REBECKA COWEN FORSSELL

CYBERBULLYING

TRANSFORMATION OF WORKING LIFE
AND ITS BOUNDARIES

MALMÖ
UNIVERSITY

CYBERBULLYING

Dissertation series in
Migration, Urbanisation, and Societal Change

Doctoral dissertation in Urban Studies
Department of Urban Studies
Faculty of Culture and Society

Information about time and place of public defense, and electronic
version of the dissertation: <https://muep.mau.se/handle/2043/26918>

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Cover illustration: Jonathan Cowen

ISBN 978-91-7104-952-0 (print)
ISBN 978-91-7104-953-7 (pdf)

Printed by Holmbergs, Malmö 2019

REBECKA COWEN FORSSELL **CYBERBULLYING**

Transformation of Working Life and its Boundaries

Malmö University, 2019
Faculty of Culture and Society

**Dissertation series in
Migration, Urbanisation, and Societal Change
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people that in different ways have contributed to this thesis and that I forever will associate this journey with. First of all, I have had the privilege to have had three supervisors along my side Tuija Muhonen, Sandra Jönsson and Lina Olsson that have made sure that writing a thesis is not a lonesome endeavor.

Tuija, your support has gone beyond methodological issues and theoretical dilemmas. You have guided me to the academic life by introducing me to all the obligatory activities and importantly reminding me to have fun along the way. Being able to turn to you with my problems, big and small, have made me feel truly supported and never alone. Thank you for your patience, your generosity and for your clever, constructive and creative comments about my work over the years!

Sandra, beside your sharp mind and good eye for text, you have also helped me to stay emotionally on track. Talks by the printer or at an empty Malmö University on a warm summer day have helped me to keep a cool head and prioritise when life becomes stressful. Thank you Sandra for being an inspiration on so many levels!

Tuija and Sandra - I am so pleased that you believed in me in the first place and gave me the opportunity to engage in doctoral studies. It has been a privilege to work with you both.

Lina, work life bullying research was a new area for you when we met. Still, your intellect and critical thinking has been of greatest value to me. Your nitty gritty reading and sharp questions have given me many new insights and not to mention - that extra valuable push! Thank you for all of this, Lina!

My gratitude also goes to all of you who have read and commented on my work at seminars - Carina Listerborn, Berit Wigerfelt, Stig Westerdahl, Martin Berg, Måns Svensson, Denise Salin, Per-Markku Ristilammi, Jonas Lundsten, Eva Torkelsson – and to others that have contributed in one-to-one discussions. Thank you: Samuel Farley for all brilliant talks about cyberbullying during the years and being a good companion at conferences. Jean-Charles Languilaire for taking your time to discuss theoretical perspectives on work/non-work boundaries with me. Gerolf Neuwerk, for widening my understanding of the digital work environment. And, Maureen Dollard for welcoming me at University of South Australia and for commenting on my work.

I also want to acknowledge Forte for the financial support for this thesis. And Sussi Lundborg at Malmö University for guiding me through all the practicalities in the final stages of completing this thesis.

Many others have also helped and supported me who are currently, or have previously been, working at the Centre for work life and evaluation studies (CTA): Hanne Berthelsen, Josefin Björk, Cecilia Cervin, Anders Edvik, Cecilia Franzén, Mats Fred, Martin Geisler, Peter Håkansson, Ulrika Karlsson, Anneli Mattson, Kettil Nordesjö, Lisbeth Rydén, Christina Scholten, Maria Svener, Louise Tregert, Hope Witmer - thank you all for being so great!

I also want to add a special thanks to my dear, former and present, MUSA doctoral fellows. Placing my name in the dissertation series for ‘Migration, Urbanization, and Societal Change’ is a truly grand experience. Henrik Emilsson, Claudia Fonseca, Martin Grander, Zahara Hamidi, Christina Hansen, Mikaela Herbert, Ingrid Jerve

Ramsøy, Jacob Lind, Malin McGlinn, Maria Persdotter, Charlotte Petersson, Ioanna Tsoni - you never stop to impress me.

And finally, a warm thanks to my family. Ann-Christine, Calle, Alex, Johan, Joakim, Madde, Felix, Nova, Saga, Hugo, Helen and my extended UK family, thank you for your unconditional love and support, and for entertaining me with things other than writing a PhD thesis.

And to my biggest supporters in life – Jon and Emmett! Jon, thank you for taking my doctoral studies as serious as I have. Your generosity has been endless. Thank you for designing the cover, correcting my English text over the years, and making graphics and illustrations (and making constant updates) for this thesis. And not to mentioned, keeping our everyday family life going, and being my best friend. Your presence is in this book. And to my sweet wonderful Emmett, you arrived three weeks after my mid-seminar, and have been my biggest inspiration and best distraction ever since. You are an amazing little person, exploring life with you is a wonderful thing. Love you forever!

SAMMANFATTNING

Sverige liksom många andra länder genomgår en digitaliseringsprocess som påverkar hur vi tar oss an och förhåller oss till arbete. I arbetslivets digitalisering ingår även psykosociala aspekter som uppstår som en följd av ökad digital kommunikation. Cybermobbing, eller nätmobbing som det ofta refereras till i en svensk kontext, syftar på mobbing via digitala kanaler och inkluderar aggressiva eller negativa beteenden på e-post, SMS, blogg eller sociala nätverkssajter som Facebook. Medan det har bedrivits forskning om cybermobbing bland barn och ungdomar de senaste två decennierna befinner sig forskningen om cybermobbing bland vuxna i arbetslivet fortfarande i ett utforskande skede.

Den här avhandlingen syftar till att utveckla ny kunskap om hur cybermobbing i arbetslivet kan förstås och förklaras. För att uppnå syftet undersöks hur cybermobbing i arbetslivet uttrycks och vilka individuella, sociala och organisatoriska implikationer mobbing medför när det sker i digitala rum. Avhandlingen har en interdisciplinär ansats och integrerar teoretiska ansatser från urbana studier, organisationspsykologi samt sociologi. Vidare tillämpas 'mixed methods research design' i syfte att generera skilda och komplementära perspektiv på samma fenomen.

Föreliggande sammanläggningsavhandling består av tre artiklar, varav två är publicerade i vetenskapliga tidskrifter och en är under granskning för publicering. Den övergripande frågeställningen är formulerad enligt följande: På vilket sätt förändras mobbing i arbetslivet när den sker genom social interaktion i digitala rum? Till-

sammans med den teoretiska diskussion som förs i kappan besvaras frågeställningen genom tre empiriska datakällor – en pilotstudie, en enkätstudie och en intervjustudie. Varje artikel i avhandlingen har sina specifika frågeställningar eller hypoteser, men den övergripande frågeställningen för avhandlingen besvaras genom att använda mixed methods.

Tre övergripande teman identifieras i avhandlingen: *nya maktdynamiker i cybermobbing*, *media-specifika uttryck i cybermobbing* och *konceptuella utmaningar i att studera cybermobbing*. *Nya maktdynamiker i cybermobbing* beskriver hur maktrelationer i cybermobbing skiljer sig till viss del från maktrelationer i mobbing ansikte-mot-ansikte. Temat är baserat på resultatet som visar att fler personer i arbetsledande positioner än icke-arbetsledande positioner är utsatta för cybermobbing. Detta antyder att digital kommunikation påverkar maktdynamiker och möjliggör för personer i formellt lägre positioner att mobba en chef. Ytterligare en aspekt som lyfts fram är att när digital kommunikation bidrar till en uppluckring av gränser i arbetslivet kan personer utanför organisationen såsom studenter, elever, kunder eller medborgare bli förövare av arbetsrelaterad cybermobbing.

Det andra temat *media-specifika uttryck i cybermobbing* utgår ifrån att cybermobbing uttrycks olika i e-post jämfört med Facebook och bloggar och att cybermobbing därför bör förstås i förhållande till den kontext som den specifika kommunikationskanalen skapar. Temat är utvecklat mot bakgrund av resultatet som visar en övervikt av passiv och exkluderande mobbing via e-post och exempel på särskilt aggressiv och direkt uttryckt mobbing på Facebook och blogg. Vilka som är åskådare och kommunikationskanalens förankring i arbetsorganisationen förefaller påverka hur cybermobbing uttrycks.

Det tredje temat, *konceptuella utmaningar i att studera cybermobbing*, framhåller en rumslig sammankoppling mellan cybermobbing och mobbing ansikte-mot-ansikte. Här diskuteras vilken betydelse överlappning mellan cybermobbing och mobbing ansikte-mot-ansikte har för tolkning av fenomenets omfattning.

Vidare diskuteras några svårigheter med att studera cybermobbing utifrån traditionella operationaliseringar av mobbning.

SUMMARY

In Sweden and many other countries, working life is undergoing a digitalisation process that changes behaviour and patterns for how work is conducted in the most profound way. Important aspects of digitalisation are the psychosocial aspects that are accentuated with increased digital communication. Among these are cyberbullying which refers to bullying via digital devices and includes hostile or deviant behaviour mediated via email, text messages, blogs or on social network sites such as Facebook. While cyberbullying among children and adolescents has been an area of research for the last two decades, research on cyberbullying in working life is still in a novel state.

The aim of this PhD thesis is to develop new knowledge on how cyberbullying in working life can be understood and explained. The aim is addressed by exploring how cyberbullying in working life is expressed and what individual, social and organisational implications it entails when bullying occurs in digital spaces. The thesis has an interdisciplinary approach as theoretical perspectives from the field of urban studies, sociology of media and organisational psychology are adopted. Moreover, the thesis is grounded in mixed methods research, the purpose of which here is to gain complementary perspectives by using methods that add different perspectives on the same phenomenon.

The thesis is organised as a compilation thesis and comprises three articles, two of which are published and one is under review. While each study addresses specific research questions or hypotheses, it is

when addressing the overarching research question that the mixing of methods is implemented. The overarching research question is formulated as: How are the characteristics of work life bullying transformed when bullying is performed through social interaction in digital spaces? This is answered by three sources of empirical data: a pilot study, a questionnaire study and an interview study, along with the theoretical discussion that is conducted in the framing chapter.

Three interrelated themes have emerged from the individual studies and the theoretical discussions. The first theme, *power dynamics in cyberbullying*, focuses on how digital communication can transform power relations and that power relations in cyberbullying differs to some extent from face-to-face bullying. The theme is based on the results that show that more managers than non-managers were exposed to cyberbullying. The theme focuses on digital communication as a powerful tool that enables people in formally lower hierarchical positions to target a manager. Moreover, the theme suggests that blurred boundaries in working life enable people outside the work organisation, such as students, pupils, customers and members of the public, to become perpetrators of work-related cyberbullying.

The second theme, *media-specific expressions in cyberbullying*, stresses that cyberbullying is performed differently on email and on Facebook and blogs and emphasises that cyberbullying should be understood as context- and media-specific. The theme is developed from the results that show a preponderance of passive and excluding behaviour on email, and examples of particularly aggressive and direct cyberbullying on Facebook and blogs. The type of audience and the embeddedness of the digital platform in the work organisation is claimed to influence in part how the cyberbullying behaviour is expressed.

The third theme, *conceptual challenges in accessing cyberbullying*, discusses spatial interconnectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying and elaborates on the implications that overlaps between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying have regard-

ing the interpretation of prevalence rates. Moreover, the theme addresses some difficulties of investigating cyberbullying with traditional approaches and operationalisation criteria.

LIST OF STUDIES

This thesis is based on the following studies:

- I. Forssell, R. (2016). Exploring cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in working life – Prevalence, targets and expressions. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 58, 454–460.
- II. Forssell, R. C. (Submitted 2018, pending second review). Cyberbullying in a boundary blurred working life – Distortion of the private and professional face on social media.
- III. Forssell, R. C. (2018). Gender and organisational position: Predicting victimisation of cyberbullying behaviour in working life. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1–20.

1. INTRODUCTION

‘...Urgh! I cannot express how sad it is for me to read this. Written by a colleague. What low level you hold on this status update. It makes me sincerely sorry – personally hurt and angry. It breeds racism – that's what it does. But also good for me to know, and to see it so clearly. See you at work ...’

(An extract from a dialog on Facebook)

This thesis studies the phenomenon of *cyberbullying* in working life. Cyberbullying refers to bullying via digital devices and includes hostile or deviant behaviour mediated via email, text messages, blogs or on social network sites such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn aimed against specific individuals. Cyberbullying has rapidly emerged as an important topic in the media today, yet cyberbullying in working life is still relatively under-researched (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Brack & Caltabiano, 2014; Farley, Coyne & D’Cruz, 2017; Göransson, Näswall & Sverke, 2011; Privitera & Campbell, 2009). Cyberbullying can be argued to be a part of a larger societal change concerning the digitalisation of work and social life. While the Internet successfully enables people to stay in contact with family and friends and provides users with fast access to information, cyberbullying – along with ‘fake news’ and issues regarding the users’ privacy and integrity – is a part of what can be described as the negative side of interaction on the Internet.

Bullying in working life is a phenomenon that concerns power and powerlessness and includes social exclusion from the working

community (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2011). Bullying is often perceived as a highly negative experience that has a serious impact on the targeted individual's health, well-being and overall work engagement (Hogh, Mikkelsen & Hansen, 2011; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). Indeed, empirical studies demonstrate that exposure to face-to-face bullying has devastating effects on the targeted individual (Björkqvist, Österman & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen & Hellesøy, 1996; Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996). In their meta-analysis of individual outcomes, Nielsen and Einarsen (2012) stress that exposure to bullying is related to mental and physical health problems, symptoms of post-traumatic stress, burnout, increased intention to leave, and reduced job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Among its most severe consequences are suicide and suicidal thoughts (Leymann, 1988; Thylefors, 1987).

Bullying is not only a problem for the targeted individual but has negative consequences for the members of the work organisations concerned. Witnesses of bullying, commonly referred to as bystanders, report more stress and mental health problems than those who have not witnessed bullying in their workplace (Vartia, 2001) and consider leaving their organisation to a higher extent than those who have not witness bullying at work (Rayner, 1998). Hence, research has concluded that bullying is also an organisational problem as it is linked to low productivity in the form of increased absenteeism, higher turnover, intention to leave and decreased commitment (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper & Einarsen, 2011; Vartia, 2001). Thus, empirical evidence indicates that besides preventing human suffering, there are economic incentives for employers and for society as a whole to prevent bullying. Still, bullying in working life is a problem with considerable consequences, as approximately 9 per cent of the working population in Sweden have experienced face-to-face bullying in their working life according to the Swedish Work Authority (Hallberg & Hallberg, 2016) and so far there are no signs that the phenomenon is decreasing. Statistics show that the number of reports on work-related ill-health due to bullying nearly doubled between

2010 and 2014 – from 600 reported cases in 2010 to more than 1150 in 2014 (Blomberg, 2016).

In Sweden and many other countries, working life is undergoing a digitalisation that changes behaviour and patterns for how work is conducted in the most profound way. Digitalisation of working life includes the introduction of new technological systems and automation of routine work. When communication technologies allow work to be performed at other places and other times than traditionally associated with working life, boundaries between work and non-work become increasingly blurred. Thus, important effects of the digitalisation are the psychosocial aspects that accentuate with increased digital communication and interaction. When social network sites such as Facebook simultaneously are used as platforms for both private and professional interactions, spaces emerge where there are no longer clear boundaries between private and public spheres. Thus, the introductory extract downloaded from Facebook illustrates how social network sites such as Facebook contribute to the boundary-blurred nature of contemporary (digital) working life and how new situations appear that urge for a reconsideration of when, where and how counterproductive work behaviour occurs.

Towards a digital and boundary-blurred working life

With increased digital communication and interaction in working life, patterns and behaviours take new forms that ultimately challenge earlier understandings of boundaries in working life. For some professionals, access to the Internet enables work to be conducted without being present at the workplace. Hence, any place with access to the Internet can, at the particular moment when the work is carried out, constitute that professional's work environment. A yearly survey from 2017 shows that 64 per cent of the Swedish working population use the Internet to work from home (Davidsson & Thoreson, 2017). Central to this development is email communication, which two out of three Swedish employees use in their daily work (Findahl, 2013). With email communication geographical boundaries are transgressed, and with technological advances such as apps, email is for many accessible directly in the

personal smartphone. As a consequence, every third Swedish employee checks work email from home (Ottoosson & Rosengren, 2015), half of the Swedish working population read work-related email during holidays (Davidsson & Thoresson, 2017, and almost every fourth is experiencing expectations of being available after working hours (Ottoosson & Rosengren, 2015).

The figures above indicate that technological advances have made communication in working life extensively faceless as well as less bounded spatially and timewise. The division of time and spatial boundaries between work and non-work has, however, a relatively short history considering how working life was organised in agricultural societies. In these earlier societies, work was shared among family members and conducted in relation to the seasons and access to daylight (Micheletti, 1990). Firstly with the transition towards an industrial society did work become separated from the private (Kylin, 2007). Thus, one contributor to the division of the private and the professional spheres of life is urban planning which, with the rise of suburbia, separated residential areas from manufacturing, administration and commercial areas (Broadbent, 2016).

In the work/non-work literature, boundaries are not merely physical but also temporal and cognitive limits that separate domains from each other (Kreiner, 2006). Segmentation between work and non-work is defined here as *'the degree to which aspects of each domain (such as thoughts, concerns, physical markers) are kept separate from one another-cognitively, physically or behaviourally'* (Kreiner, 2006, p. 485). The segmentation model has been a prevailing understanding of the relation between work and non-work that arose with the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. A clear segmentation involved a separation between work, the purpose of which was to fulfil workers' material needs, and the home, associated with social activities and emotional needs (Allvin, Aronsson, Hagström, Johansson, Lundberg, 2006; Nippert-Eng, 2008).

Opposite perspectives to the segmentation model emphasise a permeability between the two domains, and despite having been developed during the same time as the segmentation model, they are perhaps most applicable to contemporary working life (Allvin et al., 2006). This includes *the spill-over theory*, which posits that individuals' experiences, attitudes and affects in one domain tend to influence the other and that this spill-over can be positive as well as negative for either domain (Edwards, 2000). *The compensation model* likewise takes the workers' overall life situation into consideration by stressing that workers can compensate for dissatisfaction in one domain by trying to find satisfaction in the other (Edwards, 2000).

