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Exploring the importance of the context

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Scientific environment

The research for my doctoral thesis was conducted in the Department of Psychosocial Science (Institutt for samfunnspsykologi) in the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen. While gathering data for this thesis my scientific environment was the Department of Health Promotion and Development (HEMIL-senteret) at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen and Uni Research Health.

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My main supervisor was Norman Anderssen (professor) and my co-supervisor was Jørn Hetland (associate professor), at the Department of Psychosocial Science, University of Bergen.

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I dedicate this thesis to my son Svale, for making me laugh every day

Abstract

The overall aim of this thesis is to assess how gay-related name-calling is used in different contexts among a sample of young Norwegian adolescents in ninth grade (14 years), and to assess what consequences the name-calling may have in terms of depressive symptoms. In this thesis, I interpret gay-related name-calling within a microaggressive framework.

Research questions: Assessing gay-related name-calling is challenging because researchers define and operationalize gay-related name-calling differently. Furthermore, little is known about the context in which the name-calling occurs. In this thesis, I therefore explore how young Norwegian adolescents differ in their use of gay-related name-calling (Research question 1) and in their reports of being called these names (Research question 2) when the agent and target of the name-calling is differentiated by friendship, likability and acquaintance status. In the research literature, the violation of male role norms is the most frequently cited reason for engaging in gay-related name-calling, however little is known about the role played by the relational context in this conjunction. In this thesis, I thus address how young male adolescents' endorsements of underlying dimensions of traditional male norms are associated with gay-related name-calling targeting different victims (Research question 3) and how attitudes towards this name-calling, subjective norms concerning the name-calling and school-related factors are associated with gay-related name-calling (Research question 4). The association between gay-related name-calling and aversive mental health outcomes is widely documented; however, previous research exploring this association has not taken into consideration the relationship between the agent and the target of the name-calling, or whether it occurred in a bullying situation. In this thesis I explore how being called gay-related names by different agents is associated with depressive symptoms (Research question 5), and to what extent being bullied moderates the

relationship between being called gay-related names and depressive symptoms (Research question 6).

Method: A convenience sample of 921 Norwegian pupils (450 boys) from 15 upper secondary schools (mean age was 14 years) participated in the study by completing a paper-and-pencil survey during school hours. The data were collected between April and June 2010.

Main findings: The adolescents were more likely to have directed gay-related names towards a friend than towards someone they did not know. Male, but not female, adolescents were also more likely to have called a friend names rather than someone they did not like. Moreover, adolescents were more likely to report being called gay-related names by a friend than by someone who did not like them, or someone they did not know. The adolescents were also more likely to have been called gay-related names outside of a bullying context than within a bullying context. Endorsing male role norms related to emotional restriction was associated with higher levels of having directed gay-related names towards individuals they disliked or did not know, and endorsing male role norms linked to social teasing was associated with higher levels of having directed such names towards friends, and lower levels of having directed gay-related names towards individuals the name-caller did not know. Having heard other pupils engage in gay-related names at school and experiencing lower levels of teacher support was associated with calling a pupil such names at school, whereas having negative attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names was associated with not having called a pupil such names at school. Pupil support and perceived teacher intervention in gay-related name-calling did not predict the name-calling. Being called gay-related names by someone who did not like or know them was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms on the part of the target, whereas being called these names by a friend was not associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms. Being

called gay-related names was also associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms when it occurred outside of a bullying context. Boys, but not girls, who were bullied and called gay-related names, had even higher levels of depressive symptoms.

Conclusion: The findings of this thesis demonstrate that caution should be taken when drawing conclusions about predictors and consequences of gay-related name-calling. Gay-related name-calling does not seem to be socially isolated behaviour, but should be viewed within the context it occurs.

List of publications

1. Slaatten, H., Anderssen, N., & Hetland, J. (2014). Endorsement of male role norms and gay-related name-calling. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 15(3), 335-345. doi: 10.1037/a0033734
2. Slaatten, H., Hetland, J., & Anderssen, N. (2015). Correlates of gay-related name-calling in schools. *Psychology in the Schools*, 52(9), 845-859. doi: 10.1002/pits.21864
3. Slaatten, H., Anderssen, N., & Hetland, J. (2015). Gay-related name-calling among Norwegian adolescents – harmful and harmless. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 56(6), 708-716. doi: 10.1111/sjop.12256

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1. BACKGROUND

Being “accused” of being homosexual is perceived as negative in industrialized countries (Bendixen & Gabriel, 2013; Burn, Kadlec, & Rexer, 2005; Crozier & Dimmock, 1999; Plummer, 2001; Saucier, Till, Miller, O’Dea & Andres, 2015; Smith, 1998; Thurlow, 2001) and is associated with higher levels of mental health problems (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Poteat, Aragon, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Poteat, Scheer, DiGiovanni, & Mereish, 2014; Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008). One way to accuse someone of having a homosexual orientation is to call that individual gay-related names such as “gay”, “lezzie”, “faggot” etc. Adolescents, however, may not engage in gay-related name-calling primarily to infer that the target of the name-calling has a homosexual orientation. A Norwegian study (based on the dataset used in this thesis) that examined different reasons for calling someone gay-related names found that participants were more than three times more likely to have called a boy gay-related names as a response to the violation of gender norms (such as doing something perceived as feminine) than as a reference to actual or suspected sexual orientation (Slaatten & Gabrys, 2014). Norwegian small-scale interview studies also report that Norwegian pupils use gay-related name-calling in order to tease in a friendly way (Bendixen & Kennair, 2009; Kavlie & Lilletvedt, 2002). Even though some studies reveal that not all take offence when exposed to gay-related name-calling (Postic & Prough, 2014), other studies reveal that being exposed to gay-related name-calling also seems to be associated with higher levels of mental health problems (e.g. Espelage et al., 2008; Poteat & Espelage, 2007) and particularly when it occurs in combination with bullying (Roland & Auestad, 2009). Although lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals may in particular suffer from being exposed to gay-related name-calling (e.g. Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, & Yu, 2012), the main focus of this thesis will be on the overall population of pupils.

In this thesis, I explore how gay-related name-calling is used in different contexts among a sample of young Norwegian adolescents in ninth grade (14 years), and I assess what consequences the name-calling may have in terms of depressive symptoms. Although we know from previous research that adolescents frequently engage in gay-related name-calling (American Association of University Women, 2001; Anagnostopoulos, Buchanan, Pereira, & Lichty, 2009; Bendixen & Kennair, 2008; Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes, & Jaffe, 2009; Collier, Bos, & Sandfort, 2013; Poteat & Rivers, 2010; Prati, Pietrantoni, & D'Augelli, 2011; Rivers, 2001; Witkowska, 2005), little is known about *who* the primary name-callers are. For example, we do not know the extent to which the name-calling primarily occurs among friends or among peers who dislike each other. Along the same line, although we also know from previous research that adolescents report being bullied by being called gay (Swearer, Turner, Givens, & Pollack, 2008), little is known about the extent to which adolescents engage in the name-calling within a bullying context as opposed to outside a bullying context. From previous research we know that there is an established link between being exposed to gay-related name-calling and mental health concerns (e.g. Espelage et al., 2008; Poteat & Espelage, 2007), yet little is known about when pupils suffer most from the name-calling. In this thesis, I attempt to explore this matter further. In addition, I attempt to conduct a thorough exploration of the well-known association between endorsement of male role norms and gay-related name-calling. Previous research has not to a great extent explored *how* endorsing different aspects of male role norms is associated with gay-related name-calling. Lastly, although research concerning gay-related name-calling in school settings seems to be growing, there is no research to my knowledge that explores how attitudes, norms and, school related support and teacher interventions contribute in predicting gay-related name-calling. In this thesis I attempt do so.

I base my thesis on social psychological theory where the main focus will be on the processes of gay-related name-calling, rather than the content of gay-related name-calling. In line with social psychology I base my research on the idea that reality is formed by cognitive processes and features of the social context (Jost & Kruglanski, 2002). In order to explore why adolescents engage in gay-related name-calling I use Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971; 1986) and The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Throughout the thesis, I use a microaggressive framework where I interpret gay-related name-calling within a microaggressive context. Microaggression is brief denigrating messages sent to someone based on their membership in a certain group (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2007). By the use of survey method I attempt to explore how both dispositional attributions (e.g., the perception that certain behaviours are masculine) and situational factors (e.g., being in an environment where peers use gay-related name-calling) predict why adolescents use gay-related name-calling.

1.1 Defining and operationalizing gay-related name-calling

Despite the negative associations that come with gay-related names, gay-related name-calling seems to be quite common among school aged adolescents (e.g., Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009; Chiodo et al., 2009; Collier et al., 2013). It is challenging to ascertain just how common it is because studies on gay-related name-calling assess, define, and operationalize the behaviour differently. In a 232-page-long book entitled “Homophobic bullying” (Rivers, 2011), the author provides no clear explanation of what the term means, but infers that it involves “being bullied because they are called lesbian/gay” at the same time as he infers that “homophobic bullying” also refers to gay and bisexual men and lesbian and bisexual

woman being bullied. Similarly, in a book chapter entitled “Homophobic bullying”, the authors do not provide any clear explanation of what the term means, but infer that it involves victimization of sexual minority youth, homophobic epithets use and victimization that is homophobic in nature (Poteat, Mereish, DiGiovanni & Scheer, 2013). In the research literature, authors seem to use terms such as ‘homophobic bullying’, ‘homophobic teasing’, ‘homophobic victimization’ and ‘homophobic harassment’ interchangeably. Some studies refer to ‘homophobic bullying’ when they refer to sexual minority individuals being exposed to negative behaviour due to their sexual orientation, which does not involve gay-related name-calling (Blais, Gervais, & Hébert, 2014). Another study for which the stated purpose was to assess ‘homophobic teasing’ inquired whether the participants had been teased, threatened or harassed about being gay, lesbian or bisexual (Birkett, Espelage & Koenig, 2009), whereas a study which assessed ‘homophobic victimization’ asked whether the participants had been harassed, made fun of, been excluded or spread rumours about, due to their being or being considered to be lesbian, gay or bisexual (Poteat et al., 2014). Yet another study that assessed “homophobic victimization” asked whether the participants had been bullied, threatened or harassed about being perceived as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Poteat, Mereish, Digiovanni & Koenig, 2011). A study addressing this same question defines the behaviour as “bias based harassment” (Russell, Sinclair, Poteat, Brian & Koenig, 2012). Another study that assessed “victimization due to sexual orientation” asked whether the participants had been harassed or bullied because someone thought they were gay or lesbian (Kerr, Valois, Huebner & Drane, 2010). Yet another study assessing “homophobic harassment” failed to describe the behaviour at all (Plöderl, Faistauer & Fartacek, 2010), whereas two other studies that assessed ‘homophobic victimization’ inquired whether the participants had been called names such as gay, lesbo, fag, etc. (Poteat & Espelage, 2005; 2007). Yet, two other studies for which the stated purpose was to assess “sexual harassment

victimization” and “sexual harassment” explored whether the participants had been exposed to a number of unwanted acts, including being called “gay”, “fag”, “dyke”, “lezzie”, “queer” or similar terms (Chiodo et al., 2009), and calling others these names (McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2002). Of course, participants asked if they have ‘been harassed’ or merely ‘just been called a name’ are likely to provide different responses. All these studies may encompass gay-related name-calling, yet the context in which the name-calling occurs is defined differently from study to study. To complicate matters, the authors also define the behaviour differently. ‘Homophobic victimization’ is more serious than ‘homophobic teasing’, yet, questionnaire items normally do not reflect this difference. The term “homophobic” is also problematic because the meaning of the term can be interpreted differently. The intuitive meaning of the term homophobic is fear of homosexuality, but the term can also be interpreted as a rejection of one’s own homoerotic desires (Herek, 2004). Conceptually the terms “victimization” and “harassment” also correspond to different phenomena. Interview studies with adolescents also show that adolescents perceive bullying, sexual harassment and teasing as different phenomena (Land, 2003).

