that students' emotional response to witnessing bullying may have explained, to some degree, the reason for their choice of action or inaction. Question 15 of the survey asked students to indicate how they felt when witnessing bullying. Slightly less than 9% of the total sample indicated amusement or disinterest when others were being bullied, 18.7% indicated upset or embarrassment on their behalf and the same proportion, 18.7%, replied that they felt nervous.

Table 4.11A below gives details of the reactions of students to witnessing bullying specifying data as a percentage of the total sample and Table 4.11B shows these figures as percentages of those who had reported that they had witnessed bullying.

Table 4.11A:

Percentage of the total sample showing emotional responses to witnessing bullying

n	Upset	Nervous	Amused	Don't Care	Embarrassed
270	19.3%	23.3%	8.5%	1.9%	2.6%
234	12.8%	15.0%	3.4%	4.3%	2.1%
238	18.1%	20.2%	4.6%	1.3%	0.0%
275	15.6%	13.5%	5.5%	6.2%	4.4%

Table 4.11B:

Percentage of students who reported witnessing bullying and their emotional responses

Sex	n	Upset	Nervous	Amused	Don't Care	Embarrassed
F	129	40.3%	48.8%	17.8%	3.9%	5.4%
M	100	30.0%	35.0%	8.0%	10.0%	5.0%
F	96	44.8%	50.0%	11.5%	3.1%	0.0%
M	124	34.7%	29.8%	12.1%	13.7%	9.7%

Table 4.11A reveals that from among the total sample, junior female students were proportionally the highest responders to indicate feeling nervous or upset should others in their group be targeted for bullying but, they were also proportionally, the highest responding group to indicate amusement. As more students indicated emotional responses in answer to question 15 "How do you feel when you see others being bullied?" than had indicated that they had witnessed bullying, students who responded in this section were understood to have interpreted the question as "How would you feel if you were to see others being bullied?" Table 4.11B shows that of the students who had previously reported witnessing bullying, the group who expressed most nervousness were the senior female students. It was also worth noting from Table 4.11B that while 9.7% of senior male students who reported witnessing bullying (4.4% of the total senior male sample) indicated they felt embarrassed on behalf of their bullied peers, no senior female student, who reported having witnessed bullying, responded in this way.

Overall, 11% of all respondents indicated that they were d) *amused* or e) *didn't care* when witnessing others being bullied. Of those who reported being witness to bullying, the majority who indicted amusement were girls at junior cycle level, with junior cycle female students in the

Community Schools holding this attitude more than their counter-parts in either the private girls' only school or the private mixed gender school, none of whom gave this response.

4.6.2 - Students' Actions when Becoming Aware of Bullying

Question 16 asking, "what do you do if you see bullying happening?" offered students a list of options to choose from for their response. These included, a) *join in*: b) *walk away*: c) *try to help* or d) *ask an adult for help*. Overall, 93.2% of surveyed students responded to this question and of these, 34.5% indicated *walking away* as their choice of action, 46.2% indicated *trying to help* and 17.3% responded that they *would ask an adult for help*. Option a) which was to *join in*, was the least chosen of the listed options.

Table 4.12, below, displays responses relating to students' choice of action as percentages of the total sample.

Table 4.12:

Percentages of students' responses regarding choice of action to witnessing bullying

Level	Sex	n	Join in	Walk away	Try to help	Ask adult for help
J	F	270	1.1%	16.7%	20.4%	8.9%
	M	234	2.6%	12.0%	21.8%	6.4%
S	F	238	0.4%	16.0%	18.1%	5.0%
	M	275	1.5%	25.5%	14.9%	1.8%

4.6.3 - Actions Unsupportive of the Targeted Student

Overall, 1.4% of the total sample indicated joining in, with a higher number of admissions to this coming from male students than from females. Interpreting the data from this element of the survey was confused by the fact that many more students gave reasons for joining in than had indicated that they had actually done so. It was therefore understood that some students may have been suggesting reasons as to why a person might join in, rather than necessarily indicating why they themselves had done so. The main reason given for joining in was dislike for the targeted person. Though few in number, (4 out of a total of 275) all were senior male students who admitted to joining indicating that they thought that it was fun to do so. 0.3% of the entire sample, all of whom were junior male students indicated friendship with the perpetrator as a reason to join in with the bullying of others. Overall 34.5% indicated Option b) *walking away*, as their choice of action. The most common reason given for this was it was not their business. In Table 4.13A students' reasons for walking away are shown as percentages of the total sample. Table 4.13B shows details of reasons given by students as a percentage of students who indicated they had actually walked away.

Table 4.13A

Reasons given by students who indicated walking away as a percentage of the total sample

Level	Sex	n	To not get picked on	Don't like target	Target not my friend	None of my business
J	F	270	4.4%	1.9%	1.1%	11.9%
	M	234	4.7%	0.9%	0.4%	8.5%
S	F	238	2.1%	0.0%	1.7%	12.2%
	M	275	4.7%	1.1%	1.8%	19.3%

It is clear that the most popular reason given for walking away was that the bullying of others was none of their business. 37% of the total sample, more respondents than had indicated that they would walk away, gave this as a reason for doing so. As evident in Table 4.13 A, a greater proportion of senior male students than of any other group explained walking away from bullying of others on the basis that it was not the business of the witnesses. There was a considerable difference between junior and senior male responses in this category with 8.5% of the total junior male group and 19.3% of the total senior male group indicating that bullying of others is not their business. An examination of the percentage of students who actually replied that they had walked away in Table 4.13B below “because it was none of their business” shows that this was a high motivating factor for students in all four groups.

Table 4.13B:

Reasons given by students who indicated walking away as a percentage of those students who admitted doing so

Level	Sex	n	To not get picked on	Don't like target	Target not my friend	None of my business
J	F	45	26.7%	11.1%	6.7%	71.1%
	M	28	39.3%	7.1%	3.6%	71.4%
S	F	38	13.2%	0.0%	10.5%	76.3%
	M	70	18.6%	4.3%	7.1%	75.7%

34.5% (32.2% of total cohort) gave self-protection as their reason to distance themselves from a bullying situation, marking response a) *so I won't get picked on*. This course of action was more common among male students at both junior and senior level than among the females. 23.6%, of all those who indicated having walked away, gave dislike of the targeted person, or the fact that this person was not their friend, as their reason for doing so. Junior cycle females were foremost in giving dislike of the targeted student as their reason for walking away. While no senior females indicated dislike of the targeted person as their reason, a higher percentage of senior female students than of any other group offered lack of friendship with the targeted student as their reason for walking away. Overall, senior male students were proportionally the largest group to highlight walking away as an option when witnessing bullying, giving self-protection and the fact that the situation was not their business as their main reasons. This was the trend in all school types attended by male students with between 25% (mixed gender private school) and 44% (Community school sector) of senior males indicating these answers. Next in terms of numbers were junior female students followed by senior females. As percentages of the total cohort however, the group who indicate that they were least likely to walk away from a bullying situation were the senior female students.

4.6.4 - Actions Supportive of The Targeted Student

Besides joining in or walking away, two positive options or courses of action were offered to students in the response list. These were, c) *try to help*, or d) *ask an adult for help*. The two tables below display the percentages of students who indicated trying to help as a response to witnessing bullying. Table 4.14A represents these respondents as percentages of the total sample and Table 4.14B shows the data in terms of percentages of those who reported responding in this way.

Table 4.14A:

Reasons for trying to help as percentage of the total sample

Level	Sex	n	Not fair	Would want help	Discourage bully	Keep bully out of trouble
J	F	270	10.7%	12.2%	2.6%	2.6%
	M	234	12.4%	7.7%	4.3%	3.4%
S	F	238	8.8%	11.8%	2.5%	0.8%
	M	275	7.3%	5.8%	3.3%	1.8%

Table 4.14B:

Reasons for trying to help as percentage of those who indicated they had done so

Level	Sex	n	Not fair	Would want help	Discourage bully	Keep bully out of trouble
J	F	55	52.7%	60.0%	12.7%	12.7%
	M	51	56.9%	35.3%	19.6%	15.7%
S	F	43	48.8%	65.1%	14.0%	4.7%
	M	41	48.8%	39.0%	22.0%	12.2%

Overall, 18.5% of the sample responded to this item. Examining responses from students who gave *trying to help* as their response to question 16, female students at both levels and across all school types outnumbered male students in highlighting as their reason their own desire that someone would come to their aid in similar circumstances. Comparing the number of students who indicated *trying to help* as their response to witnessing bullying (question 19) with those who acknowledged it as a positive or correct response (question 16, response c) revealed a greater number of students affirmed this behaviour than actually reported doing it. 2.6% of junior male students, more than any other group, had indicated *joining in* as a response to witnessing bullying, but interestingly 21.8% of junior male students, also the biggest proportion of the different groups, had indicated trying to help when being witness to bullying. From among the male students, self-reports of trying to help their bullied peers revealed that junior male students showed a slightly greater inclination to seek help on behalf of their bullied peers than their senior counterparts (21.8 per cent and 14.9 per cent respectively). This difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4.0481$ (1 df), $p < 0.05$). On the other hand, female students' self-reports of trying to help their bullied peers revealed less of a difference between reports of doing so by students at junior and senior levels. Junior female students showed a slightly greater inclination to seek help on behalf of their bullied peers than their senior counterparts (20.4 per cent and 18.1 per cent respectively) but the difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.431$ (1 df), $p < 0.05$). 81.6% of all students gave reasons for trying to help, many of whom gave more than one reason for their actions.

44% of those who responded to this question (35.9% of the total sample) indicated the belief that bullying is unfair. Table 4.14A above shows that this view was held by a greater proportion of junior students than senior students. 36.7% (29.9% of total sample) replied that they would want someone to help them if they were being bullied. As shown in Table 4.14A

more female students than males from among the total sample highlighted this as a reason for trying to help. As can be seen from Table 4.14B, among those students who had indicated they had tried to help, the proportion of females who gave this as their reason was 60% or over at both junior and senior level. 11.8% (9.6% of the total sample), indicated the belief that by trying to help or by showing friendship towards the targeted student, they might discourage perpetrators of bullying. The proportion of male students who indicated this as their reason for trying to help was higher than the females at both junior and senior level. Students who indicated trying to help as a means *to guide a friend who was bullying away from trouble* were also predominantly male, with Community School senior male students representing the largest group to respond in this way. Approximately 5 % of female students attending the Community schools and 10% of their male counterparts gave protecting a friend who was bullying from trouble as a reason to intervene. 3.5% of students in the boys' only school also indicated this as a reason. No senior female students from the private school for girls and none of the students who attended the mixed gender private school indicated thus. Specifying this as being a reason why one should intervene did not mean that students had actually done so and when examining these responses, the number of those who reported interceding in this manner was very low. The largest group again were the senior male students attending Community schools with 7.38% of them indicating that they had actually done so. Three male students, all from the Community school sector (0.5% of all respondents), one from the junior the two others from the senior cycles had indicated a) *joining in* as their chosen action in response to question 16 and d) *to guide a friend who was bullying away from trouble,* as their reason for trying to help.

4.6.5 - Seeking Help from Adults

The last three questions of this questionnaire survey were in many ways the most important part of this phase of the study. In questioning students about their reasons for seeking

adult help, about the response of these adults and about their own feelings as to whether or not they would seek adult intervention again, the hope was to develop some kind of understanding of respondents' experiences which might explain the apparently low level of reporting of bullying. Overall, 16.1% of students who responded when asked in question 16, "What do you do when you see bullying happening?" went for option d) indicating that they would ask an adult for help. A break down by school level and gender revealed that from among the male students who reported seeking adult help, junior cycle males were more likely than their senior cycle counterparts to take this course of action (6.4 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively); the difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 7.0623$ (1 df), $p < 0.01$). Junior cycle female students were also more likely to seek help than their senior cycle counterparts (8.9 per cent and 5 per cent respectively); the difference, however, was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 2.843$ (1 df), $p < 0.05$).

Unfortunately, only 5.5 % of the total sample responded to question 20 which sought to discover students' reasons for requesting adult help. Thus, the majority of students who had specified that they would seek help did not support their statement with an explanation as of what they would expect to happen after they had done so. The tables below display the percentage details of students' different reasons for reporting to adult in their responses to question 20. Table 4.15A sets out these responses as percentages of the total sample, while the data in Table 4.15B reveals responses from students who had previously responded in question 16 that they would seek adult help.

Table 4.15A:

Percentage of the total sample of students who gave reasons for seeking adult intervention

Level	Sex	n	Would want help myself	Safer	No one deserves bullying	Expect them to stop it
J	F	270	3.7%	2.2%	3.7%	0.7%
	M	234	0.9%	2.1%	2.1%	1.3%
S	F	238	0.8%	1.3%	2.9%	0.0%
	M	275	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%

Table 4.15B:

Percentage of students who sought adult help and their reasons for seeking it

Level	Sex	n	Would want help myself	Safer	No one deserves bullying	Expect them to stop it
J	F	24	41.7%	25.0%	41.7%	8.3%
	M	15	13.3%	33.3%	33.3%	20.0%
S	F	12	16.7%	25.0%	58.3%	0.0%
	M	5	0.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%

The majority of the small group who identified seeking adult help as an option did so on the basis that they thought no one deserved to be bullied. As can be seen above, the actual number of students who opted for this course of action was very small, but this was the most popular reason, followed by an expression of the wish for help if they found themselves being targeted for bullying in similar circumstances. Table 4.14B shows that students generally did not seem to consider adult intervention as a safety measure, though between 25% and 40% of those who responded that they had reported their concerns indicated it as a consideration. An

examination of this data by gender and school level revealed that junior female students gave the desire that someone would help them if they were in a similar situation and their view that no one deserved to be bullied equal status among their motivations. Whether students admitted to reporting or not, the option "no one deserves to be bullied" was the most popular response given by students, as can be seen from Table 4.15A and Table 4.15B. As a matter of some concern however, only 17.4% of students who indicated that they would ask for help (0.9 % of the total sample) highlighted that they would expect the adult to whom they reported to put a stop to the bullying. It was noteworthy that none of the senior female students who had ticked response options relating to seeking adult help or who had indicated that they had in fact sought help responded that they expected an adult to stop the bullying.

4.6.6 - Students' Perceptions of Adults' Responses

Data relating to students' experiences or perceptions of their teachers' responses to reports of bullying are set out in the tables below. As can be seen from Table 4.15B, the actual number of students who stated they had reported is very small. Table 4.16A presents details of students' views of teachers' responses as percentages of the total sample and Table 4.16B shows the reality of these details in the framework of those who responded to this question. While there may have been some satisfaction, at least with the immediate response of teachers, the number of respondents was too few to give any real sense of adults' or teachers' activities in the area of bullying interventions, as experienced by these students. The column labelled "Never did" in the table below was inserted as a result of some students who had previously indicated that they had *reported to adults* in response to item 16 "What do you do when you see bullying happening?", but then went on to mark the response showing that they had never done so in response to question 21 which asked about adults' responses to their reports.

Table 4.16A:

Percentage of the total sample of students who indicated teachers' responses to students' reports of bullying

Level	Sex	n	Never did	They spoke to bully	They stopped the bullying	They ignored my concerns	They gave out to me
J	F	270	2.6%	3.7%	1.9%	0.7%	0.0%
	M	234	2.6%	1.3%	1.3%	0.4%	0.4%
S	F	238	0.0%	2.9%	1.3%	0.0%	0.4%
	M	275	0.4%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 4.16B:

Percentage of students who sought adult help and their perceptions of teachers' responses

Level	Sex	n	Never did	They spoke to bully	They stopped the bullying	They ignored my concerns	They gave out to me
J	F	24	29.2%	41.7%	20.8%	8.3%	0.0%
	M	15	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	6.7%	6.7%
S	F	12	0.0%	58.3%	25.0%	0.0%	8.3%
	M	5	20.0%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%

As indicated above, 16.1% of students who responded when asked in question 16, "What do you do when you see bullying happening?" went for option d) indicating that they would ask an adult for help. In response to question 21 "If you asked an adult for help – what was their response?" 63.7% of those who answered this question replied that they had never sought help from an adult. 48.2% of these students who had sought adult help (2.6 % of the student sample), replied that the adult to whom they reported their concerns had spoken to the student who was bullying. Female students at both junior and senior level recorded higher levels of awareness regarding the fact that their teachers had responded by talking to the perpetrator. This response

was reported by 41.7% of junior female students who said they had reported to an adult (3.7% of the junior female sample) and 58.3% of senior females (2.9% of the senior female sample) who similarly reported. 20% of junior males who said they had reported (1.3% of the junior male sample) and no senior males reported being aware of the fact that the teacher had spoken to the perpetrator. A further 36.1% of these responding students (2% of the student sample) replied that the adults had stopped the bullying and 10% of responding students, all of whom were juniors, replied that the adult had ignored their report. 3.6% of students who responded to this question (0.19% of all students) and who indicated that they had sought adult assistance reported that they had been reprimanded for *telling tales* with equal numbers of junior males and senior females experiencing this.

4.6.7 - Summing Up Participating Students' Self -Reported Accounts of Their Experiences and Feelings on Adults' Responses

A brief review of students' responses at this point in the data analysis showed that in their response to question 15, asking students how they felt when they witnessed bullying, 35.6% of all responding students indicated feeling *embarrassed, upset or nervous* when they saw their peers being targeted. In relation to practical and positive responses to bullying, 18.5% of responding students had chosen option c) in question 16, indicating that they had *tried to help* if they witnessed bullying but had not specified in what way they had done so. Fewer students again, only 12.5% of responding students (5.5 % of the total sample) indicated that they had sought help from an adult.

In the final question, question 22, students were invited to indicate if, based on previous experience of having done so, they would seek adult support to resolve bullying situations in the future. Response rates to this question were very low with only 14.4% of those who replied (0.9% of total sample) responding that they would be confident to report to an adult again. Male

and female students at junior and senior levels shared this attitude almost equally. 12.4% of students who indicated that they had previously sought help replied that they would be careful to whom they would report in the future and 1.8% of students, who replied that had previously sought help from an adult, indicated that they would not do so again. The few students in the latter group were all junior males. The tables below show a breakdown of students' attitudes to reporting again, based on experience (or perhaps impressions) of how teachers had dealt with reports of bullying in the past.

Table 4.17A:

Percentage of the total sample of students who indicated how teachers' responses affected their confidence to report

Level	Sex	n	Never reported	Confident to report again	Careful to whom to report	Would not report again
J	F	270	1.9%	4.4%	2.2%	0.0%
	M	234	2.1%	3.0%	0.4%	0.4%
S	F	238	0.4%	3.4%	1.3%	0.0%
	M	275	1.1%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 4.17B:

Percentage of students who indicated they had reported and how teachers' responses affected their confidence to report

Level	Sex	n	Never reported	Confident to report again	Careful to whom to report	Would not report again
J	F	24	20.8%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%
	M	15	33.3%	46.7%	6.7%	6.7%
S	F	12	8.3%	66.7%	25.0%	0.0%
	M	5	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%

A review of data contained in the two tables above makes it clear that, for whatever reason, students were disinclined to engage with this question. There was nothing to indicate why so few had responded. While 37.6% of the students who had responded to question 22, "If you reported a bullying situation to an adult – how did their response make you feel?" indicated some level of confidence to report bullying events to teachers in the future, this figure represented only 2.1% of the total sample of the student participants in this survey.

4.7 - CONCLUSION

As stated in sub-section 3.16 of the Methodology Chapter, there are limitations to the use of questionnaire surveys. This type of research facilitates cross-sectional analyses of information collected at a single point in time and as such cannot be deemed to be conclusive enough to support arguments regarding reasons for changes in attitudes as a student grows older, or assertions that students' experiences in relation to bullying in first year in a particular school, may have impacted on decisions taken or attitudes held by fifth year students in the same school. Bearing this in mind however, the information provided by students in this questionnaire survey, indicated an awareness of peer bullying which varied widely from school to school. The lowest level of reporting of awareness came from students who attended the mixed gender private school and the highest level of reporting from students in the Community schools. While there was evidence of sympathy or concern for bullied peers among male and female students, at both junior and senior cycle level and in all school types, this did not translate, except in a very small minority of responses, to students' indications of having sought adult help in putting an end to the bullying. The data extracted from the analysis of the questionnaire responses highlighted a majority of students indicating that they had not, or would not, report incidents of bullying to a teacher. With 18.6% of students indicating that they had tried to help a bullied peer (giving

reasons for doing so) and only 5.5% of the total sample responding that they had sought adult intervention, it appeared that the valuable resource of peer support was lacking.

The response levels to questions 20, 21 and 22 (Appendix E) which sought to understand students' perceptions of the role of their adults in bullying situations were so low as to be without value and so, the gaps in understanding of these issues which remained, formed the basis of the second phase of this research involving a Focus Group discussion.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

PART TWO

4.8 - INTRODUCTION

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, several questions remained unanswered at the end of phase one of this study. The research aims stated in Chapter 3 (subsection 3.10.1) reiterated the main aims of this study and set out a guiding framework for the discussions which were designed to develop an understanding of students' views regarding their teachers' roles in providing support in bullying situations. Part two of this chapter describes findings from Phase 2 of the research which involved the conversation between participants in the Pilot and the Focus Group Discussions. These conversations were guided by the prompt questions set out in Appendices G (a) and G (b) respectively. The way these prompts were used was described in the research design set out in Chapter Three, section 3.5.3.

4.9 - PILOTING THE DISCUSSION

Prior to the formal focus group discussion, four young men and one young woman had agreed to participate in a pilot discussion (see Chapter Three, subsection 3.11.1). The purpose

of this exercise was to confirm that all the issues which should be central to the conversation had been identified and to ensure that the most relevant information could be derived from the formal discussion. The procedures involved in this piloting exercise are described in Chapter 3 (subsection 3.11). While it had been explained to these participants that this discussion was just a practice run, the purpose of which was to prepare for a formal discussion, their contribution to the exercise was generous and whole hearted and much of what they said added value to the research. With this in mind and with their permission, I have included details of this piloting exercise in my findings.

4.9.1 - The Piloted Discussion

During the course of the pilot exercise it became clear that new and different perspectives would emerge offering a range of explanations for students' choices of action when confronted by bullying. The limitations of the mainly closed question and answer format of the survey conducted in Phase One of the study, which is a feature of questionnaires of this type, became more obvious as participants' stories unfolded. Their accounts of school experiences and the discussions between them helped to clarify many issues relating to bystander behaviour and to support new understandings regarding possible motivations for some of the responses students had given in the questionnaire surveys. In spite of experiencing a different life since leaving school, it became obvious that members of the pilot group still retained memories of their school experiences. Three of the four young men and the young woman involved described their awareness of school bullying and were balanced and unemotional as they delivered their insights into their experiences. In general, all participants engaged in some way in addressing the various topics. The other young man, who had attended a large private boys' school and who seemed shyer than the rest of the group, spoke little, but when he did so, his contributions on the issues of

the apparent tolerance of extreme horseplay and on not knowing where to go when concerned about this reflected his full engagement in the discussion.

4.9.2 - Types of Bullying

To open the conversation participants shared their most common observations of interpersonal exchanges or relationships as they had experienced them in school. All the male participants made reference to "messing and the slagging of others". Three of them expressed the view that teachers sometimes interpreted bullying, or at least disrespect, where none was intended, but all acknowledged the level of the intensity of this behaviour. One participant, who attended a large boys' only school, referred to the fact that there had been "a great amount of bullying" in his school. He mentioned the fact that exclusion of individuals had been a major issue for some students and how, in his view, people were afraid to report this. Another participant described how he thought that students who were isolated looked as though "they didn't understand". The other male participants had shared similar experiences and agreed with him regarding the level and type of bullying, particularly among junior cycle students. The only female in the group referred to the subtle nature of female bullying and the difficulties faced by anyone who would try to report it. She too described how individual students were excluded and isolated and told how students who attempted to report concerns, were unable to prove it, if asked to do so.

Physical aggression was described by one male participant as a "junior cycle phenomenon" with fights being organised for after school. He suggested that these fights were fuelled by disagreements rather than anger and that very often students felt forced into fighting by their peers. He suggested that this pressure to fight could, on occasions, have been considered to be bullying. He described how a popular student involved in such a fight would be further encouraged by the cheering of his supporters while his opponent, if less popular, would be jeered

and for some time afterwards be ostracised from the group. The female participant noted that she had not experienced or witnessed any physical aggression.

Another feature of school life, which three of the male participants alluded to was the "milling (explained as crowding) around of students on the corridors and at the lockers." Whether or not bullying happened in these places, there was a view that it was an ideal place for individuals to be targeted. The intimidating scene for junior students, of groups of senior students standing outside a classroom, even if nothing was to happen was recalled by one participant, who described how he had seen "it (the fear) in the faces of first years who had to walk past as I stood with my mates outside our room. We mostly ignored them, but they weren't to know."

4.9.3- School Policy and Procedures

Sharing very similar experiences of their first day at secondary school, members of the group shared and compared memories regarding the address to new students by either Principals or Year Heads. They all claimed to remember strong messages relating to lack of tolerance for bullying in school and several recalled being directed to read the policy on bullying contained within their school journals. They remembered clearly the fact that several school policies were printed therein. In relation to their schools' anti bullying policy, several members indicated that, when instructed to read it, they did not understand it. The general consensus among participants was that young students could not be expected to fully read and comprehend their schools' anti-bullying policies (or any other policy), as they all had been directed to do. While all members of the group were aware from the first day in their secondary school, that a school policy existed, none of them knew their schools' procedures when bullying occurred. When concerned about bullying, participants described how, as children, they did not know what to report, to whom and how. One of the males described his terror at being in such a large school setting and said that

when he read the introduction to the policy which stated *School name does not tolerate bullying*, he decided that he would "never bully, admit to being bullied or in fact see bullying, just to be on the safe side". He described the Principal as being very intimidating and, at the time, considered him as someone to be avoided. Another young man described how they had been given *the* bullying lecture at their first assembly in first year but that he did not remember any follow-up. He too referred to the policy as written in his school journal and said that the fact that there was nothing to indicate the nature of the consequences for any of the three parties, the perpetrator, the person being targeted or the person who would report, led to inaction on the part of students who might have been aware of a peer being bullied. Another member commented on the fear felt by witnesses to bullying as they watched bullying happening but, not knowing the procedures, felt powerless to help. This young man described how when he was in second year, a student who had been unmercifully bullied "snapped" and retaliated. The boy in question had been suspended for his violence and seven students who had been looking on, unsure of what to do or who to tell had also been suspended for their failure to act. Still contemplating school procedures, one participant made the point that the procedures could have been followed but, to her knowledge, students were not aware of this.

As this conversation continued, memories of school returned and two of the male participants recalled being told that students could talk to their tutor or their class counsellor. The female in the group recalled how they were directed to go to their class tutor should they have any issues, personal or school related. She highlighted her perception of the fragile nature of supports being offered, possibly due to the lack of clarity regarding procedures and lack of teacher training, describing two occasions of individual teachers' kind- hearted but inept responses to reports of bullying. She described how, on each occasion, in front of the whole class, the teacher had invited a student, who had confided in her, to remain back after class to

give an update of her situation. This participant suggested that this kind "minding" did little to ensure feelings of confidence or trust. Other members referred to individual teachers' responses in school which ranged from ignoring the bullying, to firm words with the perpetrator to a "general rant" with the perpetrator or the whole class group. What came across in these descriptions was the inconsistency in responding and the fact that the situations described related to individual teachers' and not whole school responding.

One member of the group stated that "The school's procedures in relation to bullying were set out in the journal – and there they stayed. We didn't understand how they would be in reality." He did, however, refer to the sometimes public way of engaging parents when bullying happened, describing how students, while not really understanding what procedures were being followed, were nonetheless aware when parents had been called in. In such cases parents were requested to come to school during school hours and they always "had to pass the classroom windows to get to the office". In such cases, the student who had been victimised was often labelled "a rat" although it was only assumed and not certain that this student had reported.

In general, as young adults looking back, the group members were critical of their schools' handling of bullying. One of the group said that he had sometimes wondered why teachers were not looking out for bullying. As stated above, they had all indicated various levels of contentment with their school life which, in the case of some participants, came about in senior cycle and was due to finding friends and remaining in the friendship groups. At this, stage participants felt they had had some control as, by nature of a system whereby students could choose at least some of their subjects for their Leaving Certificate examination, it was possible to opt for subjects that their friends were also doing and more importantly perhaps, others were not. This view was supported by Smith, Madsen and Moody (1999) who suggested that as students advance through secondary school they develop skills to help them to avoid and respond to

attempts by others to bully them. They were all aware of fellow students who had gone through school without this support and questioned the role of teachers in supporting these students and monitoring for bullying.

4.9.4 - Responses Regarding Individual Teachers

Having discussed formal school procedures and found them lacking, participants went on to share stories of individual teachers' responses to bullying in their schools. The participants' views of their teachers' responses to bullying varied. One student spoke of two teachers in his school. One who would encourage students to reflect on the way they were behaving and to whom, he felt, anyone could have gone if they were being bullied. He identified this person as a listener and a doer, as someone who would act. This group member was not sure if his teacher's actions followed school procedures or if he was someone who just "knew what to do". These encouragements to reflect were rare but effective, the young man describing how rowdier class members would be calmer for some time afterwards. In a follow-up description, he highlighted how occasionally students were taken by another teacher and subjected to a 20-minute rant, after which they felt aggrieved and abused and had learnt nothing. He described other examples of different responses by teachers in the same school.

All of the young people in this group seemed to value the quieter, listening approach of their teachers but they also highlighted that the good relationship they might have with one teacher might not have been experienced by others in their peer group. Discretion on the part of adults when addressing bullying issues was highly valued and yet, account of their experiences or observations indicated that, it was not necessarily practiced. Thus students feared reporting, knowing that the person who reported would most likely be labelled a rat. The female in the group referred again to the way in which a teacher's enquiry about a pupil's wellbeing, ensured that many of the student's class mates assumed the questions came from a desire to know if "the

bullying had stopped". The participant, who had previously referred to the opportunity to meet with the tutor or counsellor, praised the support and kindness of both. He said that he assumed that students could have raised the issue of bullying with either of them, had they so wished, but was not aware how often this was done. Another mentioned "kind" teachers who would listen to concerns but also others whose advice was to "try to sort it out for yourself".