As can be seen, the discussion of blurred boundaries between work and non-work is not new. However, rapid social changes in the way people can communicate and interact have brought new forms of blurred boundaries between work and non-work, distinctly different from industrial and agricultural societies. Diminishing boundaries are reinforced by advanced communication technologies that enable professionals to connect with work without physical relocation. When work is no longer restricted to the workplace or to certain working hours, perceptions of time and spatial boundaries become increasingly blurred. Moreover, as colleagues and managers meet less regularly, new understandings of the workplace may arise as well as what is considered to be a good organisational climate and a fair workload.

Difficulties in setting boundaries between work and non-work have been acknowledged in policy and legislation. In 2015 the Swedish Work Environment Authority established new provisions regarding the organisational and social work environment (AFS 2015:4) that require managers to work proactively to attain a good psychosocial work environment. This includes preventing victimisation by bullying and harassment, but also ensuring a fair workload and working hours among employees. Incentives for establishing a good psychosocial work environment can also be seen in rest of Europe. In France a new law has been adopted that accentuates workers' 'right to disconnect' and obliges companies with more than 50 em-

ployees to regulate hours when email can be sent or answered. Both Swedish and French regulations aim at protecting workers' time for recovery and preventing burnout syndrome. However, the development towards a fluid working life can also be understood as a way for workers to manage an accelerated life tempo in modern societies (e.g., Rosa, 2014) and find a balance between responsibilities at 'home' and at 'work' (Clark, 2000). For some professionals an integration of the work and non-work domain, defined here as '*a merging and blending of various aspects of work and home*' (Kreiner, 2006, p. 485) creates an ideal situation. However, in the same way as preferences regarding degree of integration or segmentation of work and non-work vary between individuals, work organisations differ in the way they promote segmentation or integration (Hochschild, 1997; Kreiner, 2006). High integration of domains, supported by work organisations by offering flexible working hours and teleworking as well as smartphones and laptops, is more often offered to highly skilled workers or a certain creative elite (Allvin et al., 2006).

While *boundaryless jobs* (Allvin, 2008) are often associated with task-oriented *knowledge workers* with flexible working hours, increased use of social network sites such as Facebook makes maintaining boundaries between work and non-work problematic to individuals regardless of profession. When individuals' online social networks constitute a mix of friends, family, work colleagues, managers, customers and clients, previously separate social relations become increasingly mixed and overlapping (Ollier-Malaterre, 2013; Marwick & boyd, 2011). In contrast to email communication, blurred boundaries caused by social network sites go beyond the transgression of geographical boundaries. By sharing photos, videos and texts on digital platforms, individuals' private realms are increasingly exposed to people outside their private spheres. Moreover, when users' audience consists of a mixture of private and professional audiences, situations emerge where it is difficult to draw the line regarding who the user is representing. From an organisational perspective, blurred boundaries on social network sites create issues related to when and where a particular situation is perceived as work-related. When and where does the

work organisation begin and end? And in what situations is it legitimate or even obligatory for the work-organisation to intervene?

Bullying features in transformation

The prefix *cyber* in cyberbullying indicates that bullying is subjected to transformation. In the literature on cyberbullying, ‘cyber’ simply describes that bullying is ‘generated through technology’ (Langos, 2012). In popular culture, ‘cyber’ often has a broader connotation. As when firstly introduced in the science fiction novel *Neuromancer* by William Gibson (1984), the closely related term cyberspace often embodies a place distinctively different from the physical place. ‘Cyber’ can thus be seen as indicating a clear cut between the on- and offline world, which is an idea that collides with many social media scholars’ understandings of the Internet today (e.g., Baym, 2015; Berg, 2012).

What exactly ‘cyber’ adds to work life bullying is an ongoing debate. The emergence of cyberbullying urges however for a reconsideration of traditional understandings of bullying. Thus, in order to differentiate between bullying, as it has traditionally been understood, and the new forms coming to life with digital communication, this thesis will distinguish between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. Face-to-face bullying will be used in order to describe bullying behaviour among adults in a work life setting while simultaneously separating bullying behaviour that is conducted via digital devices, as in cyberbullying. Important to note, however, is that the term cyberbullying is also used differently in different cultural contexts. While the term *workplace bullying* is commonly applied in academic settings in Australia and the UK, *workplace cyberbullying* has become the applied term for bullying via digital devices (e.g., Farley et al., 2016; Vranjes et al., 2017). However, in order to emphasise the boundary-blurred nature of cyberbullying and its capacity to intrude on the targeted individual at places outside the workplace, the noun ‘workplace’ is excluded in this thesis when referring to cyberbullying in working life.

In various ways, cyberbullying challenges boundaries in working life. Compared to traditional workplace bullying, cyberbullying

can continue or even begin when the working day is over. Thus, cyberbullying challenges previous understandings of *when* the bullying is work-related. For managers who are obliged to act upon and prevent bullying in the workplace, understanding the distinction between work-related and private conflicts becomes crucial. Moreover, the accessibility in digital communication also means that new types of actors, not necessarily members of their own organisation, but clients, customers, students or pupils can target an employee with more ease than before. Thus, with *third parties* traditional understandings of *who* are perpetrators in bullying are challenged. Understanding what type of relations are present in situations of cyberbullying also has consequences for how these situations can be dealt with in a work organisation. Furthermore, digital communication is faceless communication. Facial expressions and the tone of voices are replaced in cyberbullying by written text, exclamation and question marks, emojis, photos and videos etc. Thus, digital communication also concerns *how* social interaction occurs.

Central to the phenomenon of bullying is power and control. With communication technologies new strategies to exercise power may arise (Campbell, 2005; DeHue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012). Thus, even though it is important to understand power relations within face-to-face bullying (Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen, 1994; Leymann, 1996; Zapf et al., 1996) it is of equal importance to consider how power is exercised and practised when using communication technologies. One aspect related to power is gender. As bullying encapsulates power relations in terms of subordination and superiority, differences concerning women's and men's exposure to cyberbullying behaviour can be expected. When cyberbullying is carried out in working life also *formal power*, i.e. manager's power over subordinates, is necessary to consider. In order to broaden the understanding of power in working life and how it is related to cyberbullying, this thesis will study differences in exposure and vulnerability to cyberbullying between men, and women managers, as well as between men and women non-managers.

Research purpose, aim and questions

There is an ongoing discussion as to whether cyberbullying should be seen as a new phenomenon or only as an extension of traditional face-to-face bullying (e.g., Englander, Donnerstein, Kowalski, Lin & Parti, 2017; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Slonje & Smith, 2008). The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to this discussion by providing new interpretations of what characterises cyberbullying in working life and to consider possible explanations for the phenomenon. This is done in order to better predict, prevent and mitigate the effects of cyberbullying in working life. While the purpose indicates why the study is being conducted, the aim points here to what the study wants to achieve. The aim of this thesis is to develop new knowledge on how cyberbullying in working life can be understood and explained. The aim is addressed by exploring how cyberbullying in working life is expressed and what individual, social and organisational implications it entails when bullying occurs in digital spaces.

Cyberbullying in working life is an emerging phenomenon with unique features, yet strongly linked to the well-explored research area of face-to-face bullying. Committing to similar methods as the established research tradition of face-to-face bullying – that is, quantitative methods and deductive approaches, allows for an exploration of the commonalities and differences between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. A qualitative approach, on the other hand, allows an uncovering of new aspects and situations that emerge with cyberbullying in working life. Given this, a mixed methods research approach has been applied in order to explore the overarching research question, which is:

- How are the characteristics of work life bullying transformed when bullying is performed through social interaction in digital spaces? (Studies I, II & III)

The following three specific questions were formulated in order to address the overarching research question:

- What characterises cyberbullying when it is performed in a work life context? (Studies I & II)

- What is the prevalence of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in Swedish working life? (Study I)
- How is cyberbullying in working life related to gender and organisational position and to what extent are predictors of face-to-face bullying valid in explaining the occurrence of cyberbullying in working life? (Studies I & III).

An interdisciplinary approach

Bullying can be analysed from different levels including societal, organisational, social/group and individual level. On a societal level bullying can be recognised as a structural problem. Situations of bullying emerging due to the targeted individuals' gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, class or age can be understood as attitudes and norms within different social contexts that create and maintain different and unequal conditions for humans (Einarsdóttir, Hoel & Lewis, 2015; Salin & Hoel, 2013). By emphasising men's and women's different experiences of holding power in working life, gender is addressed in this thesis as a structural problem. The main focus of the thesis centres however on the individual, organisational and social/group level. The empirical material is based on an individual level and is grounded in the targets' experiences of cyberbullying. An organisational perspective is then applied by recognising cyberbullying as a problem that can be instigated by a poor work environment. Cyberbullying is also addressed as a relational phenomenon that focuses on social interactions. This includes relations between the target and the perpetrator, the perpetrator and the audience on social media, and the target and the digital means of communication.

Although other research disciplines are entering the area of study, most research on face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying in working life is conducted from the perspective of organisational psychology (Svensson, 2010). It is a characteristic for this research tradition to study social phenomenon on an individual level and to use quantitative methods. The immense number of studies on face-to-face bullying that follow an empirical tradition have been successful in discovering patterns and regularities within face-to-face bullying. Based on an accumulation of research results, concepts

and models have been developed that serve as a theoretical base for how bullying can be understood.

An example from this tradition is *the work environment hypothesis* that has become the dominating framework in explaining face-to-face bullying (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen, 2000; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007). This hypothesis-based theoretical framework aims at identifying risk factors for face-to-face bullying based on previous research results. The hypothesis highlights job-related factors such as role conflicts, role ambiguity and lack of clear goals related to how the work is organised and designed; team-related factors such as leadership; and organisational factors such as culture and climate (Baillien, Neyens & De Witte, 2008; Baillien, Neyens, De Witte & De Cuyper, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hauge et al., 2007; Salin & Hoel, 2011). In this thesis, factors from the work environment hypothesis are employed in order to investigate to what extent predictors of face-to-face bullying are valid in explaining the occurrence of cyberbullying in working life.

Earlier research on face-to-face bullying is also important in this thesis for understanding gender differences and differences regarding organisational position in cyberbullying. In addition to feminist perspectives on power relations in working life (e.g., Lipman-Blumen, 1976; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2012; Nicolsen, 2015) previous empirical studies on gender and organisational position in the face-to-face bullying literature are used as a theoretical base for the analysis of patterns in cyberbullying. In chapter 2, theoretical frameworks and previous research on bullying and cyberbullying are further elaborated.

As previously discussed in this introduction, profound societal changes grounded in digitalisation contribute to blurring organisational boundaries. Changes regarding what constitutes the work environment and when, where and how professional relations are maintained call for new approaches in the uncovering of characteristics of cyberbullying. While proceeding from the research area of bullying, theoretical perspectives from the field of urban studies,

organisational psychology, and the sociology of media are adopted in order to meet the overarching research question of this thesis.

The research discipline of urban studies covers a wide empirical field that stretches from studies of material spaces that includes buildings and infrastructure to social and cultural practices within these spaces. The breadth of research makes urban studies a multi- and interdisciplinary discipline with traditions stemming from natural science to social science and humanities (Bridge & Watson, 2010). The study of space and socio-spatial practices is however fundamental to urban studies and is also an important dimension in the analysis of cyberbullying in this thesis. Thus, with cyberbullying the negative behaviour moves from a material space of bodily presence manifested as the workplace, to boundary-blurred digital spaces. By emphasising socio-spatial circumstances present in situations of cyberbullying, this thesis offers a new perspective to cyberbullying research. Moreover, by adopting a spatial perspective in the analysis of online interaction, this thesis contributes to the understanding of socio-spatial relations and interaction.

In line with the human geographers Kitchin and Dodge (2011) space is understood in this thesis as an active element in the production of social relations. Space provides a defining context for social interaction at the same time as spatial contexts are produced through social relations (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011). What socio-spatial circumstances digital spaces provide change with the function and meaning of the particular platform used, as well as conventions and norms embodied in that platform at the time.

The ever-changing nature of digital spaces is illustrated in this thesis by proceeding from Turkle's (1995) early writings on cyberspace to more contemporary understandings of social interaction on the Internet today (e.g., Baym, 2015; Kitchin & Dodge, 2011). Social behaviour and interaction within spaces are then understood through the lens of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphors of everyday life interaction. According to Goffman, social interaction takes place on two performative regions: the public front stage and the more intimate backstage. While Goffman's concepts are drawn

from observations of face-to-face interaction, social media scholars such as Marwick and boyd (2011) have translated some of Goffman's ideas to an online context. This sheds light on the complexity that occurs when users are forced to simultaneously perform in front of diverse audiences consisting of private and professional relations on social network sites. These aspects as well as other socio-spatial circumstances are further discussed in chapter 3.

As is illustrated in Figure 1, this thesis is placed at the crossroads of organisational psychology, theory of socio-spatial practices and the sociology of media. The interdisciplinary approach represents different ontological and epistemological stances. Whereas the empirically driven understanding of face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying represents a post-positivistic tradition, the spatial perspectives applied in this thesis are primarily grounded in a social constructive school of philosophy. As an outcome, the overarching research question of this thesis is analysed both by extensive theoretical frameworks and by concepts and models developed from accumulated research results. While the latter approach seeks general explanations for social phenomenon by adding pieces to a larger puzzle (e.g., Baillien & De Witte 2009; Einarsen, 1999; Salin, 2003b; Zapf, Escartín, Einarsen, Hoel & Vartia, 2011), theoretical perspectives on everyday life interaction (Goffman, 1959) and conceptual understandings of space (Goffman, 1959; Kitchin & Dodge, 2011) are employed to address cyberbullying from different perspectives.

Figure 1. Theoretical and methodological positioning of this thesis.

Interdisciplinary approaches are sometimes criticised for their lack of epistemological and ontological coherence (e.g., Szostak, 2015). In this thesis, the rationale for the mix of theoretical perspectives is the same as the purpose of using mixed methods, that is, to gain complementary perspectives on the same phenomenon. The complementary purpose applied in this study can be described as to

‘seek broader, deeper, and more comprehensive social understandings by using methods that tap into different facets of dimensions of the same complex phenomenon’ (Greene, 2007, p. 101). As will be further discussed in chapter 4, I agree with Greene (2007) that the role of social science is to commit to meaningful engagement with differences. This includes a mix of ontological perspectives in the analysis of social phenomenon if it contributes to a better understanding of the study in focus (Greene, 2007). The combination of different theoretical and methodological perspectives on cyberbullying generates in my view a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying in working life than can be obtained by the use of a single method alone.

Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organised as a compilation thesis and comprises three articles, two of which are published and one has been submitted to a scientific journal (under review). Each article is an individual study with specific aims and research questions. Within the framework of the compilation thesis, however, each article is related to the overarching research question. The different methodologies used in the articles form a mixed methods research approach.

The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 gives an overview of the existing literature on bullying in working life. This includes both an introduction to the extensive literature on face-to-face bullying and an outline of studies on cyberbullying in working life. Chapter 3 presents socio-spatial circumstances that affect cyberbullying behaviour. Social interaction within digital spaces is discussed by taking a starting point in theoretical conceptualisations of everyday life interaction. Chapter 4 discusses the methodological approach of this thesis, which is grounded in mixed methods research. This discussion will arrive at a description of the three studies in chapter 5. Finally, in chapter 6 I conclude and discuss the findings from the three studies to address the aim and overarching research question.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON BULLYING

This chapter gives a brief overview of the extensive literature on face-to-face bullying. This includes defining face-to-face bullying and describing how face-to-face bullying is often operationalised in research. Moreover, this chapter positions face-to-face bullying in relation to other counterproductive work behaviour, discusses some known antecedents of face-to-face bullying and addresses face-to-face bullying from the perspective of gender and workplace hierarchy. Following on this, cyberbullying is introduced as a phenomenon. Cyberbullying is discussed with reference to earlier research on cyberbullying among children and adolescents as well as to the hitherto existing studies on cyberbullying in working life. Besides defining cyberbullying and introducing some antecedents identified in previous research, the discussion centres on the specific features of cyberbullying.

Face-to-face bullying in working life

Leymann and Gustavsson (1984) were among the first to study face-to-face bullying in working life. With their work that began in the mid 1980s, the understanding of bullying extended from a dysfunctional behaviour associated with children and school environments to include adults and work life settings. However, much has happened during the three decades that research on face-to-face

bullying has been conducted. In Sweden, the phenomenon of face-to-face bullying is well embedded in the overall understanding of the psychosocial work environment. One example of this are the new provisions established by the Swedish Work Environment Authority (AFS 2015:4) that oblige managers to actively prevent victimisation by workplace harassment.

The foundational work of Leymann (1996) and the psychological perspective he applied in his studies has had a strong impact on today's research on face-to-face bullying. While researchers from disciplines such as sociology are entering the area of study (e.g., Agevall, 2007; Svensson, 2010), research on face-to-face bullying in working life is to a large extent dominated by scholars within the academic field of organisational psychology. Thus, research questions commonly put forward concern the identification of antecedents of face-to-face bullying, discovering what consequences face-to-face bullying have on the individual and the organisation, determining prevalence rates, describing how face-to-face bullying is expressed, and identifying who the perpetrators of face-to-face bullying are (Einarsen et al., 2011; Svensson, 2010).

Defining face-to-face bullying

The prevailing research tradition is reflected in how bullying is operationalised. While there is no single definition of face-to-face bullying in working life that unites all researchers, there are elements in the operationalisations that most researchers agree upon, or in different ways relate to in their research. These elements, referred to here as *dysfunctional behaviour*, *repeated and enduring bullying behaviour* and *power imbalance*, form a conceptual understanding of face-to-face bullying. For some researchers, the perpetrator's *intention to harm* the target is an additional element in the bullying definition (Olweus, 2003; Samnani, Singh & Ezzedeen, 2013; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Due to the complexity in capturing the sender's objectives in situations of bullying, intention is however often excluded from the definition. Thus, Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper (2011) who are widely cited researchers in research on face-to-face bullying, define face-to-face bullying in the following way:

Bullying at work means harassing, offending, or socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction, or process, the bullying behaviour has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal strength are in conflict. (p. 22)

Dysfunctional behaviour in bullying

Bullying is a dysfunctional behaviour that in line with the present definition includes acts of harassment, offensive behaviour and social exclusion. There have been several attempts to categorise face-to-face bullying behaviour into typologies. This includes the work of Rayner and Hoel (1997) who incorporate in their typology the major themes from the different taxonomies in the face-to-face bullying literature. Based on the literature review, the authors categorise face-to-face bullying according to five different themes: (1) acts that threaten to harm a person's professional status (e.g. open belittlement of a person), (2) destabilising someone mentally (e.g. teasing and intimidation), (3) isolating a person (e.g. physically or socially), (4) systematically making a person overwork (e.g. setting impossible deadlines) and (5) threatening personal standing (e.g. repeatedly mentioning blunders).