In order to deal with the numerous conceptual operationalizations of calling someone words such as “gay”, “lezzie”, “fag” etc., I will use the term “gay-related name-calling” throughout the thesis. This term is used because it does not infer any behaviour or interpretation beyond engaging in calling someone names which are linked to being gay. This term is also used when referring to studies that assess gay-related name-calling, even if the authors refer to the behaviour using a broader term, such as ‘homophobic victimization’.

Sometimes gay-related name-calling is referred to as ‘homophobic bullying’ in the literature. Homophobic bullying is viewed by some as an overlap between bullying behaviour and sexual violence, which may or may not include gay-related epithets (Basile, Espelage, Rivers, McMahon, & Simon, 2009). Other studies use the term ‘homophobic bullying’ without defining the behaviour other than saying it deals with homosexuality and bullying (for example Douglas, Warwick, Whitty, Aggleton, & Kemp, 1999). In an article addressing the “*research gaps in the intersection between homophobia and bullying*” Espelage and Swearer (2008) note that little has been done to integrate these areas. In this thesis, I use the word ‘bullying’ only when the behaviour adheres to Olweus’ definition of bullying. According to his definition, a student is bullied ‘*when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students*’ (Olweus, 1993, p. 9). Furthermore, for a behaviour to be classified as bullying, there has to be an intention to harm, the behaviour has to be repeated over time, and there has to be a power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator (Olweus, 2013; Solberg & Olweus, 2003). In a Norwegian report, Roland and Auestad (2009) (who adhere to this definition of bullying) categorize individuals as being exposed to “homophobic bullying” or “bullying with homophobic content” if they have been bullied by being called gay-related names or bullied by being accused of being gay. In the literature, however, the term ‘homophobic bullying’ is often used in a broad sense that encompasses both bullying behaviour and victimizing behaviour that lacks one or more of Olweus bullying components (see for example Hong and Garbarion, 2012; Poteat, DiGiovanni & Scheer, 2013). To define gay-related name-calling as bullying in the traditional sense, the name-calling has to be repeated over time by more powerful peers who use the name-calling intentionally to hurt a person. Gay-related name-calling therefore cannot be defined as bullying without taking into consideration the context in which the name-calling occurs. As I consistently use the Olweus bullying

definition, I do not reproduce the term 'bullying' from studies in which it is used to mean name-calling behaviour lacking the traits of traditional bullying. Instead, I use the exact wording used in the questionnaires to describe the name-calling behaviour. When we asked the participants in this thesis about their exposure to gay-related name-calling used in bullying, we provided a definition of bullying.

In the same manner as gay-related name-calling can be used in bullying, gay-related names can also be used in seemingly harmless teasing among equal peers. When teasing is friendly and does not involve any intent to harm, it is not bullying (Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefoghe, 2002). Gay-related name-calling that is used among equal peers, however, may not be captured in several of the existing instruments that assess gay-related name-calling. When adolescents are asked whether they had committed the 'unwanted act' of calling someone "gay", "fag", "dyke", "lezzie", "queer" or similar terms (see McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2002), they may not perceive the everyday banter of adolescents calling someone "gay" as an "unwanted act", and thus respond that it has not happened to them. Similarly, when adolescents are asked whether they had "been harassed or made fun of for being (or being considered) lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB)" (see for example Poteat et al., 2014), they may not have interpreted the everyday banter of gay-related name-calling as 'being harassed'. In addition, they may have thought that the gay-related name-calling engaged in by their peers had nothing to do with 'being gay', because it is 'just a name they call one another'. It is thus possible that the use of several of the existing instruments assessing gay-related name-calling will result in an underreporting of the behaviour of gay-related name-calling. In this thesis, I utilize a ten-items scale developed by Poteat and Espelage (2005) which consists of questionnaire items which do not entail that the gay-related name-calling involves any behaviour beyond merely gay-related name-calling. The

scale also specifies who the agents and the targets of the gay-related name-calling are. Even though the questionnaire do not impose behaviour beyond gay-related name-calling, the scale is named the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT) (Poteat & Espelage, 2005), and has been applied to measure “homophobic victimization” (Poteat & Espelage, 2007), “homophobic behaviour” (Poteat, 2007; Poteat et al., 2013), “homophobic teasing” (Espelage, Basile & Hamburger, 2011; Espelage, Basile, De La Rue & Hamburger, 2015), “homophobic name-calling” (Collier et al., 2013; Espelage, Low, Polanin, & Brown, 2013; Rinehart & Espelage, 2015), “homophobic language” (Poteat et al., 2011; Poteat, O'Dwyer, & Mereish, 2012; Poteat & Rivers, 2010; Prati, 2012b) and “biased language use” (Poteat & DiGiovanni, 2010). Despite the fact that these questionnaire items in the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT) have been used in several studies, no study (as far as I know) except the one by Poteat and Espelage (2005) commented on or discussed the differences between the items. An interesting question the authors of the above studies fail to address is whether adolescents report being called or calling others gay-related names more frequently when the relational context of the agent and target is known, compared with merely a random pupil-to-pupil relationship. In this thesis, I will explore this question. I will also explore exposure differences between being called/ calling others gay-related names in different relational contexts.

In the thesis, I primarily refer to studies that are peer-reviewed and published in scientific journals. In the field of gay-related name-calling, non-governmental organizations, research institutions and interest groups for lesbian, gay and bisexuals have also published insightful reports on this topic but these have not been peer reviewed. In the articles, I do not (with a few exceptions) refer to these reports, but in this synthesis, I also report from reports based

on Norwegian studies that have not been peer-reviewed because they provide valuable results from Norwegian settings that are not otherwise available in the scientific journals.

1.2 Gay-related name-calling from a microaggressive perspective

In 1977, Pierce (1977) coined the term “microaggression”, which are subtle, and automatic, non-verbal exchanges which serve as put-downs of black people and which often occur on a daily basis. He further describes the mechanisms that are used against black people as innocuous. Microaggression has later been used as a concept to describe brief and daily behavioural, verbal or environmental indignities which can be either intentional or unintentional and which communicate hostile, negative or derogatory insults to a person or group based on their race, gender, sexual orientation or religion (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2007).

One of the ‘founders’ of microaggression in more recent time is Derald Wing Sue, who, together with his colleagues, developed a taxonomy of racial microaggression based upon work on aversive racism (Sue, et al. 2007). According to the taxonomy, racial microaggression occurs in three forms: microassault, microinsult and microinvalidation.

Microassault is explicit verbal or nonverbal racial derogation with an intent to hurt through name-calling, avoidant behaviour or discriminatory actions. *Microinsults* are verbal or nonverbal communications that conveys subtle snubs containing a hidden insulting message to a non-white person, but of which the perpetrator is often unaware. The communication is commonly rude and insensitive, and it demeans a persons’ racial heritage or identity (for example, a white employer expressing that the most qualified person should get the job, regardless of race, inferring that non-white individuals are not as qualified as white individuals). *Microinvalidations* are communications that exclude or invalidate the thoughts,

feelings or experiential reality of a person of colour (for example complimenting an Asian American born and raised in the USA on speaking good English). Racial microaggression also seems to have negative emotional consequences for those exposed to it (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, Capodilupo & Holder, 2008; Wang, Leu & Shoda, 2011).

Although the literature on microaggression originally focused on race, the term can also be applied to gender and sexual orientation. The use of epithets such as “fag” and “dyke” can be viewed as verbal microassaults which intend to assail one’s sexual identity and communicate that homosexuals are “lesser human beings” (Sue, 2010). Regardless of the intention behind the gay-related name-calling, in line with the framework of microaggression, gay-related name-calling communicates hostile, derogatory, or negative sexual-orientation slights and insults to the target person or to homosexuals as a group. It should be noted that to be ‘micro-aggressive’, the name-calling does not have to be directed towards someone whose self-identify is lesbian, gay or bisexual. Even neutral names denoting homosexual orientation, when they are uttered in a negative way, may be offensive to homosexual individuals (Sue, 2010; Sue et al., 2007). When “gay” is used to describe someone’s odd or nonconformist behaviour, there is an assumption that it is abnormal, deviant, and pathological to be gay (Sue, 2010).

Microaggressors may very well be well-intended, motivated by egalitarian values, believe in their own morality and feel that they are fair-minded (Sue, 2010). Yet, perpetrators of microaggression are most often not aware that they have engaged in communications that demean a target group, and one reason for this may be that they are socialized to accept values, beliefs, standards, and heteronormative ideals (the concept that the heterosexual is

the ideal) that they espouse blindly. Yet, these ideals become the standard by which all group norms and behaviour are compared and contrasted (Sue, 2010). Adolescents who say “That’s so gay” when referring to something negative, or who call someone “fag” or “dyke” may not intentionally mean to accuse the person of being gay or lesbian, and they may not intentionally mean to berate or offend a gay or lesbian person (Nadal, 2013). On the surface, the name-calling may be perceived as innocent and harmless. Yet, there seems to be a masked form of hostility directed towards gays and lesbians behind the name-calling, and this can be classified as microaggression. If two adolescents call each other “faggot” in a playful manner without intending to hurt anyone around them and without thinking about anyone’s sexual orientation when using the word, the behaviour can be defined as microaggression if a gay or lesbian individual overhears the conversation (Nadal, 2013). Adolescents who engage in gay-related name-calling do not necessarily have negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians (Burn, 2000) or engage in the name-calling with a hurtful intent (Jewell & Morrison, 2010, Slaatten & Gabrys, 2014). Instead, the name-calling may reflect biases against gays and lesbians without the name-caller being aware, but nevertheless stereotyping the gays as bad, weak or inferior (Nadal, 2013). Gay-related name-calling can be either “conscious or unconscious”, intentional or unintentional.

Regardless of whether the gay-related name-calling is used jokingly or whether it negatively targets gay and lesbian individuals, gay-related name-calling can be hurtful for gay and lesbian individuals (Nadal, 2013). One way in which microaggression may harm gays and lesbians is by the lifelong and continuing exposure to stressors and daily hassles (Sue, 2010). Microaggressive stressors can be defined as *“race-related, gender-related, or sexual-orientation related events or situations that are experienced as a perceived threat to one’s biological, cognitive, emotional, psychological, and social well-being, or position in life”*

(Sue, 2010, p. 96). Microgressions may be even more harmful than stressful life events because they are symbols of heterosexism, they are continual and perpetual, ambiguous and invisible and they impact most aspects of someone's life (Sue, 2010). Studies show that gay and lesbian individuals perceive being called gay-related names as negative (Burn et al., 2005; Smith, 1998), and that they are hurt when they are exposed to microaggressive acts such as overhearing the word "gay" being used in negative contexts (Nadal et al., 2011).

As with other types of stressors, gay-related name-calling may incite a psychological or physical demand on gay and lesbian adolescents. The cumulative impact of the gay-related name-calling may thus cause a crisis, and be harmful for those being targeted or for those overhearing gay-related name-calling. Sue (2010) argues that the negative impact of microaggression may manifest itself in biological, cognitive, emotional and behaviour reactions. Microaggressive acts such as gay-related name-calling may thus pose a serious threat to marginalized groups such as gays and lesbians. Gays and lesbians, however, are not the only targets of gay-related name-calling. As will be discussed later, all adolescents, regardless of sexual orientations may suffer from being targeted by gay-related name-calling. The main target group of this thesis is the majority of young adolescents, and thus primarily heterosexual individuals.