4.9.5 - Prevention and Awareness Raising

While not included in the list of prompt questions, it became clear that it was important to raise the issue of bullying prevention or awareness raising exercises. I reminded participants that the topic of Bullying should have been discussed within SPHE (Social and Personal Health Education) at junior cycle, but there was no real memory of this. Two of the male participants responded with "Yeah, probably" but were unable to remember any topic addressed in SPHE during the course of their junior cycle years. The female member of the group described classes in which they had been shown power-point presentations but was dismissive of the effects of these. She described how her class sat quietly during the presentation, then "got up and left." Her memory was that any conversation among the students, on the topic that had been presented, was limited to the day of the presentation. Similarly two of the male participants referred to the fruitlessness of Anti-bullying weeks which were forgotten "two days later". I gave a brief overview of the two strand approach of our bullying prevention programme as operated in our school. I explained that within strand one we deliver regular awareness raising lessons and conduct regular surveys which offer students the opportunity to share their concerns. Within our lessons in strand one, we outline and explain our formal response mechanisms to incidents of bullying, which is the second strand of our programme. One participant suggested that this could ensure that every week was an anti-bullying week, rather than having one week in every year and

identified such lessons as the ideal forum to clearly explain school procedures for responding to bullying.

It was at this stage that the issue of cyberbullying arose and the promotion of the anti-bullying message in this regard. While acknowledging the insidious nature of this type of bullying and the tragic responses of some to being bullied in this way, one participant voiced his concern about the possible down-playing of person to person bullying. He described them as "…still major. Exclusion and isolation, intimidation and disrespect are all really wounding". Thus it was agreed that it is the malicious attitude that drives someone to bully, by whatever means, that has to be addressed within the school.

4.9.6 - Comments or Recommendations

As we neared the end of our discussion I reviewed the text of our conversation with the members of the group and asked them to highlight the points which they considered to be most important.

- There was shared agreement on the key issue of the difference in perception of adults and students regarding the behaviours that constituted bullying.
- It was further agreed that, in all of their schools, there had been a lack of meaningful discussion on and explanation of the anti-bullying policy, particularly in relation to ways of reporting concerns of bullying. As a result of, what they described as, the lack of communication none of them felt confident to interpret the policy in a way that would have helped them to respond.
- Participants considered that expectations on the part of a school that children can read and understand such literature was regarded as unrealistic. Thus, clarity and openness with regard to school response procedures, including implications and consequences for all involved, were considered to be major priorities. In this regard, the shared view was that

whatever the age cohort of students being spoken to, the assumption should be made, that they would benefit from an explanation of the policy and procedures.

- There was a general awareness that, in their experiences, there had been inconsistencies in the way their schools (management and teachers) dealt with cases of bullying. It was agreed that this added to the confusion regarding students' understanding as to what would be appropriate action for them to take.
- All participants agreed that teachers, who work in the area of bullying prevention, should be trained and also shared the view that teachers dealing with issues of bullying should not teach the students involved. They shared the concern that familiarity between students and teachers could take away from or affect in some way the outcome.
- Supervising teachers on corridor duty should engage with students waiting there to prevent the "fear factor" experienced by younger or vulnerable students as they walked past seniors on the corridor (see subsection 4.9.2 above).

4.10 - FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF BULLYING IN THEIR WORKING AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT WITHIN SCHOOL

The group that came together for the formal group discussion included of six members, two females and four males. Details of the participants and the types of schools they had attended are set out in Chapter 3 (subsection 3.13). Following a brief introduction to each other, all of the participants described themselves as having been fairly or reasonably happy in their school and each stated their awareness of the existence of an anti-bullying policy in their school.

4.10.1 - Bullying

To open the discussion, I invited participants to recall the different types of bullying they had observed during their time in secondary school. One young man commented that while there

had been "all sorts", it had been mostly verbal with much teasing. His experience, which was shared to a greater or lesser extent by all of the male and one of the female participants, seemed indicative of a culture accepting of violence and aggression among students. He described how there had been many occasions when physical violence occurred with punches being thrown, students hitting and tripping each other and fights breaking out. Two other male participants referred to slagging, name calling, sneering, sniggering or laughing at others and either serious isolation or, alternatively, targeting of individuals for the kinds of verbal abuse previously mentioned. Speaking simultaneously, two participants stated "guys would be sneered at for anything". Targeting others for verbal taunts or comments was referred to by all participants, one of whom indicated that this was the way in which students regularly communicated and that no one would have been hurt by such commenting. She referred to it as "sneering" and said that "everyone" did it. This young woman was quite strong in her defense of her peers in school and repeated several times that there had been no bullying in her school. She also was resistant to any suggestions on my part that not everyone is comfortable with, or accepting of, this kind of jeering. Two members of the group stated that this kind of persistent verbal taunting had not been their experience but they knew that it was common enough. Of these, the female member who had attended the all-girls school described how comments such as "fat, slut, ugly or stupid" might regularly be directed at others. All the participants agreed that this type of verbally abusive language was a feature of daily life across all year groups, to a greater or lesser extent. With reference to this type of behaviour several of the group mentioned that "they grew up" when they went into the senior cycle.

The young woman who had referred to regular sneering among her peer group was the only member of the group to raise the issue of cyber-bullying. She commented that there had been "no bullying in school –though there was a lot of Internet/cyber stuff. Instagram/Facebook.

Kind of creeping around and sneering at people or mimicking them." She referred to "creeping" on Facebook. When asked to explain this term, she described how someone would search for a specific individual on Facebook and try to discover as much information as possible about that person. They would then seek to connect with their target, making comments to or about them. She also described how people who were targeted for this type of commenting and who questioned it in any way would be further attacked by others who would imitate or mock their questioning. Thus queries by the targeted person seeking to discover reasons for the negative attention being focused on them would become material with which to further harass them. According to this participant, who had left school almost two summers prior to this discussion, the "creeping" on Facebook which she described from her school days was still being practiced. In spite of the apparent unpleasantness of this behaviour, this participant shared the view with a minority of those described by O'Brien and Moules (2012) (Chapter Two, subsection 2.3.2) that this kind of behaviour should not be taken too seriously. When I enquired about their familiarity with or involvement in this aspect of bullying, the other participants did not generally share her experience or observations of cyber-bullying. The general consensus among the other members was that most of the negative practices they observed or experienced in school were person to person. The other female member of the group highlighted the very strict policy of her school in relation to mobile phones and mused that this might have been reflected in a lower level of internet connections among students generally. After a brief reflection, the young man who had attended a community school related a story about an incident on Bebo when he had been in second year, but other than that, none of the others in the group had any story to tell or comment to make. This young man reiterated his view that he was most aware of person to person bullying and described how, in second year, a friend had "taken up" with a girl in the class. He told how the two young people had become "boyfriend and girlfriend" and had been teased unmercifully

for their demonstrations of affection towards each other. His friend had survived and remained a student in the school but the girl had left school at the end of that academic year.

One participant, who had attended a single gender private secondary school pointed to the fact that almost half of the students in his class in first year had been with him in his local national school and said that "Everything carried over from then. Friendships and bad stuff. Guys who were bullied in primary continued to be bullied in secondary". He suggested that it was often the popular students who led this kind of bullying behaviour and that others just fell into it. Two other male participants referred to the fact that there had been little bullying among members of the top level sports teams, but that these team members would sometimes bully others who were not on the team. It was noted that, in some of the (all-boys) schools, anyone who was not a sportsman could find himself perpetually excluded from social activities. This was not seen to be the case in either of the community schools or in the all-girls school where students participated in a variety of extra-curricular activities, or none. Bullying behaviour was not confined to outside the classroom but was often a feature of classroom behaviour. Participants referred problems of indiscipline in some classes during which students, who were vulnerable anyway, might have things (including books) thrown at them. The general reaction within the class group was for others to laugh at these antics. "Everybody laughed, they didn't really think". Three of the young men shared the view that in cases such as this, the teachers didn't care or that they might have felt vulnerable themselves. When questioned further on this, they all seemed to have a sense that younger, less experienced teachers were unlikely to challenge aggressive behaviour between students because they (the teachers) did not know how to handle it if it was turned back on them. At no stage was reference made to the intervention of a senior teacher, year head or member of management in situations where junior teachers had

difficulties with control in classrooms and when asked if they had been aware of this kind of involvement, no one had noticed it.

4.10.2 - Bullying Prevention or Awareness Raising Programmes

With regard to awareness raising or bullying prevention programmes, none of the participants could initially remember any such practice – either as stand-alone exercises or as part of their SPHE or Religion programmes. Three of the young men who had attended boys' only secondary schools referred to these two subjects as non-events, with no apparent memorable outcomes to report. They highlighted the lack of discipline in these type of non-exam subjects and all observed that the teachers assigned to teaching them were, for the most part, young and lacking in experience. None of these three remembered participating in any type of anti-bullying week activities during their time in secondary school. One of the participants described how in his school they had been directed to read the school's anti-bullying charter in their journal in which was stated the phrase that "appropriate sanctions" would be applied when pupils were found to be bullying. This section of the policy included a list of extreme sanctions for bullying. He commented that "It was more like what they'd do to you if they caught you doing it." The punitive nature of the sanctions, as judged by the participant, may have been an attempt to prevent students engaging in bullying. He suggested that students thought these sanctions were so harsh they couldn't be implemented. Whether or not, instructions to read the charter was intended to raise awareness of the schools' non-acceptance of bullying behaviour or as a preventative measure, these young men were in agreement that they had not regarded being directed to read the charter as a useful exercise in bullying prevention. One of the other participants referred to the fact that students believed that the school would not have had the "bottle" (courage) to take on a student or his parents in relation to bullying. One of two members of the group who had attended a community school recalled how students had been directed to

sign their names beneath the anti-bullying charter in their school journals as though they "were signing a contract". The two female students also recalled doing this. This young man and the two females also thought it was likely, though they did not remember, that "bullying" had been a topic addressed in SPHE.

As mentioned above, there was a general sense that the issue of bullying, as a standalone concern, had not been addressed, at least in any structured way in any of the six schools attended by participants. All members of the group could recall how "bullying" had been mentioned on their first day in school. All could recall their schools' anti-bullying policy being included among the other policies in the school journal. In one of the community schools a system existed whereby names of teachers who were members of the anti-bullying committee were announced each year and the names of these teachers were posted up in every social area of the school. Students were encouraged to seek out any of these teachers should they have anxieties about bullying. The young man who described this system was not sure how often these teachers were called upon. He referred to the opportunity to raise concerns after their "Pastoral assembly", held once per term, or with a teacher whose role was to ensure that all students were supplied with text books. This young man who had attended the community school also recalled how students in his school had benefitted from visits and workshops given by Aware (a national charity which offers support to those suffering from depression or to their families), during the course of their school's annual Health Awareness weeks. At these sessions depression and many of the factors which may impact negatively on mental health, including bullying, were addressed. The participant who had attended the all-girls school recalled the very positive atmosphere of inclusion in school during the course of their annual friendship week but also how, within a matter of days of it being over, the old groups were re-formed and "things returned to normal."

A prefect system existed in the other community school. 6th year male and female students were assigned to guide the newly arrived 1st years and as described by the participant, "they advised us what to do to avoid being bullied." She mentioned how one of the pieces of advice given to first years had been to leave their school bags in the classroom when going out to the school yard, at break-times, as it was likely that they risked being teased verbally or having their bag snatched by someone who would then run away, perhaps causing them distress or embarrassment. Thus, as experienced by this participant, the prefects' role focused on offering tips on self-protection to new students but did not provide information regarding the school's attitude to bullying nor details of any prevention mechanisms that might have been in place. Neither did they offer an account of the type of responses school authorities might make should bullying occur.

4.10.3 - Formal School Procedures to Respond to or Resolve Bullying

None of the participants seemed aware of procedures their school might have followed in cases where a formal response to bullying situations might have been required. One mused about the likelihood of a student going to the Guidance Counsellor but thought the guidance counselling role was more about their college applications. All participants viewed the role of the Guidance Counsellor as relating to career guidance only. During the course of the conversation, two members of the group referred to the chaplain as someone to whom one could go with concerns and two others commented that the Deputy Principals in their schools had been approachable. One of the two who had mentioned the Deputy Principal as someone in whom a student could confide, had previously mentioned a teacher who had the responsibility of ensuring that all students were furnished with text books and that this individual appeared to be someone in whom students could confide. The remaining two members of the group did not seem to be able to identify anyone to whom students who needed support could go. There seemed very little

visibility generally with regard to the manner in which schools addressed concerns about bullying. It was thought by some of the participants that these matters might have been dealt with through the usual application of sanctions for misbehaviour. This seemed, in all cases, to be some form of detention.

As there seemed little to discuss with regard to formal school procedures, the conversation moved on to individual teacher responses. Participants described how, in their experience, students reporting to teachers was a rare event. It was suggested that "you wouldn't go tell a teacher – you would be labelled a rat" and it was agreed by all, though they had all attended different schools, that bullying was never spoken about. On reflection one of the participants mentioned that maybe once or twice some kind of procedures were applied or a teacher "would rant for a while and everyone would know what was going on". The "victim would be labelled a rat after this as it would be assumed that they had told and it could be worse for them than being bullied." I queried whether or not their teachers appeared to be trying to deal with these situations on their own initiative. There was then a brief discussion, during which the efforts of some teachers to guide individual students to better behaviour were described. These efforts were mostly in the form of a "quiet word" after class but, as far as these participants were concerned, were of little long term value.

Reference was made again to the fact that often the student who was doing the bullying was popular with some of the staff as well as some students and one participant mentioned how, on one occasion, when the targeted person snapped and retaliated, he was punished for his behaviour. Sometimes, the person who was being aggressive towards his peers might be put on detention. The general consensus was that these students didn't care about these detentions and neither did their parents. "Their parents would drop them to detention on Saturday morning and collect them afterwards." When it was suggested that no one could really knew whether they

cared or not, the response was that if they did they would have tried to avoid repeating their behaviour. All agreed that it was a lose/lose situation for the vulnerable or targeted person. One young man described how he would go along with whatever derogatory comment was made to him- thus killing the joke, while another described keeping his head down when students prone to bully others were around.

When encouraged to remember back and to recall if they had been aware of any teacher who had "the knack" of dealing with the unkindness or disrespectful behaviour they had been describing, there seemed to be a general feeling that teachers didn't seem to care or, that if they did, they felt ill-equipped to deal with a lot of what went on. There were several references to older teachers sending students to the Principal or Deputy Principal and younger teachers not engaging with the problem. Two young men also referred to very capable teachers who would not have been confronted with this type of behaviour in the classroom and who, in their view, did not need to deal with the issue anywhere else. This view was further supported by a third who suggested that in an all-boys school the students will respond to toughness and so the intervention of an assertive teacher, who won't take any "guff", would close a situation down. He commented, however, that this would not change the atmosphere in the school.

The effectiveness of sports coaches and teachers in ensuring respect and discipline among players came up in this context. The three male participants who had attended single sex schools and the young man who had attended community school all highlighted the ill-defined or clouded boundaries in the banter between male teachers who were involved in training sports teams and their male student players. The latter young man described how, on the pitch or sidelines, some male teachers accepted students on first name terms with them, rough or coarse language and harsh criticism of peers on the pitch. He observed how female coaches seemed more inclined to work to maintain the teacher/pupil boundaries and that the female coaches were also quicker to

stop the critical comments of spectating students who might be verbally abusing a player they thought was underachieving on the sports field. All the members of the group agreed that sports teachers were often highly regarded by students and could have been helpful in dealing with bullying issues.

4.10.4 - By-Standing Students

While not included in the list of prompt questions, (Appendix F (b)), the question regarding the manner in which participants, as peers who had witnessed bullying, might have responded was addressed. This topic came as a natural continuation of the discussions which had been focused on descriptions of and being a witness to bullying. Much of the deliberations thus far had referred to participants' descriptions of the apparent lack of school procedures or the varying responses by individual teachers and there had been little or no reference to the role of members of the peer group, except for those who were perpetrating the bullying. The female participant, who had described how peers constantly sneered at each other in class, stated that this was not bullying because everyone did it. When asked to reflect if, in fact, everyone did it, she replied that perhaps some of the quieter people or maybe those who "didn't fit in" might not have done so. No one would have told others to stop or to leave them or other targeted people alone. If someone had had enough they just left the company. Staying with one's friends was noted by all participants as being a strategy adopted by vulnerable students as a means of gaining some level of protection, particularly by girls. The male from the community school and the female from the all-girls school both described staying with their group of friends and the female went on to say how, on occasion, if "the bullies" had found a new "victim", her group of friends would have invited this "victim" to sit with them and the bullies would then leave her alone. Reminding the young man of his friend in second year whose relationship with a girl in the class had resulted in long term teasing, I asked if he had felt the need, the inclination or even able, to intervene in

some way on his behalf. This young man replied that no one knew what to do and no one tried, other than to tell him (the targeted student) "to ignore" his tormentors. He said it was "interesting" to see how he would let them wind him up. He described how once throughout the whole time frame (almost an academic year) a teacher had spoken severely to the other lads and there had been "peace for a week". In this situation, with little apparent adult support or involvement, the best his friends felt they could do was to advise the targeted person to ignore the taunting. Thus placing the onus on the target to put up with it or to provide his own solution.

There was agreement among all participants that reporting concerns to adults was regarded as "ratting" and would have brought problems for the one who reported. There seemed to be no trust that confidentiality for the reporting person would be observed and so the general feeling was that, if someone was being bullied, they had to endure it or try to keep out of the way. It was easier to offer friendship to some people who were being victimised than to others and so, while some bullied students may have had a level of support, others would have had to suffer it alone. When I queried this sentiment, one of the participants referred back to a comment I had made previously about the concept of "provocative victims". He said that some people were just "so annoying or so different" that others ignored their plight. He said that this didn't mean that he and his friends had no sympathy for someone in this position, or thought his treatment was deserved, they just felt there was nothing they could do.

4.10.5 – Participants' Final Reflections and Recommendations

The general feeling, among the participants, was that bullying behaviour was able to thrive due to lack of vigilance on the part of the school staff and thus their failure to pick up on and respond to bullying. There was a feeling that teachers who had difficulties imposing discipline in class would be unlikely to confront someone who was bullying, even if this bullying was going on in front of them, while on the other hand, teachers who had a strong presence in a

classroom, generally got on with teaching his/her lesson. These teachers did not need to address the issue of bullying as it was not happening in their classroom.

In all of the schools attended by the members of this group there seemed to be a culture of silence among the students. The common belief was that when students passed into senior cycle, they grew up, to some degree, and began to recognise boundaries. Two of the young men who had attended all-boys schools indicated they would still have felt vulnerable in senior cycle if they had tried to intercede when a peer was being verbally abused by another, as they would be leaving themselves open to "being slagged". They agreed with each other, however, that they would more readily attempt to intervene on behalf of a bullied peer, with the knowledge that they too could be targeted, than report the bullying to an appropriate adult and be labelled as "a rat".

In summing up the various themes of the conversation, the participants to the discussion shared a common view that in each of their schools there had been no visible formal procedural approach to bullying. They agreed, or at least accepted, that this did not mean that none existed but that lack of communication regarding this and many other elements of school life was a major issue. Three of the participants had no memory of having participated, at any time, in any bullying awareness lessons and all took the view that it was the duty of staff, not students, to monitor for and respond to bullying

One of the young men commented that when he had been asked to participate in this discussion he had spent a little while trying to recall his time in school. He said that, in doing so, he had begun to feel ashamed because, at the time, he had felt unable to support, in any way, peers who had experienced persistent bullying in school. He stated that when he saw others being bullied, he was terrified. He felt he could not act on their behalf due to what he described as his "lack of status". He felt he had no social standing among his peers. He repeated a phrase he had used earlier, describing some of his bullied peers as "emotionally stunted or damaged" by

their experience. Another young man agreed, saying that when they were in school no one really realised how being bullied could damage emotional and even physical health. While there may have been some attempts during his time in school to highlight concerns regarding suicide and depression, he felt that in the three years since he had left school these had become bigger issues, receiving more media attention and he thought that this was bringing the concerns out in the open in schools too. This participant described meeting some of his former classmates, who had been bullied in school, as he went about his business in college and said how he felt that they lacked the confidence of other students there (see Chapter Two, subsection 2.6.1). It was agreed that in reality, only a handful of students actually bullied others but that these individuals had a type of confidence which they would project onto others. One young man mentioned that if "they (the person bullying) passed a smart comment about someone, the others would laugh – as though it was the right thing to do!"

One participant referred to the role of parents, saying that they had a duty to engage with the school, to contact the Principal if they saw changes in their children in terms of attitude, behaviour or demeanour and to demand that the school should be vigilant and supporting of their children. Others in the group voiced opposition to involving parents whose children were being bullied. One young man commenting that he didn't "think that parents should be informed except in extreme cases. If someone was being bullied and their parents were informed, they (the parents) couldn't leave it alone. Always wondering, always asking if you were ok. I know it would be because they care but there is no need for that." Others in the group supported this view. The participant who had highlighted the need for parents to contact school if concerned about a change in their child also acknowledged the difficulty faced by school authorities when parents did not value education or support their child's school. She suggested that it could be very difficult to teach or guide young people from families who did not place some value on

education or show respect for those trying to provide it. With regard to the role of students, her view, and that of the other participants, was that those who did not actively bully others had to take care of themselves.

As mentioned above, when enlisting the help of these participants, I had given them an overview of my research findings up to that time and explained the rationale for having our Focus group meeting. When the group convened, I had referred to the fact that I was approaching this meeting as someone who regularly engaged in conversations on the issue of bullying. Having discussed their experiences in school in relation to this topic and heard their views regarding their schools' ethos when it came to bullying, I gave a more fulsome overview of the system in place in my school (see Appendix K). I described how we have a team of teachers who deliver regular lessons aimed at all age groups (at least one per term) and how frequent surveys (one, two or more per term) are conducted in which students can voice concerns, on their own behalf or on behalf of others. I explained that students sign their survey responses and that these are held in complete confidence so that no one knows who has reported. I explained that we view the signing of surveys as a means of giving ownership of the system to the students and how it is possible to draw down further support or question students' behaviours with them at a later date, guided by their response in their survey. For example, students are asked at the end of every survey "what is your view on bullying?" The majority of students will voice some kind of negative response to this. If, at a later date, a student's unkind behaviour has brought him to the attention of some member of the team, it is possible to find his most recent completed survey, review his response to the latter question and to use this to guide our conversation with him. While, generally, there was approval for this system and all seemed in agreement that "overkill" was preferable to nothing, nonetheless all participants seemed to have serious reservations that

such a system could have worked in their former schools. The reason for this view seemed to be that the cultures that existed during their time in school were so ingrained as to be unchangeable.

Having been asked what recommendations they would make to their Principals or Boards of Management regarding this issue, participants agreed that promoting a culture of respect, as opposed to putting out strict anti-bullying messages, might be more productive. The young man, who had spoken of his terror when he witnessed others being bullied, suggested that a system of collaborative, small group learning, where students would be rotated within these groups, could promote inclusion and co-operation among the student body generally. The conversation returned to the duty of the adults to be watchful, listening and aware and to respond when bullying happened. None of the participants believed that their former schools would have been willing to dedicate the time that they (the participants) imagined would be necessary to successfully implement the type of programme I had described. They also shared the opinion that their school would not have wanted to dedicate the time to train their staff to the level they (these participants) thought would be necessary. Two of the group members referred again to the vulnerability of younger members of staff who, they thought, would not want to participate.

In bringing the discussion to an end, two young men summed up their experience with the comment – the rule in school was "don't tell". Returning to the advice they would give to their school Principal at this stage, the young woman, who had maintained all along that there had been no bullying in her school, proposed that adults should listen to the banter and decide when to act; similarly, the young man who had attended community school proposed that supervising teachers who are regularly visible on the corridor, reading their books or newspapers, should be encouraged to join in with students in their groups, tipping in and out in a social way. A final comment by another young man concluded the discussion nicely when he said "it's not about a programme – it's about an attitude!"

4.11- CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, the contribution of members of the pilot group was considered to be enlightening and their willingness to make a contribution to this research was very generous. Thus, I have included their contribution in my examination of the findings from these discussions.

The identification of verbal abuse as the most prevalent form of bullying by participants in both the pilot and focus group discussions was in keeping with findings from the analysis of the questionnaire surveys, discussed in subsection 4.4.1 above, which showed that the most commonly reported form of bullying experienced or observed by students had been verbal. In the discussions, the term "slagging" had been frequently used in relation to verbal abuse. "Slagging" covered a multitude of different types of abusive commenting in relation to aptitude (strong and weak), physical appearance, family background or members and sexual practice or orientation. Male participants, in particular, highlighted student to student taunting in the form of offensive sexual comments relating to mothers, sisters or girlfriends. Those involved in this part of the discussion agreed that this form of teasing was very provocative as it touched on the target's closest relationships, but they were not certain as to whether or not it was actually bullying. Tasteless as it may have been, there was a belief that it was possible that the perpetrator may not always have intended to bully but, as described by one participant, "guys just thought it was a bit of fun". Often it was the manner of the response of the target which would determine whether or not the situation would escalate into the realms of bullying. It was agreed that those students who laughed off such comments were less likely to be targeted again while others who would "rise to the bait" would suffer persistent "slagging and winding up." Participants accepted that, when they had been in school, there seemed to have been no awareness or recognition that some of this

type of behaviour could have carried with it legal implications and could have been addressed by school authorities as sexual harassment.

Two participants, who had attended all boys' schools, described how disagreements between students could result in pressure from others in their class, on often reluctant peers, to" fight after school". With the exception of two female participants from among the eleven participants in the pilot and focus group discussions, all others had identified varying levels of aggression as being present in their former schools but differentiated between that and actual physical bullying which they agreed was less prevalent than other forms of bullying. This too was in keeping with findings in the survey, shown in subsection 4.4.3 above, which revealed reports of physical bullying to be less than any other type.

Participants discussions regarding their experiences of school procedures and their shared lack of awareness of these procedures had not been enquired about in the survey but the uncertainties felt by participants in the group discussion when they found themselves in bullying situations was reflected in respondents' expressions of types of emotional discomfort as illustrate in the results in subsection 4.6.1 above. While some references had been made in the discussion to participants' emotional responses to bullying, these seemed to be current feelings on historic happenings and were coupled with a level of resigned acceptance that there was nothing one could do. In summing up the conversations, all participants placed responsibility to resolve bullying issues firmly with the adults in schools and many shared the opinion that dealing with the problem is an insurmountable task. The emphasis placed on the need for vigilance on the part of teachers by participants in the discussion was interpreted as a reflection of the unwillingness of survey respondents to report to adults (subsection 4.6.5) while indicating discomfort in the presence of bullying (subsection 4.6.1). Thus it seemed clear that even with the benefit of

hindsight and the maturing process, the young adult participants in this study saw preventing and responding to bullying as very much the responsibility of the adult authority figures in the school.

In their deliberations on types and experiences of bullying, discussion group participants gave accounts of interactions between students, particularly class mates, and made few references to the adult members of the school community. Thus, with only an occasional comment regarding a teacher's individual response to a bulling situation or to the Principal's message on the school's anti-bullying stance it appeared, from the students' point of view (as described by participants), that teachers and staff were almost invisible and somewhat irrelevant to bullying situations in school. Just as students appeared to show acceptance or tolerance of bullying behaviours so too, they implied, did teachers. While participants, in their accounts, appeared to blame teachers for their lack of intervention, there had been recognition by several participants that their schools offered them access to designated teachers or members of a pastoral care network, to whom they could go to discuss concerns and from whom they could seek support. The participants who described such systems identified the value of the support that was available and none of the them referred to talking to these staff members as "ratting". It was therefore apparent that, in some cases, a system already existed which provided the opportunity for students who were bullied or who witnessed bullying to seek support and that these school supports formed the basis for a valuable and effective resource in their bullying intervention strategies. These systems, however, seemed to be fairly low key as none of the participants whose schools had identified these members of staff to their students admitted to being really aware of what went on.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5. 1 - THE PURPOSE OF THIS CHAPTER

As stated in Chapter One, subsection 1.5.1, the aim of my research was to discover what circumstances should prevail in schools in order encourage student bystanders, known for their reticence in this area, to report bullying in school. This study was undertaken in two phases. As outlined in Chapter Three, subsection 3.4, the first phase involved conducting a survey among 1,027 secondary school students, half of whom were in Junior Cycle and the other half in Senior Cycle, with almost equal representation from boys and girls. An attempt was made to ensure that these students were representative of the general secondary school population by approaching schools in urban and rural locations, both single and mixed gender, fee paying and non-fee paying, private and voluntary and community schools. Students responding to the survey questionnaire reported on their social experiences within their school and class groups (see Appendix E) and following general questions regarding their feelings of ease within their peer groups in the classroom, focused their attention on questions relating to bullying. The second phase of the study consisted of a pilot followed by a focus group discussion with participants who had left school within the previous four years. During the course of these discussions, several aspects of school bullying were discussed, including participants' perspectives on their schools' handling of situations. The method by which these participants were enlisted into the project are outlined in Chapter Three (subsections 3.11.1 and 3.13).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the findings of the two phases in the context of the research questions and existing research. As stated in Chapter Three (subsection 3.2.2) the questions which this study set out to answer were:

- What are, or were, the experiences or observations of pupils, both present and past, regarding levels of disrespectful or bullying behaviours in their school environments?
- To what extent did witnessing bullying motivate them to act on behalf of their bullied peers?
- In situations where bullying occurred in their school setting, what features or characteristics of their school systems influenced student bystanders' decisions to seek adult intervention to resolve the situation?

Having analysed the responses given by respondents to the questionnaires and discussed these findings in the group sessions, the emphasis of the discussion was on participants' assessment and evaluation of their overall school experience with regard to bullying in school and their views and suggestions as to measures which schools might adopt which would encourage students to report bullying to school authorities.