Another way of categorising face-to-face bullying is to distinguish between *work-related* and *person-related* negative behaviour (Einarsen, 1999). Examples of work-related face-to-face bullying given by Einarsen et al. (2011) involve giving extreme deadlines, unmanageable workloads, monitoring of work, or not receiving any assignments at all. Due to the nature of work-related face-to-face bullying, it is more common that the perpetrator has a managerial position.

Person-related face-to-face bullying, on the other hand, is accentuated when the perpetrator spreads rumours, ridicules people, utters insulting remarks and/or persistent criticism towards a certain person (Einarsen et al., 2011). Person-related bullying can further be

conceptualised along three dimensions: (1) physical and verbal acts, (2) active and passive acts, and (3) direct and indirect acts (Buss, 1961).

Most common in working life are verbal indirect and passive acts (Baron & Neuman, 1996). This means that face-to-face bullying often occurs through a third person rather than directly towards the targeted individual (Björkqvist, 1994) and that social isolation stemming from non-actions such as not communicating with or inviting a certain person is prevalent (Einarsen et al., 2011). In general, face-to-face bullying tends to have subtle rather than overt expressions which makes the bullying behaviour open for subjective interpretation (Samnani et al., 2013). Disguised forms of face-to-face bullying where the intent is covered in the negative acts can be a strategy for perpetrators to avoid retaliation or other negative consequences (Baron Neuman & Geddes, 1999). Consequently, some negative acts described as face-to-face bullying may be seen as commonplace and perhaps even trivial. However, when frequently and persistently directed towards the same individual, even low deviant behaviour can be experienced as a significant stressor for the individual. Thus, it is important in the understanding of face-to-face bullying between adults to recognise its psychological nature (Einarsen et al., 2011; Leymann, 1996; Zapf et al., 1996).

Repeated and enduring bullying behaviour

One of the key elements in the operationalisation is associated with the repeated and enduring behaviour involved in face-to-face bullying. As is discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter, attempts at operationalising frequency and duration have been made, which often state a weekly to monthly exposure of face-to-face bullying during a period of 6–12 months (Agervold, 2007). However, central to the element of duration and frequency in the definition is to emphasise face-to-face bullying as a process that occurs on a regular rather than on an occasional basis (Einarsen et al., 2011). Most researchers agree on the escalating nature of the face-to-face bullying process that involves different stages (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Leymann, 1990; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Thus, face-to-face bullying is commonly described as a process that moves from sub-

tle, indirect expressions that are difficult to prove by the target, towards more direct negative acts as the bullying process is allowed to continue (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Power imbalance in bullying

Also essential to the understanding of face-to-face bullying are the power dimensions involved. A central feature in most definitions of face-to-face bullying is that targets of face-to-face bullying are situated in an inferior position in relation to the perpetrator, thereby perceiving little or no possibilities to defend themselves from the bullying behaviour (Einarsen et al., 2011). The imbalance of power can exist before the face-to-face bullying situation due to the perpetrator's formal or informal status in the work organisation (Branch, Ramsay & Barker, 2007; Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2001), or develop as the conflict continues. For instance, two people may enter a conflict as equally strong, but one of them may end up in a weaker position as a power imbalance emerges (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Einarsen et al. (2011) stress that power imbalance often mirrors the formal power structure within the workplace. In these situations, the perpetrator is to be found in a superior position in the workplace. Thus, downwards bullying, which refers to face-to-face bullying where the manager is identified as the perpetrator, is commonly reported (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Hoel, Cooper & Faragher, 2001). Power imbalance can also stem from the perpetrator's informal source of power such as social power and social networks (Lamertz & Aquino, 2004) or as a result of an overpowering number of individuals engaging in the bullying treatment (Einarsen et al., 2011). Social and informal sources of power are present in situations of horizontal bullying, that is, face-to-face bullying between peers, and in upwards bullying, where one or more subordinates target a person in a managerial position.

Due to managers' control over rewards and punishments, overcoming the formal power of a supervisor is often difficult. While previous research states that upwards bullying is scarce (Zapf, Escartín, Einarsen, Hoel & Vartia, 2011) recent research has identified

managers' vulnerability to face-to-face bullying (e.g., Branch et al., 2007; Björklund, 2017). According to Björklund (2017), face-to-face bullying of managers that are new in the work organisation or that recently have returned to the workplace after a long leave of absence is common.

Intent of perpetrators

Frequently discussed in the face-to-face bullying literature is the significance of intent behind bullying behaviour. Intent points to the aim of the negative acts to cause harm and is undeniably a crucial aspect of face-to-face bullying. While some researchers claim the importance of intent (Olweus, 2003; Samnani et al. 2013), intent is seldom understood as a crucial element in the European research tradition (Einarsen, et al. 2011). While an inclusion of intent helps to distinguish face-to-face bullying acts from acts that stem from thoughtlessness or behaviours that can be viewed as legitimate in a work organisation (Einarsen, et al. 2011), there are often difficulties in verifying the intent behind the negative acts. As engaging in face-to-face bullying behaviour may lead to punishment or reprimands, intentions behind the bullying act can be well covered and disguised (Baron et al. 1999; Bjorkqvist et al., 1994). Indeed, few individuals may agree to admitting that they are perpetrators of bullying. As verifying the intent behind the negative acts falls on the perpetrator, many researchers tend to exclude intentionality from the bullying definition. Including intentionality as a defining aspect of face-to-face bullying shifts the focus of bullying towards the negative acts and intentions of the perpetrator, rather than the effects and consequences for the target.

Moreover, Einarsen et al. (2011) stress that if intentionality is to be a defining element of face-to-face bullying it is crucial to clarify the meaning of intention. According to the authors, intent can refer to different aspects of a bullying process. (1) Intent can refer to the single acts in the bullying process, meaning that each of the negative acts that forms a hostile situation for the targeted individual is intended to cause harm. (2) Intent can also refer to the overall bullying process, that is, an actual intent to bully certain individuals. (3) Intent can refer to the perpetrator's motivation for victimising

an individual, that is to place a person in a defenceless position. Finally, (4), intent can refer to the extent of harm that the perpetrator intends to do to the target. Hence, motivations for exposing someone to bullying behaviour vary greatly and can include enhancing one's own self-esteem, demonstrating superiority, increasing power etc. (Einarsen et al., 2011).

While the above concerns a discussion about the perpetrators' intent, it is also important to consider that individuals experience similar events differently and may have different perceptions of what is face-to-face bullying behaviour (Hoel & Einarsen, 2011). This complexity is revealed in a qualitative study by D'Cruz and Noronha (2010), which shows that the targeted individuals acknowledge the bullying behaviour firstly in hindsight. Thus, bullying is essentially a subjective experience. In a similar way, work organisations are embedded in organisational cultures and norms. This means that what is perceived as acceptable behaviour in one work organisation may be perceived as deviant and potentially hostile behaviour in other work organisations. Considering the above discussion, intent is problematic to address in the bullying research.

Terminology of bullying behaviours

There is a plethora of terms to describe face-to-face bullying. The variety of terminology includes: mobbing (Leymann, 1996), workplace bullying (Hoel & Cooper, 2001), harassment (Björkqvist et al., 1994; Brodsky, 1976), workplace aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996), emotional abuse (Keashly, 1997) and incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). These constructs have both distinguishing features and overlaps (Hershcovis, 2011). Additionally, the concept of counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB) has been introduced as an umbrella term for the variety of harmful behaviours in the workplace (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001). CWB subsumes, in part or whole, similar constructs. More important, CWB emphasises the relationship between different constructs by pointing out the different levels of aggressions involved (Namie, 2003). For instance, *incivility* in the workplace, manifested as a low deviant behaviour such as rudeness

and disregard of others (Fox & Lituchy, 2012), may escalate into more intense forms of aggression such as face-to-face bullying (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Leiter, 2013; Namie, 2003). Under the umbrella of CWB, face-to-face bullying can be placed in the middle of a continuum where incivility is a milder form of workplace aggression and where workplace violence is the most severe form of them all (Namie, 2003).

When introducing face-to-face bullying in working life as a research concept, Leymann (1996) proposed the term *mobbing* instead of bullying. According to Leymann (1996), mobbing is a more suitable term to describe the ‘sophisticated’ aggressive behaviour associated with bullying in working life, i.e. subtle and less direct forms of aggressions. Although differences exist regarding the physical or psychological aggression they contain, many of the constructs reflect the same or similar phenomenon as introduced by Leymann. Mobbing, bullying and harassment are used interchangeably by some researchers, and to some extent the constructs are largely a result of cultural preferences that vary between countries (Einarsen et al., 2011). Thus, the American-coined terms *workplace aggression* and *emotional abuse* reflect the American research tradition of focusing on the perpetrator rather than on the target as has been the tradition among European researchers (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Workplace incivility, on the other hand, proceeds from the above terminology as it primarily describes a low-intensity deviant behaviour (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Workplace incivility can be directed towards the organisation, such as systematically leaving the workplace early or wasting organisational resources, or towards another individual for instance by gossiping, blaming of others (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011) or taking credit for other colleagues’ work (Fox & Lituchy, 2012). As many of the negative behaviours comprising workplace incivility have similarities to negative behaviour in face-to-face bullying, the major conceptual difference between workplace incivility and face-to-face bullying is related to the lower intensity and lack of conscious intent associated with

workplace incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Fox & Lituchy, 2012; Kowalski, Toth & Morgan, 2018).

Harassment is also a term with multiple meanings. While harassment can include behaviours associated with face-to-face bullying such as scapegoating, name calling, and physical abuse (Brodsky, 1976), sexual harassment is often treated as a distinctive form of harassment. *Sexual harassment* involves ‘utilizing sexuality as a means of oppression’ (Björkqvist et al., 1994, p. 174) and focuses on non-consensual sexual behaviour. Thus, sexual harassment diverges from most definitions of bullying as it does not necessarily encompass a persistent and repeated behaviour. Although sexual harassment can be conducted as a pattern of negative behaviour, one-time offences are also considered as sexual harassment from a legal point of view (Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003).

Prevalence rates and ways of measuring bullying

Previous research shows extensive variation in the prevalence of face-to-face bullying both between and within countries (Agervold, 2007; Nielsen et al., 2009). While Scandinavian countries show a prevalence rate for face-to-face bullying between 3.5 per cent and 16 per cent (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001) a Turkish study reports the prevalence of face-to-face bullying among white-collar workers as 51 per cent (Bilgel, Aytac & Bayram, 2006).

The wide variations in prevalence rates have been explained with reference to cultural differences within countries such as power distance, egalitarianism and masculine/female values (Agervold, 2007; Hofstede, 2001), as well as methodological differences (Nielsen et al., 2009). Indeed, variations in measuring bullying contribute to an inconsistency in prevalence rates between studies (Ybarra, boyd, Korchmaros & Oppenheim, 2012). As is further discussed in chapter 4, conservative methods of measuring exposure to workplace bullying include asking the respondent directly if he or she has been exposed to bullying and/or measuring perceived exposure to specific bullying behaviours listed by the researcher (Nielsen, Mathiesen & Einarsen, 2010).

The first approach, often referred to as the *self-labelling method*, is occasionally complemented with a definition. Presenting a definition and including the word bullying tends to impact the prevalence rate negatively (Ybarra et al., 2012). Thus, being a target of bullying is often associated with feelings of shame, which can create a resistance to recognising the label (Felblinger, 2008; Lewis, 2004). Thus, the label bullied may threaten self-esteem as it can indicate signs of weakness (Van Beest & Williams, 2006).

The second approach, operationalised by giving the respondents an inventory of negative behaviours identified with bullying, shows variety in defining criteria for when an individual is regarded as bullied. Leymann (1996) suggested at least one negative act on a weekly basis with a reporting period over 6 months in order to label the negative behaviour as bullying. The rationale of the criterion is to differentiate bullying from short-term personal conflicts (Agervold, 2007). However, frequency varies among studies from weekly to monthly or occasional exposure, while periods of exposure can range from 6 to 12 months to anytime in the respondent's working life (Agervold, 2007). As not all bullying is episodic in nature, applying a cut-off criterion can be problematic.

Explanations for face-to-face bullying

There have been several attempts to identify antecedents of face-to-face bullying. Within the quantitative research tradition that primarily investigate face-to-face bullying by the use of statistical methods, antecedents to face-to-face bullying are foremost investigated on an organisational level. This research has led to the development of the *work environment hypothesis* that has a strong position in explaining face-to-face bullying today (e.g., Agervold, 2009; Baillien & De Witte, 2009; Einarsen, 2000; Leymann, 1996). Although to a lesser extent, researchers have also emphasised individual factors to explain the occurrence of face-to-face bullying. This research focuses on the characteristics of the perpetrator and the targeted individual (e.g., Coyne, Segine & Randall, 2000). However, as face-to-face bullying in working life is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon consisting of an interplay of factors (Einarsen,

1999; Hoel & Cooper, 2001; Zapf, 1999), there are also conceptual frameworks that integrate organisational and individual factors (Baillien, Neyens, De Witte & De Cuyper, 2009). Moreover, social antecedents related to group dynamics, situational factors and social relations are either interwoven in the above perspectives or considered on their own. In the latter case, it is mainly studies in the qualitative research tradition that have contributed to the research area (e.g., Svensson, 2010; Thylefors, 1987).

The work environment hypothesis

The work environment hypothesis is strongly associated with the research by Leymann (1996). According to Leymann, face-to-face bullying emerges in poor work environments and anyone exposed to such circumstances runs a potential risk of becoming a target of face-to-face bullying. Indeed, research has shown that a poor work environment is an important explanation for bullying (Einarsen et al., 1994; Vartia, 1996; Zapf et al., 1996). Risk factors related to organisational change, role conflicts, job insecurity, workload, role ambiguity, frequency of conflicts, lack social support from colleagues, a tyrannical and laissez-faire leadership have proven to be strong predictors of face-to-face bullying (Baillien & De Witte, 2009; Baillien, De Witte & Nevens, 2008; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007). These work stressors can be directly perceived as face-to-face bullying, or indirectly as the stressors can create situations that increase the risks of conflicts occurring. For instance, stressful work environments where the individuals have little or no influence over their own work are suggested to create situations where face-to-face bullying can develop (Einarsen et al., 1994; Leymann, 1996), and create a work environment that may elicit conflicts with bullying as an outcome (Salin & Hoel, 2011).

Originating in stress research, Karasek's (1979) job demand-control model emphasises that *high-strained jobs* characterised by high job demands and low job control will lead to high strain on employees. The job demand-control model emphasises that the level of influence over decisions and control over workload may impact how demands are handled by individuals. When an individual experiences high demands but little or no control, the situation is

regarded as particularly stressful (Boswell, Olson-Buchanan & LePine, 2004). In line with the job demand-control model, little control over work in combination with a high-pressure work environment could be argued to create frustration among employees that triggers counterproductive work behaviour such as face-to-face bullying. Various studies have found that stressors like those identified in the job demand-control model are related to face-to-face bullying. Among these is a study by Vartia (1996) who found that in workplaces where employees lack possibilities to influence matters concerning work had a strong association with the occurrence of face-to-face bullying. A more recent study by Baillien, De Cuyper and De Witte (2011) showed that low job autonomy, that is, a limited mandate for employees to make decisions about work activities, was associated with being a target of face-to-face bullying. Similarly, in Baillien et al. (2008), lack of job autonomy was identified as one important job-related risk factors in face-to-face bullying.

Another important factor in the understanding of face-to-face bullying is social support. Various studies show that low social support at work, that is, lack of resources provided by significant others in the workplace, is a risk factor that can trigger the occurrence of face-to-face bullying behaviour (Baillien et al., 2009; Cassidy, McLaughlin & McDowell, 2014; Zapf et al., 1996). However, while empirical studies have shown that a supportive work environment can help to mitigate the negative effects of face-to-face bullying (Einarsen et al., 1994; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Quine, 1999), many targets of face-to-face bullying perceive themselves as being ignored, minimised and not believed when raising their concerns with their manager, colleagues or the human resources department (Keashly, 2001; Lewis & Orford, 2005).

Also crucial in the understanding of face-to-face bullying is the organisational climate in the workplace. Organisational climate can be defined as *'those behaviours and attitudinal characteristics of people that are accessible to external observers'* (Dallner, 2000, p. 35) and can be seen in the contexts of the social climate of a workplace. Brodsky (1976) pointed out that face-to-face bullying in

working life only exists in an organisational culture that permits and rewards it. This notion is supported in more recent research which suggests that face-to-face bullying is only prevalent in work environments where employees and managers feel that they have support from higher levels of management to engage in bullying behaviour (Einarsen, 1999). Similar reasoning about organisational tolerance is put forward by Salin (2003b), stating that if the chance of getting away with face-to-face bullying is high the likelihood increases that the members of the organisation get involved in bullying behaviour. Hence, the social climate in the workplace has commonly been reported as one important contribution to the emergence of face-to-face bullying (Agervold, 2009; Agervold & Mikkelsen 2004; Baillien et al., 2008; Einarsen et al., 1994). Vartia (1996), among others, has shown that face-to-face bullying is prevalent in workplaces described as sullen, strained, competitive and with an authoritarian management style.

The person-centred hypothesis

The individual perspective focuses on personality traits of the target and the perpetrator (Coyne, Seigne & Randall, 2000) and is commonly referred to as *the person-centred hypothesis*. This research shows that those engaging in face-to-face bullying tend to be more competitive, assertive, aggressive and confrontational than those who do not engage in face-to-face bullying (Coyne et al., 2000). Moreover, research focusing on the social and mental profile of the targets of face-to-face bullying put forward personality traits such as being less independent, less extroverted, less stable, and more conscientious than non-targets (Coyne et al., 2000). Individual antecedents of face-to-face bullying are less researched as well as more controversial than organisational antecedents. This line of research has been firmly rejected by researchers such as Leymann (1996), who argue that such explanations risk blaming the target. Moreover, an important critique against research that seeks explanations for face-to-face bullying by focusing on the individual is the inevitable factor that targets' personalities may have changed as a result of long-term exposure to bullying behaviour (Leymann, 1996).