1.3 How gay-related name-calling is used

In this thesis, I explore how gay-related name-calling is used in different contexts. As the design of the data used in the thesis is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, I can only explore how factors are associated with gay-related name-calling, rather than determining a

cause-effect relationship. In the thesis, I explore how both internal factors and the participants' experiences of external factors are associated with gay-related name-calling. The internal factors I chose to explore were how endorsing male role norms and negative attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names are associated with gay-related name-calling. The participants' perceptions of external factors I chose to explore were how having heard other pupils using gay-related name-calling is associated with gay-related name-calling. Furthermore, I also explore how intervention in gay-related name-calling and school-related social support is associated with gay-related name-calling.

1.3.1 Male role norms and gay-related name-calling

Studies on gay-related name-calling consistently report that boys, more frequently than girls, say that they have been called gay-related names (e.g., Chiodo, et al., 2009; Collier et al., 2013; Espelage et al., 2013; McMaster et al., 2002). As perpetrators, more boys than girls also report that they engage in gay-related name-calling (e.g., Espelage et al., 2011; McMaster et al., 2002; Poteat, Kimmel, & Wilchins, 2011). A report from Norway also reveals that the same gender trends can be found among Norwegian adolescents (Bendixen & Kennair, 2008). A theoretical rationale for why gay-related name-calling is primarily directed towards males is Connell's (2005) notion of the portrayal of hegemonic masculinities as a means to eradicate unacceptable masculinities. According to Connell (2005), there is a gender hierarchy among men with good and bad ways to express gender and masculinities. Furthermore, there are gender-related scripts for how to express masculinity that vary among different environments. Connell (2005) claims that in western parts of the world, traditionally perceived non-masculine or feminine ways of expressing gender are associated with homosexuality and are ranked as a marginalized masculinity

lowest at the gender hierarchy (Connell, 2005). These claims are supported in an empirical study which shows that men identified as gay were rated more negatively than men identified as heterosexual, and that men identified as feminine were rated more negatively than men identified as masculine (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Boys who engage in “feminine” activities have also been found to be exposed to higher levels of victimization than boys who engage in “masculine” activities (Kreiger & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2013). According to Connell (2005), gay men are generally seen as subordinate to straight men, and therefore placed at the bottom of the gender hierarchy where being gay is linked to femininity. Gay-related name-calling could therefore be used to exclude men from the legitimate circle of accepted masculinities. By calling a boy “gay”, the target of the name-calling is pushed down on the gender hierarchy and is at the same time accused of being feminine, or of not being masculine. Gay-related name-calling is thus linked to masculinity. Expressing that feminine traits and gayness are at the bottom of the gender hierarchy may thus be understood as microaggressive because it communicates negative sexual-orientation slights and insults to homosexuals as a group. Agents of gay-related name-calling may not be actively aware that when they express gay-related names, they communicate that gay men are subordinate to straight men.

Empirical studies on the other hand, have demonstrated that there are close links between participating in gay-related name-calling and placing “the heterosexual” and “the masculine” at the top of the gender hierarchy. For example, interview studies reveal that boys resort to gay-related name-calling targeting boys who violate behaviour perceived as “masculine” (e.g., Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003; Renold, 2002; Stoudt, 2006). Furthermore, calling a boy gay-related names has been found to be associated with endorsing attitudes and activities perceived as masculine (Birkett, 2010; Poteat et al., 2011; Slaatten & Gabrys,

2014), believing in hegemonic ideals about masculinity (Meyer, 2009; Phoenix et al., 2003; Plummer, 2001), attempting to maintain a heterosexual identity (Carnaghi, Maass, & Fasoli, 2011) and having friends who have traditional attitudes to masculinity (Birkett & Espelage, 2015). These studies propose that masculinity and the heterosexual are the ideals. In these ideals, there is a masked form of negativity towards the non-ideals; the feminine and the homosexuals. As such, we can say that engaging in gay-related name-calling, because it endorses male role norms, is microaggressive. Norms can be defined as standards for accepted and expected behaviour, as well as prescribed “proper” behaviour (Myers, 2012). Male role norms thus refer to standards for behaviours which are accepted and expected of boys and men.

Even though the link between endorsement of male role norms and participating in gay-related name-calling has been documented, as seen above, the extent to which, and how, endorsement of male norms is associated with gay-related name-calling has not been widely researched. Furthermore, there are several definitions of masculinities (Hearn et al., 2012) and thus male role norms, and these definitions may vary from culture to culture (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). When different constructs of masculinity are taken into consideration when exploring the relationship between male role norms and gay-related name-calling, some aspects of masculinity may be linked to gay-related name-calling whereas others do not. For example, in a study by Poteat, Kimmel and Wilchins (2010), having normative masculine attitudes was associated with calling someone gay-related names for men; however, this relationship was moderated by having beliefs supportive of violence. This could mean that there are some constructs of masculinity, such as believing that violent behaviour is appropriate and effective, which are more closely associated with engaging in

gay-related name-calling than having normative masculine attitudes such as believing that it is essential for a guy to get respect from others.

One way to define male role norms is to view them as multidimensional with underlying dimensions or constructs. In this thesis, I apply Oransky and Fisher's (2009) Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale, which categorizes masculinity into four constructs.

"Emotional Restriction" concerns the reluctance to share feelings with others, "Heterosexism" concerns attitudes and behaviour which are opposite those traditionally believed to be "girly" or "gay", "Social Teasing" concerns the ability to tease, and stand up to teasing from friends, and "Constant Effort" concerns the ability to appear tough, confident and strong. Although all four constructs are notions of male role norms, they are quite different. I chose to use these constructs because I believe that the individual constructs demonstrate different clusters of behaviour concerning masculinity. Naturally, it can be expected that the different constructs would correlate differently with gay-related name-calling. Previous research, to my knowledge, has not explored how endorsing male role norms concerning different masculine cluster of behaviours may differ in its association with gay-related name-calling.

Moreover, previous research has also not explored how endorsing male role norms is associated with gay-related name-calling that occurs in different relational contexts.

Endorsing male role norms may be associated with gay-related name-calling differently when the context in which the name-calling occurs is friendly as opposed to unfriendly. In addition, gay-related name-calling that occurs in a negative setting may be associated with endorsing male role norms that are somewhat different from the male role norms endorsed

by individuals who engage in gay-related name-calling in a more friendly setting. Therefore, an exploration of the associations between endorsing male role norms and gay-related name-calling is expected to reveal that the associations may vary depending on the cluster of behaviours pertaining to the male role norms and the context in which the name-calling occurs. In this thesis, I explore these associations.

1.3.2 The correlation between school factors and gay-related name-calling

Even though a vast number of studies report that gay-related name-calling commonly occurs at school (e.g. Anagnostopoulos et al., 2009; Bendixen & Kennair, 2008; Poteat & Rivers, 2010) or infer that it occurs at school (e.g. Chiodo et al., 2009; Collier et al., 2013), there are also some observational studies reporting that such name-calling no longer exists in certain schools (McCormack & Anderson, 2010). Whether or not pupils engage in gay-related name-calling probably depends on the name-calling norms that already exist among pupils in their school. In this thesis, I explore how social norms –other pupils’ gay-related name-calling and attitudes towards gay-related name-calling – correlate with pupils calling others gay-related names at school. Two theories were utilized to explore these associations: Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986) and The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

Social Learning Theory

Aggressive behaviour can be easily learnt by observing other individuals engage in aggressive behaviour (Bandura, 1973). According to Bandura’s social learning theory, learning may occur by observing the behaviour of others and the consequences that follow

this behaviour (Bandura, 1971). Both positive and negative social reactions to a behaviour can act as external incentives for modelling a certain behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1977) called this vicarious reinforcement, where observing other people's behaviour being rewarded increases one's tendency to behave in similar ways, while observing other people's behaviour being punished, decreased this tendency (Bandura, 1977). Observing others laugh when a peer engages in gay-related name-calling, or witnessing a target of the name-calling reacting to the name-calling in some way, may thus encourage gay-related name-calling. Consequently, and in line with the Social Learning Theory, when adolescents observe that their peers frequently engage in gay-related name-calling with behavioural success in the form of triggered laughter among peers, or increased social status, they might be more likely to adopt this behaviour themselves. In three longitudinal studies, adolescents who belonged to peer groups that frequently engaged in gay-related name-calling were more inclined to increase their own use of gay-related name-calling over time, compared to the adolescents who belonged to groups that did not use such name-calling (Birkett, 2010; Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Poteat, 2007). Similarly, in a study with undergraduate students in the US, witnessing peers uttering the phrase 'That's so gay' was associated with saying this term themselves (Woodford, Howell, Kulick, & Silverschanz, 2013). When peer groups in a study of high school students in the USA were identified by friendship nomination, the groups differed in the extent to which they engaged in gay-related name-calling. An interclass correlation coefficient revealed a 31% variance between peer groups engaging in gay-related name-calling (Poteat, 2008), suggesting that peers are influenced by group norms to engage in gay-related name-calling. Witnessing aggressive behaviour towards gay individuals also seems to be associated with gay-related name-calling. In an Italian study, high school students who had witnessed peers in their school engage in aggressive behaviour towards supposed gay men were more likely to engage in gay-related name-calling

themselves, than those who had not witnessed such aggressive behaviour taking place (Prati, 2012b). Altogether, these studies are examples of how Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971) can explain how pupils observing gay-related name-calling may encourage or inhibit gay-related name-calling.

The incorporation of social cognition into the social learning theory, which is what Bandura did when he modified the Social Learning Theory and developed the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), makes the assessment of internal stimuli such as cognition and feelings important when modelling a behaviour. In addition to having witnessed other peers engage in gay-related name-calling, thoughts about how bad it is to call someone gay-related names would also be determinants for whether or not the adolescents adopt gay-related name-calling. According to Bandura (1971), being aware of the consequence of a behaviour may facilitate the behaviour, although it does not necessarily stop the behaviour. In my thesis, I also assess how having negative attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names, is associated with engaging in gay-related name-calling.

The Theory of Reasoned Action

The Theory of Reasoned Action is a theory that aims to predict and understand an individual's behaviour. The theory is based on the assumption that people consider the implications of their action before they decide whether to engage in a given behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to the theory, both attitudes towards the behaviour and subjective norms, in addition to perceived behaviour control can predict intended behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Azen, 2010). In the context of the Theory of Reasoned Action, subjective norms refer to a persons' perceptions that people who are important to

him or her believe the person should act in a certain way (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Young people have a negative reaction to being called gay-related names (e.g., Bendixen & Gabriel, 2013; Burn et al., 2005), and as demonstrated above, one reason for this may be linked to the fact that gay-related name-calling is often used to tell someone off for breaking gender norms or that it is used as a response to disliked and stupid behaviour (e.g., Jewell & Morrison, 2010, Slaatten & Gabrys, 2014). Even though gay-related name-calling may also be used as friendly teasing (Norman & Galvin, 2006; Slaatten & Gabrys, 2014), there is a well-known negativity associated with the words themselves, as demonstrated above, and individuals probably differ in the extent to which they find it negative to call someone gay-related names. It seems likely that the knowledge that being called gay-related names may hurt may cause people to form negative attitudes towards calling others gay-related names. In line with the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), attitudes towards a behaviour such as gay-related name-calling can predict whether a certain behaviour such as gay-related name-calling will occur or not. In this thesis, I assess the extent to which negative attitudes towards gay name-calling is associated with actually adopting, or not adopting, the practice. Although previous studies have demonstrated that those who have negative attitudes towards bullying are less likely to engage in bullying themselves (e.g., Wang, Swearer, Lembeck, Collins & Berry, 2015), this thesis, to my knowledge, is the first study to demonstrate how attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names is associated with engaging in the name-calling themselves.

Subjective norms are also important in the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Azen, 2010). In the context of Theory of Reasoned Action, subjective norms refer to how important others perceive the behaviour to be (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), observing others perform a behaviour can trigger a

social pressure to engage in the behaviour themselves, regardless of whether they are aware of the potential consequences of the behaviour. Watching others call someone gay-related names could thus influence a person to do the same. This is similar to the social learning theory, and as discussed above, research does indicate that watching others engage in gay-related name-calling influences one's own use of the name-calling (e.g. Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Poteat, 2007).