With these questions in mind, information gained from participants' descriptions of their experiences or observations when in school, their apparent acceptance of the practice of disrespectful or bullying behaviours and the status quo that existed in their school environments which influenced students' willingness to intervene or engage on behalf of their bullied peers will be examined and discussed in the light of previous findings. Of particular interest in these discussions will be the reasons offered for low levels of "help seeking" from adults by students which will be considered in the light of previous research and in the context of school practices as set out in the policy documents of former schools attended by participants. This chapter will show how examining the statements regarding provisions for supports within the policy documents and comparing these with insights on students' perspectives, as provided by students and former students, will support recommendations, which will be made later in this chapter,

regarding adapting school cultures so as to provide valuable opportunities to increase the level of reporting by young people.

During the course of this discussion there will be reference to literature relevant to the findings which had been introduced in the main literature review chapter of this thesis (Chapter two). Within this chapter, the three primary themes, which had emerged during the examination of the findings in Chapter Four, are discussed under the following headings.

- *Bullying Behaviour in the school environment*: Within this section, findings relating to bullying and non-bullying behaviour within the environs of the students' schools will be discussed. Chapter Four (subsection 4.4.1 to 4.4.4) inclusive, presented a description of student behaviour as provided by secondary school students in the first phase of the study. Having examined and reflected on the themes which emerged from questionnaire responses, the emergent themes were presented for discussion to the group participants, all former secondary school students (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.9.2), and within these discussions it was possible to distinguish between types of behaviour that students accepted and tolerated as "normal" as opposed to those behaviours they did not openly object to but which they reported had made them feel uncomfortable. Section 5.2 below examines and discusses the findings which emerged;
- *Bystander attitudes and behaviours:* At the heart of this study was the wish to develop an understanding regarding students' willingness to seek help for themselves or for their bullied peers when faced with bullying in school. By examining the details which emerged from the analysis of survey responses with participants in the discussion (see subsection 5.3) the aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons for responses given by respondents to the survey regarding their emotional and practical reactions to witnessing bullying. Students' survey responses, as outlined in Chapter Four (subsection

4.6.2), gave details of actions they had taken or not taken and, in some cases, of actions that they indicated that they thought they should have taken. Descriptions by participants in the discussion groups of their actions in the face of bullying (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.4) examined alongside the data from the surveys are used to develop an understanding of the mind-set that influenced bystander responses or reactions to bullying. Within this section students' evaluation of their schools' official support for students who are bullied or who want to act against it are discussed, compared to and contrasted with findings from previous research. A goal during the course of these considerations was to develop an understanding of students' expectations of their adults, as queried in the questionnaire, Appendix E, question 20 and discussed with the focus groups and to learn from the discussions their views of how effectively these expectations were met; and,

- *Official school response to bullying:* The final section of this discussion draws the two previous sections together, examining accounts given during the course of the group discussions within the context of their schools' official stance and policies on bullying. Without alluding to individual policy documents, at a risk of identifying schools which had been promised confidentiality or which had not been aware of their past pupils' involvement in the study, an overview of the policies of all schools from which survey respondents and group participants had been drawn are set out in Appendix L (phase one) and Appendix M (phase two). Reference to the way in which these policies had been introduced to group participants, when at twelve years of age, they had entered secondary school, are described alongside their accounts of their experiences (see Chapter Four, subsections 4.9.3 and 4.10.2). In a non-specific review of approaches to the introduction of school policies, comments of group participants are used to support proposals for

recommendations regarding the implementation of these policies as "living documents", particularly in relation to explaining and clarifying intervention procedures (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.9.3). Consideration is given to the importance of the implementation of bullying prevention policies, not as stand-alone documents, but as essential elements of schools' ethos or mission statements, where these are regarded as statements of intent underpinning the culture of the school.

5.2 - BULLYING BEHAVIOURS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The section below presents some of the concerns which were highlighted in respondents' descriptive answers and described in Chapter Four (subsection 4.2.2) and explored with group participants during the course of the discussion as outlined in subsections 4.9.2 and 4.10.1. Though concerned with the issue of bullying in schools and conscious of the challenging nature of some of the negative non-bullying behaviours frequently highlighted, it is important, for fairness sake, to preserve a balanced view. By doing so, it is possible to maintain a perspective which acknowledges the positive aspects of students' behaviour. In their review of the social context within which schools operate (pp. 22- 38), the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools, commissioned by the Department of Education and Science (2006) and chaired by Maeve Martin, examined external factors which influenced the behaviour of students in their schools and classrooms. While identifying the intrusion of the effects of many of the societal ills into the school environment, the authors, referring to their teacher participants, also highlighted how "Many of our informants celebrated their students and indicated their sense of personal fulfilment and privilege in working with them" (p.37).

5.2.1 - Common Classroom Behaviour

Bearing in mind that, all bullying is misbehaviour but not all misbehaviour is bullying, it was deemed important to examine the school and classroom environments of responding students in order to understand the wider context in which the enquiry was conducted. As described in Chapter Four (subsection 4.2.2) above, accounts by over ninety percent of survey respondents to questions 3 and 4 of the survey (see Appendix E) yielded several different versions of the same message, which was that rowdy or unruly behaviours, in the form of loud, inappropriate or irrelevant talk, occasional shouting and "messing "with other people's property, or disrespect towards peers and teachers, were common place in their classrooms. All of the behaviours described by students had previously been set out by Wragg and Dooley (1984) in their list of fourteen most common forms of classroom misbehaviour. Eighty percent of respondents also confessed to feeling uneasy when these behaviours were played out within their groups. Many of the behaviours described by respondents had been branded as "typical in disruption prone classrooms" by the authors of the School Matters Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour (p.62, 2006).

While students indicated discomfort in the presence of some of these behaviours, it was important to distinguish between general disruptive behaviour and bullying, whereby individuals are specifically targeted by others in some form of abusive manner, in their attempt to exercise power over and undermine them. Whether the findings relating to senior students' discomfort were indicative of the desire of these students to settle and focus on their Leaving Certificate studies or whether it was that this kind to behaviour had actually worsened is unclear. It did, however, contradict the experiences outlined by participants in the group discussions (Chapter Four, subsections 10.1 and 10.2), who felt that things improved as they grew up and that students had settled down when they entered senior cycle.

Much of what had been described, as well as the specific bullying behaviours, highlighted in response to question 8 (querying bullying of self) and question 11 (querying bullying of others) and the emotional responses to both, as indicated in response to question 15, were similar in nature to those identified within the report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools (2006) which sought to determine levels and types of disruptive behaviours in the classroom (See Chapter two, subsection 2.2.1). Recognitions of the challenges faced by some students in their family and community lives may go some way to explaining their reluctance or even inability to engage in a positive way with their own learning opportunities. As identified and described by authors including Christie and Christie (1999) and Fraser, Burman, Batchelor, and McVie (2010) (see Chapter Two, subsection 2.2.1) students' experiences of many of the challenges in their wider community are reflected by them in their behaviour in the classroom. In recent years the traditional more formal approach in Irish schools has changed, in recognition of and in an attempt, to adapt to these changes. Much work has been put into planning for and implementing successful inclusion in the educational setting of students with physical disabilities or learning differences. Resources have also been provided to support students from different background and cultures, thus attempting to ensure that all students have equal opportunity to work and play alongside each other in the school setting. The teachers' role in all of this is to ensure that the needs of all students are met and students are encouraged and afforded the opportunity to work and succeed academically.

As described by Lunn, Fahey and Hannan (2006) family structures too have changed and the assumption that students have traditional family arrangements cannot be made. Single parent families and step families are not uncommon, many of which continue to offer the stability their young people need. Where families experience multiple stresses however, and difficulties, including financial problems, parental substance misuse and family violence occur there can be

considerable negative impact on children and on parents' ability to parent effectively. As highlighted by McEvoy and Welker (2000), these kinds of circumstances place children at risk of finding strategies and mechanisms to cope which can develop into anti-social and disrespectful behaviour. The complex nature of classroom engagement and the importance of the impact of these societal issues on students and on the behaviours adopted by some in the classroom were recognised within the Linkedness programme as described by Deboutte, Deklerck, O'Moore and Minton (2006).

While acknowledging similar experiences to those of respondents regarding unruly behaviours in some of their classes (outlined in Chapter Four, subsection 4.2.2), participants in the group discussions did not have memories of feeling the discomfort or unease as had been described by seventy- eight percent of survey respondents. Participants made the distinction between the sometimes loud and physical ways of playing and relating, as referred to by Fraser, Burman, Batchelor, and McVie (2010) and Tallavaara (2003), and the more focused and malevolent targeting of others and all were in agreement that there had been a decline in bullying and a general improvement in their classroom environment, as students had matured. This point will be discussed in more detail below in (subsection 5.2.7) below. The initial examination of students' responses to questions 3 and 4 in the questionnaire provided a picture of their classroom environment, as perceived by them, and created a framework for the review of their subsequent answers relating to bullying. It also created a platform from which to develop the conversation on these themes with members of the discussion groups. It is clearly appropriate, to take into consideration the differences between how individuals identify and determine to bully their targets and the more general non-respectful behaviour (described in Chapter Four, subsection 4.4.4 and 4.10.1) that appeared to be so common in the respondents' classrooms when examining peer relationships generally.

5.2.2 - Bullying

As will be discussed in more detail below, the scrutiny of students' responses in the questionnaire survey (Appendix E) and of the contributions made by the pilot and formal focus group participants, relating to their bullying experiences and observations of different types of bullying, confirmed findings from previous studies (See for example, Fekkes, Pijpers & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005; Gini, 2006; Minton, 2006; O'Moore, 1997; Robinson & McPherson, 2010), but also raised other points of interest which could be probed more deeply within the group discussions. Students' emotional and practical responses, as indicated in the survey or discussed within the groups, also confirmed findings in the literature regarding young people's feelings and the course of action they took when they witnessed bullying (See for example, Porter, Batsche, Castillo & Witte, 2006; Manarina, 2003; Rivers, Poteat, Noret & Ashurst, 2009). Within the group discussions it had been possible to explore students' attitudes towards both the perpetrators and the targets of bullying. With the benefits of hindsight, the former school students were able to view their school experiences in a different light and to re-evaluate the bystander positions they had taken at the time.

A comparison of results from this research with previous research revealed reports by students of experiencing bullying, at just over fourteen percent (Chapter Four, subsection 4.3.1). This was lower than findings in other studies which had been identified in Chapter Two (subsection 2.4.1). O'Moore, Kirkham and Smith, (1997), for example, found that about sixteen percent of students had reported being bullied, while the report of the State of the Nation's Children: Ireland, gave a figure of just over twenty-seven percent (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2012). These results were also considerably less than the forty percent who reported having been bullied, at some time, as described by the authors of the report on the My World Survey (2012) undertaken by Headstrong, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, in

conjunction with the UCD School of Psychology. While the results shown in the My World Survey report, particularly, were higher than previous research, or than results from the first phase of this study had found, there was a possibility that this was due to the manner in which the studies had been conducted or students understood by the word "bullying". Olweus (2003) suggested that in spite of quite specific definitions of bullying, students may still, interpret the questions based on their own understanding and experience of bullying. It is possible too, that the time frame of a study may affect the outcomes. For example, the Headstrong report referred to the fact that "40% of young people reported having been bullied at some point" (p.31) while other studies, such as this one, sought to discover students' experiences and observations during a specific time frame. In the case of this study, prior to students beginning to fill out the survey, administering teachers had been asked to read aloud a definition of bullying and to request students to reflect on their experiences or observations of bullying since their return to school after their Summer holidays. It was still possible, however, as in the completion of other enquiries, for students to judge situations for themselves and to label events as bullying or not according to their own perceptions. Owens, Shute and Slee (2005) for example, described how behaviours that had been defined by girls to be "bullying", were considered by boys to be "fun", while Olweus (2003) proposed that in spite of being presented with a comprehensive definition of bullying, "students' familiarity with the concept of bullying and the degree of public attention paid to the phenomenon" (p. 49) may influence the reported rates of bullying. As Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt and Lemme (2006) pointed out, students clearly recognise or understand direct bullying in the form of verbal and or physical abuse, but are less likely to identify indirect forms of bullying, such as social isolation or exclusion of peers, or attempts to manipulate their friendships. With regard to the time element, the time span in this particular study had been restricted to students' experiences or observations during the course of the

academic year in which the survey had been completed (Appendix E). The actual time at which the surveys were conducted in schools varied considerably as, for various school based reasons (for example, illness on the part of the contact person and oversight on the part of another), the time frame over which the survey was conducted within the schools, ranged from early November 2012 (after the mid-term break) to mid-April 2013 (after the Easter holidays). Thus, students had been asked to reflect on experiences and observations in school over quite differing periods of time.

As shown in Chapter Four (subsection 4.3.1), just over fourteen percent of the sample, reported feeling bullied, at some time during the term. This was at odds with the data, set out in subsection 4.3.2, which showed that slightly more than forty-four percent of students involved in the same study recorded that they felt they had witnessed bullying during the same time frame. Considerations regarding other possible explanations for the discrepancy between the two sets of data included the fact that some children are unwilling to recognise that they are being bullied because of shame or unwillingness to accept that they are being intentionally targeted in this way by their peers, some of whom they may have regarded as their friends. It could also occur as a result of a genuine failure on their part to recognise that they are, in fact, being bullied (see: Ehlers, 2014; Mishna, Pepler, & Wiener 2006). Certainly, some of the situations, described by respondents, of behaviours directed towards themselves or others, which caused them distraction or discomfort, (see Appendix G) could have been categorised as bullying, but not all of the students who described these situations had gone on to indicate having witnessed or experienced bullying. Rigby (2010) further suggested that a level of acceptance of bullying can prevail among older school students who believe that nothing can be done to ease their situation and so this kind of behaviour can go unchallenged by peers and unreported to teachers. Bearing in mind the common belief held that one should not tell and the often complicated and fragile nature of

friendships also mean, that young people who are being bullied by peers, whom they regard as their friends, will want to deny that this is happening to them (see for example: Mishna & Alaggia, 2005; Mishna, Pepler &Wiener 2006).

5.2.3 - Verbal Bullying

As highlighted in the analysis of survey responses outlined in Chapter Four (subsection 4.5.1), the most prevalent form of school bullying was the verbal abuse meted out in the form of jeering or sneering in relation to appearances, social or ethnic background, sexuality, academic abilities (both high and low) or interests. Almost thirty-nine percent of students who identified themselves as being bullied and forty-three percent of students who observed others being bullied indicated that they had been, or had heard others being, verbally abused. Participants in the discussion groups agreed with this. The stories shared within the groups, during the second phase of the study, regarding the types of verbal abuse directed at peers in their junior cycle years and, which had continued for some students into their senior cycle, were consistent with the types of verbal taunting which had been examined and discussed in depth by researchers over the years (See for example, Kowalski, Morgan & Limber 2012; Minton, 2006; O'Moore, 1997). The options outlined in the survey to illustrate the manner in which targeted students were verbally abused were also described within the group discussions and participants' accounts included various forms of "nasty comments" designed to cause pain or embarrassment. The nature of some of the verbal comments indicated or described could also have been categorised under other definitions of bullying, including alterophobic bullying (bullying directed towards members of "alternative" sub-cultures), disablist bullying, sexual bullying and racial bullying (see Minton, 2012). Examples given by female participants of taunts made towards others were undermining in their nature. The terms of abuse which they repeated (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.1) could perhaps be best understood in the light of Duncan's (2003) suggestion that if "one is not

possessed of natural attractiveness (if such a thing exists) then one can still attain status by destroying, physically if necessary, the prospects of others, and founding alliances based upon fear" (p.120). As can be seen in Chapter Four (subsection 4.10, verbal exchanges between male students, in particular, often had a sexual theme. Participants seemed to accept that students commenting on an individual's sexuality or making references to the mothers, sisters or girlfriends of peers had been "part of the normal banter". Their suggestion that the response of the target could be the determinant as to whether or not these kinds of situations could develop into bullying seemed to be placing responsibility for being bullied back onto the target. Mishna, Pepler, and Wiener (2006) noted that teasing and bullying with sexual undertones, a behaviour which often appears to be accepted by adults, are the precursors for sexual harassment. Lehtonen (2002) referred to the fact that school authorities and teachers often fail to take responsibility by not intervening or responding to name-calling or bullying, particularly when it is sexual in nature, regarding this type of exchange as a normal part of growing up. Huuki (2003) challenged all who work in education to consider the gender perspective in their teaching in order to support boys and girls to develop into well balanced respectful men and women and Espelage, Polanin and Low (2014) advised that if adults do not confront verbally abusive forms of behaviour, and do not take it seriously, students are less likely to report it and so it continues. These findings seemed to be the borne out by descriptions of this particular type of verbally abusive behaviours, especially in boys' only schools, where, participants in the discussion groups reported, that verbal taunting was common and there had been a general acceptance of language which was coarse or sexual in its nature.

Due to an oversight in the structure of the survey, which will be considered later within the limitations of the study (see subsection 5.5 below), questions 8 and 11 (Appendix E) examining types of verbal abuse were not precise enough and so, it was impossible to determine

how many of the reports by students in this section referred specifically to derogatory comments directed towards students were of a sexual, racist or other type of abusive nature. Only one of the participants, in either the pilot or focus groups, a female student who had attended a Community School in a midlands town, referred to comments being made about race, describing how students from outside Ireland as well as students from the travelling community had, at times, been targeted. On the other hand, one of the male participants who had attended a boys' only school in the city and who had, on several occasions, described himself as being fearful of others in his class, highlighted how "in spite of a whole lot of negative stuff there was an acceptance of diversity". Duncan (2012) observed, that much of the research which had focused on racism had not considered it in the context of school bullying.

5.2.4 - Physical Bullying

By comparison with verbal or social aggression, responses relating to physical bullying directed towards self or others appeared less frequently. As shown in Chapter Four (subsection 4.5.3), sixteen percent of self-reported targeted students (just over two percent of the total) and fifteen percent of observers who reported having witnessed bullying referred to physical hurt, as in hitting or kicking. These results were consistent with findings by Mynard and Joseph (2000) and cited by Rosen, Underwood, Gentsch, Rahdar, and Wharton (2012), which showed that reports by young people, aged between 11 and 16 years, of being physically victimised or having property damaged, were lower than reports of them being socially victimised. The survey analysis had also revealed that reports of physical bullying, which were fewer among females than males and were also less frequent at senior cycle than at junior cycle. Results indicated that the number of reports by male students of being physically bullied went from six percent of the total junior male group to less than a half of one percent of the total senior male group, while reports of being physically bullied by female students all came from girls in junior cycle, of

which, just over three percent reported this experience. The difference between the rate of reporting of physical bullying between genders at junior cycle was very much in keeping with findings by Harris, Petrie and Willoughby (2002) who reported that, in a study of 9th grade students, "twice as many boys as girls indicated being threatened or hit or kicked" (p.9). In spite of the fact that physical bullying accounts for fewer incidents than other types, but because it is easier to see, it is often responded to more quickly than any of the other types of bullying (see for example: Bauman and Del Rio, 2006). The obvious way in which physical bullying can be observed in school and the consequent manner in which perpetrators of bullying are often sanctioned by the school system, supports the stereotypical view of boys as perpetrators of physical bullying. Thus boys, who are more likely than girls to engage in physical bullying, are more readily identified as being involved in bullying generally. As was mentioned in Chapter Two (subsection 2.3.1), physical bullying is not the preserve of male student. There was however, some lack of clarity regarding who was perpetrating the bullying when, among survey respondents, thirty-five percent of those who reported being physically bullied were female students and forty-six percent of those who witnessed physical bullying were female students. The latter figure represented just over three percent of all female respondents. As just eight percent of this group attended the girls'only school, it was assumed that in these cases they had been physically bullied by their female peers. It was unclear, however, as to the gender of those others who were reported by female respondents as being targeted, as all of the remaining respondents had attended mixed schools. In relation to the age profile of students involved in this type of bullying, it was clear, as stated by a male participant in the discussion (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.9.2), that "physical bullying was predominantly a junior cycle experience." Ten of the eleven female students in the first phase of the study who responded in the questionnaire that they had been physically bullied were juniors and of the males who reported being physically

bullied, only sixteen percent were seniors. While not downplaying the effects of physical bullying, there is a risk and, according to participants in the group discussion (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.1), a reality that non-physical types of bullying can often be overlooked as the expense of the more obvious physical bullying (see for example: Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Pepler & Craig ,2000; Minton, 2012).

As referred to in the introduction to the analysis of types of bullying in Chapter Four (subsection 4. 4), social bullying featured widely as the form of bullying most commonly experienced. As described in subsection 4.10.1 all participants in the discussions recognized this form of bullying as being very prevalent, while the analysis of the survey data had revealed (see subsection 4.5.2, Table 4.7) that approximately two female respondents to each one male respondent had indicated awareness of this form of bullying. During the course of the discussions, every one of the participants, both male and female, spoke of their awareness of various forms of relational or social bullying in their schools, where individuals had been excluded from groups, spoken about behind their backs and had been the subject of unkind or malicious gossip. While all were aware of this happening, not all had experienced it. There was a clear difference in awareness of bullying occurring between participants' in the discussions and respondents to the survey. This may have been due to a difference in the way in which respondents judged behaviour to be bullying and to the fact that participants in the discussion, now young adults, were more critical in their evaluation of their experiences and observations, which came with the benefit of hindsight and maturity.

Finding regarding the prevalence of social bullying among girls, referred to by Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt and Lemme (2006) were in keeping with participants' observations of their peer groups in school. When asked for possible reasons for excluding peers from a group, all participants recognised this as an attempt on the part of the perpetrator to exert

power over others or to control the social situation. They also referred to the fact that only certain people would be treated in this way and that peers who were popular or had friends would not suffer this treatment. As young adults, they were able to verbalise their understanding that students who would be targeted for this form of treatment were regarded as being vulnerable and apparently without allies and were easy targets (Olweus, 1995, 2003; O'Moore, Kirkham & Smith, 1997; Olthof, Goossens, Vermande, Aleva & van der Meulen 2011).

Details relating to indirect forms of bullying from the survey and the accounts which followed during the course of the discussion were consistent with findings by Coyne, Archer and Eslea (2006) who described how "girls typically use more subtle and indirect ways of harassment such as slandering, spreading rumors, intentionally excluding someone from the group, and manipulating friendship relations" (p.758). Salmivalli (2011), however, pointed out that more recent research had shown little difference between genders in their use of social manipulation in peer bullying. This certainly tallied with experiences of the group participants, all of whom, as mentioned above, were aware of peers who suffered this type of abuse. As far back as the mid-nineties, Österman and Björkqvist (1996) had examined gender issues within bullying and proposed that the common view that boys were more inclined to be involved in bullying than girls was incorrect. They suggested that the difference was not in quantity but in quality. Using the DIAS (Direct and Indirect Aggression Scale developed by Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Österman, (1992) these authors had found that girls bullied in other more indirect ways. This conclusion was also reached by Rosen, Underwood, Gentsch, Rahdar, and Wharton (2012) who found that while reports by boys of being physically bullied were more frequent than similar reports by girls, there was not the same consistent difference in the case of social victimisation. Citing research by Salmivalli and Kaukiainen (2004) and Vaillancourt (2005), Salmivalli (2011) reported findings which showed that while social bullying is used by both genders,

"proportionally girls use indirect forms of aggression more often than direct forms" (p. 511). This may thus lead to the impression that social or relational bullying is predominantly a female experience or that girls less frequently engage in bullying. Besag (2006) explained the perception of social bullying as being a predominantly female experience by describing how girls' engagement with each other hinge on relationships and friendships and how these engagements are generally between two or three girls. She identified how boys' engagements, on the other hand, hinge on activities and generally these activities involve larger groups of boys. Thus, the vulnerability of a third girl, where two of the three might be closer, is obvious. Not so obvious, but still true, is the vulnerability of any boy within the wider group who might not match up to others' expectations or who might be recognized by one or more within the group to be more vulnerable or unwelcome in the group than others.

5.2.5 - Cyber Bullying

As indicated in Chapter Four (subsection 4.4.4), only 1.2% of the survey respondents nominated some form of cyber-bullying when they had been invited to suggest "other" types of bullying (see questions 8 and 11, Appendix E). Considering the attention paid to this phenomenon in society generally and the resources being employed to research ways and means of responding to and educating against such behaviour, the data revealed through the survey was completely out of kilter with other data. The fact that it was not offered as an option answer and students were invited to identify "other" forms of bullying may have had some influence on this very low figure. However, while acknowledging their awareness of students being targeted with unpleasant texts, emails or on social networking sites (see subsection 4.9.5), when the issue of cyberbullying was raised in the group discussions, the participants generally were agreed that addressing person to person bullying was the key to resolving this issue. The participant who raised the matter first and others within the group all laid greater emphasis on the damaging

effects of person to person bullying. This attitude was in contrast to findings by Robinson and McPherson, (2010) who referred to cyber bullying as an "acute form of bullying because of the potential of participants, the extension of the locus of bullying and the invisibility of the audience" (p. 31) and whose study had shown that teenagers regarded cyberbullying as more damaging than person to person bullying. (See Chapter Two, subsection 2.1.1). Thus while, cyberbullying received relatively little attention in this research, whether as a result of a flaw in the design of the questionnaire or simply as a consequence of the personal experiences of the eleven participants in the discussions, it must, nonetheless, be considered a major cause for concern within the bullying debate.

5.2.6 - Location of Most Frequent Bullying

The 1997 nationwide study carried out by O' Moore, Kirkham, and Smith on bullying behaviour in Irish schools revealed that students experienced the majority of bullying incidents in the classrooms and that the next most common site was on the corridors. Considering that this was the case seventeen years ago, it should be a cause for concern that little or no apparent progress has been made, through perhaps more effective supervision mechanisms or student strategies to resolve this issue. These findings agreed with those of Swearer and Cary, 2003; Limber, Nation, Tracy, Melton, and Flerx, 2004 and Koivisto, 2004, all of whom noted classrooms and hallways as main locations for school bullying.

Results outlined in Chapter Four (subsection 4.3.4) and details of the discussion in subsection 4.10.1 revealed that survey respondents and discussion group participants confirmed previous findings that bullying in the classroom was still a frequent phenomenon, followed by corridors then other locations around the school. Discussion group participants confirmed, what the survey respondents implied, that at least some of this bullying occurred in the presence of teachers. The most commonly held view of participants in the groups who commented on this

aspect of the discussions was that teachers were aware of the bullying but, in the majority of situations, for whatever reason, choose not to intervene. It seemed to be the case, as Duncan (2012) pointed out, that, "teachers (generally) can be found to be at fault, while parents and children (generally) cannot" (p. 150). While participants made regular references to teachers' lack of intervention, there was little or no mention at all of students' support strategies for each other. As Duncan implied, it seems easier for students to blame the teachers for their lack of sensitivity to bullying going on around them than to take ownership of the problem and attempt to respond – especially when the expected response was to report the bullying. It may be that, in some cases, when bullying goes unchallenged in the classroom (or in the school environment) it is the result of a general ineptitude on the part of the teacher to manage the classroom environment. In cases where bullying occurs on the corridors or in places where students assemble there are many reasons why bullying behaviour can go unchecked. These incidents can occur on change over between classes as students wait for teachers to admit them to rooms; inadequate pupil teacher ratios, where supervising teachers are very outnumbered by students, but nonetheless, their presence fulfils insurance company requirements; when students and staff are in transition and exchanges between students can be hidden within the crowd or other large group activities, for example, at sporting events (as referred to in Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.3), where teacher calming or supervision has mixed success.

As highlighted in Chapter Four (subsection 4.10.3), several participants in the discussions referred to verbally abusive comments being directed at players on the sports field. While they had pointed to the camaraderie shared by some of the more elite members of teams (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.1), participants also noted others who were less fortunate and seemed to be devoid of protective supports from peers and teachers. This disturbing perception highlighted another feature of school bullying, the study of which had not been included in the research

objectives, that of teacher to pupil bullying. Leading by example, in these cases, it could be argued that teachers who deliver harsh and repeated criticism are giving permission for the bullying to continue. As shown in Chapter Two (subsection 2.11.1), Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette and Steinfeldt (2012) found that the greatest influences on interpersonal relationships and bullying between team members, in the realms of school football, were the attitude and example shown by significant adult males in this domain.

5.2.7 - Changes in Bullying Experiences Over Time

Overall, the cross sectional difference between students' responses, at the two school levels, showed a reduction in the number of reports of bullying from junior to senior cycle students. Questionnaire survey results indicated lower levels of reports of being bullied by senior cycle students than by junior student. Comparing the number of reports of being bullied by students at the senior cycle with similar reports by students at junior cycle showed that the downward trend was in keeping with findings of a similar decline, according to age, of reports of being bullied which were contained within the State of the Nations' Children report (2012). However, it was noteworthy that the decline in the numbers reporting being bullied as described in the State of the Nations' Children document was significantly less than findings in this current research. In relation to all types of bullying, participants in the group discussions agreed with each other that they all "grew up" on entering senior cycle and that, hence, bullying was less.

While initially "growing up" had been offered as an explanation for the apparent decline in the levels of bullying, following further investigation within the group discussions, it transpired that, as students moved from junior into senior cycle, they were assigned to classes according to their choice of subject (See Chapter Four, subsection 4.9.3). Hence classes, as they had been organized in Junior Cycle, were regrouped and students were better able to stay within their smaller friendship groups and so avoid engaging with others whose behaviour, they

regarded, as being threatening. Accounts by male participants in the group discussions of keeping their heads down or "playing along" with the situation, when being teased or taunted, were indicative of an environment in which they still did not feel particularly secure. An inference that could be drawn from the responses indicating fewer reports of experiencing or witnessing bullying among senior students was, that this did not necessarily indicate a reduction in bullying behaviour due to students maturing but, that students had appeared to develop skills or strategies to deal with bullying.

Another consideration which should be taken into account from this discussion was the suggestion of the possibility that targeted students and their families might opt to change schools. While there are no statistics available in Ireland to show the numbers of school children who transfer to a different school due to bullying, a report issued by the ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute) on behalf of the NEWB (National Education Welfare Board) in 2007 found that female students who had been frequently bullied in school were more likely than their male counterparts, and others who had not been bullied, to leave school early. Duncan (2003) noted that girls often did not divulge to parents or teachers, the true reasons for their requests (bullying) to transfer schools. Data compiled from freedom of information requests and made available by twenty-eight local councils in England (November 2013) revealed that 2,300 parents said they were changing their children to other schools because of bullying. This point had been made in both the pilot and focus group discussions, when reference was made in the former discussion by a participant who had attended an all-boys' school, that students who were consistently bullied "just left in fifth year" and in the latter group when persistent teasing of a young couple in second year had resulted in the girl changing school at the end of the academic year.