The social interactionist perspective on bullying

Psychological characteristics of the target and perpetrator may indirectly be present in the analyses of antecedents on other levels, such as on a social or group level. In contrast to the psychological explanations, *the social interactionist perspective* recognises situational and interpersonal factors and emphasises the interplay between actors involved in face-to-face bullying including targets, perpetrators and bystanders (Neuman et al., 2011). For instance, while the target's personality may affect the choice of coping strategies (Einarsen et al., 2011), the responses of the target may further contribute to an escalation or prevention of the bullying behaviour by the perpetrators (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004).

The social interactionist perspective is primarily explored by other researchers than those within the quantitative research tradition (Svensson, 2010). Among these are Thylefors (1987) who in her book *Scapegoats* describes bullying as a witch-hunting process. According to Thylefors, a witch-hunting process is evoked by an individual that constitutes an actual or imaginary threat towards other organisational members. Thylefors (1987) uses the example of norm breaking within a workplace to illustrate this threat. Leaving the workplace early or working too efficiently are both examples of behaviour that in some organisational cultures may deviate from the norm. Thus, Thylefors argues against the notion of a certain target personality and argues that the target often is a less powerful individual that serve as a container for other organisational members' frustration and anger. By using the term scapegoat Thylefors (1987) describes the target's social function in the workplace to relieve tensions of the other members of the group.

Gender and workplace hierarchy

As stated previously, central to the understanding of bullying are the power relations involved between the perpetrator and the targeted individual. As organisational power differences often are embedded in power relations on a societal level (Salin, 2003b) studies on face-to-face bullying often include gender in their analysis. Most studies do this from a gender-neutral perspective (Keashly, Fox & Lituchy, 2012; Salin & Hoel, 2013) where gender is considered as

a demographic variable and where the term 'gender' is often used interchangeably with 'biological sex' (Keashly et al., 2012; Salin, 2003a; Salin & Hoel, 2013). How and why gender matters is less investigated in the literature on face-to-face bullying, and the same is true of the relationship between gender, power and bullying (Salin, 2003a). While sex primarily points to biological differences between men and women, the concept of gender refers to historical, cultural and social constructions of gender (Lorber, 1993). From a gendered perspective the term gender includes social status and is constantly negotiated and defined in interactions with others (Keashly et al., 2012). The way that gender is applied in this thesis follows the conventional understanding of gender in the literature on face-to-face bullying. However, gender is analysed in this thesis in relation to organisational power in order to distinguish between the different experience men and women may have on holding power in working life.

Empirical studies on men's and women's different exposure to face-to-face bullying show a mix of results (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). While some studies indicate no gender differences in victimisation by face-to-face bullying (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Leymann, 1996), other studies show women to be more likely targets of face-to-face bullying than men (Björkqvist et al., 1994; O'Connell, Calvert & Watson, 2007). Applying a managerial perspective on men and women's exposure to face-to-face bullying adds to the understanding of gender influences. For instance, a study by Hoel et al. (2001) found that women were more likely to be bullied face-to-face in management positions while men were more likely to be bullied face-to-face as workers or supervisors. Thus, the study reports an extra vulnerability for women in senior management position (Hoel et al., 2001). Moreover, in her study on business professionals Salin (2003b) found that while women were bullied face-to-face by managers, colleagues and subordinates, men were only bullied by the first two categories and not by subordinates. These findings indicate that power in working life is not only derived from organisational position but also from status on a societal level (Keashly et al., 2012). This can for instance be explained by the higher visibility of women in minority positions

(Zapf et al., 2011). Being in a deviant position, it is argued that women managers often have to defend themselves against constructions of being less competent than their male counterparts (Ely, 1995; Holgersson, 2003) which gives women managers little room for manoeuvre (Kanter, 1977).

In a broader social order and within workplaces, power is often biased towards men and masculine values of power and control (Keashly et al., 2012; Lee, 2002). Feminist scholars such as Nicolson (2015) state that although more women are entering working life and taking up managerial positions, women often have different experiences than men of holding power in working life. According to Nicolson (2015), being in a minority position within a patriarchal organisational culture, women managers often experience a need to distance themselves from other women in junior positions in order to get validation from male colleagues. This in turn can contribute to feelings of isolation and loneliness among women in managerial positions (Nicolson, 2015). The process of isolation is important in the discussion of bullying, as previous research has shown that lack of social support from colleagues and managers in the work organisation is related to exposure to face-to-face bullying (Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996).

The weak position women managers often experience may prevent them from being included in a *homosocial practice* (Lipman-Blumen, 1976) in the workplace, i.e. turning to other women for help and support. The concept of homosocial practice is used to describe men's preference for other men and to explain why men dominate powerful positions in the workplace and society. The concept has also been used to describe relationships between women (e.g., Höök, 2001; Sörensdotter, 2008). In order for women to be included in the homosocial practices it is important that they contribute to a positive impact on the group's standing (Lipman-Blumen, 1976). However, as being a target of bullying often is associated with weakness and shame (Felblinger, 2008; Lewis, 2004), bullying can be argued to have the opposite effect. Instead, studies have shown that women tend to bully other women more often than they target men (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Hoel et al., 2001;

Rayner, 1997). This pattern is often explained with reference to gender co-presence, which suggests that due to a gender-segregated labour market it is also likely that women are more exposed to face-to-face bullying by women (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Leymann, 1996).

Same-gender face-to-face bullying is not as frequently reported among men. Although the same tendencies exist, men target women to a larger extent than women target men (Zapf et al., 2011). Another explanation why women bully women is put forward by Lutgen-Sandvik, Dickinson and Foss (2012), who argue that oppressed groups develop horizontal aggression as a way to rise in masculine hierarchies. Hence, bullying others in a similar position can be explained as a way of distancing oneself from their disassociated status and performing an identity in line with masculine values (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2012).

The phenomenon of cyberbullying

While cyberbullying among children and adolescents has been researched for almost two decades (Slonje, Smith & Frisén, 2013), the awareness of cyberbullying among adults has been more sparse so far. The increased interest in cyberbullying in working life is likely related to the fact that more and more work-related communication is conducted digitally. Among the first to address cyberbullying in working life were Privitera and Campbell (2009) who have studied the prevalence of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying among male manufactory workers in Australia. In this pioneer research, the authors found evidence for cyberbullying at a prevalence rate of 11 per cent. More recently, Kowalski et al. (2018) investigated cyberbullying among workers in the United States and found that 24 per cent of the respondents experienced their first incident of cyberbullying in their adulthood. Among this group, cyberbullying was primarily reported to take place on social network sites, followed by instant messaging, email and mobile phone communication.

Overall, studies investigating cyberbullying in working life indicate a variation in prevalence rates, ranging from 9 to 24 per cent (Ba-

rich, 2005; Brack & Caltabiano, 2014; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Kowalski et al. 2018). In this thesis (see Study I) the prevalence rate for self-labelled cyberbullying is reported as 0.7 per cent while 9.7 per cent can be categorised as cyberbullied in accordance with Leymann's cut-off criterion of weekly exposure to negative acts the last six months. As previously discussed in this chapter, extensive variations in prevalence rates in bullying have been explained with references to cultural differences (Hofstede, 2001) as well as methodological inconsistency in measuring exposure. Moreover, variations in reporting periods (6 to 12 months), and the defining criteria for when a person is being bullied (from weekly exposure to at least 2 to 3 times during the previous year) contribute to the variations in reported prevalence rates.

While studies on bullying in general shows variations concerning demographic characteristics, e.g. gender, occupation and/or age of the respondents, which limits comparisons across studies, studies on cyberbullying also vary regarding the digital communication channels that are included. Some studies on cyberbullying include a variety of technological media such as text messaging, phone calls, chat rooms, instant messaging, website, social network sites (Sprigg et al., 2012; Brack & Caltabiano, 2014; Privitera & Campbell, 2009), while other studies concentrate on a specific medium such as email (Baruch, 2005).

Examples of cyberbullying behaviour

Proceeding from Willard's (2007) research on cyberbullying among children and adolescents, Kowalski et al. (2012) outline a number of behaviours they argue constitute cyberbullying, namely flaming, cyber harassment, denigration, ostracism, cyberstalking, impersonation, outing and trickery, sexting and happy slapping. *Flaming* refers to a type of behaviour that emerges as a brief, intense exchange between two or more people, often on public online forums. A flame starts with a series of insulting exchanges and while it often occurs between individuals in equally strong positions, the flaming argument then often escalates into a situation where the insults and/or fear of insults creates a power imbalance between the individuals involved. Harassment, or *cyber harassment* as it is

often referred to, implies the activity of repeatedly and persistently sending offensive messages to a specific target. Cyber harassment is most frequent in personal communication channels such as email but also prevails on public forums (Kowalski et al., 2012). With *denigration*, Kowalski et al. (2012) refers to the activity of spreading untrue or cruel statements about another person online. Denigration involves the use of text, images and/or videos to distribute false and derogatory information about a certain person. *Ostracism* refers to the social exclusion of another person. Ostracism can occur in any password-protected online community and in digital environments where users need an accepted contact request to get access. Online ostracism can also involve the behaviour of defriending a person on Facebook, thereby excluding that person from the social interaction (Kowalski et al., 2012). *Cyberstalking* refers to the activity of using electronic communication to stalk another person. Stalking often involves the spread of fear by persistent threats, harassment and annoying treatment, for instance by sending multiple email messages to an individual. With *impersonation*, Kowalski et al. (2012) means situations where the perpetrator gets access to the target's email/Facebook/Instagram accounts and communicating negative information to others in the target's name. *Outing and trickery* refer to situations where the perpetrator tricks the target to share personal and embarrassing information about themselves to others online. *Sexting* refers to sending nude pictures or videos through digital means. Lastly, Kowalski et al. (2012) discuss the phenomenon of *happy slapping*, that is, when a perpetrator video record assaults on a target and shares it on the Internet for others to watch.

The unique features of cyberbullying

The specific context within which cyberbullying occurs has triggered a discussion among scholars about whether cyberbullying should be understood as a phenomenon different from face-to-face bullying or not (Dooley, Pyżalski & Cross, 2009; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Vranjes et al., 2017; Englander et al., 2017). Considering the new type of behaviours and social contexts emerging with cyberbullying, researchers point out the specific character of cyberbullying (Kowalski et al., 2012;

Slonje & Smith, 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). Drawing on empirical literature about cyberbullying among children and adolescents, Dooley et al. (2009) argue that although those who engage in cyberbullying and face-to-face often overlap, cyberbullying has distinct features.

A central feature of cyberbullying is the *accessibility* embodied in digital communication (Kowalski et al., 2012). Digital contents in cyberbullying are accessible for perpetrators and bystanders to copy, paste and forward. Moreover, accessibility emphasises the intrusive nature of cyberbullying and the ability of digital communication to access the targeted individual 24/7. In contrast to face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying behaviours do not necessarily stop when the workday is over. Rather, the digital communication enables the cyberbullying messages to be forwarded to the targeted individual at places not traditionally associated with the perpetrator. This includes the target's home environment that is often seen as a safe haven by targets of face-to-face bullying. Thus, cyberbullying is often perceived as an intensive form of bullying that leaves the target little room to hide or recover from the cyberbullying acts.

Another central feature, frequently discussed in the literature on cyberbullying, is the importance of *repetition* (Slonje & Smith, 2008). While most researchers on face-to-face bullying argue for the necessity for negative acts to occur repeatedly in order to be labelled bullying, the nature of repetition has been questioned in cyberbullying. Slonje and Smith (2008) use the example of photo/video clip bullying in order to put forward their concerns about repetition in cyberbullying. A photo or video may only be taken or recorded once, but digital devices enable the content to be forwarded repeatedly to other individuals. Additionally, if the photo or clip is uploaded on social media every hit on the page may be counted as repetition. Hence, some scholars argue for the irrelevance of repetition in cyberbullying relative to the seriousness of the actions (e.g., Langos, 2012; Dooley et al., 2009).

Langos (2012) differentiates between direct bullying in private communication by text or email, with indirect bullying taking

place in public communication on blogs, or social media platforms. In the latter case, Langos (2012) contends that the element of repetition is already embedded in the media, therefore not necessary to apply as a defining criterion. According to Langos (2012), bullying behaviour on such sites can remain public for an indefinite time, viewed repeatedly, saved and reposted. Due to the permanence of cyberbullying and the large and infinitive audience on social media and its boundary-blurred nature, some researchers (e.g., Coyne et al., 2017; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Dooley et al., 2009) argue that cyberbullying may have worse and more long lasting social and emotional effects on targets of cyberbullying compared with targets of face-to-face bullying.

While the above describes how previous assumptions about face-to-face bullying are challenged due to the digital communication, it has also been suggested that the technology itself fuels online negative behaviour. Often discussed within the literature on children's and adolescents' exposure to cyberbullying is the perpetrators ability to conduct cyberbullying behaviour anonymously. In their study on children's engagement in cyberbullying Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) found that young people were more willing to engage in bullying behaviour online than offline due to the anonymity provided by the Internet. Eliminating the risk of confrontation, the anonymity online may instigate people to bully. Researchers argue that online communication has a *disinhibiting effect* on its users, i.e. that users express themselves more openly online and say things they would not do if their identity was known (Kowalski et al., 2012; Suler, 2004).

However, due to the ability to detect computers' IP addresses, users are in fact seldom anonymous online. Nonetheless, a *dissociative anonymity* stemming from the user's ability to conceal information about themselves when communicating online can still have a disinhibiting effect that may amplify the behaviour among users (Suler, 2004). Moreover, faceless communication in digital interaction may give the users a sense of invisibility. When social cues are absent (e.g. body language, vocal tone) the receivers' responses and reactions also remain hidden for other people to observe. Thus,

Slonje and Smith (2008) argue that perpetrators' and bystanders' unawareness of the targets negative reactions give them less opportunities to develop empathy and less motivation for bystanders to intervene.

Defining cyberbullying

Several definitions of cyberbullying have been proposed. One early but often used definition of cyberbullying originating from the youth literature is the definition of Slonje and Smith (2008, p. 376). The authors describe cyberbullying as:

An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly, and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.

As the definition involves components that highlight bullying as an aggressive, repetitive behaviour that involves a power imbalance, the definition closely mirrors earlier definitions of face-to-face bullying. However, in Slonje and Smith's (2008) definition, intent to harm is included as a defining criterion for cyberbullying. As discussed previously, intent to harm has shown to be problematic to assess in the research on face-to-face bullying. In cyberbullying, intent to harm has been argued to be even more difficult to interpret due to the lack of nuances in the digital communication (Englander et al., 2017; Farley, Coyne, Axtell & Sprigg, 2016).

As research has progressed, definitions that involve a work life context have been developed as well as definitions that in more nuanced ways than before capture the unique aspects of cyberbullying. Drawn from a work life context, Farley et al. (2016) propose a definition of cyberbullying where the essential difference vis-à-vis face-to-face bullying lies in the medium by which it occurs. Thus, the authors state that although exposure to cyberbullying and to face-to-face bullying may be experienced differently, cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying are conceptually similar. In their definition, cyberbullying is described as:

A situation where over time, an individual is repeatedly subjected to perceived negative acts conducted through technology

(e.g. phone, email, web sites and social media) which are related to their work context. In this situation the target of workplace cyberbullying has difficulty defending him or herself against these actions. (p. 6)

Farley et al. (2016) suggest that despite its differences from face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying is still characterised by power imbalance and repetition.

In a recent definition of cyberbullying proposed by Vranjes et al. (2017), the authors elaborate on the importance of repetition in cyberbullying. Accordingly, the authors posit that cyberbullying can be repeatedly conducted, but single episodes can also be defined as bullying if the negative behaviour forms an intrusion into the target's private life and has a potential of being exposed to a large audience.

All negative behavior stemming from the work context and occurring through the use of ICTs, which is either (a) carried out repeatedly and over a period of time or (b) conducted at least once but forms an intrusion into someone's private life, (potentially) exposing it to a wide online audience. This behavior leaves the target feeling helpless and unable to defend. (p. 326)

This thesis encompasses all three presented definitions as each of the included studies defines cyberbullying differently. Considering the progress in research on cyberbullying in working life from the time when research for this thesis started in 2013 until the present day, the conceptual understanding of cyberbullying has developed. Thus, applying different definitions in the included studies reflects the development overall.

Hence, the overarching understanding of cyberbullying in this thesis embraces a perspective that leans towards the latter proposed definition, developed by Vranjes et al. (2017). Because of the digital context, I argue along with Vranjes et al. (2017) that also single episodes can be viewed as cyberbullying. Contrary to Vranjes et al. (2017), however, my own understanding is not necessarily restricted to acts that constitute an intrusion into someone's private life. Rather, I argue that the online context is inherently different from the context offline. Cyberbullying involves a spatial transformation to a digital space that differs from physical spaces, and this in-

cludes the perception of time. Hence, a characteristic of communication in digital spaces is the speed with which it can be performed. The potentially large audience on many social media platforms, in combination with a language structure that enables instant responses, can create particularly intense situations. Within a short space of time, a very large group of people can comment on or in other ways express their opinion of a certain posts. Thus, a relatively brief but intense situation on social media can create traumatic events with long-last consequences for the targeted individual's health and/or career. This is revealed in Study II of this thesis, which describes how one status update by the informant creates an intense situation of flaming (i.e. a brief, heated online exchange between two or more people) on Facebook. While the flaming situation last for four intense days, it has long-lasting social and emotional consequences for the target. In these situations, traditional operationalisation of repetition (e.g., Leymann's criteria of weekly exposure to bullying over a period of six months) may fall short in capturing cyberbullying. Moreover, the architecture of the Internet created by certain algorithms can make single posts, for instance on Facebook, repeatedly displayed for a wide audience. Considering this, this thesis rests in the assumption that single episodes with traumatic consequences can also be regarded as bullying. This discussion is brought up and expanded in chapter 6.

Consequences of cyberbullying

There is a growing number of studies on cyberbullying in working life that show negative implications related to the targeted individual's health (Coyne et al., 2017; Muhonen et al., 2017), including stress (Snyman & Loh, 2015) and mental strain (Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell & Subramanian, 2015). Research has also shown that cyberbullying is related to decreased job satisfaction (Coyne et al., 2017). In their study among university employees in the UK, Coyne et al. (2017) found a stronger relationship between cyberbullying and job dissatisfaction compared to face-to-face bullying. The authors explain the higher impact of cyberbullying as a consequence of the intrusive nature involved and its capability to haunt the targeted individual outside the workplace and beyond regular working hours.