Teachers' intervention in gay-related name-calling and school-related social support

Teachers play an important role when it comes to preventing and counteracting antisocial behaviour such as bullying (Olweus & Limber, 2010; Ttofi & Farrington, 2009; 2011) and research-based antibullying programmes such as the Olweus bullying programme, which emphasizes that teachers must intervene immediately when a pupil is bullied (Olweus, 1993), have been found to reduce bullying at school (Olweus & Limber, 2010; Ttofi & Farrington, 2009; 2011). Although it is not known whether these bullying programs reduce gay-related name-calling, violence prevention programs, such as a social emotional learning program, did not seem to decrease gay-related name-calling behaviour in middle school pupils (Espelage et al., 2013). Even though, to my knowledge, there is no study which has systematically evaluated the effect of teacher intervention in gay-related name-calling, it seems logical to assume that the way in which teachers respond to gay-related name-calling may also influence pupils' name-calling behaviour. In this thesis, I therefore control for teachers' intervention in gay-related name-calling when predicting gay-related name-calling. Support from other pupils and teachers are also included as control variables in the thesis because reduced levels of anti-gay behaviour, for example gay-related name-calling, has

been found to be associated with teachers promoting mutual respect in the classroom (Poteat et al., 2013).

1.4 Potential consequences of gay-related name-calling on mental health

Gay-related name-calling can be conceived of as a microaggressive act that not only harm gays and lesbians, but also seems to harm all adolescents regardless of their sexual orientation (e.g. Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Espelage et al., 2008). The correlation between being called gay-related names and impact on mental health among students irrespective of sexual orientation is well documented. For example, in four large studies using samples of high schools students in the USA, it was found that being teased, threatened or harassed about being gay, lesbian or bisexual was associated with higher levels of depression and suicidal feelings (Birkett et al., 2009; Espelage et al., 2008; Russell et al., 2012). A longitudinal study including 572 high school students further showed that being harassed, made fun of or excluded for being lesbian, gay or bisexual predicted higher levels of depression and anxiety for boys but not for girls (Poteat et al., 2014). Studies that have utilized the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale also revealed that being exposed to gay-related name-calling is associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression (Poteat & Espelage, 2005; 2007). What these studies fail to explore, is the context in which the name-calling occurs. Clearly, gay-related name-calling will be experienced quite differently when it falls in the context of banter between two equal peers, than when it is used in bullying. When gay-related name-calling is used as bullying, the intent behind the name-calling is to cause harm, the name-calling is repetitive, and the power status between the name-caller and the person being called gay-related names is not equal. According to Olweus, negative

intent, repetitive behaviour, and uneven power status between the two agents are the three characteristics of actions that constitute bullying (Olweus, 2013). A meta study concerning the long-term consequences of bullying showed that pupils who have been victimized by bullying run a higher risk of suffering from depression later in life (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel & Loeber, 2011). Whether these studies also included gay-related name-calling is unknown. Studies exploring bullying behaviour involving gay-related name-calling are scarce, and those that have examined this topic do not adhere to the same definition of bullying as Olweus's (e.g. Espelage et al., 2015; Evans & Chapman, 2014; Poteat & Rivers, 2010). In a Norwegian representative study (published in a Norwegian report) with a sample of 3046 secondary school pupils, an association was found between being bullied by gay-related name-calling and higher levels of depression and anxiety, after controls for conventional bullying. In a study from the US, boys who reported that they had been bullied "because they say I'm gay" reported to have somewhat higher levels of anxiety and depression compared to boys who were bullied for other reasons (Swearer et al., 2008). Although it is commonly known that being exposed to gay-related name-calling may have negative impacts on mental health (e.g. Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Espelage et al., 2008), there is a lack of studies exploring how gay-related name-calling is associated with mental health when the name-calling occurs in a bullying situation *compared to* a non-bullying situation. It is also known that being exposed to bullying has devastating effects on the mental health of the victims (Ttofi et al., 2011; Van Dam et al., 2012). What we do not know is whether the mental health consequences of being bullied increases when gay-related name-calling is involved. Does being the target of gay-related name-calling pose an additional burden to bullying? Clearly, gay-related name-calling is also conducted outside of bullying contexts. Adolescents may be called gay-related names that are intended to do harm, but the power status between the two individuals is equal. In such cases, the gay-related name-calling may still be experienced as

negative, even though it cannot be called bullying. In this thesis, I thus attempt to explore how gay-related name-calling is experienced in terms of associated levels of depressive symptoms when bullying is involved and when it is not involved.

Gay-related name-calling can also be used as teasing without negative intentions behind the name-calling (Slaatten & Gabrys, 2014). Generally, teasing can be prosocial and experienced as playful and humorous, but also antisocial and experienced as aggressive and cruel (Kowalski, 2004). Furthermore, teasing can be used to achieve bonding between individuals (Kowalski, 2000; Pellegrini, 2001). Because name-calling can have positive functions in a friendship, one may wonder whether gay-related name-calling between two friends will necessarily entail negative consequences. The relationship between the agent and the target of the gay-related name-calling thus seems to be an important factor when exploring the relationship between being exposed to gay-related name-calling and mental health. Yet, previous studies have not incorporated this factor. The extent to which gay-related name-calling is experienced as harmful depends on the situation. This is an interesting question that has not been explored previously. It seems intuitive that being exposed to gay-related names should entail worse effects when it occurs in a negative context. This thesis will thus explore these questions.

1.5 Research questions

The overall aim of this thesis is to assess how gay-related name-calling is used in different contexts among a sample of young Norwegian adolescents in ninth grade (14 years), and to assess what consequences the name-calling may have in terms of depressive symptoms.

Based on this aim, I have formulated six research questions.

As discussed in the introduction and theoretical framework, assessing gay-related name-calling is challenging because researchers define and operationalize gay-related name-calling differently. There is therefore often an uncertainty about what exactly is being measured. Furthermore, there is often little known about the relationship between the agent and the target of gay-related name-calling, and the context in which the gay-related name-calling occurs. In the present thesis, I strive to make the operationalization of the name-calling as specific as possible. In light of this, the following research questions were addressed.

Research question 1: How do young adolescents differ in their use of gay-related name-calling when the target of the name-calling is differentiated by perceived sexual orientation, friendship, likability and acquaintance status? (Paper 1)

Research question 2: How do young adolescents differ in their report of being called gay-related names when the agent of the name-calling is differentiated by friendship, likability and acquaintance status and when the name-calling occurs in a bullying context versus outside a bullying context? (Paper 3)

In the research literature, the violation of male role norms is the most frequently cited reason for engaging in gay-related name-calling. However, there is a lack of research exploring how endorsing male role norms is associated with engaging in gay-related name-calling occurring in different contexts. Furthermore, social norms concerning gay-related name-calling is an important predictor of the behaviour, and schools are an important arena in which such norms prevail. Yet, little is known about how factors within the school environment is associated with pupils engaging in gay-related name-calling. Based on this, the following research questions were formulated.

Research question 3: How are young male adolescents' endorsements of underlying dimensions of traditional male norms associated with gay-related name-calling targeting different victims (i.e., homosexuals, non-homosexuals, friends, people they do not like and people they do not know)? (Paper 1)

Research question 4: How are attitudes towards gay-related name-calling, subjective norms concerning gay-related name-calling, teacher intervention towards gay-related name-calling, and school-related social support associated with gay-related name-calling? (Paper 2)

To summarize the literature review, gay-related name-calling can be viewed within a microaggressive framework where the underlying message is that being gay is negative, and the target often reacts negatively to being called gay-related names. The association between gay-related name-calling and aversive mental health outcomes is widely documented, however, previous research have not taken the relationship between the agent and target of the name-calling into consideration when exploring this association. Furthermore, the power

status between the agent and target of the gay-related name-calling, and the intention to do harm when calling someone gay-related names has mostly been ignored in the research literature on gay-related name-calling. The association between gay-related name-calling and aversive mental health outcomes is widely documented, however, previous research have not taken the relationship between the agent and target of the name-calling into consideration when exploring this association. Furthermore, the power status between the agent and target of the gay-related name-calling, and the intention to do harm when calling someone gay-related names has mostly been ignored in the research literature on gay-related name-calling. Little is known, therefore, about the consequential difference between being called gay-related names when it occurs in a bullying situation as opposed to when it occurs outside a bullying situation. Based on this the following research questions were addressed.

Research question 5: To what extent is being called gay-related names by agents with whom their relationship is differentiated by friendship, perceived likeability and acquaintance status associated with depressive symptoms? (Paper 3)

Research question 6: To what extent does being bullied moderate the associations between being called gay-related names and depressive symptoms (Paper 3)

2. METHODS

2.1 Research design

As the aim of this thesis is to assess how gay-related name-calling is used in different contexts and to explore what consequences the name-calling may have in terms of depressive symptoms, the design we selected was a survey methodology with a cross-sectional design. Ideally, we should have used a longitudinal design rather than a cross-sectional design, however, the scope and resources allocated to this project did not permit two or more data-collections. With a survey design, it was possible to administer several questionnaire items concerning gay-related name-calling to a large number of participants. Furthermore, this design allowed for exploring how potential predictor and outcome variables correlated with gay-related name-calling exposures.

The precursor to this project was the school intervention study '*No to "Gay!" and "Whore!" in secondary school*', where the aim was to evaluate teachers' and principals' experiences with implementing initiatives aimed at preventing gay-related name-calling and sex-related name-calling such as "whore". In this project, data was collected from principals and teachers. Alongside with this project, we also collected data from ninth grade pupils. For the present thesis, we use the data from the pupils.

2.2 Participants

A total of 921 ninth grade pupils (boys = 450, girls = 466) participated in the study; 49 pupils did not take part in the study due to the parent or pupil declining to participate, and 94 pupils were absent from school on the day of the data collection. This yields a response rate

of 87 per cent at pupil level. The age range was from 14 to 15 years. We selected ninth grade as participants because the pupils in this grade will already have attended one year of secondary school, and will thus be familiar with the school climate concerning gay-related name-calling. The majority of the participants were presumably heterosexual. Although sexual orientation was not directly measured, the participants were asked what gender they wanted their boyfriend/girlfriend [kjæreste] to be ideally, if they were to have a boyfriend/girlfriend. This question was modified by a question originally developed by Roland and Auestad (2009). As seen in table 1, the majority of the boys and girls reported that they wished they would have an opposite-gender boyfriend/girlfriend. In the first article, boys who wished that their boyfriend/girlfriend would be of the same gender as their own were omitted from parts of the analyses. Other than this, we did not control for sexual orientation in any of the other analyses. According to several studies, more adult gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals have mental health problems compared to heterosexual individuals (e.g., Anderssen, Malterud & Slåtten, 2013; King et al., 2008; Sandfort, Bakker, Schellevis & Vanwesenbeeck, 2006). Although not documented, it is also possible that the very young lesbian, gay and bisexual adolescents may have more mental health problems than their heterosexual counterparts. As such, sexual orientation might be a moderating or confounding factor in the relationship between being exposed to gay-related name-calling and depressive symptoms. As we did not ask participants about their self-identified sexual orientation (other than preferred gender of boyfriend/girlfriend), and as the mean age for self-identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual is somewhat higher than the age of our participants (especially among girls, see Giertsen & Anderssen, 2007; Pedersen & Kristiansen, 2008;), we did not control for sexual orientation in our analyses.