Cunningham and Whitten (2007) expressed the view that rather than "growing up" and moving away from bullying behaviours, as described by participants, the reality is that as

students mature into adolescence and adulthood, their views of bully and victim change but not in the way assumed by participants. Instead of "growing out of it", they highlighted studies which found that as students who bullied moved from junior to senior classes their status increased, while, sympathy for those who were bullied decreased.

While acknowledging that survey results showed fewer students, of both genders, from both academic levels and across all school types, had reported feeling targeted for bullying (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.3.1), it was noteworthy that there was not an equivalent drop in the numbers of those who reported that they had witnessed it. Perhaps, one consequence of having some input into their assignment to different class groups when transferring to senior cycle, as referred to by participants in the discussion (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.9.3), may have been that students felt that they were better able to manage their school environment, within a network of their friends.

5.2.8 - Views as to Why Students Were Bullied

While the survey did not question students regarding their opinions as to reasons why they or their peers might be bullied, this topic had emerged during the course of the conversation (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.1). The most common suggestion offered by participants, and which had been proposed by researchers including Thornberg and Knutsen (2011) and Swearer and Cary (2003), was that people who were in some way different or, more importantly, who were seen to be vulnerable or weak were targeted. Descriptions by participants of a variety of bullying incidents they had witnessed during their time in school were in keeping with many accounts in the literature which had focused on different bullying themes. In his examination of the phenomenon of male bullying, Huuki (2003), proposed that the reason for the targeting of an individual had little to do with the person who was bullied but was, in fact, an attempt on the part of the perpetrator to demonstrate to others his/her own ability to act, where "ability brings with it

popularity" (p.43). Hymel, Rocke-Henderson, and Bonanno (2005) pointed to ways in which perpetrators of bullying attempted to justify their stance, while Salmivalli (2011) also proposed that perpetrators picked on targets who "provide them with an easy victory" (p.519),

Discussion group participants argued that there was a difference between the often common disrespectful tone adopted in conversation between classmates, teasing and "winding up" and the specific targeting of individuals for bullying (Chapter Four, subsection 4.9.2). There were references to occasions of witnessing peers being bullied in socially manipulative ways and descriptions given of how individuals in their year groups were excluded by the "in groups" or were spoken about in disrespectful ways in their presence or behind their backs. In their accounts of witnessing bullying in their classes, participants highlighted the vulnerability of some of their peers who, appearing to have no real friends, had been bullied. Participants described students in their classes who may have had hobbies or pastimes which were of no interest to others in the group and the manner in which they had been slagged or teased about it. In their description of "loners" in their group, participants recognised the "friendless child" who had been identified by Harris, Petrie and Willoughby (2002) as being particularly vulnerable to bullying. Pellegrini and Long (2002) also emphasised the benefits of quality friendships as a defence against bullying. While agreeing that no one deserves to be bullied, two male participants described students who "were so annoying - they brought it on themselves". This was not an uncommon view but one which is often shared with perpetrators of bullying, some bystanders and even some teachers. This attitude places the blame on bullied students, considering them to be weak and deserving of this treatment (see for example: Gini, Pozzoli, Borghi & Franzoni, 2008; Pozzoli & Gini 2012). Gini (2008) argued that blaming others for their own misfortune, "is a very real self-serving attribution and, in particular, blaming victims for their fate allows people to distance themselves from thoughts of suffering'' (p. 33).

5.2.9 – Summary of Students' and Participants' Views of Bullying in School

Within this section, students' and former students' observations and experiences of bullying and their emotional and practical responses were explored and examined in the light of previous research findings. With the exception of participants' attitudes to cyber-bullying, all other information was in keeping with data already available. The belief that bullying decreases from Junior to Senior Cycle was not fully explained by the maturing of students but was, at least partially, explained by participants' opportunity to choose their subjects (and therefore their classmates) for Senior cycle. The insistence of group participants on the lack of action on behalf of teachers when bullying occurred and their observations that this was the result of lack of concern or ability on the part of these teachers will be further examined in subsection 5.4 below.

5.3 - BYSTANDERS' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

As stated in Chapter 3 (subsection 3.10.2), the first phase of this study was conducted during the course of the year prior to the implementation of the new directives issued by the Department of Education and Skills in relation to new and updated school anti-bullying procedures (2013). Similarly, the school experiences of the participants in the group discussions had also been prior to that time. With adults hoping, if not expecting, that students' response to bullying would be positive and proactive it would seem appropriate that students would have had access to guidelines to support them to take such action. As already stated, the information sought from respondents to the questionnaire survey did not allow much scope for students to describe their perspectives on official supports within their school settings. In order to draw conclusions from some of the findings discussed above, and others which will deliberated on in more detail below, it was deemed necessary to place them in the context of the group participants' schools, as these settings were understood by them when they were students.

Section 5.4 below will give an outline of the official policies and procedures of the schools attended by the respondents and participants in this study. Examining findings from the survey and discussing them as recurring themes with participants in the groups, provided an opportunity to delve more deeply and to interpret meaning from some of the answers given.

5.3.1 - Students' Perceptions of Anti-Bullying Policies and Prevention Programmes Within Their School Settings

In keeping with the Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools (Department of Education and Science 1993), all of the schools attended by the students who completed the surveys in the first phase of the study and participants in the discussions in the second phase, had anti-bullying policies or equivalent which, were available to students at the time of this study, via either their official school websites, their homework journals or both. As stated above, the questionnaire survey did not query students' knowledge or familiarity with their schools' anti-bullying policies and procedures. In the light of the discussions that followed with group participants this omission was regarded as a limitation of the study which will be discussed in subsection 5.5 below.

As described in Chapter Four (subsections 4.9.3 and 4.10), participants in the discussion groups, remembered being aware of the existence of these policies and identified the fact that, in every case, they were contained in their school journals, along with school policies relating to other aspects of school life, including general discipline, late-coming and homework. Thus a written bullying prevention policy, contained in their school homework journal, had been distributed to all students in line with best practice, as advised for example by Whitted and Dupper (2005). As will be discussed in subsection 5.3.2 below, participants in the discussions voiced dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of this system of information (policy) dissemination. While three of them remembered having been instructed to read the policy and to sign beneath it

to indicate they had done so, no one, at this remove from their first year in school could remember any occasion when they had read or discussed their policies with a teacher or a tutor. All, who commented, referred to their own inability, as children of twelve years of age, to understand the detail in the policy. All participants also voiced their ignorance regarding any formal procedures followed by their schools in bullying related matters. Thus, the formal structures in their schools, with regard to the steps or procedures that would follow a report of bullying and the implications for all involved, were unknown to them.

As noted in Chapter Four (subsections 4.9.5 and 4.10.2), experience of bullying prevention lessons or exercises were negligible, with a minority, for example, recalling some form of friendship week activities. Since the year 2000 when the Social Personal and Health education (SPHE) programme was approved by the Minister (Department of Education and Science circular M22/00) and introduced into Irish post-primary schools, second level schools have been required to offer SPHE as part of their core curriculum at Junior Cycle. Thus, students and former students participating in this research had attended weekly Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) lessons. The SPHE curriculum, currently identified for review, consisted of ten modules being taught each year. The programme was spiral in nature, so that the same modules or topics were repeated in each of first, second and third year but with the examination of the topics growing in depth and age appropriate relevance each year. The nature of the programme, in this modular form, provided opportunities to consider, among other themes, friendships and emotional health in many different contexts including in relation to bullying behaviour. In this classroom setting it was envisaged that over the course of their three-year junior cycle students would benefit from

- awareness raising exercises regarding the nature and effects of bullying;
- opportunities to experience and to learn empathetic skills; and,

- encouragement and guidance to develop strategies regarding how to avoid or respond to bullying.

The programme had the potential and was intended to be cross curricular with opportunities for many of the module themes to be addressed in lessons in other subjects. For example, substance use and aspects of physical and mental health to be addressed in PE, home economics and science; friendship themes to be addressed through literature (English, Irish, CSPE and foreign language) and bullying, similarly through literature in English and other languages, history and religion. A system of such cross curricular activity could be developed under the blanket of pastoral care. The descriptions by participants of their experiences in these classes indicated their generally fairly dismissive attitude of this subject, from their second year upwards and were consistent with findings of a joint report on progress in SPHE (University of Limerick, 2002; Burtenshaw, 2003 and Millar 2003), which highlighted the challenge faced by teachers in this subject area as they attempted to facilitate personal engagement of students with the SPHE curriculum, and with each other. Reflections on their lesson experiences did not produce memories of the type of cross curricular experiences suggested above. In general, all agreed on the ineffectiveness of these programmes in relation to bullying prevention or guidance to students to understand as to how to respond to bullying. Comments by participants regarding the age and teaching experience profiles of many of their SPHE teachers seemed indicative of practices within some schools where SPHE could have acted as a "filler" for teachers' timetables when it was found that they were one or perhaps two periods short of their full teaching hours. Thus the SPHE programme, which had been developed and designed to provide social and emotional education to students had, as far as these participants been concerned, failed to have an effect on the manner in which their peers in school had related and on the level of bullying they had observed. Yeung and Leadbeater (2010) proposed that the benefits of both parental and

teacher support for students who are bullied decreases into adolescence and that peer support becomes more important. With this in mind and reflecting on participants' comments regarding their intervention, if any, on the part of a friend, it is essential to encourage potential for positive classroom relationships within the peer group in order to ensure a reduced likelihood of isolated or friendless students. In this regard, rather than concentrate on trying to deliver the message through SPHE or engaging in activities labelled as anti-bullying or bullying prevention exercises, it should be recognised that subject teachers who involve their students in collaborative classroom activities and most importantly to supervise it properly are laying the groundwork and offering opportunities for students to get to know each other and to form new friendships. With good lesson preparation and managed student engagement, teachers have the opportunity to create an environment in their classroom whereby students flourish and learn.

5.3.2 - Students' Recognitions of Their Own Bystander Roles

Some of the literature referred to in Chapter Two (subsections 2.9.1 to 2.10.2 inclusive), highlighted and described different perspectives on the various participant roles adopted by students who witness bullying (for example: Gini, Albiero, Benelli & Altoe, 2008; Polanain, Espelage & Piggot, 2012; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Österman & Kaukiainen, 1996; Tsang, Hui & Law, 2011; Twemlow, Fonagy & Sacco,2004). While there may be some differences in the labels attached to the bystander groups, researchers and practitioners share common or at least similar views regarding the negative effects of some of the roles adopted by bystanders and the impact that witnessing the bullying can have on them.

An examination of results relating to students' responses to questions 15 - 19 inclusive (Appendix E), regarding their emotional and practical responses to witnessing bullying (Chapter Four subsection 4.5.4) revealed that two out of every three students, in their responses to the questionnaire, demonstrated anti-bullying attitudes through their labelling of bullying behaviour

as unfair or undeserved. While proportionately more respondents (forty-six percent) had indicated that they would make some effort to help, than had indicated any other form of action, an inconsistency emerged, when it became evident that the number of students' who gave reasons for trying to help did not agree with the number of those who said they would do so. As the reasons given for trying to help were either the desire to be similarly supported or the belief that bullying is unfair, it was possible that students' responses recognised helping as a good thing to do but, in fact, not all had actively done so. The low numbers of students who indicated trying to help was consistent with Salmivalli's (2010) observation that in spite of holding anti-bullying attitudes and indicating intentions to aid their targeted peers, "actual defending behaviour assessed by peer reports is rare" (p. 115). She referred to the "disconnect" that existed saying "something prevents children from defending their bullied peers even if they think that it would be the right thing to do and have intentions of doing so" (p. 115). At least some of this "disconnect" could be understood in the light of comments made by participants in the discussion (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.5), one of whom referred to "being terrified" when he witnessed bullying and to his feelings of "lack of status" in the group where he felt powerless to act. Other participants also described feeling nervous and uncertain as to what they should do.

These feelings, as expressed by participants, also tie in with Thornberg's and Jungert's (2013) identification of the significance of students' "moral sensitivity" to bullying and to the importance that bystanders should recognise the damage being done to the target. Describing these two factors as important motivators for students to act in support of their bullied peers, Thornberg and Jungert pointed out that, along with the above named traits, an essential ingredient, empowering students to act, was the defending students' sense of self-efficacy. In a similar vein, Pöyhönen , Juvonen and Salmivalli (2012) emphasised the importance to defenders of improving the situation for their victimised peer, whom they saw to be suffering. Significantly

however, they found that sympathy was not enough, pointing out that students who were sympathetic to the targets of bullying but did not act, chose this course because they believed their defending would not have the effect of stopping the bullying. Gini, Albiero, Benelli, and Altoe (2008) also proposed that students with low levels of self-efficacy were unlikely to help a victimised peer, no matter how much they objected to the treatment of that student. They suggested, as had the group participants, that bystanders' reasons for their non-intervention included not knowing what to do, the likelihood that anyone who reported would be labelled a "rat", concern for possible consequences for themselves, such as, drawing attention from the perpetrator of bullying onto themselves and fear that by intervening they would make matters worse.

Results from the survey questionnaire showed that thirty-six percent of students had responded that they would help their bullied peers, based on the fact that they believed that bullying was not fair (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.6.4). When results were examined side by side it was revealed that of the three hundred and ninety students who had indicated feeling nervous, two hundred and twelve of them had indicated they would try to help, while ninety recorded that they would ask an adult. A minority of eighty had indicated that they would walk away. As stated above, more students indicated helping than had actually done so. From the discussions in phase two of this study it was clear that participants, as students, were loath to draw the attention of perpetrators of bullying on to themselves. While none of the participants reported that they had been actively engaged in bullying practice, several had admitted to laughing or smiling (Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.1), thus placing themselves in the role of reinforcers. They agreed, that feeling nervous or fear of drawing attention to themselves was a deterrent to students taking any kind of action, even though they might have deemed some action to be appropriate. Feeling nervous was also used to explain the smiling or laughing response.

Thus an individual's poor sense of self-efficacy and in some cases their feelings of low status within the group were contributing factors in the positions they adopted as bystanders to bullying. As will be described below, this absence of belief in one's own ability to make a difference and to bring about change (in this case, to stop the bullying) was referred to commonly by male participants in the discussion groups who had attended boys' only schools.

5.3.3 - Age and Gender in Non-Helping Behaviour Choices

As had been shown in Chapter Four (subsection 4.5.2), thirty-five percent of the overall sample had indicated they would walk away from the site of the bullying. Of these, the majority of reports of walking away came from the senior male group (subsection 4.6.2). Of these senior male students, (twenty-four out of forty-four), just over thirteen percent indicated that they would walk away because they did not care. These details confirmed findings by Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse and Neale (2010) showing that older students were more likely than their junior peers to take this course of action when becoming aware of bullying situations. The most common reason given by those who had indicated they had walked away was that, the bullying of others was not their business. Having been invited to identify more than one reason for walking away, eleven percent of those who responded had indicated that they were amused when they saw others being bullied and that they did not care (subsection 4.6.1). Thornberg and Jungert (2013) referred to this as moral disengagement on the part of by-standing students, resulting in their victimised peers being unsupported. Only a small proportion of these (1.4%), however, owned up to joining in with the bullying.

As can be seen in Chapter Four (subsection 4.6.5), less than four percent in any of the student groups (by school level and gender) had indicated their belief that it was safer to involve an adult in attempting to resolve these situations and fewer again indicated that they had actually done so. A common view expressed by participants in the discussion, in relation to students'

non-reporting, agreed with findings by Harris, Petrie and Willoughby (2002) regarding students' lack of belief in their teachers' ability or interest to resolve bullying. Four of the eleven participants in the pilot and focus groups echoed Swearer and Cary (2003) proposal that students' belief that teachers were uncaring or that they were unaware about matters relating to bullying and how to manage them, would do little to offer hope to them that the situations would change if they reported. Added to this was a more common perception of reporting as "ratting" and the various ramifications attached to having done so, including being labelled by others in their peer group or being targeted themselves by the perpetrator. This view seemed ingrained in their psyche and nine of the eleven participants held tightly to this view. The two exceptions to this strictly held view were the young woman who had attended the girls only, non-fee paying voluntary school in the city and the young man who had attended a community school in a town close to his home in a rural area.

An account by one participant in the discussion who, describing his "shame" as a non-defending peer, referred to his own lack of status and the inflated status of other individuals in the group. He described how some students asserted themselves, assuming a status rather than earning it. His description was consistent with the suggestion by Tsang, Hui and Law (2011) that the status of the bystanders within the class group has an essential effect on the roles they adopt in bullying situations. Salmivalli (2010) highlighted the perceived popularity of perpetrators of bullying as a reason for lack of intervention on the part of other students. Veenstra, Lindenberg, Munniksma, and Dijkstra (2010) had also pointed out that since perpetrators of bullying were only rejected by those who felt threatened by them, they (the perpetrators) were careful to target individuals who were least likely to be defended.

Contributions by participants within the group discussions failed to indicate that any of them felt that they had engaged in active or positive bystander behaviour. With the exception of

two females, who spoke of drawing targeted others into their friendship groups, it was noteworthy that the most common responses to witnessing bullying had been to watch events happening, laugh when encouraged to do so by the (high status) perpetrators and stay with one's friends. All the male participants spoke of being conscious of the possibility of drawing the attention of perpetrators of bullying onto themselves and while sympathetic, at times, for their targeted peers, did little to support them. All who contributed agreed that anyone was vulnerable as a target, echoing the point made by Carroll-Lind and Kearney (2004) that "No matter how capable, popular and well-adjusted students are, many of them experience bullying in one form or another" (p. 22).

5.3.4 - Reasons for Failure to Report

Cortes and Kochenderfer-Ladd (2014) found that students' willingness to report bullying to teachers was indicative of the success achieved by their teachers in creating a supportive environment in which bullying is taken seriously. They noted that this effect did not appear to decrease with age, as might be imagined, but emphasised the essential ingredient of pupil reports as it is usually only through these that teachers know that bullying is happening. Unnever and Cornell (2004) found that students who see their schools as being unreceptive to complaints of bullying are less likely to voice their concerns suggesting that they were less likely to report if they believed that their school tolerated bully. For the most part, participants in this study voiced opinions about their own schools which were in line with this finding. However, the covert opportunities that were offered to students to report, via the nominated pastoral care person, indicated signs that some, if not all, of their schools were willing to listen. The fact that participants, as students, had failed to appreciate that opportunities existed for them to report in confidence, seems to indicate that the failure they

perceived in their schools related to communications and not necessarily to the support system.

- In their examination of students' suggestions for response strategies to bullying, Kanetsuna, Smith, and Morita (2006) noted that while seeking help was often recommended by pupils participating in their research, these pupils also indicated that they did not often do so. The authors highlighted the fact that students, though sympathetic, did not actually know what to do or who to approach for help. The main reason they gave for failure to seek help was their fear of making the situation worse. During the course of the group discussions, several other reasons had emerged for failure to seek help which could have accounted for the generally low level of reporting of concerns as revealed in the survey results and described in group discussions. The motives for non-reporting were not specified as individual reasons, but overlapped so as to support and strengthen participants' justifications for their actions in this regard. Among these were issues critical to the participants' memories of school bullying and included:
- Pupils' lack of knowledge (information) regarding where or to whom to report concerns of bullying;
- Concern for personal safety in situations where students shared a belief that most teachers were not interested or did not care;
- A lack of trust in teachers' discretion regarding confidentiality for the person who reported, or in their ability to deal with these situations;
- A fear of reprisals or of making matters worse; and,
- Concerns that reporting students would be labelled as "rats" by their peers.

Other concerns which arose in the discussions focused on, getting into trouble for telling tales, lack of evidence with which to support their complaint, not knowing how the school would respond to the complaint and a general lack of confidence in their schools' ability to deal with the issue. All of the concerns which were raised in the discussions had been listed within the findings of the Children's Ombudsman's report on Dealing with Bullying in Schools: a Consultation with Children & Young People (2012).

5.3.5 - Bystanding Students' Perceptions Regarding Appropriate Teacher Response

As described in Chapter Four (subsection 4.9.2), difficulties which arose relating to the provision of evidence when attempting to report concerns about social or relational bullying led to the belief on the part of participants that their teachers did not want to know. Several of the group participants revealed that, based on their experiences, they had had no expectations of their teachers but that they still judged teacher intervention to be an appropriate response to bullying. Descriptions and examples by the three female participants of attempting to identify someone to talk to when they wanted to report concerns, the varying and often inadequate responses by different teachers and negative outcomes experienced by former class mates when attempting to report incidents of bullying, or to seek teacher support in such situations, added to the sense of dissatisfaction felt by these participants as they told their stories. While obviously frustrated by their memories of this aspect of school, these participants did however accept, as Guillory (2013) suggested, that schools are confronted by particular challenges in the face of social bullying which is harder to detect and recognise than other aggressive acts and they agreed that seeking adult support, in situations such as this, was more complex due to the nature of this type of bullying. Their opinions were similar to findings by Byers, Caltabiano and Caltabiano (2011) that, in general, teachers judged incidents of social or relational bullying as less serious than the more overt methods of verbal or physical aggression. Participants were of the view that teachers

were often less sympathetic to students targeted in this way and therefore, less likely to intervene. Thus verbal unkindness and social exclusion, sometime though not always, unheard or unseen by adults were unlikely to be viewed as bullying or to warrant intervention (see for example: Byers, Caltabiano, & Caltabiano, 2011; Mishna, Pepler & Wiener, 2006).

While there is evidence that physical bullying occurs less frequently than other types, it seemed clear from the conversations that it (physical bullying) was more frequently dealt with or challenged than were careless talk or unkind throw away remarks. In situations where teachers' responses to physical or verbal bullying were considered to have been inadequate however, participants were less sympathetic to the failure they perceived in their teachers regarding their lack of intervention. Participants described some of the behaviours they had witnessed, considering much of it to be "obvious to everyone" and no one in either group of discussion participants expressed much faith in the abilities or desires of many of their teachers to address or to resolve these particular types of situations. While participants were persistent in their views of the obvious nature of these types of bullying, Pepler's and Craig's (2000) investigation of school staffs' involvement in bullying and victimisation found that, in general, staff are unaware of the nature and extent of bullying and victimisation problems. Veenstra, Lindenberg, Huitsing, Sainio, and Salmivalli (2014), also reflected on teachers' perceptions and attitudes to bullying proposing that, while teachers who were involved in their study may have admitted to being unaware of some incidents of bullying, many others considered bullying to be "part of a normative developmental process, and they expect victims to handle it on their own" (p. 1136). Other reasons, suggested by Pepler and Craig, for the low level of teacher interventions, included the fact that verbal abuse, particularly where episodes are brief, may be regarded with less concern than physical incidents and that bullying often happens when there is only a low level supervision of students. Participants' accounts agreed with this view as they had described how,

even though there had been some teacher presence in social locations as well as in classrooms, the level of engagement of these supervising teachers with their students was slight. While teacher opinion was not sought in this study, it is worth considering that students' unwillingness to report bullying or to seek help from teachers combined with the difference in perception of bullying by teachers and students may have accounted for the contrast, evident in Pepler's and Craig's study, which found that while seventy-one percent of teachers had indicated that they would intervene in bullying situations, only twenty-five percent of students believed this to be the case.

5.3.6 - Concerns Held by Students in Relation to Reporting

The concerns, relating to reporting by bystanders or targeted students, raised by participants all seemed to point to gaps in communication between the schools' authority figures and their students. The schools' stance on bullying and their stated practice in relation to responding (see Appendices O and N) were at variance with participants' memories of how, as students, they had interpreted the procedures of their schools. Reflecting on descriptions outlined by participants in Chapter Four (subsections 4.9.3 and 4.10.2), of their early days in school, it seemed clear that the anxieties they shared regarding the consequences of reporting bullying, were indicative of a real lack of awareness, or perhaps trust in, their school authorities and were in keeping with findings by Oliver and Candappa (2003) whose examination of students' anxieties regarding reporting bullying to their teachers revealed among their concerns, fears "in relation to possible breaches of confidentiality, failure to act on reported incidents of bullying, and an inability to protect pupils from retaliatory action on the part of perpetrators" (p.4).

During the course of the discussions, the phrase "to rat" or the label "a rat" were regularly repeated. Between them the eleven participants in the pilot and focus groups had attended nine different schools but the terms were common to all and it was clear that they had learned these

concepts when in primary school. This in itself was cause for concern as all involved in this study had already participated in the Stay Safe Programme (currently being reviewed) as part of their Primary School SPHE lessons (see subsection 5.3.1 above) aimed at reducing children's vulnerability to child abuse and bullying where pupils are encouraged in the face of these dangers to "Say no, Get away and Tell". With an emphasis on equipping children and young people to report when they feel unsafe and insecure, it seems important to promote the use of a vocabulary that provides appropriate words for telling and to challenge students' use of such comments or labels. In relation to reporting bullying, it is clear how a teacher's response could determine further decisions a young person might make regarding reporting again. Advice for teachers, set out in The Cool School Programme booklet, produced by the Health Service Executive (2002), cautions careful responding on the basis that "Any pupil who discloses bullying is expressing a cry for help which needs a robust response from the teacher they have chosen to tell" (Health Service Executive). The Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993), which had been the relevant document in every school at the time of this study, recommended that all reports of bullying should be recorded by the teacher and that appropriate measures, in accordance with the school's code of discipline, should be taken. At no stage during the course of the two group conversations had there been reference to formal reporting or to being aware of official recording of details. Instead participants had spoken of the challenge of trying to find a teacher they felt comfortable with and in whom they could confide (see subsection 5.3.4 above). Thus the necessity to inform students as to how and to whom to report, responding to the concerns raised, enquiring further into the reason for the telling and listening while recording details, may encourage the student to be confident in reporting bullying. This type of meticulous approach would also help to provide clarity on the situations for the adult to whom the report was made.

5.3.7 - Students' Opinions Regarding the Ineffectiveness of Reporting Incidents of Bullying

As noted in Chapter Two (subsection 2.11.2), a study on help seeking in bullying situations by Carroll-Lind and Kearney (2004) found that "teachers are often the last to be told about bullying at school" (p. 3). This was confirmed by Professor Mona O'Moore (2012) in her speech to the Anti-Bullying Forum (Department of Education and Skills) when she commented on the reluctance of young people to report bullying as one of the "biggest obstacles a community faces in dealing effectively with it." She referred to the fact that while two thirds of post primary students do not report at home that they are being bullied in school, the situation is worse in school where fewer students again will report to teachers. Dowling and Carey (2013) found that the two main reasons targeted students gave for seeking help were to stop the bullying and to feel better. Yet, as pointed out in subsection 2.11.2, in spite of the fact that teachers were identified by students as being in the best position to help, this study revealed that they were more likely to talk to their friends or family members than to their teachers. As noted previously, participants in the discussions referred to the fact that teachers were often present when bullying occurred and so, there was no reason, in their views, as to why teachers should not intervene had they wanted to. Dowling and Carey found that anxiety regarding personal safety, when wanting to report bullying, was a cause of significant concern and therefore a strong deterrent, particularly for male students. Self-protection, both of one's reputation and of one-self (a bullying avoidance mechanism) seemed to be the basis for the code of silence which had been referred to in the literature (Chapter Two, subsection 2.11.2) and which appeared to have existed in all schools attended by participants. Lack of trust in teachers' abilities to deal with bullying and to protect reporting students' identities were issues which had been addressed and repeated in the discussion (subsection 5.5.2). It seemed that, at least to some extent, these views were held

without having been tried and tested. That is, participants had assumed their teachers couldn't manage the situations and that they could not be trusted to keep their students' confidence.

In the view of seven of the eight male participants and one of the three females (from the pilot and focus groups), reporting, with its connotation of "ratting" was not considered an appropriate option. This was in spite of the fact that in many of their accounts of bullying situations in school they had felt uncomfortable for themselves and sympathy for the targeted student. As mentioned above, as far as they were concerned, excepting the subtle nature of social or relational bullying, other types of bullying occurred in plain sight and still they witnessed their teachers' failure to respond. While Pepler's and Craig's (2000) study had revealed that "42% of bullies and 46% of victims report that they have talked to teachers about problem" (p.10), only sixteen percent of students, who completed the survey questionnaire in Phase one of this study, had indicated "asking an adult for help" as a possible option to take. Thus circumstances, such as in the participating schools, which indicated relatively lower levels of acceptance of reporting of bullying as an option along with the similar types of responses given by participants in the discussion groups, could have been contributing factors to the general lack of teacher awareness.

Unnever and Cornell (2004) commented on the lack of research into reasons for students' unwillingness to report bullying. They proposed family background and school climate as two main factors in students' decision making in this regard. In the case of family background, they referred to parents' encouragement of their children to deal with their own issues or, alternatively, to mind their own business. Examining school climate, these authors found that many students accepted bullying as a feature of school life and did not see their teachers as being interested in putting a stop to it. Exploring the culture of not reporting on a gender basis, Unnever and Cornell found that while girls were more likely than boys to tell their friends, boys, when desperate, were more likely than girls to speak to an adult. However, concerns about

"ratting" were greater among boys than girls, as boys identified "telling" as a weakness or an admission of their inability to manage their own issues. Dowling and Carey (2013) identified reporting to teachers as being the most effective help-seeking strategy to take but, fear among students of reprisal, a topic which featured strongly in the group discussions, or of making the situation worse ensured that, most students were slow to do so. These authors suggested that while it could be effective, it was also the riskiest course of action with thirteen to sixteen percent of students who reported experiencing a worsening of their situation. They also found that anxiety regarding personal safety, when wanting to report bullying, was a cause of significant concern among male students. Thus the quandary faced by students who object to the bullying, are sympathetic to the target, but unwilling to intervene in some kind of helping way is one which warrants students' engagement in the creation of a solution.