In line with these findings, qualitative studies by D'Cruz and Noronha (2013) and Heatherington and Coyne (2017) emphasise the boundarylessness nature of cyberbullying. In their study of IT workers in India, D'Cruz and Noronha (2013) describe how exposure to cyberbullying behaviour tends to go beyond the physical workplace and into the target's home and include relationships from the target's private sphere such as family members and significant others. Similarly, in their qualitative study on cyberbullying in the UK, Heatherington and Coyne (2017) stress that the target's boundaries between work and home were perceived as transgressed when they were harassed while at home. This violation of boundaries is, according to the authors, a contributing factor to the target's negative experiences of cyberbullying.

Work-related cyberbullying and third parties

Most literature on face-to-face bullying in working life concerns the relationship between managers, colleagues and subordinates within the work organisation. Less attention has been paid to organisational members' relationship with 'third parties' such as clients, students, patients, pupils. With digital communication, however, third parties can target professionals more easily than before. This includes *customer cyberbullying* (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014), which refers to aggressive behaviours from customers directed towards front-line employees. In customer bullying where the relationship between employee and third party often is short-lived, the situations that occur are not always conceptually consistent with traditional understandings of bullying. Farley, Coyne and D'Cruz (2017), however, meet this criticism by highlighting the different context online and how power imbalance and repetition in these environments has come to change.

Thus, with social media new ways of imposing power and equalising power relations appear. For instance, research on cyberbullying among children and adolescents has suggested that power can be gained due to the technological skills of the perpetrator and anonymous interaction, and that powerlessness experienced by the target occurs when not having control over the cyberbullying content

spread on social media (Dooley et al., 2009). Besides the power of 'shaming' someone publicly online, social media can also be used for protesting and for collective mobilisation.

For all sectors that include long-term relationships with third parties there is a potential for bullying behaviour to develop (Farley, 2017). For human service organisations (HSOs) such as schools, nurseries, hospitals and social service agencies, client-worker relations are the core activity (Hasenfeld, 2009). Through education, social service, medical care etc., HSOs aim to alter, reshape and transform people's attributes (Hasenfeld, 2009). The crucial role HSOs play in many people's lives makes the client-worker relations within HSOs deeply embedded in power structures. This is manifested, for instance, in the HSO workers' control over resources, position to diagnose patients or grade students' performances. However, despite the asymmetric power relations, clients/students/patients can impose different strategies to influence decision making.

Reports on teachers' vulnerability to cyberbullying from pupils have been noted in media as well as in research. A study among primary and lower secondary school teachers in Finland by Kauppi and Pörhölä (2015) showed that 7.6 per cent of the teachers experienced cyberbullying (e.g. posting of abusive writings or photos) from pupils at least occasionally. Moreover, a study among faculty members of a university in Canada by Cassidy, Faucher and Jackson (2014) reported that 12 per cent of the faculty members had experienced cyberbullying from students the last 12 months. According to the authors, most commonly reported was cyberbullying through email, followed by course-related sites, blogs, forums and chats, and a professor-rating site. When explaining the motives, the targets reported the cyberbullying behaviour as being due to teaching-related reasons such as grading of students, teaching style or course content. For female faculty members, however, gender and age were also reported as a reason why they thought the cyberbullying occurred (Cassidy et al., 2014).

Antecedents of cyberbullying in working life

So far, there are few studies that investigate antecedents of cyberbullying in working life (Farley et al., 2017). Those studies investigating antecedents of cyberbullying in working life are to a large extent influenced by the face-to-face bullying research and the work environment hypothesis. Among these, a study by Gardner et al. (2016), investigating predictors of working life bullying found that a non-supportive organisational climate increased levels of both cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. This is in line with the results of this thesis (see Study III) which show that social climate in the workplace predicts exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for men and women managers, men and women non-managers.

In Gardner et al. (2016), differences regarding the two forms of bullying were also found by reporting that a destructive leadership and team conflicts predicted face-to-face bullying but not cyberbullying. The authors discuss this finding as a consequence of the fact that cyberbullying can be conducted in a way where the negative acts are invisible to others. Important to note, however, is that they also found that individuals in managerial position were more exposed to cyberbullying than other employee groups. Thus, their study may indicate that employees are more prone to cyberbully 'upwards', i.e. targeting the management when bullying occurs online.

In this thesis a similar indication is found. Study I shows that individuals in supervisory positions are more often targets of cyberbullying than other employee groups and that men are exposed to cyberbullying, as measured by the CBQ, to a higher degree than women. Interesting to note is that the same gender differences were not observed among the respondents who were bullied face-to-face. Differences regarding gender and organisational position when predicting exposure to cyberbullying are also demonstrated in Study III of this thesis. In this study, women managers show a different pattern from men managers, women and men non-managers. For instance, only for women managers was low sup-

port from colleagues significantly related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour.

In digital contexts other motivations for engaging in cyberbullying may emerge that are different from face-to-face bullying. In their conceptual study on cyberbullying in working life, Vranjes et al. (2017) propose a model which they call the *Emotion Reaction Model* in order to explain the occurrence of cyberbullying. According to the authors, confrontation with workplace stressors such as organisational change and team conflict give rise to emotions such as anger, fear and sadness, and these in turn may fuel cyberbullying behaviour. The model further suggests that control appraisal and emotion regulation can moderate the relationship between stressors and cyberbullying.

Summary

This chapter has given a brief overview of the research area of face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying. While the two forms of bullying have been discussed separately, there are many similarities between face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying. This may be related to the fact that most studies on face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying stem from the same research tradition and that similar types of questions are addressed in the research. Moreover, both face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying concern power and powerlessness, social exclusion and dominance.

Also discussed in this chapter are the specific features of cyberbullying that distinguish cyberbullying from face-to-face bullying. While some researchers suggest that the essential difference between face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying lies in the medium by which it occurs (e.g., Farley et al., 2016) it can also be argued that the medium may instigate bullying behaviour. Besides the new type of bullying behaviour and perpetrators emerging with cyberbullying in working life, it can also be argued that digital spaces create psychological conditions that shape the users' mental life and social interaction. While face-to-face bullying often tends to find causes for its existence in the work organisation, the characteristic of the perpetrator and the targeted individual and the social group, ex-

planations for cyberbullying may also be found in the digital spaces where the cyberbullying behaviour occurs. Thus, in the following chapter, spatial circumstances that may form digital communication and interaction are discussed.

3. NEW SPACES OF INTERACTION, BULLYING IN NEW SPACES

In the introduction, space was introduced as an active element in the production of social relations. It was also suggested that in order to understand cyberbullying it is important to consider the spatial circumstances that create the defining context for the social interaction. Lack of social cues, perception of anonymity, large and infinitive audiences are examples of aspects previously pointed out in the research on cyberbullying as having an impact on the social behaviour involved (e.g., Slonje & Smith 2008; Suler, 2004).

This chapter takes a spatial approach to social interaction on the Internet. The discussion starts off with a theoretical introduction to the concept of space. Thereafter, digital spaces are discussed based on early understandings of cyberspace, before moving on to more contemporary understandings of social life on the Internet. Social interaction within digital space is discussed through the lens of Goffman's (1959) theories on everyday life interaction. While Goffman's concepts are drawn from observations on face-to-face interaction, the writings of Baym (2015) and Marwick and boyd (2011) on the characteristics of the digital space and online interaction are further elaborated on in this chapter.

By distinguishing between interaction and practices conducted online from interaction and practices offline, the concepts of digital and physical spaces are used in this thesis. However, as will be discussed below, the borders between digital and physical spaces are

constantly negotiated and are often perceived today as deeply intertwined (Berg, 2015).

A spatial approach to digitalisation

Space has been an area of interest in research for many years. Among the first scholars to reflect on how space profoundly influences people's mental life was Simmel. In his observations of the metropolitan life at the beginning of the twentieth century, Simmel (1903) describes a space filled with external stimuli that individuals needed to protect themselves from by adopting a blasé outlook and impersonal relations. This mental mode, characterised as an antipathy and distancing in the meeting with the stranger, is described by Simmel (1903) as a rational and necessary reaction to the immense amount of external stimuli in the city. Early metropolitan life, he argued, provided a place where people could liberate themselves from the fixed identities experienced in rural villages. However, anonymity in public spaces also leads to alienation from other people, expressed as impersonal relations and blasé attitudes. Hence, in Simmel's (1903) reflections on the urban space, he contends that spaces create psychological conditions that form people's mental life and social interaction.

Simmel (1903) saw the transformation of social relations as intimately linked to the rapid changes of the metropolitan environments. He regarded urban space and social relations as mutually formed, an understanding which is now commonplace in urban studies. However, the dominating view of space among geographers before the 1950s was merely as a container where social life happens to take place. The focus in this early work lay on describing unique aspects of the particular place and plotting spatial patterns within geographical areas (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011). Beginning in the 1970s, an increasing number of scholars came to shift focus by paying interest to the nature of the space itself. With the concept of *relational space* (e.g., Massey, 1994) spaces were conceived as relational, conditional and actively constructed (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011).

Proceeding from this line of thought, one could argue that the workplace is not only a physical place for a certain function but a place that is given meaning by people's practices, language, behaviour, and memories, and that in turn shapes social relations (e.g., Kitchin & Dodge, 2011). Massey (1994), who is one of the scholars associated with this school of thought, describes the *spatial* as constructed out of multiple relations and across different spatial scales; from the macro scale such as the global economy, to micro scale that includes social relations in the workplace. Hence, the lived world consists of multiple spaces that are cross-cutting and intersecting. Fundamental for this perspective, however, is that social relations and material spaces are shaped dialectically. As social relations according to Massey (1994) are dynamic, space too is ever-shifting. Moreover, as social relations are imbued in power relations, space itself reflects and mediates power relations.

Likewise, Kitchin and Dodge (2011) discuss spaces such as workplaces, homes, neighbourhoods as more than merely a backdrop, arguing that these spaces constitute '*a defining contexts in which relations unfolds*' (p. 65). According to Kitchin and Dodge (2011) social relations are never performed autonomously from space, but space is a '*constitutive element in the production of social relations*' (p. 65).

Kitchin and Dodge (2011) are particularly interested in spaces in relation to software. With their concept *code/space*, Kitchin and Dodge (2011) discuss how software, constructed to solve relational problems and improve people's lives, transduces space and shapes social relations. Thus, space and software are in their view produced through each other. By taking examples from the physical sphere such as the home, Kitchin and Dodge (2011) discuss how the embeddedness of software aimed at promoting functionality, comfort and convenience also offers new ways of undertaking domestic life. The interactivity involved in digital technologies allows people to search for information without leaving the home, to play video games with people located elsewhere, and to work from home while simultaneously being connected with colleagues at work. As an outcome, homes are increasingly being rescaled and

stretched out in space through networks. Thus, Kitchin and Dodge (2011) contend that software reshapes spatiality, encourages people to undertake new activities and routines, and makes traditional understandings of spaces such as the home or the workplace profoundly more complex than before.

Digital space and the agency of people

If digital spaces are important elements in the construction of social relations, does technology have external agency that determines its users' behaviour? *Technological determinism* refers to the tradition of attributing external agency to the technology itself. Hence, this perspective emphasising the ability of technology to transfer its features to those who use them (Baym, 2015). *Social construction of technology*, on the other hand, offers an opposite perspective to technological determinism by postulating that people are the main source for societal and technological change (Baym, 2015). From this perspective, social and cultural factors related to how people communicate, as well as social influence from peers, may impact people's perceptions and attitudes towards technologies and how they are used (Baym, 2015). While Kitchin and Dodge's (2011) understanding of software and space production involves a certain degree of technological determinism, they also argue that spatial activities are '*embodied through the performance and interaction of the people within space*' (p. 73). Another way to describe this relation is that software frames interaction but does not determine it (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011).

The understanding of technological influence in this thesis reflects a middle position taken by Kitchin and Dodge (2011), arguing that both social relations and technological abilities constitute a specific context for cyberbullying behaviour. In line with Baym (2015), it is argued in this thesis that in order to understand how digital media are related to social consequences it is important to understand both the technologies and the social practices around them.

In the same way as work organisations are carriers of conventions of behaviour, norms and values that may influence social behaviour and interaction between organisational members, digital spac-

es can be argued to be embedded in context-specific norms for social interaction. Each digital platform can be argued to have its specific purpose and norms regarding acceptable behaviour. Moreover, each digital platform constitutes a set of technological functions that encourage as well as limit social behaviour. Hence, as is brought up in Study II and further developed in chapter 6, the specific communication technology in use may influence the type of cyberbullying behaviour that occurs.

Contexts for interaction

In the following, a general discussion is held on how the understanding of social life on the Internet has changed from when the Internet first met a wider mass, to understanding of social life on the Internet today. This historical background reveals how digital spaces are ever-changing, negotiated and tested among users (Kitchin & Dodge, 2011). Moreover, it emphasises how previous attitudes and understanding may still impact contemporary understandings and behaviours online (Baym, 2015).

From cyberspace to social network sites

Due to technological developments, conditions for social interaction change rapidly. Fundamental characteristics of the social life on the Internet in the early 1990s, when a wider public started to gain access to the Internet, differs in many aspects from today. Embedded in the early understandings of the Internet is a sense of futurism. This can be illustrated by references to cyberspace, which is a term that grew out of science fiction. Scholars such as Turkle (1995), who was among the first to study the social life on the Internet, portrayed cyberspace as place of opportunity and individual growth. Turkle's (1995) early observations involve a discussion about basic conception of the self. Taking the virtual platform MUD¹ as a starting point, Turkle (1995) studied how users developed online personas and how multiple sides of the self were expressed. As in a social laboratory, the self could be constructed and

¹ MUD is an abbreviation of Multi-User Domain. A MUD is multiplayer real-time virtual world that combines elements of role-playing games, player versus player, interactive fiction, and online chat.

reconstructed. Thus, on these platforms, users constructed virtual personalities that sometimes blurred the boundaries between what was perceived as ‘real’ or ‘authentic’.

From a spatial perspective, it is important to note that digital spaces in these earlier days of the Internet were often conceptualised in opposition to the offline world (Berg, 2012). The emphasis was on the offline world and the possibilities in digital spaces to ‘escape’ the embodied life and explore alter egos essentially different from the user’s persona in the offline world. Crucial for this transformation according to Turkle (1995), was the anonymity offered by many online communities. Thus, it was in the realm of anonymity that users could participate in self-experiments and play in new ways. Similar to Simmel’s (1903) reflection on urban space at the beginning of the twentieth century, anonymity was a crucial aspect in the early theorisation on cyberspace. Anonymity was seen as a positive aspect for social interaction as it provided the users with a sense of safety to explore sides of the self that they were not comfortable to do offline.

Considering that terms and conditions for online interaction are constantly negotiated and developed, much has happened since the Internet first reached a wider public. Social interaction online is dominated today by participation in social network sites such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Indeed, participation in social network sites has for many become a part of everyday life. A yearly market survey from 2016 shows that 58 per cent of all the Internet users in Sweden use social network sites on a daily basis, and among all social network sites Facebook is the one mostly used (Davidsson & Findahl, 2016). Users of social network sites report spending about more than one hour per day on these sites and over half of all Internet users visit social networks daily via their mobile phone (Davidsson & Findahl, 2016).

Social network sites are defined by Ellison and boyd (2013, p. 158) in the following way:

A networked communication platform in which participants (1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users and/or system data; (2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and (3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site.

While one of the fundamental ideas behind social network sites is to make personal networks visible to other members of the site and connect users with each other, anonymity on social network sites is often low (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Thus, the playful elaborations with identity online described by Turkle (1995) change with the deep embeddedness of social network sites in the users' offline identities. The shift in the use of the Internet fundamentally transforms the perception of the digital space as something isolated from everyday life in the physical world. Instead, social network sites are intertwined with the users' offline identities (Murthy, 2012). Moreover, as interaction on sites like Facebook primarily takes place among individuals who already have an established relationship, interaction on social network sites is strongly interlinked with the everyday practices in the physical world (Berg, 2012; Ellison, 2007). The shift in use of the Internet can be illustrated with many media users' rejection of the expression 'in real life' (IRL) with 'away from keyboard' (AFK). While IRL suggests that interaction on the Internet is less real than face-to-face encounters, AFK has become a replacing expression that also indicates that users of the Internet today never log out, merely direct attention elsewhere for a while.

Social interaction in digital spaces

While the fundamental purpose of communication technology is to exchange information without being physically co-present, digital spaces change the perception of time and space (Baym, 2015). When spaces no longer are geographically bounded, users can be co-present in more than one space simultaneously. Moreover, when carrying the smartphone close to the body in a pocket or a handbag, digital spaces are highly accessible. Gergen (2002) uses

the term *absent present* to emphasise how people can be physically present in one space while absorbed in a mediated space elsewhere. According to Gergen (2002) an absent presence makes people as concerned about digital relationships as with the ones they are surrounded with. Thus, the constant access to digital spaces raises important questions about intimacy, relationships and social belonging in our everyday encounters, including work relations.

A similar reflection is present in Turkle's (2011) later book *Alone Together* where she explores the phenomenon of people being physically present in one space while concurrently devoting themselves to different digital spaces. Not being present in the moment may be enhanced by the faceless communication conducted online. Facial gestures, eye contact and body language are replaced in the digital interaction by pressing buttons on a keyboard and watching text being created on the screen. In some senses, digital interaction brings us closer to what Haraway (1990) refers to as cyborgs, i.e. a hybrid of the human and the machine. At once fictional and material, the metaphor of the cyborg used by Haraway is a rejection of any rigid boundaries. Although for most people the understanding of our ourselves as humans remains intact, human qualities such as social awareness may become affected by the close everyday life experience with technology.

Cues filtered out

There have been many attempts to capture the differences between online and face-to-face communication. In the cyberbullying research, the notion of cues filtered out (Culnan & Markus, 1987), emphasising the lack of non-verbal cues in digital communication, is often used when describing the unique features of cyberbullying. As previously discussed in chapter 2, Slonje and Smith (2008) argue that in cyberbullying perpetrators and bystanders are not exposed to the target's negative reactions and therefore they are less able to develop feelings of empathy for the targeted individual. Thus, reduced social cues involve the lack of seeing, hearing and feeling the communicating partner. Additionally, Suler (2004) discusses how a dissociative anonymity stemming from the user's ability to conceal information about themselves when communicating

online has a disinhibiting effect that may amplify the behaviour among users.