Table 1

The participants' response to what gender they wished their boyfriend/girlfriend would have

	Males		Females	
	%	n	%	n
Opposite-gender	95,3	427	94,4	437
Same-gender	2,5	11	0,6	3
Opposite or same gender	1,1	5	3,5	16
Do not know	1,1	5	1,5	7

2.3 Procedure

The data used in this thesis are collected as a part of an intervention study aimed at reducing gay-related name-calling, gender-related bullying and sexual harassment. Although the data are collected as a part of an intervention study, all data were collected before the intervention took place. We invited the majority of all public lower secondary schools (n = 102) in Midthordaland, Oslo and Akershus to take part in the study by sending them a letter of invitation (see appendix A). The choice of schools was based on an Internet list of secondary schools in these regions. It turns out that the list of schools was not complete. The choice of invited schools is thus not random. Two (out of 38) schools in Oslo, two (out of 23) schools in Akershus, six (out of 24) schools in Bergen and five (out of 17) schools in Midthordaland outside of Bergen decided to participate in the study. Two additional schools in Oslo participated in the intervention study, but did not participate in the pupil survey which is the data collection used in this thesis. The response rate at school level was 14.7 per cent with 15 schools participating in the survey used in this thesis. A total of 49 classes participated in the survey. The number of participating classes from each school ranged from one to four, with

a median number of three classes. We invited the schools by letters and follow-up phone calls. Furthermore, we treated schools that repeatedly failed to respond to phone calls as non-responders.

In participating schools, ninth grade pupils were invited to take part in the study by completing a paper-and-pencil survey during a school lesson (see appendix B). The ninth grade class chosen to participate in the study was selected by the individual schools. The selection of classes within schools was thus not random. The mean number of participants in each school was 61.4 (SD = 27.3), with a range from 16 to 98 participants. As the participants were younger than 16 years of age, we used an informed consent procedure with parental passive approval. We informed the parents about the project by letters sent through pupils and provided them with a reply form that they could sign and return if they wanted their child to withdraw from participating in the data collection (see appendix C).

Furthermore, we informed the pupils about the study on the first page of the questionnaire. Here we also informed the participants that anonymity was assured, that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. We also informed the participants that we regarded filling out the questionnaire as consent to participate in the study (appendix B). All teachers involved with the data collection were given a research protocol that informed them in detail how to perform the data collection and how they should assure anonymity and voluntary participation among the pupils (see appendix D). It was explained, for example, that they should instruct the pupils to put the completed forms into envelopes and to seal these. We collected the pupil questionnaires between April and June 2010.

2.4 Instruments

While selecting the questions and scales to be included in the 26-page-long questionnaire, we aimed to use questionnaire-items and scales that had previously been tested out in the peer-reviewed literature and where the validity and reliability of the questionnaire-items were already established. For some topics, we could not find any previously used questionnaire item in the peer-reviewed literature. For these topics, we had to create the questionnaire items ourselves. As the questionnaire was to be administered in the Norwegian language, we also had to translate the English questionnaire items and scales into Norwegian ourselves when these had not been translated into Norwegian previously. We did not use professional translators, or a back-translation process to verify the translation. Instead, we arranged a focus group of Norwegians who are highly proficient in English and had them compare our translation of the items with the original items. This may cause concern regarding the validity of the scale. A full copy of the questionnaire can be found in appendix B.

Paper 1

Gay-related name-calling. We used the the 5-item Agent subscale of the the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale to measures how often the participants have called someone gay-related names in the previous week (Poteat & Espelage, 2005). Participants were given question items preceded by the statement: ‘Some kids call each other names such as gay, lesbo, fag, etc. How many times in the last week did you say these things to....’. Response alternatives were: a) a friend, b) someone I did not know, c) someone I did not like, d) someone I thought was gay, and e) someone I did not think was gay. The response alternatives were: ‘Never’, ‘1 or 2 times’, ‘3 or 4 times’, ‘5 or 6 times’ and ‘7 or more times’ (Poteat & Espelage, 2005). The advantage to this scale over other measures of gay-related

name-calling is that it does not stipulate the purpose behind the name-calling, nor the circumstances where the name-calling is used (Poteat & Rivers, 2010). Previous studies of the scale report of a high internal consistency with a Chronbach Alpha ranging from .74 to .90 (Poteat, 2007; 2008; 2010; Poteat & Espelage, 2005; Poteat, et al., 2012; Prati, 2012b). In this thesis, I do not use the full scale. Instead I use individual items of the scale.

Two further statements were used to assess gay-related name-calling: 'I have called one or more boys/men (girls/women) 'gay', 'faggot' ('gay', 'lezzie') or similar words in the last year'. The response alternatives were adopted from Solberg and Olweus (2003) 'This has not happened in the last year', 'Only seldom', 'Monthly', '2 or 3 times a month', 'About once a week', and 'Several times a week'.

Endorsement of Male Role Norms. Endorsement of male role norms was assessed by The Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale (Oransky & Fisher, 2009) which comprises four subscales. The 'Emotional Restriction' subscale has seven items which measures the extent to which participants believe that boys should be emotionally stoic and not share feelings with others (e.g., 'Guys should not talk about their worries with each other'). The 'Constant Effort' subscale has seven items which measures the extent to which participants believe boys should maintain a tough, confident and strong public persona (e.g., 'A guy must always appear confident even if he isn't'). The 'Heterosexism' subscale has eight items which measures to what extent participants believe that boys should refrain from adhering to behaviours and attitudes that are the opposite of what is traditionally believed to be 'girly' or 'gay' (e.g., 'Being thought of as gay makes a guy seem like less of a man'). The 'Social Teasing' subscale has five items which measures the extent to which participants believe that boys should be able to stand up to teasing from peers and make fun of their friends (e.g., 'A

guy should be able to take teasing from a friend'). Response alternatives were 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree'.

These subscales were derived from former constructs which measures male norms, and interview studies with boys inquiring about beliefs concerning what it means to be masculine (Oransky & Fisher, 2009). Previous administration of the full scale yields a reliability ranging from .61 (Social Teasing) to .80 (Heterosexism and Emotional Restriction) and from .56 (Social Teasing) to .78 (Heterosexism) (Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette, & Steinfeldt, 2012). The convergent validity of all subscales was high in the original study. The Emotional Restriction subscale correlated negatively with the Intimate Exchange subscale of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire; the Heterosexism subscale correlated negatively with the Antifemininity subscale of the MRNS. Furthermore, the Social Teasing subscale correlated positively with the Normative Beliefs about Aggression, and the Constant Effort subscale correlated positively with the Popularity Scale (Oransky & Fisher, 2009). Based on these properties, we believed this scale would adequately measure endorsement of male role norms.

Because the scale was developed for North American adolescents, and because North American adolescents' male role norms may differ from Norwegian adolescents' male role norms, we decided to test the reliability of these measures among the Norwegian participants. To assess whether the four-factor structure of the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale fits the present data, we conducted a Confirmatory Factor Analysis by using Mplus (version 5.2). According to the fit indices, the original model did not adequately fit the data: $\chi^2(20) = 296.722, p < .001$; CFI = .789, TLI = .926; RMSEA = .222. We therefore respecified the model by using model modification indices. Furthermore, we

removed items with the highest cross loadings with other factors sequentially until the model adequately fitted the data: $\chi^2(28) = 95.74, p < .001$; CFI = .945, TLI = .988; RMSEA = .088. In total 13 items were removed. The reliability of the revised Meaning of Adolescent Masculinity Scale that was used for the current study was .86 for Constant Effort (four items), .83 for Emotional Restriction (three items), .83 for Heterosexism (four items) and .73 for Social Teasing (three items).

Paper 2

Gay-related name-calling. To assess gay-related name-calling we posed the question:

‘Have you called another pupil “gay” [homo], “faggot” [homse], “lezzie” [lesbe] or similar words in the last month?’ followed by three sub-questions: ‘At school, directly to a pupil?’, ‘In your spare time, directly to a pupil?’ ‘On the internet, directly to a pupil?’ The response alternatives were ‘yes’ and ‘no’.

Negative attitudes to gay-related name-calling. To assess attitudes towards calling someone the names ‘gay’ [homo], ‘faggot’ [homse], ‘poofter’ [soper] and ‘lezzie’ [lesbe], these four names were preceded by the statement: ‘On a scale from one to five, how bad do you think it is to call someone the names below? If you do not think the name is bad at all, select number 1, and if you think it is the worst name one can ever call someone, select number 5.’ The response alternatives ranged from 1 to 5. The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was .91.

Having heard other pupils engage in name-calling. To assess how often the participants had heard a pupil call another pupil gay-related names during the last month we posed three dichotomous questions; ‘Have you heard a pupil call another pupil “gay” [homo], “faggot” [homse], “lezzie” [lesbe] or similar words in the last month?’. We divided this question into

three sub-questions: 'At school?', 'In your spare time?' 'On the internet?' The response alternatives were 'yes' and 'no'.

Teacher intervention in name-calling. In order to measure how often teachers intervened when they heard a pupil call another pupil the names 'gay' [homo], 'faggot' [homse], 'poofter' [soper], and 'lezzie' [lesbe], these four names were preceded by the statement: 'How often do teachers intervene when they hear a pupil call another pupil ...:' The response alternatives were: 'Every time it happens', 'Usually when it happens', 'Sometimes when it happens', 'Never when it happens', and 'It has never happened'. We recoded items in the response category 'It has never happened' as missing, and formed a scale with the remaining items. Due to listwise deletion, we omitted participants responding that it had never happened that any of these words had been used ($n = 135$) from the analysis.

Teacher support. We utilized four questions to form a scale that measures perceived support from teachers: 'I feel that my teachers are interested in me as a person', 'When I need extra help from teachers, I can get it', 'I feel that the teachers accept me for who I am', and 'I have great trust in my teachers'. Response alternatives were 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Disagree', and 'Strongly disagree'. A teacher support scale containing two of these items and two additional items proved to have adequate reliability and validity (Freeman et al., 2009; Torsheim et al., 2012; Torsheim, Wold, & Samdal, 2000). For the current scale, Cronbach's alpha was .91.

Pupil support. To measure perceived support from classmates we utilized four questions: 'The pupils in my class enjoy being together', 'Most of the pupils in my class are kind and helpful', 'Other pupils accept me as I am', 'When a classmate is upset, other pupils comfort

him/her'. Response alternatives were: 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Neither agree nor disagree', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly disagree'. Former use of this scale among Norwegian studies revealed that its test-retest reliability was adequate ($r = .74$), and the scale indicated adequate concurrent validity by correlating moderately with a measure of friend support (Torsheim, Wold, Samdal, 2000). Internal consistency also seems adequate when used among adolescents in countries outside Norway (Torsheim et al., 2012). For the current scale, Cronbach's alpha was .86.

Paper 3

Gay-related name-calling and bullying. To measure gay-related name-calling and bullying, we posed the following three questions: 'How often have you been called 'gay', 'faggot', 'lezzie' or similar names by another pupil in the past couple of months?', 'How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?' and 'How often were you bullied at school by being called 'gay', 'faggot', 'lezzie' or similar names in the past couple of months?'. The response alternatives were: 'I have not been called this by another pupil in the past couple of months/ I have not been bullied at school in the past couple of months/ I have not been bullied at school by being called "gay", "faggot", "lezzie" or similar names in the past couple of months', 'It has only happened once or twice', 'Two or three times a month', 'About once a week' and 'Several times a week'. Based on Olweus's Bullying questionnaire (Solberg & Olweus, 2003) and Witkowska's (2005) questionnaire on gay-related name-calling, we constructed these three items for the current study and piloted them in March 2009 on a convenience sample of fifteen pupils. In both the pilot study and the main study, we provided participants with a definition of bullying that included the main elements of

bullying, which are intention to harm, a repetitive nature and an imbalance of power (Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

In order to measure gay-related name-calling we also utilized three questions from the Target subscale of the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale (HCAT) (Poteat & Espelage, 2005). Question items were preceded with the statement: 'Some kids call each other names such as gay, lesbo, fag, etc. How many times in the last week did the following people call you these things?' The three agents were 'A friend', 'Someone I did not know' and 'Someone who did not like me'. Response alternatives were 'Never', '1 or 2 times', '3 or 4 times', '5 or 6 times' and '7 or more times'.