In recognition of the challenge faced by students with regard to reporting bullying, one means which could be made available is the opportunity to complete anonymous questionnaires or surveys. In six of the studies contained in Smith, Pepler and Rigby (2004), (see Galloway & Roland; Hanewinkel,; Koivisto; Limber, Nation, Tracy, Melton, & Flerx; O'Moore & Minton; Ortaga, Del Rey & Mora-Merchán) the authors referred to the use of anonymous surveys, based for the most part on the Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (1996), in order to garner information from students regarding their bullying experiences and behaviours in school. Others, such as Whitted and Dupper (2005), also referred to offering students confidential or anonymous means of reporting. While anonymous surveys may be useful as means of measuring bullying activity, others researchers, for example, Pepler, Smith, and Rigby (2004) suggested that it should be possible to give students reassurance regarding the protection of their identities as there is a necessity to move beyond anonymous questionnaires as a mechanism in this work. With this in mind, Skiba, Morrison, and Furlong (2013) proposed that a study should be done to determine

what, if any, difference would occur when students were allowed to report concerns of bullying using an anonymous (unsigned) or confidential (signed) reporting system.

Unnever and Cornell (2004) also highlighted concerns relating to possible limitations with regard to the accuracy of self- reports of bullying and the limitations of such surveys, while at the same time acknowledging the benefits of surveying students and the common use of anonymous questionnaires to do so. The bullying prevention programme described in Appendix K, which was developed by myself and other members of staff in the school in which I teach, uses frequent surveys as one means of gathering information. Unlike many of the well- known questionnaire surveys, most notably the revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (1996), the surveys we use are not anonymous, but are confidential. We offer our students strict confidentiality to ensure they will share their concerns with us and explain that the surveys are not anonymous because we want students to "own" their reports. The reason behind this is twofold. On the one hand, it guides against false claims of bullying. All allegations made are investigated, including an interview with the alleged perpetrator and, depending on the circumstances, a conversation with the targeted student. If reports are substantiated and the alleged perpetrator admits to the accusations (whatever his motivations), we follow a clear and well explained set of procedures. If, however, the allegations are found to be untrue we can reassure all parties, or if someone was "only messing" we can point out to the "joker" who reported the time that has been wasted. False reporting, in our experience, is a very rare event and on the odd occasion it occurs it is most likely to happen in first year where students are not fully aware of our system. The other reason for confidential, signed reporting, in the case of particularly stressful situations for the target, is to seek out and quietly thank the reporting students and to ask their help to monitor the situation, thus empowering them and affirming their decision to report.

5.3.8 - Students' Suggestions Regarding the Role of Parents in School Bullying Situations

The very negative views of schools' and teachers' attitudes and responses to bullying were tempered, somewhat, by an acknowledgement by participants that schools, without parental support, were limited in what they could do. Whitted and Dupper (2005) promoted the involvement of parents, as stakeholders, in every aspect of bullying prevention planning and in the development and implementation of bullying prevention and response systems. Dowling and Carey (2013) pointed out that children who were bullied were most likely to tell their friends and while young children may tell their parents, the older they become, the less likely bullied students are to tell any adult – parents or teachers.

There were contradictions however with regard to participants' views of parental involvement. On the one hand, those who commented suggested that informing parents of their child's bullying experience was to be avoided, while on the other, they identified the necessity for parents to monitor for change in their children's dispositions which might be indicative of them being bullied. Participants' reasons for non-involvement of parents were to avoid causing anxiety and perhaps overprotectiveness, as they saw it, on the part of parents. Pikas (1989, 2002) had also advocated intervention with alleged perpetrators prior to informing parents with the intention of devising a positive solution to the situation. Findings cited by Dowling and Carey (2013) showing that parents were more commonly approached for help than friends or teachers contradicted research by Mishna, Pepler and Wiener (2006) which had found that children generally chose not to tell their parents, unless, or until, their situation had become unbearable. Importantly, it was acknowledged by a participant in the discussion (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.5) that parental example in the way they value education, or not, can exert more influence on students than their school could hope to. While participants emphasised the importance of

parents' engagement and support for schools in these matters, at the same time, they placed the responsibility on the school to resolve issues before it became a concern to parents. Some participants voiced criticism of parents' willingness to drop and collect their students from detention (earned for bullying others) as the almost casual way in which this was done appeared to demonstrate a tolerance for their behaviour (See Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.3).

5.3.9 - Summary of Themes

As pointed out in Chapter Three (subsection 3.16.1), the sourcing of participants for the group discussion had been quite difficult. While the locations of their former schools were geographically limited, the participants themselves had attended secondary schools of various types, including private and non-fee paying single gender schools, both male and female, mixed gender community schools, schools with affiliation to religious orders, interdenominational and non-denominational schools. Accepting contributions by the discussion group participants to be as representative as possible of general student opinion and inviting these participants to help to clarify reasons for some of the responses given by survey respondents, it became clear that the steps followed by the school authorities when information has been provided by students are crucial to the encouragement of further reporting and the empowering of bystanders.

It was evident from survey responses and participants' contributions to discussions that bullying or disrespectful behaviour was quite commonplace. In spite of acknowledging their own feelings of discomfort or distress at witnessing bullying and their general misgivings about the targeting of peers in this way, it is clear that, for the most part, unless one's friend was being bullied, survey respondents and former students had been reluctant to intervene in the situation and even more so to seek adult (teacher) assistance. While individual participants in the discussion group had identified specific adults, including the Chaplain, the Deputy Principal and a particular teacher whose role it was to ensure all students had books, explanations offered by

discussion participants for their failure to report (described frequently as "ratting") included nervousness or uncertainty regarding who to approach, as well as the issue of not knowing the consequences for any of the parties – perpetrator, target or bystander. Thus not telling was explained, at least in some cases, as being the result of the fear of these unknowns. Thus it seems to be essential for schools to provide a consistent and well explained framework of responses to reports of bullying while also offering total confidentiality to the informants. Again, in the discussions it was agreed that even if official responses to reports of individual cases of bullying by students were not widely publicised, a noticeable change in the behaviour of the perpetrator would indicate something had happened and it would have gone some way in imbuing in students a greater confidence to report again. The shared view was that stopping the bullying was the prime concern and any punishment that might be meted out should be in keeping with the severity of the case. Anecdotally, at least, there was some recognition among students of the fact that those who bully may do so driven by their own inadequacies. Their stories of how some teachers had tried to talk to and persuade students to change their ways were supportive of a notion of using positive interventions to dissuade students away from this kind of behaviour. These interventions may have been indicative of their teachers' belief that for some children who bully, or who are involved in a bullying relationship in a bully-victim role, a rehabilitative approach rather than a punitive one may have been the appropriate response. Participants' references to the inadequacy which motivated some of their peers to bully and the pastoral care approach of their teachers' responses in these cases were supported by findings by O'Moore and Kirkham (2001) who highlighted that "that there is a relationship between the frequency of the victimisation and bullying behaviour and the level of self-esteem—the more frequent the abuse, the lower the self-esteem" (p. 281).

Findings by Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt and Lemme (2006) showed that teachers and students hold different opinions as to what constitutes bullying. They also highlighted that teachers neither fully understand students' perspectives on bullying, nor do they fully appreciate the difficulties faced by students who, in whatever way, are targeted or suffer isolation within their group. In general, participants' views of their schools did not reflect an awareness of a supportive or protective ethos in their schools, though all of the participants were aware that their schools had formal policies supporting respectful practices and consequences for breaches of these practices. On several occasions during the course of the discussions, a number of the participants went so far as to say that their "teachers didn't care". No one in either group objected to or disagreed with this statement. While not investigated in the survey, views of teachers' as not caring produced a "what's the point?" attitude among discussion group participants, making it seem unlikely that they would have reported.

In order to understand the inconsistency between participants' views of their experiences of their schools' practice and the official practice of their schools, as proclaimed in their policies, the next section will examine elements of these policies as they had been presented to these participants when they entered secondary school.

5.4 - OFFICIAL SCHOOL POSITION ON BULLYING

Before examining concerns raised by participants with regard to aspects of their school policies and procedure, it is appropriate to recall the school setting experienced by each of them. As outlined in Chapter Three (subsection 3.11.1), five young adults had participated in the piloted discussion. Of these, three young men had attended all-boys secondary schools and two of these had been in school together. These two schools displayed their Anti-Bullying policies on their school website. The other young man had attended a mixed gender private school, which had a

website but did not display their policy and the only female participant had attended an all-girls secondary school. This school also displayed its policy on the school's website. As described in subsection 3.13.1, the participants in the focus group discussion had included four young men and two young women. Three of the male participants and one of the females had attended single gender schools in the suburbs of the city. Two of these young men had attended schools in the private sector (one run by a religious order and the other a non-denominational school), the other young man and the young woman had attended single gender schools which were under the trusteeship of religious orders in the non-fee paying voluntary sector. Each of the remaining two participants (one male and one female) had attended large community schools in towns close to their homes in rural areas of the country. All of the schools displayed their Anti-Bullying policy on their school website, with the exception of the Community school attended by the male participant which referred to its Anti-Bullying policy within its Code of Conduct which was displayed on its website.

5.4.1 - Commonly Observed Student Interactions

As stated in Chapter Two (subsection 2.4), the report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group (2013) to the Minister for Education and Skills, had highlighted that, under the Education Act 1998 and other education specific legislation, schools were charged with responsibilities to provide safe, secure, inclusive and respectful learning environments. As described in Chapter Four (subsection 4.2.2) and discussed above (subsection 5.2.1), respondents to the questionnaire surveys had described a variety of unruly behaviours which caused distraction and/or feelings of unease in their classroom environments in their classroom environments (see Appendix E, questions 3 and 4). Much of this unruly behaviour was verbal but these respondents had also described physical activities between or towards students. While the participants in the discussion groups had fewer memories of the actual discomfort described by survey respondents,

all acknowledged that a culture of careless or rough talk (referred to as slagging) was fairly commonplace among students. Male students may have been louder but female students had also engaged in "slagging". In relation to these behaviours, the figures in the survey results indicated that not all students regarded these types of behaviour as bullying and similarly in the group discussions, participants denied harmful intent and indicated an acceptance of the manner in which students had addressed others or spoken to each other. In this regard, Fraser, Burman, Batchelor, and McVie (2010) proposed that the reasons behind young people's tolerance and acting out of these behaviours are complex and do not sit comfortably with their adult authority figures. The view expressed by several participants that "everybody" behaved like this seemed to be their way, initially at any rate, of denying that bullying was prevalent. It was evident from participants' contributions to the discussions that students and teachers, who shared the same world (as had been described by Sullivan, 2010), had very different views as to the nature and level of bullying activity. On the one hand participants reported that teachers saw bullying where none was intended and on the other, teachers failed to recognize bullying when it was happening in front of them (Pepler & Craig, 2000; Bauman & Del Rio,2006; Guillory, 2013).

As questions 3 and 4 (Appendix E) specifically asked about classroom behaviours it could be inferred from survey responses that, at least some of the time, teachers were present during the various exchanges. It was stated, as a matter of fact, by the participants in the discussions that the type of disregard shown for others frequently occurred in the presence of teachers. Thus there was an apparent disregard for, or ignorance of, their school's messages promoting respect. As survey respondents had not been asked about their teachers' reactions to these disruptive or unruly behaviours it was not possible to know how much tolerance was shown. Discussion participants however, who described how their teachers reacted, or not, provided an image of many teachers responding as individuals, rather than as part of a system, with some choosing not

to get involved at all (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.1). Though not necessarily bullying, disrespectful or rough behaviour is often unwanted and therefore inappropriate and it was evident from their contributions to the conversations that former students had judged some of their teachers to have been vulnerable and unsupported themselves and unwilling or unable to act (see subsections 4.10.1 and subsection 5.3.7 above). Descriptions of nervous teachers failing to reprimand or intervene seemed to belie the paragraphs in several of the anti-bullying policies regarding the provision of support to help teachers to deal with bullying.

5.4.2 - Communication Of Policy Details Regarding Reporting Of Bullying

An examination of the available Anti-Bullying Policies or Codes of Conduct of the schools with representatives in both phases of this study revealed messages promoting a sense of community and respect and tolerance for all (see Appendices N and O). Five of the nine schools previously attended by discussion group participants referred to an aim of their policy as being to keep their students "safe" or "secure" or both. The four other schools, all boys' only schools, made no reference to providing a protective environment. Within these policies, as can be seen from the general descriptions in Appendix M, bullying was defined and steps and procedures to deal with it were outlined. It was evident from students' responses to the survey and in participants' contributions to discussions (see Chapter Four, subsections 4.2.2, 4.9.2 and 4.10.1) that the characteristics of respect for all and a sense of community were often lacking. It was normal that all participants would identify their community as, first and foremost, their groups of friends but, while it was not specifically referred to, there was no real sense that any of the participants in either the piloted or formal group discussions felt committed to their schools for having been at the core of their community. While none of the participants expressed negative or antagonistic views towards their old school, neither did any of them speak of their schools with particular fondness.

As illustrated in Chapter Four (subsection 4.9.3) and discussed above in subsections 5.3.2 and 5.3.4, one of the deterrents to reporting bullying or seeking adult support was the uncertainty as to whom to report to. Examining this aspect of the policies which had been displayed on school websites revealed that only one school had a section specifically dedicated to reporting, setting out within it very precise details regarding how and to whom to report. In this girls only school, the section entitled, "who to tell and how to tell" was directed at parents and students. Included in this section there was also reference to reporting via half yearly surveys. In her contribution to this part of the discussion, the participant who had attended this school, had described how it was possible to report and feel relatively secure when doing so. Three school policies, all belonging to boys' only schools, emphasised the responsibility for vigilance on the part of teaching and ancillary staff. Parents were also encouraged to watch over their sons. Two of these three policies also encouraged students to report their concerns, while the third one, identified the role of staff, parents and student representatives to do so. In these schools, the members of the school community charged with monitoring for bullying were encouraged to report to the Principal, Deputy Principal or to the relevant Year Head. One of these policies in its updated form has included an email address to allow for confidential reporting. The policy of a fifth school, a rural Community school, encouraged parents or students to report to any member of staff in whom they had confidence. In the remaining two schools where reference was made in their policies to reporting of bulling, one named the relevant teachers to whom to report and the other outlined procedures that would follow complaints of bullying. In promoting their message to students to report, when concerns arose about bullying, none of the school policies, except for the girls only school mentioned above, offered guidance as to how to do so discreetly (Who to tell and how to tell"). However, as outlined in Chapter Four (subsection 4.11) other schools had also nominated staff members, through their pastoral care system, to support students

as required. It appeared that confiding concerns about bullying to these designated people could have been an option. Group participants did not make very much of this as an option, perhaps due to the fact that this role was not emphasised when these staff members were nominated.

When seeking to discover the most likely confidante for students who sought help in bullying situations, Dowling and Carey (2013) found that, relief from harassment and not a desire for punishment motivated the majority of the students in their study to report to teachers. These findings examined in conjunction with contributions of participants in the discussions proved useful when reflecting on the reasons that had been offered for their failure to report. Participants' reflections on their experiences when in school revealed their general lack of knowledge or awareness of the processes and procedures that would follow reports of bullying made by students. As described in Chapter Four (subsection 4.9.3) one of the young men in the pilot discussion had described his terror as he entered his new school setting and how he regarded the Principal to be very intimidating. This school was one of the two identified above whose policy charged its staff with the responsibility for watching out for bullying and encouraged its students to report concerns about bullying to the Principal. The young man had stated that there was no prospect that he would ever have reported anything, never mind bullying, to his Principal. Thus he felt intimidated by the main designated support adult.

The lack of clarity regarding how and to whom to report and the apparent failure on the schools' part to offer students mechanisms that would provide them with a sense of security in this regard, fed into the culture of silence where students feared being labelled "a rat". Participants' accounts (see Chapter Four, subsections 4.9.3 and 4.10.3) of their secondary school experiences blamed, at least some of, the non-reporting of bullying by students on distinct gaps in communication between students and their school authorities. These gaps in communication resulted in participants describing how, as students, they had interpreted their situations in a

manner that might have surprised their teachers and school management. Participants' viewed their schools' response procedures to bullying as being vague and unclear and some of their teachers as non-caring or inept. Governed by these feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, reporting was, as suggested by Sullivan (2010), regarded as being a negative action. This unease could be so great as to ensure that having weighed it up, students accepted abuse of themselves and of others and failed to tap into teacher support which Dowling and Carey (2013) identified as, potentially, the most effective means of stopping the bullying.

5.4.3 - Communication of Policy Details Regarding Consequences of Reporting

Another concern raised by the discussion participants and detailed in Chapter Four (subsection 4.9.3) was the issue of consequences. When discussing consequences, it became clear that in participants' eyes, this issue did not relate just to punishment or sanctions for the perpetrator of bullying, but resulted from concerns regarding what effect reports of bullying would have on the reporter and the target. Thus it appeared that, participants had no idea what would be done with the information that might be divulged and how it would be shared with the alleged perpetrator or within the class or peer group. This anxiety could be interpreted as an indication of a lack of trust in their adults, or in their schools' systems, that those to whom reports were made would take due care in the handling of sensitive information and in the provision of the safe and secure environment envisioned by schools within their policies. With this lack of trust was the additional concern that, by reporting, an already unpleasant situation, it could escalate (see for example, Carroll-Lind & Kearney, 2004; Huitsinga, Veenstraa, Sainiob & Salmivalli, 2010; Salmivalli, 2006)

A perusal of the policies that were available did not reveal any reference to the reporting student(s) and few references to targeted ones. They also varied considerably in the detailing of consequences for perpetrators. Two of the single gender schools, one for boys the other for girls,

simply referred to "appropriate sanctions". A third school stated that bullying would be dealt with using the "procedures applied to serious disciplinary breaches" and then went on to encourage students to walk away from confrontation and to find non-aggressive ways of dealing with problems. This statement seemed to place equal responsibility on participants in such situations, failing to recognise the imbalance of power inherent within the definition of bullying. The girls only school which had detailed a list of ways by which students or their parents could report bullying, also listed a number of consequences. Beginning with a pastoral approach which offered the perpetrator of bullying the opportunity to meet the chaplain or the guidance counsellor it detailed various in-school sanctions and in the final stage of the sanction list, indicated the school's willingness to seek the intervention of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer. The two remaining schools, one a boys' only school and the other a rural Community school, both referred to sanctions for bullying as being in accordance with the schools' code of behaviour. The former school went on to list other sanctions, including, expulsion, suspension, detention, verbal warning, referral to a child psychologist and referral to the local Garda juvenile liaison officer. This was the school attended by the participant who had suggested that the sanctions were so extreme that no one in the student body believed that the school would act upon them (see, Chapter Four, 4.10.2). Thus, with the exception perhaps of the girls' only school, the sanctions as set out in the school policies were open to interpretation by students. As one young man had pointed out (see subsection 5.3.9, above), a change in behaviour or demeanour of a perpetrator could have been an indication that some intervention had occurred. Not seeing such changes encouraged discussion participants to suggest that interventions in response to bullying were few and far between.

5.4.4 - Policy Statements Regarding Communication and Cooperation Between Parents/Guardians and The School

All of the policies that I had been able to access were also available to parents/guardians. Parents/guardians whose children had attended schools which did not display their anti-bullying policies on their websites would have received their schools' policy documents by other means. In one of the eight schools, whose policy was available on their website, students and their parents/guardians were expected to sign a paper copy of the school charter on bullying. Two further policies emphasised the responsibility of parents/guardians to guide their children away from bullying behaviour and to promote an anti-bullying message. All policies recommended that parents monitor their children for signs that they might be being bullied. This last point had been made by a female participant in the discussion, who had highlighted the role of parents in noting changes in their children's attitudes or demeanours and their responsibility to voice their concerns to their school (see, Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.5).

In terms of parental involvement in the intervention or the response procedures, however, this was as far as the agreement went between participants' opinions and the statements of their former schools. While O'Moore et al (2013) advocated collaboration between all members of the school community, including staff, students and their families and that this should occur within a supportive structure where policy and procedures are consistently and effectively applied, the accounts by participants made few, if any, references to students' families engagement with schools on bullying related issues. For the most part, within the school environments, as they had experienced, participants expressed a preferance for not informing or even excluding parents from the resolution of bullying situations in school. All of their school policies made reference to *notifying parents* or *possibly notifying parents* should incidents of bullying occur or, when a case of bullying had been responded to but the bullying did not stop. In two cases where it was stated

that parents *may be notified if the behaviour continued*, there seemed little doubt that this was a reference to the parents of the perpetrator and was indicative of the fact that students had experienced some kind of intervention process and having been offered the opportunity to reform their behaviour had failed to do so. With these exception, it was unclear as to which set of parents three other policy documents were referring to when stating parents would or could be notified– parents of the perpetrator, the targeted student or both. The Community school, whose policy had been accessed, had a slightly modified version of this declaration, stating that parents of the targeted students would be notified, with the permission of the targeted student and two other schools had included a statement regarding the notification of parents of the targeted student and a commitment to keeping them informed of events. Though somewhat ambiguous, all policy documents demonstrated the schools' recognition of parents' rights and responsibilities in these situations.

However, as described in Chapter Four (subsection 4.10.5), the general consensus of participants had been that the less parental involvement there was the better. Participants had played down the need to raise parental concerns, partly to avoid the vigilance and enquiring of their parents and also because it was likely that the peer/class group would become aware when parents of students (targeted or perpetrators) were called in and whether it was the case, or not, it would be assumed that the targeted student had reported and they would then have to carry the blame for this and would be labelled a "rat" (Chapter Four, subsection 4.9.3). As described in Chapter Two (subsection 2.11.2) the provision of protection from further bullying of students who had already been victimised is a central consideration of the Shared Concern method (Pikas, 1989, 2002).

5.4.5 - School Policy and Caring Teachers

Perhaps the most difficult of the discussion themes to address within the context of participants' former school policies is the repeated phrase they used which was that, in their views, their "teachers didn't care". Their belief that teachers didn't care was arrived at when they questioned how teachers didn't respond, even when bullying was blatantly obvious to the students. As highlighted in Chapter Four (subsection 4.9.2) participants had alluded to teachers' misdiagnosis of bullying, as in, seeing it when it wasn't there. Significantly though, participants did not fully accept findings which showed that teachers do not always recognise when bullying is happening or the seriousness of it (see Ellis & Shute, 2007; Novick & Isaacs, 2010) and they placed the responsibility or blame for non-intervention in episodes of bullying directly with the teacher, rather than with students who could have reported their concerns. No policy can legislate for people to care but policies can, as statements of intent, provide for staff to be equipped through training so that they are more sensitive to bullying and capable of intervening in a positive and productive manner. From among the eight Anti-Bullying policies that were available, three made statements of commitment to support for staff, but did not specify the nature of this support or how it would be provided. Another of the documents stated the requirement that "teachers will read and understand the school's policy on bullying". None of the policy documents made mention of staff development and training in this area and when it came to describing responses to bullying the nominated persons for such interventions identified in the policies were the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head or the "relevant" teacher. This appeared to locate the bullying response and resolution mechanisms among the hierarchy of management.

5.4.6 - A Review of Policies

Central to the implementation of their anti-bullying policies under the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (Department of Educations and Skills, 2013), schools are now obliged to formally record complaints of and official responses to bullying. In so far as I could ascertain, as this study was coming to its conclusion, five of the eight schools attended by participants, which showed their anti-bullying policies on their school websites, had uploaded a new policy document onto their website. While newly revised policies and formal procedures can be positive steps to supporting a more secure school climate, it is only through the working of these policies that this success can be measured. To ensure that their policies are fit for purpose as working documents, it is essential, based on participants' accounts that schools should evaluate their policies with regard to their effectiveness. This practice of evaluation, for the purpose of ensuring effectiveness, had been recommended in the Department of Education and Science (1993) 'Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools' and is among the key elements listed in the principles for best practice outlined in the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (p.35, 2013). With specific reference to cyberbullying, but also very relevant to consideration of traditional methods of bullying, O'Moore et al advised that young people should be involved through consultation in the policy making process and that their thoughts about definition and their concerns about reporting and the investigation of these reports are taken into account in the writing of these documents. The authors also highlighted the necessity for policy makers to ensure the relevance of their documents by evaluating their effectiveness.

5.5 - LIMITATIONS

Overall, the two phase approach to this survey was productive. When developing the questionnaire survey, all efforts were made to ensure the survey was fit for the designated purpose which was to gain insights from students' descriptions of their experiences of being bullied or their observations of others being bullied. In preparation for the construction and use of the questionnaire, I first discussed themes and topics with students in my own school who were familiar with this type of activity and then piloted the questionnaire with students from both junior and senior cycle within the same school. Following this preparatory work, the questionnaire surveys were distributed to schools. However, some limitations to the questionnaire survey in the form of omissions became apparent during the analysis of the data. These exclusions were identified and used to good effect in developing the prompt questions to be used to guide the conversation with the Focus group.

5.5.1 - Limitations in the Use of the Questionnaire Survey

As pointed out in Chapter Three (subsection 3.16), there were some limitations in the structure and content of the survey questionnaire which was used in the first phase of this study (see Appendix E). The questions in the survey concentrated, in the main, on students' experiences, observations, thoughts and feelings with regard to bullying, but did not attempt to enquire so as to understand their responses within their school setting. By failing to question students regarding their awareness or knowledge of their schools' policies and procedures, an opportunity was missed to examine their responses in the context of their schools' official position on bullying. Thus the potential to explore the influence of their schools' ethos on students while they were in school and how the declared ethos of the schools impacted on interpersonal relationships between students and between students and their teachers were lost. While not a conscious decision to exclude question regarding students' awareness or knowledge

of their schools' policies and procedures it was possible that by doing so I had avoided creating a possibly stressful situation whereby students, whose experiences and observations of school bullying were of primary concern at this stage in the study, could have thought that they were being "tested" on their knowledge of their school policies. Creating such a concern for responding students, could in turn have influenced their approaches to responding to other questions.

The contributions on this topic made by discussion participants drew upon their memories of the policies as they had been displayed in their homework journals and which they had been directed to read at the beginning of their first year in school. The time period that had elapsed since these participants had entered into first year ranged from seven to ten years. As highlighted in Chapter Four (subsection 4.9.3), participants claimed to have paid little attention to the policy documents contained within their journals. While it would have been interesting to discover student respondents' level of familiarity with, understanding of, or attention to the policies which, were governing their day to day regulation in school, the impact of such questions might, as I suggested, have detracted from the quality of their responses in other areas.

Due to the concise formatting of questions 8 and 11 which asked students about their experience or observations of several categories of bullying an opportunity was also missed to more closely identify the levels of specific types of negative commenting. With regard to verbal bullying, part c of both sets of answers offered students the opportunity to indicate whether or not they had experienced or heard others being targeted with, "nasty names about their race, gender or sexual orientation". By listing these themes separately instead of combining them together it would have been possible to gain a much clearer insight into the types of comments passed during verbal bullying and the level of specific abuses. A further flaw in the questionnaire survey related to the exclusion of the term "cyberbullying" in the categories of possible bullying

behaviours. Given that specific methods of traditional bullying were listed among the various options offered to students to choose from (questions 8 and 11), the omission of cyberbullying, which is a cause of great concern and reported to be widespread, was an error. As noted in Chapter Three (subsection 3.16), it may, have been an incorrect assumption that students, when asked to indicate "other", if that was appropriate, would have known to mention cyberbullying, especially as all other methods listed for them were, as stated, person to person offences.

In all, there were 22 questions in the survey. It was noteworthy that as respondents worked their way through the document, their attention to or their energy for answering decreased. Of 1,027 respondents, only two (0.2%) failed to answer questions 1and 2 relating to levels of happiness and numbers of friends in school. Thus 99.8% did so. In contrast, the level of answering of questions 21 and 22 enquiring about seeking help from adults and respondents' feelings on having done so, were at 67% and 76% respectively. It was possible that as students progressed through the questionnaire, which required a considerable amount of reading due to the number of option answers in all of the questions, they may have run out of energy or interest. This fatigue effect had not been apparent when I had piloted the questionnaire with students in my own school. The relative ease with which the pilot group had fully completed the survey may have been due, in part, to the fact that our students regularly complete surveys on bullying and while they would not be as detailed as the survey devised for this research, nonetheless it was a familiar experience for them. Though it cannot be known, it is also possible that had the questions been asked in a different order, the response rate on the questions which were central to this research might have been greater. As it was however, students were invited to express feelings on their own level of happiness and to describe their classroom environment at the beginning of the questionnaire. The survey analysis revealed that the majority of students claimed to be happy or usually happy within their school setting (see Chapter Four, subsection,

4.2.1). Asking this question before pursuing issues of bullying may have resulted in different responses to answers which students might have given if the questions had been asked at the end of the survey. Coming where they did at the beginning of the questionnaire, queries relating to happiness and friendships and students' responses to them were unclouded by considerations of the questions on bullying which were to follow (see Chapter Three, subsection 3.5.5). Thus it is likely that these responses truly reflected responding students' perspectives at the time. It was clear by comparing the data in Chapter Four (tables 4.1. and 4.2) that the indicators of happiness could be linked to numbers of friends in school. It also emerged, as a result of the inclusion of this question, that in spite of being targeted by others for bullying, not all students who had reported being bullied had indicated their unhappiness in school.

Among this group of respondents there were students, the biggest proportion of whom came from among the senior males (at just over six percent), who indicated that they were never happy in school. Conscious of concerns regarding students' mental health, these types of questions, used as an introduction to students' surveys on this and other related topics, could provide, a useful means of monitoring for students' emotional and psychological well-being.

A final limitation in this phase of the study and one that may have affected the data was the time frame of the completion of the questionnaires. The distribution of the surveys began the second week following the return to school after the mid-term break in October 2012. A two-week time frame had occurred between the posting of the first batch of questionnaire surveys to the posting of the last batch to schools. Within this time frame too, the Principals of two schools who had invited me to email my surveys for them to print, copy and to distribute to students for completion had also received these documents as email attachments. However, as I described in Chapter Three (subsection 3.4), due to a number of school based reasons, which were outside my control, the time span over which these documents were returned was over five and a half

months. Thus, in relation to completion of the survey, some students would have been asked to reflect on their bullying experiences and observations during the course of the previous two to three months (September, October and part of November 2012) while others would have been reflecting on the same experiences and observations over a period of up to six months (September 2012 to the beginning of April 2013).