While social cues refer to contextual, visual and auditory information that is important in interpreting messages, media platforms vary in what extent social cues can be transmitted (Baym, 2015). For instance, media platforms vary in their way of stimulating interaction among strangers versus interaction among people where a personal relationship is established before the digital interaction. In the latter case, the communicating partners share a relational context, knowledge and history that assists interpretation of messages and compensates for the social cues that are lost in the digital communication (Baym, 2015).

The cues filtered out approach stems from a set of theories in the field of media research that is referred to as *media richness* (Daft & Lengel, 1984) and *social presence* (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). Media richness refers to the medium's capacity for '*resolving ambiguity and uncertainty*' (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). This includes, for instance the immediacy of feedback between communicating partners and the ability to address a specific individual with the message (Walther, 2011). Social presence, on the other hand, refers to the acoustic, visual and physical contact that can be achieved between communication partners and refers to the degree of intimacy and immediacy the media platform supports between users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The social presence and the media richness theories were developed at a time when it was assumed that online communication was less rich than communication face-to-face and therefore impedes social interaction (Baym, 2015). In, contemporary communication technologies, however, photos, graphics, videos, emojis etc., are often included that enable a richer transmission of cues than previous generation of media (Walther, 2011). Nonetheless, social presence and media richness help to distinguish different types of media platforms. Thus, in the discussion of communication in digital spaces it is important to recognise that media technologies possess

diverse interactive tools that have different ways of influencing social interaction (Baym, 2015).

Temporal structure, storage/replicability and reach

In addition to previous discussion about media variation there are other media-specific aspects that may influence the context for interaction. Baym (2015) lists seven key concepts that in different ways influence social interaction online, four of which – temporal structure, storage and replicability, and reach – are discussed in the following section.

Temporal structure is related to social presence and emphasises whether the communication is *asynchronous*, which means that there is a time delay between responses such as in email conversations, or *synchronous*, which refers to communication that is instant, as often in live chat. Live chat takes place when both communication partners are online and, as in face-to-face communication, live chat conversations encourage immediate responses of their interlocutors. Some media platforms such as Facebook offer both asynchronous communication when posting messages on someone's wall and synchronous communication in their chat. In fact, as media platforms can have different temporal structures, it is in practice difficult to tie temporal structure to a specific media (Baym, 2015). Email for instance can, despite its asynchronous structure, be sent and answered with a speed that is perceived of as synchronous by the users.

Still, the distinction between asynchronous and synchronous communication is important as it offers different contexts for communication. Synchronous communication for instance can to a higher extent than asynchronous communication make messages feel immediate, personal and create a feeling of placelessness (Baym, 2015). The time delay offered by asynchronous communication, on the other hand, gives the users time to reflect on their responses before posting the message (Baym, 2015; Murthy, 2012). This offers users control over their answers and their self-presentation, which is a theme that is returned to later on in this chapter. However, in

asynchronous communication there may be less sense of a shared context, and therefore more room for misunderstandings.

Storage and *replicability*, on the other hand, indicate the differences in media regarding the extent to which communicated messages can be stored, replicated, redistributed and/or edited (Baym, 2015). While some synchronous communication is difficult to access after the interaction has taken place, asynchronous communication can be saved and forwarded to others (Baym, 2015). Moreover, information stored on personal websites and blogs can be archived and searched for on the Internet. However, webpages and blogs can also easily be taken down by the administrator and disappear from one day to another.

Reach reflects how media vary in size of audience (Baym, 2015). On social network sites such as Facebook, reach can be understood with regard to the number of friends or followers that users have in their social network. Similar to emailing lists and discussions in online communities and blogs, social network sites have the capacity to reach an extraordinary number of people. Through activities such as sharing, liking or commenting on a message on Facebook, a status update can also become visible to users outside one's own social network. Thus, supported by algorithms, the architecture of social network sites such as Facebook is based on previous activities undertaken by the users and forms the user's newsfeed.

Moreover, there are differences in reach between websites and blogs that are available for all users of the Internet, and other digital communication such as one-to-one email or chat (Baym, 2015). In one-to-one digital conversations, messages have the ability to become available to a larger audience only after a message has been replicated and re-sent (Baym, 2015).

The self from the perspective of social interactionism

As described earlier in the work of Massey (1994) and Kitchin and Dodge (2011), space is understood in this thesis as something that frames and influences social interaction among people. This relationship is however understood as dyadic, i.e. spaces are construct-

ed through the activities and interaction among people within space. Previously in this chapter, different aspects of the context for social interaction in digital spaces have been outlined. In the rest of the chapter, social interaction within spaces will be elaborated. More specifically, the remaining part of this chapter discusses how the self is constructed in social interaction with others.

In media research, the construction of digital identities is a central theme. Within this area of research, Goffman's (1959) theories of everyday life interaction are commonly employed in order to understand how users perform social identities in front of spatially defined audiences. Hence, in this section, Goffman's dramaturgical approach and his conceptual notion of *face* is used in order to understand social interaction within digital spaces. Inspired by sociologists such as Mead and Blumer, much of Goffman's work has its roots in symbolic interactionism (Ritzer, 1996). Thus, actors, action and interaction are in focus in his work.

In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) analyses everyday life social interaction as a performance on a stage. According to Goffman, the individual is a socially interactive construction that in relation to the audience presents an idealised version of her/himself. Formed as a team around the individual, Goffman describes this performance as a joint effort where the co-actors either maintain, enhance or destroy the performance.

Along with Goffman's low attention to cultural factors in the interaction, some of the drama metaphors have been criticised for being lightweight and inconsequential (Smith, 2002). However, some concepts from Goffman's analysis have survived and are commonly used in social science today. In particular, Goffman's understanding of performance has been proven useful to the analyses of the mediated society (Johansson, 1999). Although Goffman's theorisation draws on observations of face-to-face interaction, Goffman's dramaturgical approach is often considered useful in understanding online presentation of the self (Hogan, 2010). Thus, in this section, some of Goffman's key concepts such as *front and backstage regions*, *audience segregation*, *self-presentation* and *face* are used to

explore social-digital contexts within which cyberbullying takes place. Hence, thinking of cyberbullying as a performance in front of an audience that occurs in a given space may enhance the understanding of why people act in a certain way online.

Front and backstage regions and the outside

Considering Goffman's (1959) understanding of social interaction as a performance, Goffman addresses spatiality in relation to audience. Three regions or places are identified by Goffman: the public front stage, the private backstage and the outside. According to Goffman, the front stage region is where the performance is taking place. When on the front stage, actors try to impact the audience's impression of themselves, which includes incorporating the specific norms of the setting. The setting where the social interaction is taking place can be referred to as a stage. Everyone on the stage is an actor as well as an audience to other actors (Lin, Wu & Hsieh, 2009). Together, teams play out a script in line with the norms, rituals, obligations or exactions of that particular setting. In a work life setting, these norms and expectations are correspondingly related to the profession and organisational position within the workplace (Goffman, 1959). Hence, characteristic for performance in the front stage region is the exercised self-control, while behaviour that may harm the impression of the self is acted out in the backstage region.

In the backstage region, which exists in relation to the front stage although separated from it, the actors can let go of the presented image of the self and digest the impressions collected on the front stage. Backstage, actors can reflect upon their performances and seek support among their near ones. Thus, this is a place where actors can share emotions with others. In a working life setting, members of the backstage region may for instance be work colleagues or a similar close unit group.

Rather than spatially defined regions, Goffman's separation between front and backstage emphasises how individuals switch between control and full expressions (Johansson, 1999). Thus, places for front and backstage performances are not fixed spatially. One

room such as the office can be both back and front stage but at different times. Thus, a room may be perceived as front stage when a manager is having a meeting with a subordinate, but becomes a backstage for the manager when the subordinate leaves the room (e.g., Ritzer, 1996).

The third type of region Goffman (1959) describes is what he calls *the outside*. The outside is simply defined as ‘*all other places than the two already identified*’ (p. 135). Thus, individuals who are outside are those who neither perform nor are being performed to. Outsiders neither participate nor observe, but they can enter an ongoing performance. Goffman compares outsiders to servants, thus highlighting actors that are present on the stage although not participating or adding to the performance. Compared to the front and backstage, the outside is not as well developed conceptually as Goffman's other two concepts.

Although Goffman's theoretical model of performance is based on interaction face-to-face, the approach has also been used to understand social interaction online. Online communities are sometimes associated with backstage environments as these places are comparable to private exchange where users can comment and reflect on situations initiated face-to-face (Lin et al., 2009). Moreover, the perception of anonymity within online communities may enhance the willingness to share secrets and reveal emotions the users would not do otherwise (Lin et al., 2009). However, with powerful search engines and algorithms, anonymity becomes fragile. When interaction on these sites becomes saved and searchable, comments and reflections shared within online communities may risk becoming public statements (Lin et al., 2009). Thus, the borders between front and backstage in online communities are complex and may best be considered as fluid. This overlap can also be exemplified with situations when a private message is posted between two or more users of an online community in order to hide the communicated content from the other users in the community. In these situations, the online community may be treated as a stage and a place for performance.

In other studies, Facebook has been described as a stage for contemplated self-presentation (Murthy, 2012). In some circumstances, however, taking a peek at someone's Facebook wall can be a way of getting insight into the user's backstage environment. In their study on students' use of privacy settings on social network sites, Lewis, Kaufman and Christakis (2008) reflect on the activity of teachers, parents or employers logging into Facebook in order to get a glimpse of the student's, child's or potential employee's back region. Hence, this attempt to get hold of backstage information about an individual may have practical consequences for the user. As the roles played out on Facebook not infrequently stand in contrast to the roles users would play out in other spheres of life, insight into this back region may contribute to a lack of legitimacy in the eyes of that audience.

Audience segregation versus context collapse

With the concept of regional behaviour, Goffman (1959) describes how the self is played out differently depending on the audience and the setting. With the concept of *audience segregation* Goffman emphasises that the actors need to keep audiences separated in order to protect and maintain the impression that has been created for different audiences. By public segregation the actor ensures that the audience to which he or she is performing does not involve individuals to whom he or she performs a contradictory role. However, when interacting on social network sites, audience segregation becomes a difficult task, as multiple audiences are often merged into one platform (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Unlike face-to-face interactions, where individuals can present themselves differently depending on who they are talking to and where the interaction takes place, users of social network sites address different audiences with the same messages and with the same user profile. The phenomenon defined by boyd (2008) as *context collapse* can be a source of tension and conflicts as the same status update may be interpreted differently among different groups in the audience.

For many users of Facebook, their audience consists of a mixture of relationships. Close friendships and distant acquaintances, new and old relations, form the audience that the user addresses. Alt-

though Facebook mostly is used for private purposes, 18 per cent of the Swedish employees who are members of Facebook include work relations in their social network (Findahl, 2012). With status updates and photos distributed on Facebook, colleagues and perhaps even managers get insight into the Facebook user's private sphere that might previously have been kept hidden. Hence, Facebook can contribute to the diminishing boundaries between work and private life.

Considering the immensity of digital spaces such as Facebook and the user's many connections on Facebook, grasping the width of the audience becomes unmanageable. Therefore, it has been suggested that users of social network sites create an image of an *imagined audience*, that is, a mental conceptualisation of people with whom they are communicating (Litt, 2012) before crafting a message. This imagined audience often reflects the user's own personality, interests or values, thus, someone we expect to get a positive reaction from with our status update.

Impression management

As social network sites such as Facebook provide possibilities to merge work and private relations, it can be argued that users are getting more insight into colleagues' backstage behaviour. However, it can also be argued that images of backstage environments on social network sites like Facebook are merely posed views of what users would like to portray as their backstage.

The idea that individuals consciously engage in self-presentation was first introduced by Goffman (1959), who claims that individuals have an interest in engaging in strategic activities that '*convey an impression to others which it is in his interest to convey*' (p. 4). Impression management behaviour is present in practices in both digital and physical spaces and includes cues intentionally *given* by an individual and cues unintentionally *given off*, such as in non-verbal communication. In a digital space, where users often have little access to information about the communicating partner, these cues become highly informative (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006).

Cues given by the user are the impressions the user wishes the audience to have and are associated offline with verbal expressions and gestures (Kernaghan & Elwood, 2013). Online this can be presented as profile picture, username, and the content and language used in status updates (Baym, 2015). In digital communication and when the responses of the communicating partners are not immediate, the users have time to consider and reflect upon the answer before responding. Thus, the asynchronous nature in most communication on social network sites leads to a greater extent of control over how the self is presented than in face-to-face encounters (Ellison et al., 2006). This does not mean that they necessarily use the opportunity to control but act impulsively nevertheless. When the user has time to reflect upon the answer and build up arguments before responding, the digital communication enables the user to present him- or herself as more informed and knowledgeable than when face-to-face with the communication partner. Thus, online interaction allows a user to express ideal versions of the self, i.e. attributes they would like to possess (Ellison et al., 2006).

However, in accordance with Goffman, cues are also *given off* unwittingly. Cues given off include the non-verbal communication that the user have difficulties controlling (Kernaghan & Elwood, 2013). In digital communication, cues given off can be manifested, for instance by poor spelling, which may give cues to the user's social position (Ellison, 2007), and become much more of an important identity marker than face-to-face interaction (Baym, 2015). Moreover, the commonly used practice of 'likes' and status updates with emojis that express feelings such as happiness, anger, sadness, contribute further to the cues given or given off online and may influence how the user is perceived by others.

Considering that one of the fundamental ideas behind social network sites is to enable users to articulate their social network, users' social contacts on these sites become an important identity marker (Baym, 2015). Baym (2015) describes links on social network sites are mutual, which means that in order to share connection with another person, the receiver of a contact request needs to accept the invitation and agree to publicly display their connection

on the platform. As users' contacts on social network sites give off signals about status and trustworthiness, members of social network sites may carefully consider who to share connection with (Baym, 2015). Just as important as being connected to the 'right' people, 'wrong' connections may negatively affect the user's reputation. Thus, despite the idea of building networks, social network sites can in some situations be used to exclude other people from social interaction.

Losing face

While self-presentation and the cues the user deliberately gives away highlight the user's own choice of presentation, users of social network sites are also given cues about others. Although digital communication may stimulate self-presentation in a more controlled way than in face-to-face meeting, users also run the risk of having their self-presented image twisted and destroyed publicly on social media.

Having an embarrassing message written on one's wall, being tagged in a badly portrayed photograph, or having negative comments written under a status update are examples of behaviours that can have a negative impact on an individual's reputation. Gossiping and shaming mechanism are a way of keeping behaviour in line and may function as social control over others (Baym, 2015). When spreading false or dishonest information online, the bullying behaviour may have a wide reach and can become searchable. Thus, public shaming can serve as an effective way of destroying someone's reputation and creditability (Solove, 2007).

In his book *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-face Behavior* Goffman (1967) stresses that the self is a social construction and the self-image is constantly negotiated in interactions with others. According to Goffman (1967), a person's social self-image and reputation should be seen as a loan from society that can easily be lost if an individual is not proven worthy of a specific image. With his concept of *face*, which Goffman defines as '*the positive social value that a person achieves in the eyes of others by adhering to approved social attributes*' (Goffman, 1967, p. 5), Goffman em-

phasises people's endeavour for positive recognition by others. Face refers to the image of the self in the eyes of others. This self-image is emotionally invested; thus, individuals often experience a personal attachment to face. As the face can be lost, maintained or enhanced it must constantly be paid notice to in interactions with others (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

When presenting an image that is perceived as internally consistent and supported by others, an individual may be said to be maintaining face (Goffman, 1967). In most social interactions, it is in the interactants' interest to maintain other people's faces. As a threat to a person's face may trigger a defence that involves a threat to other interactants' faces, a mutual vulnerability to losing face often exists in social interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, growing attachment to face makes people vulnerable to face-threatening acts. Moreover, this attachment gives people something to aim at (Goffman, 1967). When discrediting information is put forward, people are likely to feel ashamed and inferior. Thus, people experience 'losing face' in situations when others do not support the positive self-image the individual has claimed for himself and is emotionally attached to. Losing face, or being in the wrong face, is described by Goffman (1967) as follows:

Felt lack of judgmental support from the encounter may take him aback, confuse him, and momentarily incapacitate him as an interactant. His manner and bearing may falter, collapse, and crumble. He may become embarrassed and chagrined; he may become shamefaced. The feeling, whether warranted or not, that he is perceived in a flustered state by others, and that he is presenting no usable line, may add further injuries to his feelings, just as his change from being in wrong face or out of face to being shamefaced can add further disorder to the expressive organization of the situation (p. 8).

Face-threatening acts can wound the individual or even destroy someone's reputation. While these situations can arise unintentionally, they can also be of the kind that Goffman (1967) referred to as 'aggressive use of face-work', that is, face-threatening acts that are done maliciously with the intention of causing open insults or destroy someone's face. Elaborating on Goffman's face-threatening act, Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish between face-threatening acts that are clear and unambiguous and those whose

intention is unclear. The authors use the notion of ‘off record’ when referring to communicative acts where it is not possible to identify one clear intention behind the spoken sentence. This strategy can be used when the motive is to threaten someone’s face, although not wanting to take responsibility for it. An example is when someone employs an off-record strategy, such as using jokes or irony; it is up to the addressee to decide how to interpret it.

Goffman in media and bullying research

While Goffman’s understanding of face was developed from observations of face-to-face interactions, the concepts have also been applied by scholars to understand social interaction online (Bundsgaard, 2012; Ivana, 2016). The asynchronous communication characteristic of most digital communication and the lack of visible cues can entail greater uncertainty than in face-to-face interaction. When face-work is observable, individuals communicate with mimics and gestures. In faceless communication, however, where the participants cannot see or hear each other, these gestural actions and reactions are hidden for the other participants.

Using Goffman’s concept of face to describe challenges evoked in faceless communication, Bundsgaard (2012) illustrates how one and same email can trigger a variety of interpretations among different receivers. Also, one and the same reader can read different intents into the same message when rereading it. Moreover, in her work of analysing how Facebook users construct their face online and how they relate to others in doing so, Ivana (2016) reflects upon the difficulty of determining when a communicative act on social media is face-threatening. Using the example of photos being taken and uploaded on Facebook showing colleagues at a work-related party, the author stresses how an act can be non-threatening when the work-colleagues are posing for the camera, but may be perceived as face-threatening in retrospect as the photos become public on Facebook.