Depressive symptoms (The CES-D scale). In order to measure depressive symptoms, we utilized the Centre for Epidemiological Studies-Depression scale (CES-D scale) (Radloff, 1977), translated into Norwegian (Holsen, Kraft, & Vitterso, 2000). We selected this instrument because it is designed to measure current levels of depressive symptoms in the general population (Fisher & Corcoran, 1994; Radloff, 1977, 1991). We provided participants with 20 statements about feelings and moods (e.g., 'I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me' and 'I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor'), and were requested to indicate how well each statement described how they felt during the past week. The response alternatives were 'Rarely or none of the time', 'Some or a little of the time', 'Occasionally or a moderate amount of time', and 'Most or all of the time' (Radloff, 1977). Former studies reveal that The CES-D scale is a valid measure of depressive symptoms (Santor, Zuroff, Cervantes, & Palacios, 1995) and has a satisfactory concurrent validity by correlating well with other depression and mood scales (Andrews, Lewinsohn,

Hops, & Roberts, 1993; Fisher & Corcoran, 1994). The scale also seems to be acceptable and reliable when administered to adolescents (Radloff, 1977; Roberts, Lewinsohn, & Seeley, 1991). Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .89.

2.5 Statistical analyses

The quality of the data and missing data

We analysed the data primarily using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) (version 18 and 20). For all analyses, we utilized a pairwise missing variable strategy.

Participants who did not complete the whole questionnaire were included in the data analyses, and as a result, the total n varies across the analyses. We checked for data entry errors by manually checking the frequencies of each variable in SPSS. A few questionnaires seemed not to have been answered sincerely; however, these were kept in the dataset since we had no set way of defining the sincerity of the response.

Paper 1

We used Chi-squares and odds ratio analysis to test for differences between groups, and Pearson product-moment correlations to measure associations between independent variables. To assess how the Meaning of Adolescent Masculinity Scale predicts whether participants had called different targets gay-related names, we used a set of five logistic regression analyses. For the subscales of the Meaning of Adolescent Masculinity Scale, we assumed interval level scaling. We converted the independent continuous variables for different aspects of masculinity into z-scores in the logistic regression analyses. We deleted female participants and male participants categorized as homosexual, bisexual or not knowing their sexual orientation from the analyses involving endorsement of male role

norms. For preliminary analyses, we used the statistical program Mplus (version 5.2) to test the four-factor structure of the Meaning of Adolescent Masculinity Scale. Here, we utilized a Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The fact that we did not perform any multilevel analysis, controlling for class-level is a limitation of the study. In retrospect, this was a very unfortunate omission, as pupils' responses might be nested within classrooms.

Paper 2

For descriptive statistics of pupil's use of gay-related name-calling, we used frequencies and percentages. Furthermore, we used odds ratio to test for differences in having directed gay-related name-calling towards different groups, and Spearman Rho correlation to measure associations between all variables. Lastly, we used logistic regression to assess how a set of variables predict gay-related name-calling. As the pupils' responses might be nested within classrooms, we repeated the regression analysis while controlling for class-level in a multilevel analysis in the statistical program Mlwin. These analyses yielded the same results as with the standard logistic regression analysis. The multilevel analyses were therefore not included in the article.

Paper 3

For descriptive statistics, we used frequencies, percentages and means. To test for differences between groups we utilized independent sample t-tests for continuous outcomes and logistic regression and odds ratio for dichotomous outcome variables. We tested for associations between variables with Pearson product-moment correlations, and we used Fisher r-to-z transformation to measure the significance of the differences between two variables. Furthermore, we used hierarchical and standard multiple regression analysis and logistic regression analysis to conduct multivariate analysis. We present logistic regression

analyses as odds ratio (OR) with 95% CI, and Chi squares as an evaluation of the regression models.

To examine the possible design effect caused by the use of clustering sampling in our outcome (depressive symptoms), we tested an unpredicted (null-model) multilevel model by using MLwiN 2.30. The analysis revealed an Inter Class Correlation (ICC) of .037.

Moreover, the school-level variance was not significant. Based on this, we decided that it was not necessary to adjust for design effects in the regression analysis. We therefore decided not to include these analyses in the article.

3. RESULTS

Paper 1

The first paper provides answers pertaining to how young male adolescents differ in their use of gay-related name-calling when the target of the name-calling is differentiated by perceived sexual orientation, likability and acquaintance status (Research question 1), and how young male adolescents' endorsement of underlying dimensions of traditional male norms predict gay-related name-calling targeting these adolescents (research question 3).

The data revealed that male (but not female) adolescents were more likely to have directed gay-related names towards someone they did not believe was homosexual (OR = 1.76) rather than someone they believed was homosexual. Male adolescents were furthermore more likely to have called a friend gay-related names than someone they did not like (OR=1.77), or someone they did not know (OR=4.01). Female adolescents were also more likely to have called a friend gay-related names than someone they did not know (OR=2.97), but they were not more likely to have called a friend rather than someone they did not like, a gay-related name. The logistic regression analyses revealed that male adolescents who scored higher on Emotional Restriction (while controlling for the other subscales) were more likely to have called an individual not believed to be homosexual (OR = 1.57), and unknown individual (OR = 2.09) and an individual they disliked (OR = 1.47) a gay-related name during the previous week. Male adolescents who scored higher on Social Teasing (while controlling for the other subscales) were more likely to have called a friend (OR = 1.40) and *less* likely to have called an unknown individual (OR = .66) a gay-related name during the previous week. Male adolescents who scored higher on Constant Effort or Heterosexism (while controlling for the other subscales) were not more likely to have called someone gay-related names during the previous week.

Paper 2

The second paper provides answers pertaining to the extent to which attitudes towards gay-related name-calling, subjective norms concerning gay-related name-calling, teacher intervention towards gay-related name-calling, and school-related social support predict gay-related name-calling? (Research question 4).

A logistic regression analysis (while controlling for the other variables) revealed that participants who had negative attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names were *less* likely to have called a pupil gay-related names at school the last month (OR = 1.11). Furthermore, pupils who had heard a pupil call another pupil gay-related names at school, outside school and on the Internet (subjective norms), and pupils who experienced lower levels of teacher support were more likely to have called a pupil gay-related names at school during the last month (OR = 3.81, 2.87, 1.57, 1.08 respectively). Pupil support and perceived teacher intervention in gay-related name-calling did not significantly predict having called other pupils gay-related names at school the last month. Having heard a pupil call another pupil gay-related names at school the last month was the variable that most powerfully predicted having called another pupil gay-related names themselves at school.

Paper 3

The third paper provides answers pertaining to how young Norwegian adolescents differ in their reporting of being called gay-related names when the agent of the name-calling is differentiated by friendship, perceived likeability and acquaintance status (Research question 2). Furthermore, the paper explores to what extent being called gay-related names by agents with whom their relationship is differentiated by friendship, acquaintance status and

perceived likeability is associated with depressive symptoms (Research question 5), and the associations between being called gay-related names and depressive symptoms when the pupils report that they have been bullied, and when they report that they have not been bullied (Research question 6).

The data with application of odds ratio show that the participants were called gay-related names more frequently by a friend than by someone who did not like them (OR = 2.32) or someone they did not know (OR = 5.59). Furthermore, participants also reported having been called gay-related names by a pupil in the last month more frequently than 'being bullied' by gay-related name-calling (OR = 4.29). Multiple regression analyses revealed that being called gay-related names by someone who did not like them (β : boys = .27, girls = .18), and someone the participants did not know (β : boys = .32, girls = .19) was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms for both boys and girls. Being called gay-related names by a friend, however, was not associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms.

Two hierarchical multiple regression analyses conducted separately for boys and girls revealed that being called gay-related names and being bullied individually predicted depressive symptoms. Being called gay-related names was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms, including when controlling for bullying for both boys and girls (β : boys = .21, girls = .22). An interaction effect was found between being bullied and being called gay-related names on depressive symptoms for boys (β = .33), but not for girls (β = .07). There was a stronger association between being called gay-related names and depressive symptoms among the boys who were bullied compared to the boys who were not bullied.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Main empirical findings

The aim of the thesis was to explore how gay-related name-calling is used in different contexts and what consequences the name-calling may have in terms of depressive symptoms in a sample of young Norwegian adolescents. The main findings are as follows:

- Male adolescents (but not female adolescents) were more likely to have directed gay-related names towards a person not perceived as homosexual than towards a person perceived to be homosexual. Male and female adolescents were more furthermore more likely to have directed gay-related names towards a friend than towards someone they did not know. Male but not female adolescents were also more likely to have called a friend names rather than someone they did not like.
- Young adolescents were more likely to report being called gay-related names by a friend than by someone who did not like them, or someone they did not know. The adolescents were also more likely to have been called gay-related names outside of bullying context than within a bullying context.
- Endorsing male role norms related to emotional restriction was associated with higher levels of having directed gay-related names towards disliked and unknown individuals, and endorsing male role norms linked to social teasing was associated with higher levels of having directed gay-related names towards friends, and lower levels of having directed such names towards unknown individuals.

- Having heard other pupils engage in gay-related names at school and experiencing lower levels of teacher support was associated with having called a pupil gay-related names at school, whereas having negative attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names was associated with not having called a pupil gay-related names at school. Pupil support and perceived teacher intervention in gay-related name-calling did not predict the name-calling.

- Being called gay-related names by someone who did not like or know them was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms, whereas being called gay-related names by a friend was not associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms.

- Being called gay-related names was associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms also when it occurred outside of a bullying context. Boys but not girls who were bullied *and* called gay-related names had even higher levels of depressive symptoms.

4.1.1 Contextualizing of gay-related name-calling

The thesis assesses gay-related name-calling by using several questions that emphasize the different contexts in which gay-related name-calling is used. Although several prior studies have utilized questionnaire items that assess the relational context between the agent and the target of the name-calling (see e.g., Collier et al., 2013; Poteat & Espelage, 2005; 2007; Poteat & DiGiovanni, 2010), only the study by Poteat and Espelage (2005) reports these relational differences; however, the sample in this study is rather small ($n = 191$). The fact that findings presented in this thesis reveal that participants reported higher levels of gay-related name-calling when the relationship between the agent and target was specified, and furthermore that the name-calling was also reported as more common among individuals who were friends than among individuals who did not like or know one another, emphasizes the need to specify the context in which the gay-related name-calling occurs. The implication of this might be that previous research using other questions inquiring about gay-related name-calling underreport the actual name-calling behaviour that occurs because the participants may have excluded name-calling among friends as not applicable. Of course, not including name-calling among friends might also reflect the researchers' agenda as they may have wanted primarily to assess gay-related name-calling that was perceived as a victimizing behaviour. However, as participants may have interpreted differently the context in which the name-calling occurred, it is not certain what the participants responded to. The thesis contributes to the existing research literature in that there is a more clarity as to what is measured when assessing gay-related name-calling.

Even though gay-related name-calling is the topic of this thesis, gay-related name-calling is not all different from other types of name-calling such as, for example, racial or religious slurs. Findings similar to those in this thesis might thus be found if gay-related name-calling

was replaced by name-calling based on race and religion. For example, African Americans may react negatively to the word “nigger”, and particularly when it is used by non-black people (Kennedy, 2003; Motley & Craig-Henderson, 2007).