5.5.2 - Limitations of the Focus Group Discussion Method

As pointed out by Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981), one of the drawbacks of questionnaire of the type in this study is the requirement for respondents to identify their preferred responses from a list of previously determined option answers. During the course of the analysis of survey results, some of the limitations of the structure of the survey became clear. Identifying omissions in the questioning and the obvious gaps in information which had emerged provided the platform on which to develop the prompt questions which would lead the conversation, in Phase two of the study, with the Focus Group participants. Thus, the format of the Focus Group discussion, informed by the questions which had arisen or remained unanswered, provided the opportunity to investigate with participants some possible reasons or motivations for students' answers in the questionnaire. This method supported the putting aside of assumptions so often made regarding bystanders' motivations and facilitated a proper exploration with young people of the thinking behind the behaviour choices made by young people in the context of school bullying.

Some of the limitations relating to the Focus Group method were outlined in Chapter Three (subsection 3.16.1). While the survey questionnaire had provided a considerable amount of valuable information, including indicators of topics that required further exploration, the Focus Group method was found to be more productive in this research. This may have been in some way due to my own comfort in these settings as I regularly engage in group discussions on very similar themes. The possibility to explore elements of interest more deeply or to clarify points

made by participants are both very positive features of this method. The initial challenge for the second phase was to find individuals willing to participate and the next one was to identify a time that suited everyone. Sourcing participants for both the pilot and the formal group discussions was the result of a snowballing effect where engaging one possible participant in the pilot brought four others and in the case of the other session, contact with two willing participants and a professional contact brought the remaining four participants. One of the features of this method is the initial setting down of ground rules, the aim of which are to ensure confidentiality and a feeling of security for all. One of the limitations of this particular exercise was, in part, due to the enthusiasm of one of the participants in the formal (as opposed to the piloted) session. In her enthusiasm, she regularly referred to the other participants by name and also named her former school. As this session was being recorded, it was necessary, for the protection of all, not to share the recorded details with any other parties. As mentioned in Chapter Four (subsection 4.11), the participation of all involved in the two discussions was whole hearted. One of the limitations of this, was the difficulty in maintaining the flow in the conversation as occasionally participants, focusing on particular themes, wanted to return to them to highlight or confirm previous statements. One of the main points reiterated on several occasions was that, in the views of participants, their schools or teachers didn't care. This focus on non-caring teachers could have become a sticking point (subsection 4.9.3) as I questioned participants regarding other possible reasons as to why, in their opinion, there had been little or no action on bullying in their former schools. As not all participants were equally determined regarding the uncaring attitudes of their teachers, those who were could be identified as the "dominant voices" referred to by Smithson (2000, p. 107). By continuing to question this view with individuals in the group, it was possible to encourage participants who were less spontaneous in the conversation to seek other reasons for what was being promoted as the lack of teacher engagement in the process.

Quieter participants were, as Smithson described, invited into the conversation, their contributions enabling a more individualised analysis of the discussion. This also encouraged those who were strong in their opinions to reflect on other possibilities and provided interpretations of other opinions as opposed to that of the "collective voice" (Smithson, 2000, p.109).

While accepting commentary of all parties in the discussions as being true to their memories at the time, it was possible that participants' contributions may have been affected by any of the influences described in Chapter Three (subsection 3.16.1)

By utilising a two phase approach to this research, it was possible to examine students' responses to the questionnaire with focus group participants and to query with them their interpretation of some of the reasons for response which students had offered. While, as stated below, it was not possible to determine causality, respecting the participants' contributions to the discussions as accurate of their experiences, it was possible to inductively develop a tentative but explanatory theory as to the reasons why young people, as bystander to bullying, are slow to engage with their school authorities. This method therefore, offered the opportunity to explain the "code of silence" regarding reporting in schools. Where the assumption has often been stated that fear of being labelled a "rat" or some kind of "honour" among peers has been central to non-reporting, this study revealed that ignorance of procedure and fear of outcomes also played a large part in students' decision making.

5.6 - CONCLUSION

As identified in Chapter One (subsection 1.5), detailed in Chapter Three (subsections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3) and described in subsection 5.1 above, my research sought to identify bullying experiences and observations of secondary school students and to discover reasons for the relatively low rates of reports of bullying. Detailed findings of the two phases of this study were

described in Chapter Four. Using issues raised by answers to the survey questions provided by student respondents and bearing in mind the need for caution regarding an attempt to do anything other than identify association between accounts, a framework of topics to guide the group discussions was constructed. It had been possible to identify several key concerns from students' responses to the survey. These concerns were explored and deliberated upon by group participants who offered their experiences and their interpretations of them as reasons for the still common phenomenon of low levels of reporting to adults when bullying occurs.

The current research has important implications for school communities including School Boards, senior management, teachers and support staff who, along with other stakeholders, are frequently involved in the planning and development of school bullying prevention policies and procedures and who are then charged with their implementation and with monitoring for and evaluating their effectiveness.

5.6.1 - Summary of Key Findings

In many ways, the introductory stages of this study replicated research previously undertaken in Ireland and internationally, confirming findings regarding the level and types of bullying, both experienced and witnessed (See Chapter Four, Tables 4.2 – 4.6) and the locations where this bullying was most likely to occur. It was clear from survey responses and the contributions of participants in the discussions that the experiences and observations of person to person bullying by respondents and participants in this study were not dissimilar to those of students in the 90's and 00's (O'Moore, Kirkham, & Smith, 1997; Minton & O'Moore, 2008). Unfortunately, it was also evident that the number of students, who found themselves cast in the role of bystanders, and reported that they would seek adult help remained low and in keeping with findings by Carroll-Lind and Kearney (2004) as described in Chapter Two (subsection 2.11.2). Overall, sixteen percent of students had identified seeking adult help as their course of

action when witnessing bullying, while slightly over five percent of all respondents to the survey had indicated reasons why one would do so (See Chapter Four, subsection 4.6.5). This figure (sixteen percent) was slightly higher than the thirteen percent referred to by Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse and Neale (2010).

The inclusion of senior cycle students in the first phase of the study revealed a slightly lower but not dissimilar level of the anti-bullying attitudes which had been expressed by junior cycle students (see Chapter Four, subsection, 4.6.4). In spite of the possibility for greater confidence and self-assuredness of these seniors, on the basis that the majority of them should have, by nature of their longer presence in the school, been accustomed to the ways of their schools, data which resulted from senior cycle students' responses to questions enquiring about reporting and seeking adult help differed only from those of the junior cycle students' results (See Chapter Four, table 14A), in the fact that the figures for reporting were lower again. This was in keeping with findings by Trach, Hymel, Waterhouse and Neale (2010) which revealed that compared to elementary school boys, secondary school boys were increasingly disengaged and passive in their bystander responses. With regard to the low numbers of reports by students, this study found, as had Unnever and Cornell (2004), that middle school boys (comparable to Junior cycle) were less likely than girls to report bullying. They also noted that students in the younger classes were more likely to report than their senior peers. Thus the senior cycle students in this study were following the trend indicated by these researchers.

5.6.2 - Reluctance to Report

Having addressed the research questions which related to students' experiences of and attitudes to bullying and the level of help seeking they were prepared to access, the main focus of this study was to explore in more detail reasons as to why student bystanders were so reluctant to seek help from teachers. As discussed in the limitations above (subsection 5.5.1), survey

respondents were limited in their opportunity to explain their answers, even if they had wanted to. It was clear in Chapter Four (subsection 4.6.7) that, of the very few respondents who had reported that they had sought adult help, there had been fewer again who indicated that they would repeat their approach. As highlighted in Chapter Four (subsections 4.9.3 and 4.10.3) accounts by participants in the discussion groups of their experiences, when in secondary school, explained non-reporting of bullying by students partly on the basis of what appeared to be a distinct gap in communication between students and their school authorities. This gap in communication, resulted in participants describing how, as students, they had interpreted their situations in a manner that might have surprised their teachers and school management. Participants' viewed their schools' response procedures to bullying as being vague and unclear and some of their teachers as non-caring or inept. As pointed out in Chapter Four (subsection, 4.9.6) there was, in keeping with the literature, disagreement between staff and students as to the behaviour that constituted bullying. Respondents' and participants' apparent acceptance of unruly behaviour by some students aimed at others clouded the issue. As highlighted by Fraser, Burman, Batchelor, and McVie (2010), the reasons behind young people's tolerance and acting out of these behaviours are complex and do not sit comfortably with their adult authority figures. The view expressed by several participants that "everybody" behaved like this seemed to be their way, initially at any rate, of denying that bullying was prevalent and that rowdy or boisterous behaviour was then norm. It was evident from participants' contributions to the discussions that students and teachers, who shared the same world (as had been described by Sullivan, 2010), had very different views as to the nature and level of bullying activity. On the one hand participants reported that teachers saw bullying where none was intended and on the other, teachers failed to recognize bullying when it was happening in front of them (see for example, Pepler & Craig, 2000; Bauman &Del Rio,2006; Guillory, 2013).

In their research to discover the most likely confidante for students who sought help in bullying situations, Dowling and Carey (2013) found that, in relation to approaching teachers, students identified a variety of reasons for having done so. They pointed to the fact that "stopping the bullying" and "feeling better about themselves" (p.806) were key factors and that "getting back at the bully" (p.806) was given as a reason less often than either of these. Thus, relief from harassment and not a desire for punishment motivated the majority of the students in their study. These findings examined in conjunction with contributions of participants in the discussions proved useful when reflecting on the reasons that had been offered for their failure to report. Participants' reflections on their experiences when in school revealed their general lack of knowledge or awareness of the processes and procedures that would follow reports of bullying made by students. In spite of the desire to stop the bullying, their virtual ignorance of school processes undermined their belief that the safety of the reporting student would be assured. While participants proposed the lack of a shared agreement between staff and students as to the behaviour that constituted bullying and significant gaps in communications as the two main reasons for students' non-reporting, they did not deny that the bullying of others was harmful. In fact, several participants clearly remembered, with regret, times when they failed to help their peers. These differences in students' and teachers' definitions and understanding of bullying and the need for school authorities to listen to their students were highlighted by Naylor, Cowie, Cossin, de Bettencourt and Lemme (2006) who remarked "teachers need to listen carefully to what pupils have to say about bullying and work with and help them to develop their conceptions of the phenomenon. Some teachers, too, need to develop their conceptions of bullying (p. 554).

5.7 - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The whole-school approach to bullying prevention advocated, for example, by O'Moore and Minton, (2004), Richard, Schneider, and Mallet (2012) and Smith, Salmivalli and Cowie, (2012) supports a system comprising of a clear policy and consistent enforcement of same, where all stakeholders in school are included, teachers are supported and trained, parents are kept fully informed and students are engaged in a programme of awareness raising in order to guide them towards an understanding and non-acceptance of bullying behaviour. The beginning of the practical phase of this research coincided with the circulation by the Department of Education and Skills of the new Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2013). Thus, all those involved in this study had experienced school under the old regime, where individual schools had devised their own policies and applied them as they deemed appropriate. Some with more vigour than others. It is clear that the aforementioned document is more far reaching and carries more force than the recommendations made within the *Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (Department of Education and Science, 1993) which it replaced. Within these guidelines it was accepted that schools had the autonomy to write and enact their own policies. The new procedures (2013) set out requirements regarding the revision by schools of their existing policies and the dissemination of these policies to all school stakeholders. Appendix 1, p.38 of the Departments' document provided a template policy for schools to adapt in developing their own policies. Schools are required to provide clear definitions of bullying behaviour, to write their rules in pupil friendly language, to stipulate consequences and sanctions which would follow reports of bullying and to set out and adhere to procedures regarding reporting to the Principal and the Board of Management.

It was clear from reading the updated policies on the websites of the schools attended by survey respondents and discussion group participants, where such policies have been made available, that the content, language and formatting of these documents have changed very little. Since the completion of the investigative phase of this research and following analysis of the quantitative and descriptive data provided, I have identified eight points on which to make recommendations in relation to school policy and practice, including support for teachers, which would support the successful operation of the new procedures in schools.

5.7.1 - Recommendation for Policy and Practice

- Bearing in mind that it is common practice in many Irish secondary schools to introduce their incoming first years to their new school on a day, or on days, prior to the return of the rest of the student body to school, an opportunity exists to ensure that time is given over to introducing the most relevant policies, including the policy on bullying, to new students on such days. In this type of setting, where the first year students' meetings with their teachers are uninterrupted by distractions of the presence of more senior students, it would be possible to explain and discuss with students the wording and the content of the policy statement (including the definition itself). In this type of session, the procedures regarding reporting and those which would follow should bullying occur can be discussed and most importantly the spirit which informs and drives the policy. Within this latter discussion, the importance of countering beliefs, as expressed in subsection 5.6, that when it comes to rowdy or unruly behaviour "everybody" does it. Hidden in the midst of general rowdiness is the scope to target and abuse more vulnerable students. While, during the course of the academic year, situations will arise providing opportunities to develop students' resilience, these early sessions with incoming first years should be used to set down standards which will be restated

throughout the academic year. It would also be possible during these sessions to listen to students, to learn of their experiences in Primary School in order to try to anticipate any problems that might arise from lack of understanding or students' previous experiences of other school systems;

- It could also be beneficial in schools where senior students are trained as "buddies" or "mentors" to help first year students in their transition to their secondary schools to engage these buddies in the role of mediators for their assigned first years. As buddies, these senior students are frequently with their first years in the early days of the new school year and often present when first years are being introduced to rules and features of their new school. In such circumstances, it should be possible for the buddies to act as mediators, to explain or to enquire on behalf of their students regarding anything they have failed to take in or understand during the course of their introductory sessions with teachers;
- While those involved in the writing of the rules may work to ensure that they have been presented in a pupil friendly manner, personal experience has shown that it is incorrect to assume that everyone understands the rules and procedures as they are set out. In order to ensure that school policies are accessible to all, particularly students, it is important that pupils at various levels within the school participate in lessons, or discussions, during the course of which the rules are examined and discussed. Frequent reference to the policy and its contents and to their place in maintaining a safe and secure school environment ensures the anti-bullying attitude maintains a high profile in the school;
- In relation to reporting bullying, statements in policies such as "following reports" (with no indications as to how or to whom to report) should be avoided. Each school, should

decide on and list the means by which students (or their family members) can report their concerns in confidence. As noted in subsection 5.3.7, students too can be invited into consultation on the methods of reporting that they would recommend as providing the necessary confidentiality and as being user friendly. Regular surveys, carried out in rooms which allow for students to have space when completing them, would be a means of providing them with the opportunity to feel secure as they respond, while also offering opportunities for students, who otherwise may be too shy or nervous, to report. Schools should actively promote reporting as a practice of stating the facts, as they are known, while work should be carried out with students to learn to distinguish between "ratting" and reporting. It is important for those students who are uncertain regarding the validity of their concerns, that they should be aware that all reports of bullying will be investigated and if concerns are unfounded there will be no follow up;

- In relation to statements in policy documents regarding consequences or sanctions, phrases such as "appropriate sanctions" should be avoided. This phrase was identified as being too vague by participants who, though they had also been provided with a list of possible sanctions, considered the phrase to be a deterrent to students who might have been considering reporting their concerns (see Chapter Four, subsection 4.10.2). A set of procedural responses to bullying similar to the Ladder of Referral, otherwise referred to as the ladder of intervention (National Education Welfare Board, 2008), which is an element in Discipline policies in many schools, would ensure clarity regarding consequences and the consistency of responses on the part of staff; and,

The whole school approach to bullying prevention as referenced above (subsection 5.7), would be supported on a broader level by the recommendations of Galloway and Roland (2004) regarding school improvements and their suggestions for the provision of professional

development in the area of behaviour management training for all teachers. Teachers trained and supported in the area of behavior management generally, with specific training in the area of bullying prevention (see subsection 5.7.2 below) would ideally influence a reduction in the stress levels for all and particularly students who were sensitive to them. In such an environment it is possible that students would recognise bullying more clearly and be less accepting of it. It is to be hoped that, in a calmer classroom, reducing the initial impressions that "everybody" does it, would empower students to act in an environment of mutual co-operation and have the effect of increasing levels of reporting where correct procedures are in place.

5.7.2 - Recommendations for Support for Teachers

As shown in Chapter Four (Table 4.12) the data which revealed small numbers of students admitting to reporting their concerns of bullying to adults was, at first, explained by group participants on the grounds that students did not trust teachers' ability, or desire, to resolve the situation (subsection 4.10.3). Two points repeated several times by discussion group participants during the course of the conversation relating to their teachers' involvement, or lack thereof, were that teachers didn't care or that they were incapable of acting effectively. Other than this, they put their teachers' not caring and inability to act down to fear of confrontation which in turn was blamed on a lack of teacher training. Participants further assumed that their school authorities would not be agreeable to allowing teachers permission to attend for training during weekdays and that their teachers would not want or be able to attend for such training at the weekend.

Support for staff (paragraph 6.7, p. 28) was specified as a key element of best practice in the procedures set out by the Department of Education and Skills (2013). Stated within this section of the document is the requirement for management to ensure that staff are sufficiently familiar with the school's anti bullying policy so as to "enable them to effectively and consistently apply the policy when required" (paragraph 6.7.1, p. 28). The procedures further

stated that staff members, depending on their roles, should be supported to recognise, respond to or implement strategies in order to prevent bullying and that school management should ensure that temporary and substitute staff should have sufficient awareness of the school's code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy (paragraph 6.7.2)

In the light of findings from this research the following recommendations regarding support for teachers are set out below.

- Circular 0043/2014 (Department of Education and Skills, 2014) lists among the suggestions for use of the 33 additional hours, "approved school arranged in-service /Continuing Professional Development" (Appendix 1, paragraph 5). A recommendation for the worthwhile use of some of these hours would be that they should be committed to providing training for all staff in the area of bullying prevention and methods of response to bullying. While some teachers involved in the teaching of the Social Personal and Health Education course may have had the opportunity to participate in such training, the whole staff experience, which offers opportunities to share concerns and collaborate on ideas within an environment that is familiar to all, provides greater scope for confident engagement on the part of staff members. By offering this training the "support to staff" advocated in the Anti-Bullying Procedures (2013) would become a reality. In addition, Paragraph 1.4.1 (p.8) of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2013) requires that the Board of Management must carry out an annual evaluation of the school's anti-bullying policy and of its operation within the school. As part of this process, it should be possible for a commitment be made to also provide annual teacher training in this area (again within the Croke Park Hours arrangement). These sessions would ensure that teachers are kept informed of any additions or changes to policy or procedures and have the opportunity to develop and

refresh their skills, thus ensuring more informed, confident and competent interactions with students when interacting with them regarding issues of bullying.

The references made by discussion group participants to the challenges experienced by new or student teachers (whom they described as vulnerable) when they were confronted with bullying situations, reflected concerns about the confidence and ability of these teachers to deal with it. While bullying prevention is now an element of teacher training courses in many of the Universities, either for example, in modular form (Dublin City University) or within the context of other modules, for example, Applied Psychology in Education (Trinity College Dublin), these course may not equip teachers for the actuality of dealing with bullying in their new school setting. In order to equip new teachers to deal with such situations, it would be appropriate to ensure that, not only have they been encouraged to make themselves familiar with their school's policy on bullying, but that they have been introduced to and encouraged to liaise with the staff member(s) designated to lead the school's bullying prevention and intervention programme.

5.8 - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this age of awareness of the need to ensure best practice within educational (and other) settings and concerns regarding litigations which may stem from failure to meet the standards, it would seem appropriate to reflect on bullying as a human rights issue. As noted in Chapter One (subsection 1.5) above, General Comment No. 12 (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009) entitled "The Right of the Child to be Heard" included eighty-seven instances where references were made to the right of the child to be heard and to have his/her views respected. This research which involved children in phase one (under 18 years of age) and young adults in phase two, attempted to listen to and to hear the experiences of children as, in the latter phase, the participants recounted details of their time in school. Thus some of the common assumptions

regarding reasons for student bystander behaviours were, to some degree, overturned. It was evident in this study, as described above in subsection 5.7.1, that misunderstandings and failures in communication existed in many schools between school authorities and their students. Participants' described how channels of communication through which information on policy and procedures in schools were shared were often fuzzy. This resulted in assumptions being made on both sides. On the one hand, students thought their schools were not truly committed to their anti-bullying message and that some of their teachers were uncaring or inept. On the other, school authorities, believing that their policies proclaimed their supports for students, could blame students' non reporting on their own "code of silence" or students' fear of being labelled "a rat".

The 2012 report published by the office of the Children's Ombudsman, described findings from consultations with children and young people on their experiences of bullying and their recommendations to protect against it. The young people involved in the consultation identified practical steps such as ways to support confidential reporting and class meetings and offered sound peer to peer advice. In my much smaller consultation exercise and guided by the outcome from survey responses, I took a slightly different approach. I enquired of participants regarding their experiences of the systems which had been in place in their schools and the features of these which they judged to have impacted on students' decisions to report bullying. The Focus Group approach, although time consuming was very worthwhile, offering the opportunity to draw on students' experiences and observations and to question any lack of clarity that might have emerged during the course of these discussion. The group discussion, as opposed to individual interviews created a dynamic where participants conversed with each other, comparing and contrasting their experiences and developing themes within the conversation. Paper and pen type surveys are limited in the scope of their enquiry and observation type exercises can lead to, but

not confirm, conclusions regarding students' reasons for their actions (or lack of them). This research provided new insights into students' motivations for the behaviour of bystanders in bullying situations. The cross sectional nature of the first phase and the small sample of participants in the second phase should be regarded as having laid the foundations for further similar research projects in this area with potential to provide additional and significant information. Bearing in mind the reference made within the Anti-Bullying Procedures (2013) regarding the approach to be taken by schools to engage pupils with their bullying prevention policies, further research carried out in schools should investigate the effectiveness of schools in their writing and dissemination of school rules on bullying. Such an exercise would have as a component feature an evaluation of the user-friendly nature of the policies and their relevance to students – as perceived by them.

Through my own experience of presenting and attending at in-service training and my involvement in a website which provides lesson materials for teachers to use in their work to prevent school bullying, I am very conscious that the perception of participants regarding non caring teachers is unfair and inaccurate. I believe however, that many teachers do feel inadequate when it comes to dealing with matters of bullying and that it would be very worthwhile to initiate a research project, using a group discussion approach similar to this study, on the issue of "support for staff". Such an investigation would seek to hear the views and experiences of teacher participants in focus group discussions regarding the systems in place in their schools and how they are managed and used by their school communities. Participation in discussions, where experiences are shared, would enable group members to also share thoughts and feelings on the challenges they face and to identify effective bullying prevention and response mechanisms within their schools. Further recommendations regarding policy and practice would emerge from these studies. In addition to this, at a practical level, participants would be in a position to return

to their schools having shared their concerns and heard the concerns of others, bringing with them suggestions or recommendations for new ideas and methods of action.

When considering the findings of this research and the emergence of the lack of clarity in relation to students' interpretation of their schools' anti-bullying policies as an impediment to their reporting of concerns, the challenge faced by school authorities, under pressure from the increasingly heavily loaded curriculum, is to find the time to communicate with their students and most importantly to listen to them. Nonetheless, opportunities exist for teachers in classrooms, who are trained to be aware of what to look out for and supported in their practice by management and peers, to promote respect, challenge derision or intolerance and encourage positive interpersonal communication. As one of the focus group participants remarked "it's not about a programme – it's about an attitude!"

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Appendix A

Conversation prompts in pre-research discussion on which to create a framework for the survey questionnaire

1. What kinds of behaviours would you describe as bullying?
2. How regularly during this school year would you have been conscious of bullying in your group?
3. What forms of bullying do/did you see most often?
4. Where was it most likely to occur?
5. Have you been the target of this behaviour?
6. Have others you know been targeted?
7. Why do you think this happened?
8. What have you thought when you have seen/experienced this happen?
9. How have you felt?
10. What kind of effect have you noticed in your classroom when a student there is being bullied or hassled by another?
11. When we ask students to help by reporting or giving information, why do you think they may sometimes fail to do so?
12. What role do you think the staff in school has to play in the resolution or continuance of bullying situations?

Appendix B

Letter to Principal

Dear Principal,

I am a Doctoral student in the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, where I previously completed my M.Ed. (Aggression Studies). My research interests include conflict, aggression and bullying in schools with particular emphasis on empowering students to resolve these issues peacefully.

I worked in the development of the anti-bullying programme in our school with Seán Fallon my former colleague and the tireless administrator of the anti-bullying website www.antibullyingcampaign.ie which came about as a direct result of seeing the effectiveness of our programme in operation in school.

My current research concentrates on the bystanders to school bullying - their role in bullying situations; what they do, why they do it and the effect on them and others of their action or inactions. I would also like to discover from young people what they feel their adults should do to support them to adopt a more positive and proactive bystander position.

I would greatly appreciate your help in discovering the answers to these questions. If it is acceptable to you and to your school, I would appreciate if you would conduct this survey among a sample of your first year and fifth year student groups? I know that the business of the school ensures that all teachers are kept well occupied and so in order not to add too much to your work load, I have tried to keep the questionnaire brief.

The findings of my study will form part of my research and will therefore be discussed with my supervisor Dr Stephen James Minton. It will ultimately be documented in my thesis which will be held by Trinity College; however neither the name of any school nor any person involved in the research process will be identified in the thesis. In addition, should they be

required, the findings regarding the outcome of this research will be made available in order to guide future planning in this area.

With thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Kent

Appendix C

Letter to teacher administering student questionnaire

Dear Teacher,

The aim of this questionnaire is to ascertain student attitudes to bullying behaviour in order that we can understand what motivates the response of students who are witness to bullying. By asking students for their views and motivations, instead of making assumptions as to why they do or say what they do, I hope to open up the discussion with young people which will offer them the opportunity to consider their role in these situations and from these insights to inform future training for adults regarding the support structures which by-standing students seek rather than those which we as adults think should be provided. **Please read the accompanying explanation of this survey to your students and ask them to take their time when filling out the questionnaire.** Please also arrange their seating so that they feel secure and comfortable when completing their answers. I am very grateful for your help in discovering the views of students in your group and would appreciate if you would take a few moments to answer the questions below.

Are you Male? ☐ Female? ☐

A Tutor? ☐

Year Head? ☐

Teacher of:

Religion? ☐

SPHE? ☐

CSPE? ☐

Other? ☐

If you ticked “other” please briefly describe your role._____

_____

How long have you known the students in your group?

≤one year ☐

≤two years ☐

≤three years ☐

>three years ☐

With very sincere thanks

Mary Kent

Pupil Questionnaire

We say a young person is being bullied when he or she is treated in an unpleasant way by another young person or several young people. We usually understand bullying to be a repeated behaviour but not always.

For example, it is bullying when a young person

- has nasty or unpleasant things said to or about him or her,
- is physically intimidated hit, kicked or threatened,
- receives nasty notes, texts or emails,
- is the subject of abusive comments on a website e.g. Facebook.
- Their belongings are taken, broken, hidden or passed around the classroom

It is also bullying when someone is left out of conversations, games or other group activities. These things can happen often and it may be difficult for the young person being bullied to defend him or herself.

It is not bullying when two pupils of about the same strength have the odd fight or quarrel but **it may be bullying** when other students manipulate or set up two students to fight each other after school.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to discover the experiences, observations and attitudes of young people in relation to bullying in schools.

Please circle only one statement unless the question states you may circle more than one. Don't write your name on the questionnaire. No one will know how you answered these questions **but** it is important that you answer carefully, as honestly as you can and say how you really feel. Sometimes it is hard to decide what to answer. Then choose the answer you think is closest to how you think. If you have any questions, raise your hand.

Most of the questions are about your relationships in school and the relationships you observe that others have had since returning at the end of August last year. When you answer, you should think of how school life has been since your return after the summer holidays and not only how it is just now.

Appendix D

Pupil Questionnaire

Please tick or circle only one answer.

1. How happy are you with the atmosphere in your class group?
   a) Very happy,
   b) usually happy
   c) sometimes happy,
   d) seldom happy,
   e) Never happy.

2. How many good friends do you have within your class group?
   a) None,
   a) one,
   b) two,
   c) more than two

3. What kind of behaviour between students distracts you from your class work?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. What kind of behaviour between students makes you feel uncomfortable in class?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Do you feel that you have been bullied this year?
   a) Yes,
   b) No

6. If yes, how often would you feel this?
   a) Every day
   b) About once a week
   c) Rarely

7. Where does this bullying happen? (you may circle more than one option) In the
   a) Classroom,
   b) School yard,
   c) Toilets,

d) Corridors,
e) Other

8. In what way have you been bullied at school this year? (you may circle more than one option)
   a) I haven't been bullied
   b) Called nasty names about your race, gender or sexual orientation
   c) Called nasty names in other ways
   d) Members of my family have been verbally abused
   e) Physically hurt. eg. hit or kicked
   f) Threatened
   g) No one would talk to me
   h) Rumours spread about me
   i) Belonging taken from me
   j) Bullied in another way (please say how)

   _____

   _____

9. Do you ever feel that others in your class are being bullied this year?
   a) Yes,
   b) No

10. If yes, how often would you feel this?
    a) Every day
    b) About once a week
    c) Rarely

11. In what way have the others been bullied at school this year? (you may circle more than one option)
    a) I haven't seen bullying this term
    b) Called nasty names about their race, gender or sexual orientation
    c) Called nasty names in other ways
    d) Members of their family have been verbally abused
    e) Physically hurt. eg. hit or kicked
    f) Threatened
    g) No one would talk to them
    h) Rumours spread about them
    i) Belonging taken from them
    j) Bullied in another way (please say how)

    _____

    _____

12. Where does this bullying happen? (you may circle more than one option) In the
    a) classroom,
    b) school yard,
    c) toilets,
    d) corridors,
    e) other

13. Have you been involved in bullying others?
    a) Every day,
    b) Once a week
    c) Once or twice
    d) Never

14. If you were involved in bullying, circle to show why you behaved like this?
    a) So I wouldn't get picked on,
    b) because my friends bully,
    c) its fun

15. How do you feel when you see other people being bullied?
    a) upset,
    b) nervous
    c) amused
    d) don’t care
    e) Embarrassed for them

16. What do you do if you see bullying happening?
    a) Join in
    b) Walk away
    c) Try to help
    d) Ask an adult for help

17. If you join in – why do you do so?
    a) because my friends bully,
    b) because I don't like the person who is being bullied,
    c) its fun

18. If you walk away – why do you do so?
    a) So I won't get picked on,
    b) because I don't like the person who is being bullied,
    c) the person being bullied is not my friend,
    d) its none of my business

19. If you try to help – why do you do so?
    a) Bullying is not fair,
    b) I would want someone to help me,
    c) Sometimes the person who is bullying will stop if they see their victim has a friend
    d) Sometimes if my friend is bullying I try to help him/her stay out of trouble

20. If you ask an adult for help – why do you do so?
    a) I would want someone to help me,
    b) Its safer to involve an adult,
    c) No one deserves to be bullied
    d) I expect them to stop the bullying

21. If you asked an adult for help – what was their response?
    a) I never asked an adult for help
    b) They spoke to the student who was bullying
    c) They stopped the bullying
    d) They ignored my concerns
    e) They gave out to me for telling tales

22. If you reported a bullying situation to an adult – how did their response make you feel?
    a) I never reported bullying to an adult
    b) I would be confident to report such a situation again.
    c) I would be careful to whom I reported
    d) I would not report to an adult again.