When considering bullying as a phenomenon arising in social interaction, Goffman’s dramaturgical theory and the metaphors of front and backstage have contributed useful insight. In her doctoral

thesis about bullying at work, Svensson (2010) discusses bullying as a phenomenon that emerges in interaction with others. Goffman's spatial division of backstage region, front stage region and the third space to which he refers as outside are important analytical tools to Svensson. With her concept of *places for retreat*, Svensson (2010) stresses the importance of places in the workplace where employees can have privacy and recover from earlier performances in the front stage. Places for retreat are places for individual recovery. Svensson (2010) states that in horizontal work groups, where everyone is at the same organisational level and in workplaces where members are forced to socialise with each other often and during longer times per day, colleagues start evaluating each other on informal grounds. Hence, in these situations, bullying can be expressed more clearly. In her empirical material, Svensson (2010) identifies nurseries, hospitals and fire stations as workplaces with a high intensity of forced socialisation and lack of places for retreat, thus, places where bullying can grow.

Also drawing on the work of Goffman, Vickers (2011) argues in her studies on public administration workers that victims of bullying engage in social performances as a way of getting control over a bullying situation. In Vickers' (2011) empirical case, she describes situations of *surface acting* where targets convey their true, negative emotions experienced in the bullying situation. Negative emotions disguised by impression management strategies cover the humiliations the bullying target may experience and are an adjustment to workplace norms and expectations. In line with Goffman, Vickers (2011) emphasises targets' motivation for acting in accordance with how they think others want them to act in the specific context. However, Vickers (2011) also points out the negative cost that social performances may have for the target, including burn-out, stress, poor self-esteem, depression, cynicism, self-alienation and emotional exhaustion.

In her qualitative study on negative acts among colleagues in working life, Bloch (2010) elaborates on Goffman's concept on face-threatening act while seeking answer to why negative acts are perceived as painful and why they may escalate to bullying. In her

analysis, Bloch (2010) reduces negative acts to five face-threatening categories: 1) Rejection of face such as scolding, 2) denial of face such as ostracism, 3) contrasting aspects of face, 4) derogatory construction of face such as slander and gossiping, and 5) ambiguous construction of face such as humour, teasing and nicknaming. Two of them, denial of face and derogatory construction of face, the author points out as particularly damaging for the individual and difficult to redress.

To some extent, Goffman's theoretical concepts have been used by scholars to understand cyberbullying. Drawing on earlier researchers' attempt to frame online interaction by the roles of the performer, the audience and the outsider (e.g., Lin et al., 2009; Miller, 1995), Kernaghan and Elwood (2013) use Goffman's dramaturgical model to frame cyberbullying in performative terms. In their study on cyberbullying among girls aged 12–15, the authors draw parallels between Goffman's distinctive role of the performer, audience and outsiders with the target, bully and bystanders often referred to within the research on bullying. By framing cyberbullying as a performance, Kernaghan and Elwood (2013) provide a framework that emphasises the importance of audience in cyberbullying. Moreover, the authors discuss how cyberbullying may be carried out in a backstage region but impact the target in the public front stage regions. There are several reasons for perpetrators to perform bullying in backstage regions. In these environments, the bullies can plan their act and manage the impressions they give off, such as concealing their identity and set a tone in their messages that is open for wider interpretations.

Summary

This chapter has focused on contextual aspects of digital spaces as well as motives for social interaction. Digital spaces have been discussed in relation to physical spaces, and through the division of front and backstage regions. In both ways of addressing space, space can be seen as fluid with unfixed borders. Social interaction within digital spaces has been explained by using Goffman's dramaturgical approach. Interaction has also been addressed by pointing out variation within media technologies and the interactive tools

that different media platforms possess. In what way do these perspectives on space and social interaction add to an understanding of cyberbullying?

Spatial surrounding is important in the understanding of social interaction. Thus, space matters as it influences people's perceptions. Characteristic for digital spaces today is their natural place in everyday life. With mobile devices, users can interact with people regardless of location or time of the day. The boundary-blurred working life enhanced by digital communication can construct settings where users are dwelling in backstage behaviour while simultaneously performing the role of a professional colleague on a front stage environment such as Facebook. Moreover, taking part in social interaction in a physical space while being absorbed in a mediated space elsewhere further influences people's attention. When the social awareness is affected, users may pay less attention to the cues they are giving off, as well as being less attentive to the cues others are giving in the interaction.

Moreover, the boundary-blurred working life emerging with social network sites, and the mix of private and professional connections, invites people from the target's private sphere such as family members or friends to become actors or outsiders in work-related cyberbullying. By liking a certain comment or by writing a response, people from the target's private sphere can actively show support for the cyberbullied target. However, the blurred boundaries on social media platform also means that losing face on these sites, as often in the case of cyberbullying in working life, may be associated with embarrassment and discomfort also outside the professional sphere.

Thinking of cyberbullying as a front stage performance emphasises the importance of the audience. The audiences are important as they are both receivers of the message performed, and responder and legitimisers of actors' performances. As performance on social media platforms sometimes is a performance in front of an imaginary audience, whom the actors perceive to have values similar to their own, performance may be seen as a self-affirmative action. In

situations like this, the actual addressee of the cyberbullying acts may be found in the audience.

4. METHODOLOGY, METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter the research design and methods employed in the individual studies are presented as well as the overall research design of the thesis. Moreover, this chapter describes the participants and how the empirical data has been gathered and analysed.

This choice of methodology in this thesis is grounded on the aim and overarching research question. In order to address the aim and answer the overarching research question, multiple methodologies were required. By employing a mixed methods research approach, the overarching research question is addressed by the analyses of prevalence rates and predictors of cyberbullying as well as by the search for contextual knowledge that elucidates the characteristics of cyberbullying in working life.

Work-related cyberbullying is an emerging phenomenon with unique features, yet strongly linked to the well-explored research area of face-to-face bullying. Committing to methods similar to those in the established research tradition of face-to-face bullying, that is, quantitative methods and deductive approaches, allows further for an exploration of the commonalities and differences between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. A qualitative approach, on the other hand, allows for an exploration of new aspects and situations that emerge with cyberbullying in working life.

Rationale for mixing methods

The approach of combining quantitative and qualitative methods, referred to as mixed methods research, can broadly be defined in the following way:

Mixed methods research represents research that involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009, p. 267).

There are several purposes and functions in applying a mixed methods design and these include development, initiation, expansion, complementarity and triangulation (Greene, 2007). The purpose of a mixed methods design in this thesis is to gain complementary perspectives on the same phenomenon. This can be described as a way to *'seek broader, deeper, and more comprehensive social understandings by using methods that tap into different facets of dimensions of the same complex phenomenon'* (Greene, 2007, p. 101).

The purpose of complementarity is implemented in this thesis by utilising the phenomenon of cyberbullying from a single research approach in the individual empirical studies. Studies I & III follow the dominant tradition within bullying research and address cyberbullying by using a deductive approach, hypothesis testing, prediction and statistical analyses. This approach is commonly referred to as a post-positivistic² research tradition. In Study II, cyberbullying is addressed by the use of a qualitative research approach with the purpose of discovering new aspects and situations emerging with cyberbullying in working life contexts. Thus, Study II aims for a contextualized understanding of how cyberbullying is experi-

² Post-positivism can be understood as any paradigm replacing positivism. In the mixed methods research tradition, post-positivism is often linked to the quantitative research tradition (Greene, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Post-positivism is understood from this tradition as grounded in the ideals of positivism (i.e., that the social world exists independent of our knowledge of it) although with less trust in the power of method (Greene, 2007).

enced by the informants. This study is based on the perspective of social constructivism.

Finally in chapter 6, the results of the studies are merged and complementary interferences are drawn. Thus, while each study addresses a specific research question or hypothesis, it is when addressing the overarching research question of this thesis that the mixing of methods occurs.

A mixed methods study design

Mixed methods research can be visualised on a continuum ranging from monomethod design, which refers to methods that are not mixed at all, to fully mixed methods design which holds the highest degree of mixing (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) argue that once a study combines qualitative or quantitative research techniques to any degree, the study no longer has a monomethod design.

In accordance with Leech and Onwuegbuzie's (2009) typology of mixed methods research designs, the present thesis employs a *partially mixed sequential equal status design* (see Figure 2). Central to this design is the use of quantitative research methods for one stage of the research process and qualitative research methods for the other stage. Thus, instead of mixing methods within one or more stages or across these stages, as undertaken in fully mixed designs, a partially mixed design is employed when the quantitative and qualitative research approaches are conducted in their entirety before being mixed in the overall analyses of the results (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Therefore, the time order for mixing methods in this thesis is sequential. Moreover, despite the uneven number of quantitative and qualitative studies, equal priority is given to the quantitative and qualitative approach in the overall interpretation stage when addressing the overarching aim.

Figure 2. Various Mixed Methods Research designs. Originating from the work of Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009, p. 269).

More than a method

As methodological approaches are embedded in ontological and epistemological stances, mixed methods research concerns more than merely method. Methodological choices reflect the researcher's assumptions of the nature of the social world and the nature of the knowledge that can be obtained about the world. Following from this, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) state that conflicting paradigms³ are not commensurable due to their different assumptions, values and stances and that mixing of methods can only be done within a given paradigm or across paradigms with similar philosophical viewpoints.

³ Paradigm is understood as a prevailing *worldview* that comes with a set of assumptions about the nature of the social world (Greene, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This includes the discussion of whether only contextual knowledge exists or if general understandings of human behaviour are true in various settings.

The incompatibility thesis which states the inappropriateness of mixing methods when underlying paradigms are conflicting, is often met by mixed methodologists by emphasising a pragmatic stance. Indeed, much of the mixed methods research tend to have a practical and outcome-oriented approach (Greene, 2007). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), however, list five different positions on how paradigms can be used in mixed methods research (i.e. a-paradigmatic stance, single paradigm thesis, the complementary strength stance, the dialectical thesis and multiple paradigm thesis).

While this thesis aligns with the pragmatic approach associated with *the single paradigm stance*, it particularly leans towards an understanding and a practical utilisation of mixed methods research that is related to the *dialectic stance* and *the complementary strength stance*. Thus, in the following section, a presentation of the three different positions of mixed methods research is presented as well as my own position within these stances.

The position of this thesis on mixing methods

Connecting mixed methods research with *pragmatism* is reminiscent of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) work on creating linkages between post-positivism and quantitative methods, and between constructivism and qualitative methods. Hence, mixed methodologies often refer to the mixed methods research approach as a *third paradigm* (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) or a *third research community* (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) that shares a set of beliefs, values and assumptions (Creswell, 2010; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Thus, with interdisciplinary research a non-purist stance has developed that takes a middle position between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Followers of this perspective often maintain a *single paradigm stance* where pragmatism serves as the foundation for mixed methods research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). While this thesis embraces the outcome-oriented approach of this stance, where the research question is considered more important than underlying paradigms in the methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), this thesis deviate from the broader

understanding that there is one single best paradigm for mixed methods.

Aligned with Greene (2007) and *the dialectic stance*, this thesis maintains that all paradigms have something to offer and that considering opposing viewpoints of a social phenomenon can generate a more comprehensive understanding. Hence, a dialectic stance offers a slightly different way of understanding and handling the tension that arises when methods and paradigms are mixed. Although this stance recognises paradigms as importantly different, it also understands them as historically constructed, and therefore not inviolable (Greene, 2007; Greene & Caracelli, 2003). Mixed methods research according to Greene (2007) means interacting with different paradigms and assumptions about the world. Thus, adopting a dialectic stance involves engaging with opposing viewpoints by a respectful conversation among different ways of '*knowing, perceiving and understanding*' (Greene, 2007, p. 118).

In contrast to the dialectic stance, *the complementary strength stance* stresses the importance of maintaining the integrity of paradigm in mixed methods studies (Morse, 2003). According to the complementary strength stance, each paradigm such as post-positivism and constructivism has its distinctive strengths and should therefore be carefully separated in order not to be violated. The approach of this stance is to treat each research tradition as essentially different but not incommensurable. As maintaining the integrity of each paradigm is a central aspect, the mixing of methods in this stance often follows a design where different types of methods remain separate rather than fully integrated (Greene, 2007). Hence, a complementary strength stance often holds a lower degree of mixing of methods compared to stances where the mixing of methods is integrated in different phases of a study, such as in the dialectic stance.

When addressing the overarching research question of this thesis, the mixed methods research approach adopted follows a dialectic stance. Multiple methods and theoretical perspectives drawn from both a post-positivistic and social constructivist framework are in-

tegrated in the discussion. The individual studies however are conducted from a single methodological approach and are in line with the complementary strength stance.

Data collection and analyses

The empirical material for this thesis was collected in three steps including a pilot study, a questionnaire study and an interview study. The data collection stretches in time from 2013 to spring 2017 when the last interview was conducted. The data collection is interlinked in the sense that the pilot study informed the questionnaire study by providing items for the development of a measurement to examining cyberbullying in working life (see below presentation of CBQ). Moreover, some of the informants that participated in the interview study were recruited through the questionnaire study. This was accomplished by asking those respondents in the questionnaire study who had been exposed to cyberbullying in working life to participate in an in-depth interview.

In the following, each empirical study is described. This starts with a presentation of the pilot study followed by the questionnaire study and the interview study.

The pilot study

The scarce knowledge about cyberbullying in working life when the work on this thesis started led to the decision to initiate the data collection with a pilot study. The aim of the pilot study was to find out how cyberbullying behaviour in working life was expressed. The pilot study was conducted with two types of data collection.

First, an online questionnaire was developed and distributed through two channels 1) via email to people who had attended a work life conference at Malmö University and 2) through the research project's Facebook page. Overall, 105 individuals responded to the questionnaire, whereof 63 per cent were women and 36 per cent were men. The sample covers a variety of professions including teachers, administrators, professionals within Human Resources, psychologists, nurses, social workers and journalists. The

only restriction was that the cyberbullying behaviour was work-related, i.e. directed towards an employee and thereby a work environment issue for the organisation to handle.

The online questionnaire consisted of 12 questions. Three of them were demographic questions where the respondents were asked about gender, profession and whether or not they had a managerial position. Moreover, the respondents were asked if they had been exposed to bullying or harassment via digital media (e.g. email, SMS, social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and by whom (e.g. colleagues, clients, customers, pupils, students). For all questions concerning cyberbullying, an open-ended question followed where the respondents who answered yes to the previous question were asked to describe in their own words how the cyberbullying took place.

Second, a focus group interview with ten inspectors at the Swedish Work Environment Authority was conducted. While handling work environmental issues, the inspectors come into contact with cyberbullying behaviour through the organisations they inspect. Moreover, as inspecting workplaces is a part of the inspectors' job description, threats and harassment are also common within their own profession. While none of the inspectors in the focus group interview had own experiences of cyberbullying behaviour, they were reflecting upon situations where they had witnessed such behaviour through clients or other colleagues.

The focus group lasted for two hours and where held at the inspectors' workplace. The purpose was to receive knowledge and examples of how cyberbullying behaviour can be performed, thus, the focus group interview had a semi-structured format. The informants were encouraged to speak as freely as possible and highlight examples of cyberbullying behaviour that they found important. However, an interview guide was prepared that centred a discussion around the use of social network sites in working life, policy's around social media, perceived coping strategies and perceived consequences of cyberbullying behaviour. As the inspectors requested more information about cyberbullying in working life, a

presentation about the phenomenon was given after conducting the focus group interview.

The results of the pilot study were used for the next step in the data collection, the development of a more comprehensive questionnaire and a measurement to study cyberbullying in working life. The results of the pilot study were presented at a work life conference (Forssell, 2014). In Table 1, an overview of the reported cyberbullying behaviours described in the questionnaire and/or the focus group interview are presented.

Table 1. Examples of cyberbullying behaviour reported in the pilot study.

Examples of reported cyberbullying behaviour from the pilot study	
Reported cyberbullying behaviour:	
By colleagues:	Manipulation of email, being singled out, ridiculed and lectured via digital media. Forwarding private messages, being excluded from the community on Facebook.
By supervisors:	Being slandered in mass email, having accusations sent via text messages, being falsely accused on Twitter and the workplace intranet.
By clients, customers, etc:	Receiving unpleasant and aggressive emails, being criticised and discussed on social media, receiving inappropriate SMS.
By pupils/ students:	Slander on Facebook and blogs, creating Facebook page about a teacher, secretly filming teachers during class and uploading the film on YouTube.

The questionnaire study

The quantitative part of the data collection consisted of a comprehensive online questionnaire and constitutes the empirical material for Studies I & III. The questionnaire addressed research questions regarding prevalence of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in working life (Study I), how cyberbullying behaviour in working life was expressed (Study I) differences regarding gender and organisational position (Studies I & III), and predictors of cyberbullying behaviour (Study III). Besides being grounded in the same empirical material, Studies I & III are interlinked in the sense that the differences regarding gender and organisational position identified in Study I were followed up and further examined in Study III.

Participants and procedure

The questionnaire was distributed by TNS Sifo, a public poll and market research company with access to a representative sample of 140,000 individuals in Sweden. From this pool, the questionnaire was sent to a random sample of individuals in working age – in this case defined as individuals between the ages of 25 and 65 living in Scania in south Sweden. The main argument for restricting the sample in age was to obtain respondents in working life. The higher age was set because many people retire at this age, while the lower age takes into account that many young people, due to university studies and/or obstacles on the labour market, enter the labour market a few years after graduation.

In total 3885 respondents replied to the questionnaire. As the aim was to study cyberbullying behaviour in working life, respondents who had been unemployed during the last six months ($n=514$) were excluded from the sample. The total number of respondents was therefore 3371, which gives the study a response rate of 42 per cent. Among the 3371 respondents in the sample, 51 per cent were men and 49 per cent women. The mean age of the respondents was 50 years. Moreover, 60 per cent had a university degree and 32 per cent of the respondents had a supervisory position at their workplace. Altogether, 73 per cent of the respondents reported using digital devices such as computer, mobile phone or iPad as ‘very often’ or ‘always’ in their daily work.

Measures

Exposure to cyberbullying – the self-labelling method. Exposure to cyberbullying was measured by a self-labelling method consisting of a direct question whether or not the respondent been exposed to cyberbullying⁴ the last six months. The respondents were requested to report if they had been cyberbullied in accordance with the following definition:

⁴ When communicating with the respondents the Swedish word *nätmobbing* was used, which can be translated as Internet bullying. The use of Internet bullying instead of cyberbullying is due to the term being better known outside academia.