The fact that gay-related name-calling can occur both within and outside a bullying context, and both among people who are friends and people who do not like one another, suggests that young adolescents may engage in gay-related name-calling with either harmful or harmless intentions. The results of this thesis is thus consistent with research which show that gay-related name-calling is perceived as both negative victimization (Bendixen & Gabriel, 2013; Burn et al., 2005; Crozier & Dimmock, 1999; Plummer, 2001; Saucier, et. al., 2015; Smith, 1998; Thurlow, 2001) and as mere teasing (Norman & Galvin, 2006; Phoenix, et al., 2003; Slaatten & Gabrys, 2014). By providing the participants with a definition of bullying, this thesis clearly distinguishes between gay-related name-calling linked with bullying and gay-related name-calling that does not involve bullying. Overall, the results of the thesis emphasize the need to view gay-related name-calling in a context. It appears to be important to elicit accurate responses from the participants to specify the agents and targets of gay-related name-calling, as well as the relationship that exists between them.

Individuals who engage in bullying behaviour are also more inclined to engage in all sorts of antisocial behaviour, including gay-related name-calling. In a longitudinal study, boys in fifth to eight grade who were exposed to victimizing and aggressive behaviour (defined as bullying by the authors) were also more inclined to engage in gay-related name-calling (Birkett & Espelage, 2015). Other studies also reveal associations between having engaged in gay-related name-calling and aggressive and victimizing behaviour (defined as bullying by the authors) (Espelage et al., 2015; Espelage et al., 2012; Evans & Chapman, 2014; Poteat

et al., 2011; Poteat & Rivers, 2010; Prati, 2012a). It is possible that boys who bullied others would also be more inclined to engage in any kind of name-calling that was popular at that school at that time.

4.1.2 The importance of the conceptualization of male role norms

The research findings demonstrate that the extent to which there is an association between endorsement of male role norms and having called someone gay-related names depends on the how male role norms are conceptualized, and on the setting in which the gay-related name-calling occurs. The findings indicate that there are clear associations between endorsing male role norms and gay-related name-calling, but only in some conceptualizations of male role norms. For example, endorsing male role norms relating to emotional restriction seems to increase gay-related name-calling towards unknown and disliked individuals, and endorsing male role norms relating to social teasing seems to increase the name-calling towards friends, and decrease it towards unknown individuals. What these findings mean is that those adolescents who believe boys should act in a “masculine” ways in terms of emotional restriction are more inclined to accuse someone they do not like but not someone they like of being gay.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that the content of male role norms is important when it comes to examining how they may predict behaviour. A theoretical implication of the results is that special consideration should be given when measuring male role norms because the content of male role norms may change over time and may be different between different cultures (Pleck, 1976). An instrument measuring male role norms among North American boys may not be appropriate when measuring male role norms among Scandinavian boys. In this thesis, I therefore included a test to explore whether the original

four-factor structure of the Meanings of Adolescent Masculinity Scale fitted the present data. As the original model did not fit the data, the model was respecified and items were removed until the model adequately fitted the data. The findings in this thesis remind us about the importance of selecting instruments that measure concepts of male role norms that suit the population they measure. A theoretical implication of the findings is thus that male role norms may comprise different constructs that may predict behaviour in different ways.

The findings presented in the articles are portrayed as if they are based on a sequence of events where endorsement of male role norms predicts gay-related name-calling. However, it is also possible that this causal pathway can be reversed, in that gay-related name-calling may predict endorsement of male role norms. In line with self-perception theory, which states that people develop attitudes based on observing their own behaviour (Bem, 1972), it is also possible that engaging in gay-related name-calling may have shaped the participants' male role norms. This may be particularly true for endorsing the male role norms linked to "social teasing" which measures the ability to stand up to teasing from peers and making fun at the expense of friends. Participants who engaged in gay-related name-calling may have thought that because they have called someone gay-related names, they are then able to tease friends, and stand up to teasing from friends. Although the article concerning male role norms mentions the possibility that the relationship may operate in reverse, a thorough discussion of this limitation is lacking in the article.

4.1.3 Social norms and attitudes towards gay-related name-calling

Even after controls for attitudes towards the behaviour, teacher intervention and school related social support were applied, the results of this thesis suggest that young adolescents are influenced by their peers to engage in gay-related name-calling. Furthermore, negative

attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names seemed to decrease the name-calling, whereas teachers' intervention when observing gay-related name-calling and teacher and pupil support did not seem to influence whether the pupils engaged in the behaviour. The fact that adolescents who observe others engaging in gay-related name-calling are more inclined to do so themselves supports previous research in the field (Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Poteat, 2007; Poteat, 2008). This thesis controls for variables that could be expected to influence this relationship, such as support from teachers and other pupils. A recent study, however, has found that positive teacher-staff-student interaction is not associated with fewer instances of pupils reporting to be engaged in gay-related name-calling (Rinehart & Espelage, 2015). The findings of this thesis also seem to support this. A weakness of the thesis is that it is based entirely on cross-sectional data. To establish that observing gay-related name-calling increases the chance of engaging in the behaviour, longitudinal data would be necessary.

In the thesis, I use Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971) and The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) to explain the research findings as presented in the article. In the article, I do not address Social Cognitive theory, but only focus on Social Learning Theory. Looking at this in retrospect, I realize that it would have been more fruitful to discuss the research findings in terms of Social Cognitive Theory because it seems likely that cognitions and feelings will play a role in determining the attitudes a person has towards the potential harm caused by calling someone gay-related names, and furthermore how these attitudes are associated with gay-related name-calling. Moral reasoning is also important when it comes to explaining behaviour (Bandura, Barbaranelli & Caprara, 1996), and it seems likely that moral judgements should be involved when determining whether it is bad to call someone gay-related names. The findings in the

second article could very well have been described in terms of Bandura's triadic reciprocal determinism, which states that personal, behavioural and environmental factors work in a continuous interaction (Bandura, 1977). This reciprocal determinism may well have contributed towards explaining how witnessing peers engaging in gay-related name-calling (environmental factor), and attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names (personal factor) and engaging in the name-calling (behaviour factor) mutually interact. In the second article, I chose to utilize engaging in gay-related name-calling as the dependant variable, but it would also have been interesting to see how engaging in the behaviour predicts attitudes towards calling someone gay-related names for example.

Even though Social Learning Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action may contribute in explaining why observing others engaging in gay-related name-calling and attitudes towards the name-calling is associated with own engagement of gay-related name-calling, it should be noted that these theories are limited in their scope. As there are probably several reasons for antigay aggression (Parrott, 2008), the thesis would have benefitted from also including more individual risk factors such as homonegative attitudes, lack of empathy and general anti-social behaviour, as well as situational risk factors such as homonegative attitudes among peers, a hostile school environment, and a lack an effective anti-bullying program when trying to predict gay-related name-calling.

4.1.4 The importance of the context in which the gay-related name-calling occurs

In this thesis, the extent to which gay-related name-calling was associated with depressive symptoms depended on the context in which the name-calling occurred. When the name-

calling came from someone who did not like or know the adolescents, they had higher levels of depressive symptoms, but not when it came from a friend. Similarly, when the name-calling was done in a bullying context, boys but not girls had higher levels of depressive symptoms, than when the name-calling occurred outside of a bullying context. However, being called gay-related names was also associated with depressive symptoms when bullying was not involved for both boys and girls. These findings contribute to the existing research in that they highlight the importance of examining the context in which the name-calling occurs. Gay-related name-calling may be experienced quite differently depending on the relationship one has with the perpetrator. Although this might seem intuitive, current research in the field do not take the relationship between the agent and the target of the gay-related name-calling into consideration when exploring the relationship between being exposed to negative behaviour such as being harassed about being gay, lesbian or bisexual and depression (Birkett et al., 2009; Espelage et al., 2008; Poteat et al., 2014; Russell et al., 2012), or when exploring the relationship between gay-related name-calling and depression (Poteat & Espelage, 2005; 2007). This is a bit surprising, given that two of the studies utilize the Target subscale of the Homophobic Content Agent Target Scale which specifies the target of the name-calling (Poteat & Espelage, 2005; 2007). Having said that, in parts of the analysis I also created and utilized a dichotomous variable which stated whether the participants had been called gay-related names by a friend, someone who did not like them, and someone who did not know them. Here, I also reduced gay-related name-calling to whether the pupils had been called gay-related name-calling or not, without taking into consideration the context in which the name-calling. In retrospect, I should have distinguished between the participants who had been called gay-related names by a friend and those who had been called gay-related names by someone who did not like or know them.

The thesis adds to the research literature in the field in that it controls for bullying when exploring the association between gay-related name-calling and depressive symptoms. As gay-related name-calling may be just one of many negative actions used in bullying, the findings in the third article suggest that gay-related name-calling seems to be negatively experienced by victims in terms of elevated levels of depressive symptoms, including when bullying is not involved. Even though previous research has assessed how being exposed to bullying by being called gay-related names (Roland & Auestad, 2009), or bullying because others say they are gay (Swearer et al., 2008) is associated with mental health problems, previous research has not addressed how being exposed to gay-related name-calling is experienced within a bullying context *compared* to how it is experienced when it occurs in a non-bullying context. The findings in the articles thus suggest that it is important to know whether or not the targets of gay-related name-calling are bullied.

In the thesis, I assume that the participants have an accurate perception of whether those who call them gay-related names like them or not. It is also possible, however, that those participants who perceived that their name-callers did not like them have more negative perceptions of events happening to them in general. As having a more negative outlook in life is associated with depressive symptoms (Chang & Farrehi, 2001; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) it is possible that the tendency to have pessimistic feelings might have mediated the relationship between being exposed to gay-related name-calling and depressive symptoms. Another alternative interpretation of the findings is that the variable being called gay-related names by someone who did not like them might have been more a measure of the mere presence of someone who do not like the participants than a measure of a person calling the victim names.

In a Dutch study exploring how name-calling is associated with psychological distress (including depressive and anxious symptoms), gay-related name-calling was not associated with psychological distress when gender non-conformity and same-sex attraction was controlled for (Collier et al., 2013). It is thus possible that being called gay-related names because of violating male role norms is experienced as particularly distressing. Future research should address this.

4.1.5 Gay-related name-calling from a microaggressive perspective

The findings presented in the articles suggest that gay-related name-calling may indeed be viewed as microaggression. The fact that the findings reveal that gay-related name-calling was used both towards individuals who were both liked and disliked, and both within and outside a bullying context, suggests that the name-calling may be used both intentionally to hurt someone, but also with no harmful intent. Acts of microaggression can be brief and common verbal insults or indignities that can be either intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile or negative slights and insults about a target group based on race, gender and sexual orientation (Sue, 2010). Overtly, the name-calling behaviour may be friendly, yet there is a hidden form of hostility towards gays and lesbians behind the behaviour (Nadal, 2013), often without the perpetrator being aware that his or her name-calling demeans gays and lesbians as a group (Sue, 2010). As the name-calling was more frequently directed towards individuals not perceived to be homosexual than individuals perceived to be homosexual, this further suggests that the name-calling is not primarily used to berate gay and lesbian individuals. Instead, when the name-calling is directed towards non-homosexual individuals, it communicates derogatory insults to homosexuals as a group.

The assumption that it is abnormal, deviant and pathological to be gay, is thus reproduced when adolescents engage in gay-related name-calling. This message is amplified even though the agent of the name-calling may not personally agree with these assumptions.

As the findings presented in the third article indicate that gay-related name-calling may have negative mental health consequences for those exposed to the name-calling, support the idea that gay-related name-calling could be understood within microaggressive framework.

According to Sue (2010), the negative impacts of microaggression may trigger biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural reactions. Because the gay-related name-calling communicates that it is abnormal, deviant, and pathological to be gay and lesbian (Sue, 2010), self-identified gay and lesbian individuals might be more affected than heterosexual individuals by this form of microaggression. This thesis demonstrates however, that gay-related name-calling also poses a threat to young adolescents irrespective of sexual orientation.