Thank you for taking the time to do this questionnaire.

Finally, please tick the boxes which describe you.

Are you:

Male ☐ Female ☐

Age:

12 – 13 ☐

13 – 14 ☐

14 – 15 ☐

15 – 16 ☐

Class:

1st Year ☐

5th Year ☐

Appendix E

Notes for Teachers on Pupil Questionnaire

Questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 invite comments regarding students' own social experience and comfort in their school and enquire of them regarding their own experience of being bullied.

Questions 3 and 4 seek to discover the kind of interactions which may occur among pupils in the classroom which serve to disrupt work or concentration. These two questions give students the opportunity to comment on their own experiences within the classroom as well as their observations of how others may be treated.

Questions 9, 10, 11 and 12 ask about their observations of their peers within the class group who may have experienced bullying.

Questions 13 down to 22 focus on the level and type of their participation in bullying situations. Students are asked to consider their choice of action, their reasons for making these choices and their thoughts and feelings in relation to the actions of others.

Questions 20, 21, and 22 which give students the opportunity to express their views regarding their experience of adult participation and support are of particular interest to this researcher.

Appendix F

Focus Group Introductory Remarks

In a study conducted among one thousand and thirty secondary school students (equally divided between male and female and junior and senior cycle) regarding their experiences or observations of bullying in school, the following responses were given:

- *454 (44.2% of total) students identified that others in their group had been bullied.*
- *147 (14.3% of total) students highlighted that they themselves had been bullied and, of these, 111 students (10.8% of total/ 75.5% of those who reported being bullied) had also observed the bullying of others.*

Of those who witnessed others being bullied,

- *180 of the 454 (39.6%) reported that they had never asked an adult for help and of the 147 who reported experiencing bullying as well as being witness to the bullying of others, 33(22.4%) responded that they had never reported their experience or observations to an adult.*
- *14 students who had reported bullying to a teacher said they would be careful to whom they would report again and 7 more replied that they would not report to an adult again.*

Having studied students' responses to the survey questionnaire it became clear that **a vital piece of information had not been sought from them**. Many previous studies had elicited views from students regarding their relational experiences in school and their experiences and observations of bullying behaviour in their environment. Concerns are regularly raised and

disappointment expressed by adults regarding apathy or at least inaction on the part of some student bystanders. It is likely, however, that young people too are disappointed with the responses of some of their adults. While several studies have sought to discover the role of adults in such situation it has yet to be determined whether or not young people can identify or describe the qualities in their teachers or procedures in their schools which they found to be helpful or which they believe, if they were aware of them being available, would have encouraged and facilitated them to seek help when bullying occurs.

I am seeking your help to identify what personal/environmental supports or practical/structural mechanisms they would have welcomed in their school which would, in their opinion, have helped to ensure a reduction in bullying and have the potential to produce positive resolutions when bullying happened.

Below is a set of questions which will be used in a discussion with a group of young adults on their experiences or observations of school bullying. The purpose of these prompts is to guide the conversation. There may however, be omissions here which could affect the quality of the information gained and this is why it is necessary to pilot it first.

Appendix F (a)

Prompt Questions – Pilot Discussion

1. What types of bullying were you most aware of in or around your school environment?
2. What did you know of your school's procedures to resolve bullying situations? If something, please describe the process.
3. Were you aware of times they were applied? If so, what did you think of the way they were applied?
4. What was the level and type of response from staff members when they became aware of bullying happening?
5. If teachers did intervene, what, generally, would have been the outcomes of the interventions?
6. Do you think that teachers' responses to such situations prevented further bullying?
7. Was there (or were there) any teacher(s) in your school who you or your friends thought was (were) particularly sensitive or responsive to bullying situations and to whom you could have gone if you were concerned about bullying?
8. What was it about this teacher (s) that made him/her/them approachable at these times?
9. How does your view of this teacher fit in with your overall view of the staff in your former school? (Was there a consistent approach or were there some teachers who were more active than others in attempting to deal with or prevent bullying?)
10. If you were not satisfied with how teachers or other staff dealt with bullying in your school, can you, looking back, identify what you think would have helped to improve the school's response?

11. Can you describe how your experiences or observations of how bullying issues were dealt with in school affected your memories of school?

Appendix F (b)

Prompt Questions – Focus Group Discussion

1. What types of bullying were you most aware of in or around your school environment?
2. Was there any type bullying prevention programme in place in your school to highlight awareness and develop understanding of bullying and its effects?
3. How aware were you of school procedures and their applications relating to bullying?
4. How aware were you of organisational and or individual teacher responses to bullying?
5. What was your opinion regarding these responses?
6. What longer term effects, if any, were there as a result of these responses?
7. Was there (or were there) any teacher(s) in your school who you or your friends thought was (were) particularly sensitive or responsive to bullying situations and to whom you could have gone if you were concerned about bullying?
8. What was it about this teacher (s) that made him/her/them approachable at these times?
9. If teachers did intervene, what, generally, would have been the outcomes of the interventions?
10. Do you think that teachers' responses to such situations prevented further bullying?
11. Based on your experiences or observations of bullying in school would you like to highlight any strengths within your school's practice or make any suggestions/ recommendations regarding improved practice which you feel would be of benefit to students who currently attend your former school?

Appendix G

Coding System for Questionnaires

The following method of coding was developed and attributed to students' written responses to questions 3 and 4. The alphabetical application of letters to behaviours was used to indicate students who reported they had been distracted from their work (question 3) or made to feel uncomfortable (question 4) within their class group by the following types of behaviours:

a) Whispering/Gossiping/Passing notes/Texting.

b) Talking or messing, including complaining about school work.

c) Unruly behaviour, including shouting, laughing, arguing or fighting or other expressions or demonstrations of anger.

d) Throwing things.

e) Physical contact, including pushing, punching, poking, taking things belonging to others etc.

f) Insubordinate or disrespectful behaviours towards teachers, including refusal to work or cooperate and answering back.

g) Teacher behaviours, such as raised voice or picking on a student.

h) Disrespect towards others – peers and teachers, including commenting or gossiping about them in a derogatory fashion, slagging and laughing at them.

i) Disrespect towards me, including commenting or gossiping about me in a derogatory fashion and laughing at me.

j) Students being bullied.

k) Me being bullied.

l) Students being isolated, excluded, or ignored either inside or outside school.

m) Feeling isolated, excluded or ignored myself, either inside or outside school.

n) Being stared at.

o) Other.

p) Being the target of unwanted attention, for example, being stared at or asked questions of a personal nature.

Appendix H

Transcript of the Piloted Focus Group Discussion

Following the introductory remarks set out in Appendix F I explained how, as a result of what I had discovered, my research question had changed from a quest to understand the reticence of school students to come forward to report bullying and had become instead a mission to identify, with the help of young adults, the procedures, practices and structures which, if available in schools, would act as possible supports to report concerns about bullying.

The discussion, guided by the prompt questions in Appendix F (a), was not recorded but all points made were noted precisely and confirmed with the conversationalist. The need to respect confidentiality of and by all members of the group was raised and a guarantee given that no one would be identified in the writing up of the minutes of this meeting. In the event that the discussion might provoke some memory or feeling in participants that, at a later stage, they might like to discuss further, I confirmed my personal contact details with all participants. The participants in this conversation were identified by number, 1 – 5, and R represents my input into the conversation. Two young men, numbered 3 and 5, had attended the same secondary school.

Types of bullying:

1. While there was much slagging and name calling in school, very little of it was an attempt to upset or offend others. The majority of physical aggression, such as it was, was at junior cycle. By the time students went into senior cycle, they had settled down and even the level of slagging was much reduced. On the first day, I sat beside a boy and as we were all new to each other, I regarded him as my friend. However, I soon realised that he drew a lot of negative attention on himself and withdrew from him. He regularly called other people names

and threw stuff at them. Looking back, I can see that he was being bullied as so many people acted negatively towards him. He left in 5th year and said that he had been bullied out of school.

R. Sometimes a person who behaves in the way you described is referred to as a provocative victim.

1. That probably describes him ok.

2. In a girls' school it's maybe different. I saw no physical bullying at all. It was back-handed, sneaky stuff, a lot of stuff you couldn't put your finger on. Exclusion – people being in and out of groups. I just stayed with my friends. If you wanted to tell, you might not even be able to say what was going on – you couldn't prove it. Things got better at senior cycle. People grew into themselves.

3. We had the usual stuff. Name calling and slagging and even though there were one or two who were physically very aggressive towards others – mostly there was very little physical aggression. There was no stealing or anything like that. Most fights that happened were not triggered by anger but by disagreements and were organised for after school. Others would go and watch. Students with less friends or supporters would be jeered during these fights and the more popular students would be cheered on. I suppose where the fight might not have been about bullying the response of those around them was just that. Depending on what went before and what the outcome was, some people might harbour a grudge but others might just get over it. There were some people who were different and not popular and so were isolated. Others who were very popular might have been unkind to them – maybe it was unthinking, but no one pointed that out. Some people come in thinking they have to make a name for themselves. They set themselves up as messers and there always has to be someone who is a butt for their jokes. There was a guy who behaved like this, we all got fed up with him in the end and he became a bit isolated in senior cycle.

4. There was a great amount of bullying in my school - especially in the junior cycle. I was in a very big school where there were people from many different backgrounds. Exclusion was a massive issue for some. People were afraid to tell and so this isolation worsened. It was like people had to assert themselves or make their mark. There was also verbal and physical aggression – some of the physical stuff was quite aggressive. Why should a person who is picked on not fight back - but he shouldn't have to either? This notion of a provocative victim seems to lay the blame on this person for their own misfortune and maybe it's not all his fault.

5. In the earlier years there was a lot of slagging but as we got older it seemed to fade away. No one seemed to know or think about the effects that this might have on the people being slagged. Occasionally a new student came into a class from another school and he would be bullied until everyone settled in together.

School procedures, their application and knowledge thereof:

1. We weren't really told about our school procedures - certainly not about reporting. We didn't know who to go to or how to go about it. Some teachers were very reactive – they might reprimand a student for his/her behaviour or they might take them away for a 20 minute screaming session, which left the student feeling angry and abused. Nothing learnt there!

2. We didn't really know about our school procedures. We were told we should report to our tutor but depending on who that person was, it may or may not have been helpful. The tutor was also a classroom teacher and so there would have been concerns about how they would behave in relation to this issue – like for example asking the bullied student if she was ok in front of the class or asking her to stay back after school to see how she was. There was also the fact that it was hard to describe what was going on and of course, no one wanted to be "a rat". You can't make people be friends.

3. We had The Talk on bullying our first day of first year. We had no idea of what procedures were followed in school in relation to bullying or what the repercussions would be for acting in this way. Even if we had wanted to, we did not know where to go or who to talk to. People were afraid to report – they did not know what would happen to the person bullying, the person being bullied or themselves for reporting and so they thought it was safer to do nothing. There seemed to be a lack of openness regarding what happened in these situations – how the school would respond. We really didn't know. We often wondered that teachers weren't looking out for bullying. Occasionally if something did arise, we would be spoken to for the fact that we had not told or acted in some way. We didn't know how to act. What was acceptable and what was not? We had year heads and tutors but we didn't necessarily want to approach them with our concerns because we were afraid of a formal discipline response with parents being called in. We always knew if school was dealing with a bullying issue, if someone was being bullied or someone was bullying and we knew when their parents were there. We could see them (the parents) in the office. Even still, we can look back and remember ……. for the fact that he was bullied and his parents were called in. It somehow made him seem a bit weak – even though he wasn't. Maybe, we would have liked someone to have a word with a student who was being unkind or disrespectful.

4. People were afraid to tell and in the same way (as 3) we didn't know how extreme the reaction of the school would be and so often chose to do nothing. There was a culture in the school whereby the person being bullied would just leave. The statement "bullying is not tolerated in ……" was frightening to a first year. Our Principal was intimidating and we thought if bullying wasn't tolerated we shouldn't see it, let alone bully or be bullied.

5. The school's procedures in relation to bullying were set out in the journal – and there they stayed. We didn't understand how they would be in reality.

School/ teacher responses

1. There didn't seem to be a school or procedural response. There were some teachers who would go on a rant and one teacher who would bring up the issue in class over and over again. There were others who seem to have the skill to put their finger on the nub of the matter. These teachers encouraged students to reflect – for example there was a teacher who spoke to us about how in years to come, looking back, some of us would hate ourselves for the way we had behaved and what we had done. He caused some people to look at themselves and change the way they had been behaving. If you felt you wanted to talk to a teacher you would have had to know that you could trust that person, not only to listen to you but also that they would know what to do. It wouldn't be much good if they didn't know how to deal with it. You would need to feel that person was on your side.

2. There was often a sense that nothing could be done. Some tutors were kind but others would say we had to work things out ourselves as adults. We had the power-point presentations to raise awareness but they didn't really mean anything. Things did get better when we went into senior cycle and the class groups were broken up and remixed.

3. Sometimes teachers would react and bring the issue into class, even though it was something that was going on between a few and wasn't really a group issue.

4. We had a very good system in school where each year group had a year head and a counsellor. It is likely that students would have approached this counsellor to talk things through and as that was all that this person did (they did not teach), there was never really any heed paid by peers to other students attending. You would see the counsellor about three times a year but could arrange to go at any other time if you needed to. This wasn't just for bullying but for anything. I'm sure the issue of bullying would have often been raised, but I don't know how it would have been dealt with.

4. In relation to bullying, I think that the school deciding to involve the parents could have caused major issues.

R. Do you think that there should have been early communication with parents?

4. No, I don't think that parents should be informed except in extreme cases. If someone was being bullied and their parents were informed, they (the parents) couldn't leave it alone. Always wondering, always asking if you were ok. I know it would be because they care but there is no need for that.

3. I agree. If the school dealt with the issue properly, that should have been the end of it.

4. An example of how procedures were unclear was when we were in 2nd year a student who had been unmercifully bullied by another finally snapped and fought back. There was a physical fight which resulted in the student who had been bullying the other being suspended for a few days. Seven other students who had been watching the fight were also suspended. They were suspended for not acting.

R. Had they been told what they should do if such an incident occurred?

4. No. They didn't know if they should have stepped in and physically intervened or if they should have gone for help. There was generally a fear of reporting – they really didn't know what they were afraid of – so they just stood and watched. When they were suspended, they spent two days at home angry for the injustice that had been done to them. They wondered if they had been punished with a view to making them take action in the future. As they were so few out of a very large group, it was likely they would have just walked away if there had been a next time.

2. There was uncertainty as to who to speak to about concerns and no real awareness of what would happen so this led to feelings of insecurity. We just stuck with our friends.

Qualities of supporting or effective teachers?

1. Many of us knew that we could approach the teacher I described who spoke to us about reflecting on our behaviour. He was very calm, always listened and never made a deal of what you were saying – just nodded and said hmm. He seemed to know what to do next. He would have dealt with any issue himself. I don't know if he followed procedures set out by the school or not.

3. Often all you might need was someone to mediate between two students. One of our subject teachers was very approachable and like that calm and thoughtful in his response.

R. You wouldn't have done that subject at junior cycle. Was there anyone who you could have approached during those years?

3. Not that I felt I could. Although we were told we could always talk to our tutor, we didn't as we just didn't know what would happen next.

Comments or Recommendations:

2. I think there should be a culture in the school in which different types of bullying are clearly described in order to help students to identify what's happening. That wasn't there. As it was, we found our friendship groups and stayed within them. It made it easier.

1. It's not really enough to set out procedures in the journal and to tell students to read them. It's important to explain them and the implications of them.

3. There should be some kind of distinction made when dealing with behaviour issues. Stuff is labelled bullying that's not bullying and people are labelled bullies who are not bullies. Some of the messing is just that and students need to be told to tone it down. Bullying is malicious – messing is not.

1. There is so much talk about cyber bullying but the person to person stuff can be really hurtful and needs to be focussed on in school.

3. I know the effects of cyber bullying can be really harmful and insidious, bad enough to make people want to take their own lives. Part of it is that it can be that it is so private – a person can be smiling away and no one knows they are being bullied. No one wants to say that they are getting bullied via text or msn. Knowing this shouldn't mean that the other forms of bullying are downplayed - they are still major. Exclusion and isolation, intimidation and disrespect are all really wounding.

R. Looking back on your experiences and observations would you recommend any changes or introductions of procedures to your school which you think would improve the situation for students who are still there?

2. I think that there should be some system of reporting – maybe anonymously, to a person who is not your teacher. Teachers shouldn't really deal with issues like this. It takes away from the teaching and learning.

3. I agree. The person to whom you report should not teach the group. This way the whole issue is resolved outside of the classroom. All teachers, and especially these teachers, should be trained so that they know how to respond and there is consistency in responses throughout the school. A lot of teachers didn't know what to do – they either over reacted or didn't react at all.

4. I think some system of anonymous reporting would be good too.

R. What would you think of confidential as opposed to anonymous reporting where the name of the reporter is known only to the teacher who takes on to resolve the issue?

4. You would have to be able to trust that person.

R. I noticed in our conversation that the discussion hinged on witnessing and responding to bullying, do any of you remember what kind of bullying prevention work went on in school?

3. We had our talk on the first day of first year as I said and I don't really remember anything else.

R. Would you have dealt with it in SPHE?

3. Maybe in junior cycle. I don't remember.

2. We had our anti-bullying week, but somehow it was only that. It didn't have any long term effects.

5. Two days later, it was forgotten.

R. Do you think regular lessons about aspects of bullying given to all year groups would be useful, perhaps followed by a survey?

4. This would be more like every day's an anti-bullying day rather than one anti-bullying week in the year. I think it would be good. There could also be a clear explanation of the procedures – what they mean, why they're there and how they are implemented.

3. Some kind of counselling service in school would be helpful. With the exception of 4's school, I think most counsellors are there to provide career guidance so maybe these people would have to be especially trained to mediate between students.

4. I think it might be helpful to have these sessions where someone being bullied or hassled can confront the person who is giving them a bad time and talk about how they're feeling. When you do or you say……. I feel…… There would have to be a trained adult there to offer support, to ensure that everyone was heard and to follow it up so that there were no negative repercussions and for the person to who is being unkind to understand that this is an opportunity to stop before he gets himself into trouble.

Memories of school

3. Looking back, the thing that stands out for me in relation to feeling insecure in school was the view of the long corridor I had to walk with senior students on either side when I was in first year. Whether or not it happened, you feared a smack on the head or a trip as you would try to make your way to your locker.

4. Yes, I remember that too. You felt it was like a rite of passage. When I got to senior cycle, even though there was no way that I would mess up a junior, even still, I watched their little pinched faces as they walked down the corridor.

R. Where were all the supervising teachers?

5. They would have been there but they rarely said anything. It was like they didn't want to get in the middle of anything or they didn't think it was a big deal.

2. I was happy enough in school, especially in senior cycle. Junior cycle could have been uncomfortable at times. I felt some girls were very unkind but I couldn't say how. I found new friends when the classes were regrouped in fifth year and more or less stayed with them. It was fine.

Appendix I

Transcript of Focus Group Discussion.

The discussion was guided by the revised prompt questions in Appendix F (b) and was recorded. I stated that an essential element of this study was that the confidentiality of and by all members of the group should be respected and gave a guarantee that no one would be identified in the writing up of the minutes of this meeting. Due to the enthusiasm of one participant who frequently named her school and identified other participants by name it was not possible to include the recording with this research. However, all points made were noted precisely and confirmed with the conversationalist. In the event that the discussion might provoke some memory or feeling in participants that, at a later stage, they might like to discuss further, I confirmed my personal contact details with all participants. The participants in this conversation were identified by number, 1 – 5, and R represents my input into the conversation.

Types of Bullying

1. All types of bullying went on – there was also often a lot of throwing of punches, fighting and teasing. Every so often it could be pretty bad.

2. It was mostly verbal- name calling and slagging.

3. There was a lot of laughing at people but not really too much physical stuff – maybe some messing. Guys were singled out and were even slagged in front of their teachers. It happened in most years. We didn't think about it as bullying. Most people did it.

3. It was really down to popularity- the popular students could lead the others into it.

3. You fell into it- it continued from primary school. 50% of students in my class were also in primary school with us. Everything carried over from then. Friendships and bad stuff. Guys

who were bullied in primary continued to be bullied in secondary. These wouldn't be popular students. It happened in front of the teachers in the class room.

1. All types of bullying went on – there was also often a lot of throwing of punches, fighting and teasing.

5. There was no bullying in school –though there was a lot of Internet/cyber stuff. Instagram/Facebook. Kind of creeping around and sneering at people or mimicking them.

R. Did anyone else experience the cyber stuff?

6. Our school was really strict on this and so it was very rare.

4. I suppose when we were in 2nd year there would have been stuff on Beebo but it was mostly verbal- generally personal stuff and face to face. In second year there one of my friends took up with a girl. They were teased constantly. In the end, she left and he hung in there until the teasing stopped. When we were 15 or 16 everyone would have been targeted for something but in my group no one was really hurt or went home feeling friendless.

R. Would anyone have ever said they'd had enough?

5. No one would have said they had had enough. They would just get up and walk away.

6. In our classes, small groups of girls would befriend each other. Bullies would go around picking on others. If they picked on someone who was not in a group, we'd ask her to join us and they'd go away.

R. Was there any exclusion or isolation?

6. Not really – again it was verbal– taunting and labelling people fat, ugly or stupid. They were very strict about phones in school so there was no cyber stuff at all.

1. and 2.- guys would be sneered at for anything.

3. Some teachers didn't care.

1. Some of the worst things happened in one teacher's class – the class would get whipped up into a frenzy and the teacher had no control. People would throw books at each other – something really hard.

3. There might be no response from a teacher –things could be thrown at a fella or he could be hit very hard, other students would laugh and the teacher would just let it pass.

1. Whole class would could go wild if a teacher tried to pull some one out of the class to talk to him. If a teacher couldn't control the class, how could they address this issue?

Bullying prevention programme

1. There was a charter in our journal which set out extreme sanction for bullying. It was more like what they'd do to you if they caught you doing it – stuff like suspension and expulsion. We thought they were so harsh they couldn't be implemented. You never really saw anyone being sanctioned for bullying.

2. It was so hard to deal with – for them to put their finger on.

R. What about lessons about bullying, maybe in SPHE or an anti-bullying week?

1. and 2. We had no anti-bullying weeks.

3. I don't remember any anti-bullying message anytime I was in school. We had guidance counsellors but they were for the senior students and for the CAO stuff. I don't really remember anyone being reprimanded for bullying- maybe it's different now.

4. We were spoken to about bullying on our first day of our first year. Every year, we were given a list of names of teachers who were on the anti-bullying committee and to whom we could go if we had concerns. These names were also posted up in every social area in the school.

5. In first year we had prefects – 6th year girls and boys who were supposed to guide us to good behaviour – The do's and don'ts of secondary school. The advised us what to do to avoid being bullied.

6. I suppose we talked about it in SPHE.

4. and 5. – so did we!

6. We also had friendship week.

R. How did that work?

6. People were matched up with others and engaged in various positive activities throughout the week. It was quite good.

R. Did the positive effects last?

6. No, as soon as the week was over everyone returned to their old ways and old friendships and we forgot about it.

5. One year our Transition Years did a great project called "Feeling low- let someone know". In this they addressed depression, loneliness and bullying. It was brilliant – but it was one year.

4. We had a few visits and workshops from Aware during our Health Awareness weeks where depression and all the influences on negative mental health, including bullying were addressed.

3. They never talked about suicide or depression – mental health stuff or the emotional effects of bullying.

1. Maybe it's different now but those topics were never brought up.

R. For those of you who don't remember these type of activities, if it (bullying) wasn't addressed in SPHE classes, did it come up in Religion? Maybe as a moral issue or included in discussions on respect?

1. We didn't really listen in RE or SPHE- They were organised in the same way - young teachers who couldn't control the class were given these classes and often gave up in the end.

2. We didn't have religion in school.

1. No, bullying didn't arise as a topic. Respect didn't feature as a topic in class but in my school there was great acceptance of religious difference – Muslim students were accepted by all. Muslim students were regarded as cool – they were looked up to because of all they have and how they present themselves– they appeared to have personal standards which were acknowledged and respected by others. No one cares about difference of religion. Religion is not so important in Ireland anymore. Religion was like sphe – they'd send young teachers in who couldn't cope.

School's procedures to resolve bullying

R. Were you aware of your schools' policy statement on procedures should bullying occur?

1. No one really talked about it. Maybe there were and maybe the guidance counsellor might have helped. We weren't aware if they did.

3. There was no real guidance as to where to go or what to do. People wouldn't report – they'd be labelled a rat. That would be worse than being bullied.

4. and 6. School policies were pointed out to us in our journal when we began in first year and during the first week or so we read them through.

5. No, there was no discussion though we knew it was there. We had to sign our journal – like a behaviour contract.

4. and 6. – so did we.

4. Once a term we had a pastoral class. If a student had concerns they could quietly go to the teacher who was responsible for giving out the school books and chat with them.

6. In our school, we had assembly once a week and often girls would go to the chaplain for an appointment after that. You could talk about anything. Sometimes you might just like a little time out.

5. If there was something bothering you, there wasn't really any bullying in our school, but if you felt there was, you would go to the Principal.

R. Straight to the top? Was there anyone else?

5. No not really.

4. I don't know how often people approached a member of the anti-bullying Committee. Our Vice Principal was very good – you'd mostly go to him.

Application of Procedures

R. to 4. Did you think there was something you could have done for your friend who had the friendship with the girl in 2nd year?

4. No one knew what to do. No one tried. It was kind of interesting to see how they could wind him up and he would let them. It was worst in woodwork. The teacher didn't really care but one day, he let them have it and it stopped – for about a week.

1. Sometimes the person being bullied might snap and retaliate but if the person doing the bullying was popular with the teachers, which was often the case, it was the victim who had snapped who would be punished.

3. It was like a lose /lose situation. It was better to go with the joke- to kill the joke by laughing along with the others. Telling would mean people would talk about you behind your back – it would be worse than being bullied.

2. There might have been detention or suspension for misbehaviour – but no one really cared.

3. Even their parents didn't care. They'd drop them down for detention on Saturday and pick them up after.

1. People threw chairs and there was no sanction that we could see.

3. A guy in our class was suspended for setting fire to another guy's hair. "you wouldn't go tell a teacher – you would be labelled a rat." Bullying was never spoken about.

3.Maybe once or twice procedures were applied – There might be a shouting match on the corridor where a teacher would rant for a while about it and everyone would know what was going on. The victim would be labelled a rat –it could be worse than being bullied. This would last for a little while then pass off.

R. Can you remember any member of staff who had the knack?

5. We were always sneering at each other. Most teachers didn't care. The older teachers didn't understand that it was what we did, the way we communicated - we wouldn't do it if we thought someone couldn't take it but everyone could.

R. Who might be sneered at?

5. People who didn't fit in – there are some people don't fit in anywhere. They might have got bullied. Guys tried to make girls feel insecure but they were just messers and we came to know that. Older teachers sometimes intervened.

6. Quieter teachers or new teachers wouldn't engage – they'd ignore it. Older teachers sent them to the Principal.

3. One guy just left at the end of 5th year. Teachers just ran out of ideas in trying to help him change his behaviour. It wasn't about following procedures, they formed relationships with him to try and help him and then let him away with stuff – there seemed to be no boundaries.

1. No one really talked about it. Maybe a guidance counsellor would have but we didn't know. It was like teachers might be making it up as they went along.

5. One time a teacher tried to go on Facebook to check it out. It was weird.

2. We kind of grew up in senior cycle. We copped on a bit.

3. Yes, in senior cycle, students stepping in could sort it out better though there was a risk of being slagged for trying to help and targeted for a while yourself.

4. Yes, we had that too. We kept an eye on each other and knew when to tell someone to lay off because the person they were picking on had had enough.

6. Your friendship groups were firmer. You stayed with your friends and ignored the others.

R. Did any of you engage in any community type exercise which would aid team building?

1.Collaborative learning happened in our school- it was useful and in spite of a whole lot of negative stuff there was an acceptance of diversity.

3. Being on a team ensured that team mates, at least, got on well together. Being on a sports team helped but then anyone who didn't play sport was left behind, left out or further isolated. People who didn't play sport got left behind.

2. Everyone wanted to be mates with the team – who got away with murder.

1. Any kind of community activities involved students who were good in class – like a treat. Normal people or those who were badly behaved were always left out

3. When someone developed a reputation – they would be branded as either a bully or a victim it wouldn't change- from 1st to 6th year. That label stuck.

5. In my school there was no special status to being on a team. I played sports and some of my friends didn't but we were the best of friends anyway.

Level of teacher awareness

1. Some teachers who couldn't control the classes ignored it all. Young teachers were given SPHE and Religion and gave up in the end

3. Teachers who could control their classes weren't really aware of bullying as there was no acting out in their classes.

1. If a teacher had a presence they just taught. Students just took stuff off the board and didn't hassle each other so these teachers didn't know what might have been going on at other times.

R. If teachers did intervene, what, generally, would have been the outcomes of the interventions? Did teachers' responses to such situations prevented further bullying?

3. Some assertive teachers didn't take any guff and their intervention would have had an effect at the time but it wouldn't have been long term. In an all-boys school, they respond to toughness- but only for the time of the event. The school's or teacher's response didn't change the atmosphere.

1. Some people might have wanted to be helped but others would always have been the victims –they didn't want to have to change. Or, if they were bullying, they didn't want to be helped either– they want to do their own thing. They don't care about detention and neither do their parents. Teachers just ran out of ideas.

4. Male teachers, especially those involved in sports would banter with them. They had a relationship but sometimes the boundaries were blurred. That wasn't usually the case with female teachers. They generally ensured boundaries were kept.

5. Students would maybe have more respect for sports teachers – they might listen to them if they spoke to them.

Final reflections or recommendations

2. As we got older we came to recognise boundaries anyway- we usually did not over step the mark.

3. Teachers who have a presence, get on with teaching and don't discuss other things.

1. Trying to encourage students to tell would just fall on deaf ears. It puts huge stress on students to tell them to tell. The responsibility should be on teachers to watch and monitor – the "ratting" students only gets into trouble with the others.

3. Kids will never talk – stop telling them tell us - that "we're all approachable". Telling kids to tell puts huge pressure on the kids.

3. In that kind of environment- kids will never tell. They need to watch out for themselves. Collaborative learning, working together would probably be one way to encourage inclusion and social engagement.

R. Did you ever see a situation and wonder if it was bullying? What you should do?

5. My friend was really beautiful and some of the others were very jealous. They'd talk about her in the bathroom when she'd be there. They'd be my friends too. I'd just tell her not to mind them. She never reacted. She just blew it off. She's grand now.

1. No one understood the emotional damage caused by bullying. You can see certain people now who were socially stunted by their experience of being bullied in school. They're not socially developed.

3. I used to see a guy in UCD who was bullied when we were in in school. He still has very few friends.

3. Now, we talk about mental health and suicide but schools didn't mention these things. Suicide was not discussed. They never talked about the emotional effects of bullying. Talking

about bullying, differentiating between ratting and reporting should be a regular feature of school life. Overkill is better than nothing.

1. Recently I have been thinking again about school and I'm ashamed now of what I saw and didn't engage with or try to help. I was terrified. I had no social standing and so just kept my head down.

2. Looking back really only a handful of guys bullied. They could project their confidence onto everyone. If a guy passed a smart remark you'd laugh because, if he did (laugh), it was the right thing to do.

5. Parents and teachers have the main responsibility. They should watch their kids and listen to the banter. It shouldn't be left up to the kids to complain. Parents know their kids and they should notice all the changes immediately. Parents should be able to say that someone is having a bad influence on their child and to keep them apart. It would have to be subtle.

R. Do you think there was enough time spent trying to encourage the kids with the bad name to engage in school?

4. Teachers can only do so much.

6. Some time you would feel that teachers didn't care.

(Fairly general agreement on this)

5. Parents and teachers are on the same side and kids should know that, but sometimes parents put no value on education and have no respect for their kids' teachers. How can teachers deal with that?

R. – I gave a description of the system we developed in the school in which I teach.

3. It sounds great but it sounds like huge amount of work and you wouldn't get teachers involved. They don't have that much time and maybe the confidence either.

R. Do you think they might if they were offered training?

3. Schools probably wouldn't allow them to have as much training as they would require. They're busy places and the emphasis is on exams.

2. Basically the rule in school is "don't tell".

R. If you were to revisit your school would you have any advice for the Principal?

4. I'd say that teachers supervising at breaks or free classes should engage with students and not just be a presence – make connections. They used to sit and read the paper or a book in our school. They need to be actively involved with the students and get to know them personally.

2. I'd encourage them to look at systems of learning where students work in collaboration so that everyone has the chance to be included.

3. I don't know - It's very hard to deal with. It's not about a programme it's an attitude – a complete change.

Appendix J

Details of School Type and Student Population in Ireland

In 2011 – 2012 there were 56 fee-paying schools all of which, according to reports from the Department of Education and Skills, belonged to the Voluntary Sector. These fee paying schools were privately owned and managed, receiving some public funding through payment of their teachers, and, run most often by religious orders. In addition, there were 723 non fee-paying schools. Of the latter group 400 schools belonged to the Voluntary Schools category and the rest belonged to, either the Vocational Schools and Community Colleges group, owned by the local Vocational Education Committees, or, to the Community, and Comprehensive schools many of which had been established as the result of the amalgamation of Voluntary Secondary and Vocational Schools. In relation to student attendances, figures quoted indicated:

- 57% of secondary school students were educated within the Voluntary sector.
- 28% of secondary pupils attended Vocational Schools
- 15% of secondary pupils attended Comprehensive or Community Schools
- Figures for 2006 – 2007 indicated that nationally, 9% of boys and 6% of girls attended fee-paying schools. In the Dublin area the figures given indicated 21% of boys and 17% of girls were in fee-paying schools. These figures may have reduced by the time this research was conducted (2013) due to the ongoing ill-effects of the economic downturn on the lives of many families in Ireland from 2008 onwards.

2012

Second Level Schools and Pupils by Year, Type of School and Statistic

	Single Sex Boys Second Level Schools (Number)	Single Sex Girls Second Level Schools (Number)	Mixed Sex Second Level Schools (Number)	All Second Level Schools (Number)	Pupils in Single Sex Boys Second Level Schools (Number)	Pupils in Single Sex Girls Second Level Schools (Number)	Male Pupils in Mixed Sex Second Level Schools (Number)	Female Pupils in Mixed Sex Second Level Schools (Number)	All Pupils in Second Level Schools (Number)
Secondary schools	107	107	136	133	376	54,670	72,115	33,237	26,387
Secondary schools	..								
Community schools	1	..	3	250	253	..	560	60,464	55,815
Comprehensive schools	..		..	..	14	14	..	..	4,181
Second level education institutions aided by DES	108	108	140	474	722	55,236	123,139	107,242	359,047

Source: Individual school data (including total number of students, teachers, gender ratio etc.), class size can be found at the website of the Department of Education and Skills: http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Data-on-Individual-Schools/

Appendix K

School's Anti-bullying programme

Introduction:

The aim of this programme is to provide, in so far as we can, a safe and happy environment for our students. We believe that supporting students in this way can create an atmosphere in which their health and well - being are protected.

The anti-bullying programme consists of a two strand approach.

Prevention: Knowing that bullying can occur anywhere that people come together, our priority is to work to ensure our students learn to recognise and reject the behaviour as being harmful to the health, well-being and dignity of all involved and on this basis to report it so that the issue can be dealt with..

Intervention: In responding to bullying when it happens in school our aim is first and foremost to stop the behaviour in order to make the environment safe for the person who is being targeted.

Strand one: The aim of stand one is to prevent or at least reduce bullying through awareness raising

Our team of volunteer teachers works with students to encourage them to be pro-social in their thinking and acting, to be aware of others, accepting difference and acknowledging their own difference and their right to be so.

We begin our work during students' first week in first year. Within a day or so of their entering school we survey them to get to know them and to enquire of them if they or others in

their primary school class had experienced bullying. We seek their support in identifying students we should particularly watch out for and inform them of the school's stance on interpersonal behaviour and our emphasis on respect for self and others. We aim to highlight bullying as anti-social behaviour which has a damaging effect on all – the person who is targeted, the person who is bullying and the one who is looking on. The individual's power in making choices regarding behaviour is also emphasised.

Students who are entering second year are also surveyed within a week or so of their return to school. This survey seeks their view or experience of the school's anti-bullying programme during their first year.

During the course of the school year we survey all classes at least once a half term to try to inform ourselves on relations in the various class groups.

All classes are visited by members of the anti-bullying team about once a half term with awareness raising lessons. These lessons are age appropriate. Using dvd s and discussions students are encouraged to identify "bullying" as a behaviour, to consider the effects of this behaviour, to consider too their own views of such behaviour, why people behave like this towards others and what they can do if they find themselves either the target or a bystander in a bullying situation.

Senior students also participate in lessons and again the damaging effects of bullying are highlighted and discussed. Discussions with seniors regarding bullying in the workplace and society aim to reinforce the message of respect. During the last few years we have accumulated a significant number of audio and video materials with which to begin discussions. English teachers also highlight the issue in transition year in the course of their media studies module.

Strand two involves our procedures in response to allegations of bullying.

As well as the regular surveys conducted among students we also "keep our ear to the ground" by checking with teachers, students and ancillary staff – all of whom are now so familiar with our system that if any of them have any suspicion of bullying they will come to members of the team and inform them. Students too are made aware that they can tell "any" member of staff who will pass on the information in confidence. Our emphasis is on changing and stopping this behaviour and our message to students is that should they be concerned that one of their peers or even one of their friends is bullying someone then by telling we can help this student to change his behaviour. Our approach is the "No Blame Approach" of George Robinson and Barbara Maine which carries with it consequences but initially not punishments. We are also guided by the "Shared concern" philosophy of Pika, where all are encouraged to participate in the resolution of the problem.

Information will lead to an investigation and an intervention beginning with a survey of the class or classes where the situation is thought to be occurring. Once information has been received, the student(s) who is (are) alleged to be bullying is (are) interviewed. The interview is very structured involving the use of documentation. While working through these forms students are made aware of the procedure being used to investigate and of the fact that should they themselves ever find themselves on the receiving end of negative behaviour from others they too will be supported.

In the event that bullying has occurred a student may be quite aware of his behaviour and working through this procedure comes to recognise the effects on others. On other occasions the student may only come to that recognition following interview. On these occasions the student undertakes to treat the other students with respect, signing a promise to that effect which is also signed by the team member. Reviewing our annual figures we have found that the number of re-offenders is small.

We regard re-offending as a choice. Students who re-offend go through the same procedure of investigation and interview. Once we are clear that bullying has occurred the student is offered an opportunity to again commit, signing a promise, to treat the target of his bullying respectfully. On this second occasion the student's parents/guardians are also asked to sign. We suggest to students that their repeat bullying behaviour indicates that they need support from home to change their behaviour. Unless the student had informed them of the previous situation, this is the first time they are aware of this behaviour. Subsequent bullying behaviour (rare enough) will be drawn to the attention of the Principal and will be dealt with through normal discipline procedures.

Appendix L

A summary of anti-bullying policies of schools in Phase 1

An examination of the websites of participating schools in October 2014 revealed that of these seven schools, one large Community School in Leinster did not appear to have an internet website. Two schools, one a private single sex school and the other a mixed gender secondary school both located in Leinster, dealt with the issue of bullying within their Code of Behaviour policy or their Dignity for All policy. Both of these schools described types of bullying behaviour and set out details of their response procedures and prevention programmes. Neither school however, seemed to have a policy labelled *Anti-Bullying policy* or *Bullying Prevention Policy* (my italics) on their website. The Code of Behaviour of the mixed gender school stressed the key elements of mutual respect, co-operation and natural justice as being integral features of their school ethos. The Dignity for All document in the second school set out the school's vision to protect all members of the school community. It further stated that bystanders to bullying situations are required to act and to confide their concerns to a trusted person, emphasising the responsibility of everyone within the school community to uphold the policy.

An all boys' voluntary school in Leinster whose Anti-bullying policy promoted positive behaviour and leadership presented a comprehensive list of bullying behaviours including isolation of peers. Members of the anti-bullying team within the school were identified by name and a schedule of lessons, aimed at preventing bullying, was set out which were to be delivered throughout the year. Students were encouraged to discuss any concerns regarding bullying with a member of staff. Procedures were listed in response to reports of bullying and a programme of supports provided to students who had been bullied was described. A section on supervision and

monitoring, the role of parents, harassment and dignity in the workplace were also outlined in the policy along with a proposal that the policy be reviewed every three years.

The Community Schools in Munster and Connacht published their Anti-bullying policies on their website. Both documents defined bullying behaviour, listed prevention and response strategies and encouraged students to report their concerns regarding incidents of bullying to a member of the school's anti-bullying team or other staff members. One of these schools went further than the others in their policy identifying the possibility of teacher to pupil bullying. This latter school also included sample copies of documents to be used in response to reports of bullying and included an email address on their website to be used to report concerns about bullying. The final school in the sample was a mixed gender private school located in Munster. The school's Anti-bullying policy stated their aim of creating a safe environment for their students in which students could safely disclose concerns regarding bullying. The policy applied to behaviour both inside and outside school, when students were on school business and outside of school also when certain bullying behaviours could seriously impact on the life of a student. This school's policy included the most comprehensive of all the lists of examples of bullying behaviour which had been included in the Anti-bullying policies of participating schools and also provided a list of teachers specified by their roles, for example the Principle, the Deputy Principle, Year Heads and others who would respond. It was emphasised that, when necessary, students could approach any teacher who would respond to reports of bullying. Bullying prevention was promoted on a cross curricular basis through various lessons/subjects. The school's record keeping procedures were outlined and sample response form documents were included in the appendices of the policy. Tips for promoting a positive school climate were provided and the importance of supervision and monitoring of students was acknowledged.

In summary:

All girls private school (city): Bullying defined within their dignity for all policy which they link to the stated ethos of the school and specifically identifies certain types of bullying behaviours, the reasons why people might bully and the effects of bullying. School procedures for responding to bullying are set out in detail and sanctions described. Mention is also given to inappropriate retaliation for reporting. The school's behaviour policy and mobile and digital device policy also includes a section on bullying where the negativity of this type of behaviour is reiterated.

All boys voluntary school (mid-lands town): Promote positive behaviour and leadership. Present a comprehensive list of bullying behaviours – including in this, the isolation of individuals within the peer group. Identify the anti-bullying team within the school and set out a list of lessons aimed to prevent bullying which are given throughout the school year. They describe procedures which follow the reporting of bullying and a programme of support provided to students who have been bullied. They include a section on supervision and monitoring, the role of parents, harassment and dignity in the workplace. They propose their policy will be reviewed every three years.

Large Community School in urban area – not on internet

VEC mixed gender school large country town (Munster): policy promotes a positive school culture and the supervision and monitoring of same. Bullying is defined and types of bullying are listed – the school anti-bullying team members are identified, bullying prevention lessons and strategies for prevention and response are listed. The policy states that all members

of the school community (including parents) are expected to support positive behaviour within the school.

Mixed gender secondary school (Leinster): No specific anti-bullying policy. The code of behaviour emphasises that mutual respect, co-operation and natural justice are integral features of the school ethos

Community School (Connacht): The school's anti-bullying policy links it to the mission statement of the school and states that the policy applies to all school members – staff and students on school business either inside or outside school. it sets out the rationale behind and the goals of the policy. The policy includes a comprehensive list of bullying behaviours, identifies teacher behaviours within this, lists a series of prevention and intervention strategies including supports provided for bullied students. The policy includes samples of documents used when recording investigations and responding to reports of bullying

Mixed gender private school (Munster): The policy applies to behaviour inside and outside school on school business but outside when bullying behaviour can seriously impact on the life of students. The most comprehensive list of examples of bullying behaviour is set out and a list of teachers with specific roles who will respond. When necessary, any teacher can fall into this category. Bullying prevention is promoted on a cross curricular basis through various lessons/subjects. Record keeping is emphasised Tips for promoting a positive school climate are provided, including supervision and monitoring of students. Sample response form documents are included in the appendices.

Appendix M

Summary of Anti-bullying Policies of schools attended by participants in Phase 2

In total there were eleven participants between the pilot and focus group discussions. A feature of the snowballing effect of gathering participants was that two former students of separate schools who had participated in the pilot discussion enlisted one former classmate for the formal focus group discussion that followed. Therefore, in total, the eleven participants between the two groups were drawn from nine schools. There were representatives from two large community schools located in towns where many of their student population were drawn from rural localities on the edge of these towns. The policies are outlined below.

Policies of schools formerly attended by Pilot Group Participants

Participants 1 and 3

A private, boys only primary and secondary school in the suburbs (approximately 600 secondary students). This policy defines bullying and inappropriate behaviours and indicates that the policy is applicable both inside and outside the school grounds. Steps which will be followed when concerns are raised about bullying are listed and the policy states that "appropriate actions" will be taken in response to these complaints. Suggestions are made as to who should deal with concerns about bullying and the manner of recording these details. The concluding statement restates the goal of the school as being to ensure an atmosphere of respect, encouragement and understanding and one where all in the community (including staff will be supported). Sanctions in accordance with the Code of Behaviour will be used for incidents of bullying and these will include if necessary, expulsion, suspension, detention, verbal warning, referral to a child psychologist, referral to the local Garda juvenile liaison officer.

Participant 2

A private, boys only secondary school in the suburbs (approximately 1000 students). The policy is introduced as promoting care for others. Bullying is defined and types of bullying listed. Awareness raising activities are identified and teachers, ancillary staff and class representatives are encouraged to be vigilant for bullying, while the year heads should promote the anti-bullying message. Counsellors are available to students in whom students can confide. The policy claims that students who confide should gain confidence from their experience. The procedure for dealing with serious disciplinary issues should be applied. Students are encouraged to walk away from confrontation and to find non aggressive ways of dealing with their problems. Should the relevant authority think it appropriate, meetings should be arranged between parents/guardians and a representative of staff

(An updated policy gives an email address through which reports of bullying can be communicated to the school and outlines steps that students can take if they are concerned for others or are targeted for bullying, including advise if students are bullied online. In this policy the Principal is identified as the relevant teacher for investigating and dealing with bullying. A statement of support for teachers is included in this document)

Participant 4

A small mixed gender secondary school - policy not available (approximately 270 students)

Participant 5

A girls only secondary school (just under 750 students). The school's mission statement promotes inclusion of all and respect for diversity and identifies bullying prevention as a community exercise. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to monitor for, recognise and report bullying behaviour. The anti-bullying policy defines and lists types of bullying, outlines the role of staff to monitor for bullying and suggests persons to whom parents or student could report

concerns of bullying. Procedures are outlined including record keeping, to follow such reports and follow up activities, which may include counselling for either party or mediation between both. Consequences described as appropriate action, up to and including expulsion

Policies of schools formerly attended by Focus Group Participants

Participant 1

A boys only secondary school in the suburbs (just under 750 students). The policy defines bullying, promotes inclusion, a positive school culture and the building of resilience. The policy states the school's commitment to support teachers to deal with bullying. Methods of spreading the non-bullying message through lessons and other campaigns are identified and a statement of support for teachers in their work is included. Teachers, ancillary staff and student representatives are encouraged to be vigilant at all times and to report. Procedures are described that will be followed when incidents of bullying are being investigated and the adults assigned to deal with these issues are nominated by title. Parents of all parties will be invited to attend a meeting The school reserves the right to deal with bullying between students which may occur outside school. The Principal or Board of Management may impose sanctions appropriate to the incident and in line with the College Code of Behaviour.

Participant 2

A boys only secondary school in the suburbs (approximately 220 students). The policy defines bullying and outlines the scope of the policy. It promotes a positive school culture where students learn respect, empathy and resilience and develop leadership skills. The policy places the emphasis on "prevention rather than cure" and outlines where bullying prevention lies within the teaching of other school programmes. It identifies the roles of teachers, senior staff and the pastoral care team and outlines procedures and record keeping mechanisms, refers to the

investigative process and monitoring for change and if not visible, the student is referred to the Principal and sanctions up to and including suspension may ensue. Parents are expected to take a proactive position in promoting the anti-bullying message. Whether the parents of those involved are informed of the matter at this point will depend on the judgment of the Relevant Teacher as to the level of seriousness of the alleged or actual bullying. Should a student not change his behaviour, parents will be informed. There is reference to support for staff to deal with these issues.

Participant 3

As Participants 1 and 3 in Pilot group

Participant 4

A mixed gender community school in a town/rural setting (approximately 700 students). The school's anti-bullying policy was not available on their website but was referred to on three occasions within their code of conduct policy. The school's anti-bullying policy was referred to as an essential element in the promotion of the school's ethos. Reference was made to awareness raising within SPHE, CSPE and other subject areas and by inviting outside agencies to promote the message. Finally, bullying was included in the list of behaviours which were deemed unacceptable in school. Providing mutual support for all members of the school community, students, staff and parents, was identified as a goal within the code and this was restated later with examples of types of supports available to staff.

Participant 5

A mixed gender community school in the midlands (approximately 750 students). The policy of this school identified the goals of their policy as being to provide an environment free from bullying, and one in which students would feel confident to report, if bullying should occur. Students parents and guardians were required to sign the anti-bullying charter. Students were

urged to report concerns about bullying to any adult in whom they felt they could confide, knowing that their report would be taken seriously. Students should share their concerns of bullying with their parents. Parents of perpetrator may be informed and parents of target may also be informed with the permission of the student. The policy set out a long list of bullying behaviours and the appropriate responses to same. Proposals for the ongoing development of a positive school culture with reference to subjects in which bullying prevention lessons should occur. Teachers were encouraged to read and understand the school's anti-bullying policy. Sanctions were identified to be as per the code of behaviour and listed further down the document to include: A contract of good behaviour; School community service; Withdrawal of privileges; Other sanctions deemed appropriate; Suspension Or expulsion

Participant 6

A girls only secondary school in the suburbs (approximately 700 students). The policy defined bullying, a list of bullying behaviours was set out and the effects on individuals of being bullied were also given. Under two headings and listed side by side, the rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community were set out. Included in this was the statement "Bystanders and witnesses have the responsibility to tell when you know a student is being bullied. (This is not 'ratting'. It is telling to be safe.)" students who feel they are being bullied are encouraged to tell, sooner rather than later and various means of doing so are outlined in the document. Procedures which follow reporting are clearly outlined, sanctions listed and system of record keeping are described. While there is no specific statement of support for teachers, the emphasis of this policy is very much to do with support all within the community. Regarding sanctions, the document states that When a Class Tutor has been informed of an incident which has not yet been resolved or when a number of incidents relating to the same student have been reported, s/he should do some or all of the following, as considered appropriate to resolve the situation: Offer

the opportunity to the student(s) to speak with Guidance Counsellor/Chaplain; Offer the opportunity of mediation to all of the students concerned; Use school discipline procedure if appropriate; Advise referral to child psychologist/Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer or other agencies.

Appendix N

Author's Biographical Experiences

When presenting a research project such as this, it is important to be able to identify the experiences and inspirations which motivated the researcher to undertake the study.

As a teacher of Maths and History in a Post Primary school for boys in the suburbs of Dublin over twenty years ago one could not fail to be aware of, if not become involved in, the interpersonal relationship challenges which often occurred between students. Early in my teaching career, I became involved in teaching CSPE (Civic Social and Political Education) and after a few years I progressed from there to SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), later becoming SPHE co-ordinator. Over time this co-ordinator role extended to include Learning Support Co-ordinator and then Co-ordinator of the Anti-bullying team combined with my continuing Maths teaching responsibilities. Engaging with students in SPHE, CSPE and in the context of Learning Support provided the opportunity to listen to and to observe at closer quarters, than in the more formal setting of a Maths class, students' attitudes and behaviours and to interpret from them their view of the world.

As I gained experiences in the classroom and my confidence developed, my motivation to draw our students into a programme that would enable them to engage in a positive, thoughtful, pro-active manner when dealing with conflict issues, including the unpleasant and very prevalent issue of bullying also grew.

Positive discipline

Among the many courses I attended in those early days which were significant in my early thinking on the topic of bullying were

- The "No Blame Approach" to Bullying (1994): presented by the authors, Barbara Maines and George Robinson. The authors' emphasis was on working with all participant parties, both active and passive, to first of all stop the bullying behaviour, then to create an understanding of the harm inflicted on the target and to engage the perpetrators in a more positive way of relating. In this work, they identified by-standing students as having a potentially strong influence in resolving the problem.
- Discipline for Learning (1996): presented by the author Adrian Smith. His programme, based on his philosophy, focused on the need to be firm and open with the young people with whom one works. Smith advocated a very structured approach to teaching and learning. He suggested that by clearly defining goals, positively affirming achievements and tracking students' progress within this system it would be possible to reduce incidents of indiscipline and the applications of sanctions. While bullying was only one of the elements of indiscipline discussed by Smith, nonetheless, his message of openness and non-avoidance of issues was direct and positive.

Other educators and experts who widened my horizons and influenced my thinking included:

- Michael S Rosenberg, who with Lauri A.Jackman, advocated consideration and collaborative team work among staff in schools in order to develop an agreed positive and supportive school-wide approach to behaviour management for all children. Their programme, known as PAR (2003), referred to preventing, acting upon, and re-solving troubling behaviour. The emphasis in this programme was

on collaborative work among staff which would result in written discipline plans tailored to particular school staff and the young people in their care.

- William Glasser whose Quality Schools Programme (1990) promoted positive affirmation and non- engagement in the kind of conflict which often results from reprimanding students in the common manner of criticising, complaining and blaming of individuals. His approach offered a more positive and caring system as opposed to the *crime and punishment* (my italics) model which was very prevalent at the time.

While these authors all promoted non-confrontational methods, none of them advised the acceptance of indiscipline, the breaking of rules or ill-treatment of fellow students. The notion of addressing issues of concern with students, as opposed to labelling the students, punishing them indiscriminately or excluding them, appeared to me to be a more holistic and hopeful approach to education.

Influenced by these and other experts and sharing these views with colleagues we became more alert to the need to engage our students through positive means. We introduced a *Discipline for Learning* (my italics) type programme where there was a greater awareness of the need to *catch students being good* (my italics) and students were affirmed for good behaviour through positive post-cards addressed to them at home. This system was later replaced by a *Positive Attitudes* (my italics) system which is still in operation in the school and is grounded in the same theory. In this system, students and whole class groups are rewarded for positive behaviour and commitment to learning.

Early experience in the area of bullying prevention and conflict resolution

Our formal Anti-Bullying programme in school, of which I was a co-founder, along with my colleague Seán Fallon, began as a response to a particular situation. This distressing situation triggered an in depth examination of how our school dealt with the issue of bullying. From this examination grew the acute awareness of the need to develop a prevention programme which would provide, in so far as possible, a safe and happy environment for our students. We believed that by addressing the issue of bullying openly with students and by providing a formal mechanism of response we could create an environment for students in which their health and well being would be protected and where they could avail of the opportunity to learn, without the distractions which often result from insecurity or fear of bullying.

Guided by research findings of experts in the field, we developed a programme with which we sought to openly engage with all our students, first years through to sixth years, on the topic of bullying behaviour in school. We developed lesson materials aimed at guiding students to identify bullying behaviour, to reflect on the reasons and motivations for the roles students adopt in bullying situations and to consider some of the implications of their experiences within an environment where bullying is happening, including the harm inflicted on all present. We encouraged students to recognise how they, as supporting peers, had the power to bring about change and help to end the bullying. By confronting the issue directly, we hoped to change a culture, common in many schools at the time, which to a large extent failed to see, or chose not to see, bullying when it happened. We sought to determine if an improvement in behaviour would occur if students were encouraged to have a more thoughtful approach to bullying issues and conflict situations and if this improved behaviour would be likely to facilitate an improvement in academic outcomes.

Our programme consisted of a two strand approach. The first strand, aimed at preventing bullying, contained a series of age appropriate lessons including lessons relating to the identification of types of bullying, the impact of bullying on all involved and motivations for bullying. The second strand was a structured set of responses to reports or allegations of bullying in school. All reports of bullying would be responded to, following the same set of procedures, thus ensuring that all students would know that students alleged to be bullying would be treated equally, according to the structures of the intervention process, doing away with the risk of accusations or concerns that any students would be treated unfairly because of his previous reputation.

As we expanded our bank of resources, and experienced the benefits of their use, we approached Professor Mona O'Moore of the Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC) in Trinity College Dublin (now located in Dublin City University), and with her support we developed a website providing lessons aimed at preventing bullying and providing intervention strategies for teachers. www.antibullyingcampaign.ie.

As a direct result of meeting Professor O'Moore, I completed a Masters in Education (Aggression Studies track), earning a distinction. My research thesis focussed on the effects on teenage boys of their participation in a programme of *thinking lessons* (my italics) which I had developed, modelling it on deBono's *Six Thinking Hats method* (my italics). As Goldstein and Glick observed, "Many young people are skilled in fighting, bullying and intimidating, harassing, and manipulating others" (1994, 9). They proposed that young people are frequently inadequately skilled in relating pro-socially and that they respond with violence where conflicts occur, as they are unable to deal with their issues in any other way. As bullying may often be a response on the part of the perpetrator to release some inner conflict, it seemed worthwhile to

explore the possibilities for improving coping skills by teaching students how to reflect on situations in order to find non-violent and effective solutions to their conflict issues.

Further involvement in the field of research and practice came through participation in the European Schools Programme (Comminius), Sabona Project (2009 – 2010), during the course of which I, and members of my school community, engaged with Spanish and Norwegian teacher colleagues in an examination, application and evaluation of the *Sabona conflict resolution methods* (my italics) based on the work of Professor Johan Galtung, a Norwegian born sociologist with a long career in international conflict resolution and peace-building. For their part in the project, each national group worked to develop and devise lessons which would be appropriate to their own students and to share the outcomes of these exercises with their international partners. While the Sabona programme was initially designed and developed in Norway to teach young people to resolve their conflicts by recognising that these conflicts were about issues as opposed to between peers, our lessons, developed within our bullying prevention culture recognised that bullying often happens due to inner conflict and the lessons we contributed to the project were developed and framed within this model. The Sabona project, as it was known, was supported fully by Professor Galtung who regularly engaged in discussions with his Norwegian and Spanish colleagues and who was present at group sessions when these occurred in Spain.

As my experience has increased, both in terms of research and school based intervention and response work, I have been impressed time and again by the significance of the presence of those who are standing by. The positive and negative effects of their behaviour choices on situations seem quite obvious, but still, the reasons for the stance that students take are not. In undertaking this research, I set out to investigate some of these reasons for these behaviours. However, through my study of some of the vast bank of literature relating to *bystander behaviour* (my italics) and of students' questionnaire surveys returned by participating schools, I have

begun to question more deeply the role of adults in this aspect of the lives of these students. Expectations that students will respond in a helpful and positive manner have been stated and restated in recent years and yet, according to some respondent students, they considered the mechanisms to report or the follow up procedures to such reports to be less than adequate in their schools. In some of these cases, students had indicated unwillingness to report again. In other cases, students who had indicated pro-social values, did not identify reporting to an adult as an option they would choose should they become aware of bullying among their peers.

Thus my experiences, both academic and practical, which have demonstrated the possibilities to engage students in positive and proactive behaviours, have motivated me to explore more deeply the support needs of students when they are witness to bullying.

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