4.2 Methodological considerations

4.2.1 Selection of participants and representativeness

Because the selection of invited schools was not representative of schools in Norway and the response rate at school level was low (15%), it is not possible to draw any conclusions concerning the prevalence of gay-related name-calling among Norwegian ninth grade pupils.

As the participating schools had decided to take part in an intervention study aimed at reducing gay-related and sexually related name-calling, there is a chance of a selection bias.

Schools deciding to participate in the intervention study may thus have differed from schools that decided not to participate in the study. For example, they may have had more problems

concerning gay-related name-calling than other schools, or they may have found the topic more important than other schools. Furthermore, the selection of ninth grade classes within the individual schools that were to participate in the study was made entirely by the individual schools. As a result, both schools and classes which had more (or less than average) problems with gay-related name-calling may have chosen to take part in the study. This non-random selection of participants at both school and class level further limits the generalizability of the prevalence of the findings. However, there are no grounds to believe that the relationship between the variables in the participating school should differ from that of other schools. The agenda of this thesis is also to highlight the relationships between the variables rather than capturing and describing how common gay-related name-calling is in Norwegian schools. The response rate at pupil level was rather high (87%).

4.2.2 Validity and reliability of the instruments

I will briefly point at three issues regarding the validity and reliability of the instruments. First of all, in this thesis some of the research questions were answered based on analyses where the dependent variables were single dichotomous questions instead of scales consisting of several questionnaire items. For example, the participants were asked whether they had directly called another pupil gay-related names at school during the previous month. One of the research questions was answered by an analysis which used this single question as the dependant variable. As there is a chance that some participants may have (willingly or unwillingly) answered this question incorrectly, relying on one single question poses a threat to the reliability of the measure.

Secondly, as some of the questionnaire items used in the thesis had to be created for the data collection, the validity and reliability of these items are uncertain. The fact that we cannot

be certain that the instruments measure what we say they measure is a limitation of the thesis. The fact that we did not use a back translation process for the questionnaire items that needed to be translated from English into Norwegian may have further limited the validity of the instruments.

Thirdly, even though the four-factor structure of “the Meaning of Adolescent Masculinity Scale” was modified to fit the present data, the scale was originally developed for North American adolescents and may not be equally applicable to Norwegian adolescents. This might have limited the validity of the instrument. Furthermore, the face validity of the four different constructs of male role norms was not addressed. As the different constructs have not been validated against similar constructs, it is not certain that they measure what they say they measure. For example, being able to tease friends and standing up to teasing from friends might be a valued characteristic of boys in Scandinavia. If this is true, Social Teasing may not be an appropriate construct of male role norms.

4.2.3 Data collection methods

Even though all data used in the present study were collected through a self-reported questionnaire, other data collection methods might also have been suitable. Other ways of measuring gay-related name-calling might include videorecording interaction between pupils in class, participatory teacher observation, interviews with the pupils and having the pupils note down gay-related name-calling in diaries over a longer period of time. By using qualitative methods such as discursive or narrative procedures (Jost & Kruglanski, 2002) when trying to understand male role norms and gay-related name-calling, I might have acquired a richer understanding of the topic. Such procedures would have opened up for an exploration of gay-related name-calling more in relation to its history, culture and

ideological context (Jost & Kruglanski, 2002). According to social constructionists, all “apparent truths” can be challenged and everything is relative (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Social constructionists claim that we can only make sense of words and phrases in a context or in relations to a specific occasion. Social constructivists might thus question the task of attempting to define and operationalize gay-related name-calling. As language is created within human relationships and the world, according to postmodern psychology (Gergen, 2001), the phenomena of gay-related name-calling may warrant different definitions and meanings in different historical, cultural and ideological contexts. However, by not defining and operationalizing gay-related name-calling, we would be unable to identify and compare the name-calling across settings. For my research questions, I thus believe utilizing survey methods was suitable.

4.2.4 Data analysis

Even though a total number of 15 schools including 38 classes participated in the study, I did not control for school- or class-level in this thesis. Given the results of this thesis, namely, the close association between having heard other pupils use gay-related name-calling and engaging in gay-related name-calling themselves, it seems likely that the pupils’ responses should be nested within classrooms. Yet, we did not perform any multilevel analysis, controlling for class level, for the first article of this thesis. This is a shortcoming of this thesis. Retrospectively, it seems obvious that males within a class may influence one another when it comes to endorsing male role norms, and engaging in gay-related name-calling. If I were to repeat the study, I would have controlled for class-level. In the second article, we repeated important analyses, controlling for class-level (in MIWin), however, as the analyses showed the same results as the standard analyses, we did not include these analyses in the article. Nevertheless, these null-findings are also interesting and if I were to repeat the study,

I would have performed all analyses, controlling for class level. As we controlled for school level in the third article but did not find any significant school-level variance, we decided it was not necessary to adjust for design effects in the regression analysis, nor to include these analyses in the article. Again, these null findings are interesting, and should perhaps have been included in the article.

Another limitation of the analyses is that participants who did not complete the whole questionnaire were included in the data analyses. This means that participants who might not have taken the questionnaire seriously, and only answered a few of the questions were included in the study as well.

A further limitation of the thesis is that 135 pupils had to be deleted from the variable ‘teacher intervention in name-calling’ in the logistic regression analysis in the second article because they had never heard any of the four given gay-related names used in name-calling. If the participants had heard other gay-related terms used, they should not have been omitted from the analysis.

4.3 Ethical considerations

The project was approved by NSD (The Norwegian Social Science Data Service) which is a resource centre that assists Norwegian researchers with issues relating to data collection, privacy and research ethics, and which acts on behalf of the Norwegian Data Inspectorate concerning the Personal Data Act and the Health Register Act. Because the data do not contain any personal health information that can be tracked back to an individual, or any health information that is aimed at obtaining new knowledge about health and disease, a

further approval of REK (Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethics) was not deemed necessary by NSD. NSD evaluated the data collection procedures, the content of the questionnaire and the project as a whole and approved it.

Participants were asked to respond to questions concerning their exposure to gay-related name-calling and bullying, and they were asked to respond to questions concerning their levels of depressive symptoms during the previous week. For some pupils, these questions may have caused some distress. As most teachers in secondary school probably have good competence in dealing with pupils' concerns regarding sexual orientation, mental health and bullying, we decided that it would be safe to include these questionnaire items. It is possible that answering this questionnaire may have raised the pupils' awareness concerning gay-related name-calling, and increased their curiosity about identifying pupils who are gay, lesbian or bisexual. Because of this, gay, lesbian and bisexual pupils in these school environments may have been at higher risk of being subjected to gay-related name-calling. Yet, it is also possible that answering the survey may have raised an awareness in the pupils which *decreased* their inclination to engage in gay-related name-calling. As Norwegian schools are obliged by law (Section 8a, Norwegian Education Act) to intervene when sexual harassment based on gender and sexual orientation occurs, I believe most teachers will stop gay-related name-calling before it escalates to harassment. In addition, we provided the pupils and the teachers with my contact details (email address and phone number) in the event they had any queries about the project.

We informed the parents about the project by letters sent through pupils, and provided them with an answer slip they could sign and return if they wished for their child to withdraw from participating in the data collection. As a passive consent procedure was used, it is

probable that not all parents were informed about the project because some pupils might not have given the answer slip to their parents. To ensure full informed consent we should have used a signed written consent procedure. However, balancing the need for this time consuming procedure against the possible dangers in utilizing the passive informed consent procedure, we decided to use the passive consent procedure.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Main conclusion

The present thesis adds to the existing literature on gay-related name-calling among young people, in that it demonstrates that gay-related name-calling is more common in some contexts than in others. For example, gay-related name-calling was found to be more common among friends than among people who do not like or know one another, and it was more common outside a bullying context.

In line with previous research, this thesis confirms that there is an association between engaging in gay-related name-calling and endorsing male role norms (Meyer, 2009; Phoenix et al., 2003; Plummer, 2001). The thesis holds however, that this association depends on how male role norms are conceptualized, and on the context in which the name-calling occurs. Social norms such as hearing pupils engage in gay-related name-calling, and negative attitudes towards such name-calling also seem to increase gay-related name-calling taking place at school while controlling for other relevant school variables.

In this thesis, the research findings confirm previous research demonstrating that there is an association between gay-related name-calling and mental health; however, the findings also demonstrate that the presence of such an association depends on whether the agent and the target of the name-calling know each other, are friends or dislike each other. The research findings also demonstrate that for boys, the association between gay-related name-calling and mental health is stronger when bullying is involved. For both boys and girls, the relationship between gay-related name-calling and mental health also remains outside of bullying contexts.

To sum up, the findings of my thesis demonstrate that caution should be taken when drawing conclusions about predictors and consequences of gay-related name-calling. Gay-related name-calling does not seem to be socially isolated behaviour, but should be viewed within the context it occurs.

5.2 Practical implications of the findings and the need for future research

Because the thesis is based on a non-representative sample, and the generalizability of the prevalence of the findings is limited, future research should utilize a national representative sample to establish how common the name-calling is in Norwegian schools. Important questions are; how prevalent is gay-related name-calling among friends, among peers who dislike one another, and how prevalent is gay-related name-calling within a bullying context compared to outside of a bullying context?

As the thesis reveals that gay-related name-calling involved in bullying is experienced differently from gay-related name-calling not involved in bullying, I do not believe researchers should refer to gay-related name-calling as “bullying” (or “homophobic bullying”), unless bullying is involved. I believe the research field of gay-related name-calling would benefit from adhering to Olweus definition of bullying by only classifying a behaviour as bullying if it entails an intention to do harm, the behaviour is repeated over time, and there is a power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator (Olweus, 2013; Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

Even though the findings of this thesis propose that gay-related name-calling seems to be most harmful in terms of increased levels of depressive symptoms when gay-related name-calling is used in a context in which the pupils did not like one another, or when bullying was involved, this does not mean that gay-related name-calling among friends is unproblematic. Gay-related name-calling can be seen as microaggression even when it is used among friends, and even when the target is not offended by the name-calling. Because gay-related name-calling communicates hostile, derogatory or negative slights about homosexual people as a group, homosexuals overhearing the name-calling may get hurt (Sue, 2010; Sue et al, 2007).

An implication of the findings of the thesis is that when gay-related name-calling is used to regulate behaviour that deviates from male role norms, prevailing stereotypes are reinforced, for example maintaining the notion that homosexual boys do not conform to male role norms. Furthermore, boys who behave in ways that deviate from traditional male role norms may on the other hand feel obliged to conform to these norms because they want to avoid being called gay-related names.

Based on these findings I believe gay-related name-calling among young adolescents should be prevented. As seen in this thesis, gay-related name-calling may be involved in bullying behaviour, but it may also be conducted as a practice not involving bullying. Because gay-related name-calling may have negative consequences regardless of whether or not it involves bullying, I believe this type of behaviour should be counteracted and prevented whenever it occurs. The fact that the findings of this thesis reveal that gay-related name-calling was more frequently observed at school than outside of school, and that pupils are influenced by other pupils to engage in gay-related name-calling, I believe future research

should explore how to prevent gay-related name-calling in school settings. Based on an earlier experience in introducing a program aimed at increasing teachers' competences in preventing and counteracting gay-related name-calling in secondary school, we found that school administration and teachers do not easily embrace such single-purpose programs (Slåtten, Holsen, Anderssen & Jensen, 2012). Because research based anti-bullying programs are effective in reducing antisocial behaviour and bullying (Olweus & Limber, 2010; Ttofi & Farrington, 2009; 2011), I believe they are most suited to incorporating and combatting gay-related name-calling within their programs. Future research should thus explore how anti-bullying programs can address gay-related name-calling in order to prevent and counteract the behaviour. I also believe anti-bullying programs should address the role of male role norms when developing strategies for counteracting and preventing the name-calling. Future research in this field is much needed.

6. References

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