Negative acts carried out by a group or an individual using digital media. The acts are carried out repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself. Cyberbullying can be expressed by offensive or rude text messages, email, or someone posting unpleasant and offensive information (picture, videos, or text) on the Internet.

Based on this definition the respondents were requested to answer the following question: Have you been exposed to cyberbullying in relation to your work during the last six months? (yes/no)

Exposure to face-to-face bullying – the self-labelling method. The self-labelling method was employed when investigating face-to-face bullying. The respondents were requested to report if they had been exposed to face-to-face bullying in accordance with the following definition:

Bullying occurs when a person repeatedly becomes a target for unpleasant, disparaging, or hurtful acts in the workplace. In order to label an activity as bullying, the acts need to occur over a period of time, and the target is having difficulties in defending him or herself.

Based on the definition the respondents were requested to answer the following question: Have you been exposed to bullying in relation to your work during the last six months? (yes/no)

Cyberbullying behaviour questionnaire (CBQ). Besides the self-labelling method, exposure to cyberbullying behaviour was measured by an inventory of negative acts referred to as the cyberbullying behaviour questionnaire (CBQ) developed by Jönsson, Muhonen, Forssell and Bäckström (2017). The following three sources formed a basis for the items in the CBQ. The Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ-R) developed by Einarsen, Hoel and Notebaers (2009) that measures exposure to face-to-face bullying in the workplace, a preliminary questionnaire on cyberbullying called the Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (CNAQ) developed by Sprigg

et al. (2012), and the pilot study that initiated the work of this thesis (Forssell, 2014).

The CBQ consists of 20 items related to bullying, covering a variety of digital channels such as emails, text messages, social network sites and the Internet in general (see Table 2 for full description of items). The inventory refers to work-related cyberbullying behaviour occurring in the last six months. The respondents were given instructions to report exposure to each of the behaviours in their working life during the last six months. The following instructions were given to the respondents:

The statements below exemplify behaviours that can be aimed at workers via digital media such as email, instant messaging, text messages or on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube. Specify how often you experienced the following situations in the last six months.

A five-point Likert scale was applied to assess the frequency with which the respondents experienced the cyberbullying behaviour. The Likert scale ranges from 'never' to 'now and then', 'monthly', 'weekly' or 'daily' exposure of cyberbullying behaviour. The same response scale is also used in the NAQ-R. Cronbach's alpha for the CBQ was 0.96.

Table 2. Items in the CBQ.

Items in the CBQ		
How often during the last six months has any of the following occurred:		
1.	Your supervisor/colleagues are not responding to your emails or text messages ^{a,b}	
2.	Your work performance has been commented upon in negative terms on the Internet ^{b,c}	
3.	Rude messages have been sent to you via digital media ^c	
4.	Persistent criticism of your work or performance has been made against you via digital media ^a	
5.	Necessary information has been withheld making your work more difficult (e.g. being excluded from email lists) ^{a, b, c}	
6.	Aggressively worded messages (e.g. capital letters, bold style or multiple exclamation marks) have been sent to you via email, text messages or the like ^b	
7.	Threatening personal messages have been sent to you via digital media ^{a,b}	
8.	Allegations about you have been made on the Internet ^a	
9.	Threatening messages about your friends/your family have been sent to you via digital media ^c	
10.	Others have commented on the Internet that you should quit your work ^a	
11.	Attacks against you as a person, your values or your personal life have been made on digital media ^c	
12.	Your computer identity has been hijacked ^c	
13.	Gossip or rumours about you have been spread on the Internet ^a	
14.	Extracts from your messages have been copied so that the meaning of the original message is distorted ^b	
15.	Offensive photos/videos of you have been posted on the Internet ^c	
16.	Jokes about you have been spread on the Internet or via email to several recipients ^a	
17.	Viruses have intentionally been sent to your email address ^c	
18.	Your mistakes or errors at work are repeatedly commented about in emails, text messages or the like ^{a,c}	
19.	False statements about you have been spread on the Internet ^a	
20.	Colleagues have excluded you from the social community online (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) ^a	
	^a = NAQ-R, Einarsen et al., 2009	^b = Sprigg et al., 2012
		^c = Forssell, 2014

Social Organisational Climate. Social climate was measured by using QPSNordic (Dallner et al., 2000). The respondents were asked 'What is the social climate like in your work unit?' Five examples of work atmospheres were given: (1) Competitive, (2) Encouraging and supportive, (3) Distrustful and suspicious, (4) Relaxed and pleasant, (5) Rigid and rule-based. The participants were asked to respond using a five point-scale ranging from 'very little/not at all' to 'very much'. Responses were coded so that higher values indicated better social organisational climate.

Cronbach's alpha was .78.

Support from Managers and Colleagues. Support from managers was measured by two items from COPSOQ II (Pejtersen, Kristensen, Borg & Bjorner, 2010). One example item was 'How often is your nearest superior willing to listen to your problems at work?' Support from colleagues was also assessed by two items from COPSOQ II. An example item was 'How often do you get help and support from your colleagues?' Both items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 'very often' to 'very rarely'. Before analyses the original values were reversed so that higher values indicate increasing support.

Cronbach's alpha was .90 for the scale measuring support from managers, and .93 for the scale measuring support from colleagues.

Influence over Work. Influence over one's own work was measured by four items from COPSOQ II (Pejtersen et al., 2010). An example item was 'Can you influence decisions that are important for your work?' Answers were given on a five-point scale from 'very often' to 'very seldom'. Responses were coded so that higher value indicated higher influence over work.

Cronbach's alpha was .84.

Data analyses

Being cyberbullied is defined in two ways in this thesis. The first definition includes individuals who are exposed to negative acts in

the CBQ in accordance with Leymann's criteria. In line with Leymann's (1996) cut-off criterion for face-to-face bullying, at least weekly exposure to negative acts during the last six months has been categorised as being cyberbullied.

Second definition includes individuals who are exposed to negative acts in the CBQ to some extent (monthly, weekly and/or daily). The argument for the broader definition is that in studies on bullying the last two categories, weekly and daily exposure, are seldom reported (Einarsen et al., 2009). Consequently, statistics on bullying are often non-normally distributed. In order to compensate for the skewness, the three categories monthly, weekly and daily exposure to cyberbullying behaviour was collapsed into one category when investigating exposure to cyberbullying behaviour.

In Study I, bullying experiences were separated into four different categories: participants who (1) were exposed to cyberbullying behaviour; (2) were exposed to cyberbullying in accordance with Leymann's criteria; (3) labelled themselves as victims of cyberbullying; (4) labelled themselves as victims of face-to-face bullying. Descriptive statistics were used to investigate the prevalence of bullying within each group.

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was used to analyse differences regarding gender and organisational position while controlling for age and educational level. The MANOVA contained three dependent variables (1) exposure to cyberbullying behaviour; (2) self-labelled cyberbullying; (3) self-labelled face-to-face bullying.

In order to estimate the magnitude of the effect size, Cohen's d was performed. A standardised interpretation of effect size offered by Cohen (1988) has been applied to the results suggesting $d=0.2$ as a small effect, $d=0.5$ as a medium effect and $d=0.8$ as large effect. Moreover, a t -test was performed to examine the use of digital devices between managers and non-managers.

In Study III, Pearson's correlations and descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation were analysed for all studied varia-

bles. Missing values were addressed by SPSS default setting and excluded listwise.

Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine predictors of cyberbullying behaviour in the work environment. As possible effects might be concealed in the analyses if they are not divided by gender and organisational position (Albertsen, Nielsen & Borg, 2001), four separate analyses were conducted, one each for men managers, women managers, men non-managers and women non-managers.

When two or more independent variables correlate to a high extent the effect on the dependent variable becomes difficult to determine. To test the correlation of the independent variables, a multicollinearity test was conducted among the significant variables in model three. The cut-off criterion of $< .8$ was used to identify multicollinearity (Field, 2013). The correlations for the total group range between 0.15 and 0.54, thereby multicollinearity was not considered to be problematic. The largest correlation was observed between the variables 'support from managers' and 'support from colleagues'. To further ensure that no problematic multicollinearity existed between the independent variables, a collinearity diagnostic test was conducted. Variance inflation factor (VIF) larger than 10 and tolerance statistics below 0.2 were used to indicate bias or potential problems with multicollinearity in the models (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990; Field, 2013; Menard, 2002). The collinearity diagnostic test confirmed that the study has no signs of serious multicollinearity by identifying the VIF as not larger than 1.60 and tolerance statistics not lower than .63.

The interview study

An interview study constitutes the empirical material for Study II. In total, ten interviews were conducted with informants who in different ways had experienced cyberbullying directed to them in their professional life. Most of the informants were recruited via the previously mentioned questionnaire study. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. By this procedure seven informants were recruit-

ed. The other three informants approached the researcher after having read about the research project in the media or had received information about the project in other ways.

Considering the novelty of the phenomenon and the explorative approach of the study, the only selection criterion was that the informants were adults and had experienced cyberbullying in their working life. This approach resulted in an age span among the informants ranging between 40 and 60 years of age. Similarly, the study had no selection criteria for type of work organisation. However, all informants who volunteered to participate in the study were working within human service organisations (HSOs). HSOs is an umbrella term for organisations designed to handle education, child care, health care and social service etc. (Hasenfeld, 2009), and involves establishments such as schools, nurseries, public and authority offices.

Despite the ten interviews, only the narratives of eight individuals – four men and four women – were included in the interview study. While the initial approach was characterised by an open mind-set regarding the type of cyberbullying behaviour, it was first after the interviews were conducted that an understanding was developed to nuance the discussion of cyberbullying by distinguishing the medium in which it occurs. The narratives excluded from the interview study revealed situations where the informants perceived themselves being harassed by journalists or by text messages or by customers over the telephone. Thus, the excluded narratives represent situations distinctly different from the cyberbullying that was experienced by the other informants on Facebook and blogs. While communication technologies share certain features, they can also be argued to create different digital spaces. Thus, as this research has progressed the decision was taken to focus on cyberbullying on social media as it would provide in-depth knowledge about the particular context surrounding this type of environment.

Procedure

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted from one hour to one and a half hours. The interviews were based on themes that let

the informants describe the *situations* around cyberbullying, what perceived *consequences* the cyberbullying had had for them, what *coping strategies* the informants found available and what *support* the informant received from their employer. Besides some prepared questions, the interviewer listened to the informants and asked follow-up questions. Considering the sensitive nature of the topic, it was important to create an atmosphere where the informants felt comfortable to talk as freely as possible about their experiences. Hence, establishing a sense of trust between the interviewer and the interviewee was crucial for the quality of the interviews.

Most interviews were conducted at the university where the researcher is affiliated. However, due to geographical distance some of the interviews were conducted over telephone. This included three of the interviews. Due to the digital content, some of the cyberbullying situations were available and accessible online. This occurred in four of the interviews, two of which were conducted over the telephone. The content available online came to my attention either before the interviews as a result of googling the informant's name, or while the interviews were carried out as the informant informed me about 'digital footprints'. When the content of cyberbullying was available online, this became an additional source of information that strengthens the informants' narratives and increased the understandings of the dynamics involved. What was said, by whom and how many were involved, what time during the day and with what intensity the cyberbullying was carried out are examples of information that emerged when the cyberbullying was available online.

Additionally, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to be used in the next phase of analysis.

Analysing the interviews

The interview data was analysed by means of thematic analysis which is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes occurring in the empirical material. The purpose of using thematic analysis is to interpret several aspects of a research topic (Braun & Clark, 2006). The common ground for thematic analyses

is their epistemological and theoretical flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, the analysis can involve both a reflection of the reality and an unravelling of the surface.

The themes were identified after the interviews were conducted. Since the themes are constructed based on the informants' narratives rather than the researcher's preconceptions of the studied phenomenon, the themes are only loosely related to the specific questions that were asked during the interviews. The analytical process involved moving back and forth between the entire data set, the initial generation of codes, and the broader themes that were gradually identified. In line with Braun and Clark (2006), theme is operationalized in this study as something that both captures important elements in relation to the research question and signifies a patterned response within the study.

Methodological considerations

As with all empirical studies, this thesis includes methodological considerations that need to be addressed. The following section reflects on methodological issues regarding the questionnaire study and interview study that in different ways may affect the reliability and validity of the studies. A more detailed description of the methodological issues is given in the individual studies (see Studies I–III).

One of the methodological issues concerning this thesis is that the empirical material is based on self-reported data. While self-reported data is common in research on bullying because it is a relatively effective way of gathering data, it is essentially a subjective approach. This means that the questions asked in the questionnaire study can be interpreted differently by different people. Moreover, people have various preferences when it comes to labelling themselves as bullied. In general, when a self-labelling method is used to assess the prevalence of bullying, victimisation tends to be underreported due to its association with feelings of shame (Felblinger, 2008; Lewis, 2004). Inventories such as the CBQ which investigates exposure to negative behaviour aim to overcome such problems (Nielsen et al., 2011). However, as respondents may

experience the same behaviour differently, even this approach cannot be argued to be fully objective (Nielsen et al., 2011). Moreover, self-reported data may have concerns regarding the validity of the examined predictors of cyberbullying behaviour in Study III. While predictors such as social support are assessed in Study III based on the respondents' own perception of the social support they receive, the support given might have been valued differently if the respondents colleague or manager had been asked.

Following on this, another methodological concern relates to the issues of using an inventory for assessing prevalence rates of cyberbullying. The items listed in the CBQ can be criticised for not capturing other types of cyberbullying behaviour. Considering the ever-shifting nature of online communication and interaction, as well as the developing state that the research area of cyberbullying in working life was when the questionnaire was developed, the items listed can be criticised for being short-lived. Moreover, the items can be questioned for only capturing cyberbullying behaviours that have already been thought of. However, as the CBQ is developed on the basis of existing measurements of face-to-face bullying (NAQ-R), a preliminary questionnaire on cyberbullying (CNAQ), as well as a pilot study (Forssell, 2014), the CBQ can be argued to capture items developed from a variety of different sources which can strengthen the validity of the inventory.

Moreover, the cross-sectional design employed in Studies I and III prevents conclusions regarding causality. As an inverse relationship between cyberbullying and the identified predictors in Study III cannot be ruled out, conclusions about causality should be made with caution. Hence, it cannot be dismissed, for instance, that it is the exposure to cyberbullying behaviour that predicts the perception of the social climate at the workplace as poor and not vice versa as is argued in this thesis. Using longitudinal data would have overcome the problem of causality and needs to be considered in future studies. Still, previous research provides support for the assumption that psychosocial factors in the work environment trigger the occurrence of face-to-face bullying (Agervold & Mikkelsen,

2004; Einarsen, 2000; Hauge et al., 2007) which strengthens the results of Study III.

For Study II, issues regarding validity and reliability are addressed somewhat differently compared to Studies I and III. This is due to the qualitative approach in Study II and its aim for contextualised and not generalised knowledge. Still, methodological concerns need to be addressed.

First, the approach of gathering informants for Study II is characterised by a self-selection process. Based on an invitation in the previously distributed questionnaire and in the media, the informants volunteered to participate in the interview study. How informants are selected is linked to the aim of the research conducted and the question that it is seeking answers to (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2015). The volunteer approach aligns with the explorative aim of Study II. However, it cannot be ruled out that those who volunteer to participate are individuals of a certain group – for instance individuals with severe traumatic experiences of cyberbullying – therefore not necessarily representative of all targets of cyberbullying. Important to address, however, is that representiveness is not the aim of Study II. Rather than obtaining a representative sample, in-depth knowledge through personal experiences of victimisation by cyberbullying was the guiding principle for the recruitment.

Another methodological issue concerns the interview process. Compared to interview studies that seek general knowledge, Study II aims for an in-depth understanding of the informants' experiences of cyberbullying, which is mirrored in the relatively few informants included in the study. The use of telephone interviews in some of the included narratives can however cast doubt on the ability to build up the trust and relationship needed for the informant to feel comfortable about sharing his/her experiences and for a depth in the conversation to be achieved. Conducting interviews over the telephone means that body language and facial expressions are hidden in the conversation. Non-verbal language such as reactions and gestures have an informative value for the interviewer as they reveal information about what aspects of the narratives are of par-

ticular importance for the informant (Bryman, 2011). Despite this shortcoming, a study by Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) where the results of telephone and face-to-face interviews were compared showed small differences in the quality that was obtained. Still, telephone interviews can be questioned for not being a suitable tool when the interviews encompass sensitive topics. For emotionally painful experiences as cyberbullying may be, the researcher may fall short in comforting the informant as well as foreseeing such reactions. However, it has also been suggested that telephone interviews can give the informant a perception of anonymity (Greenfield, Midanik & Rogers, 2000), which may help the informant to share personal information. It is also my overall impression that the informants wanted to tell their story as well as be listened to, also in the interviews conducted over the telephone.

Further methodological issues concern the generalisability of the findings. First, the mean for cyberbullying reported in Studies I and III is fairly low. A low mean indicates that exposure to cyberbullying behaviour was not yet a frequent phenomenon in Swedish working life and may have an effect on the generalisability of the results. However, while Studies I and III are based on a cross-sectional sample of the working population in Sweden, a study conducted on a specific work organisation may show different results. Second, the external validity of Studies I and III is limited by the fact that the questionnaire study was carried out in a Swedish working environment and among variety of different workplaces and professions. Thus, this limits a generalisation of the results to other cultural contexts. However, when findings are in line with previous research, it can be argued that there is support for generalised conclusions. A similar reasoning can be applied for Study II. Study II aims for a contextualised knowledge prior a generalised knowledge, however, it may still be appropriate to talk about general tendencies for findings that align with previous research results. For findings that uncover new aspects of cyberbullying, future research must determine whether results are also applicable in other cultural contexts or in particular areas of work.

Ethical considerations

Bullying – in any form – is a sensitive subject. When the participants share personal information about their experiences of bullying in a questionnaire or an interview study it may evoke negative memories. Particularly in interviews, sharing experiences of cyberbullying is a personal experience. Interview situations involve a relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer and this relation is embedded in tensions and power (Öberg, 2011). The role of the researcher includes being aware of his/her influence over the interviews. Not asking leading questions or in other ways taking control over the informant's narratives is one example of how the role of the researcher has been handled. Another example concerns ethical aspects such as being empathic, sensitive and understanding about the informant's experiences when conducting the interviews (Öberg, 2011).

In order to ensure that the participants in the empirical studies are handled respectfully, the Swedish Research Council's (2011) principles for good research practice have been followed. This includes informing participants about the project, receiving informed consent from the participants and treating information given by the participants confidentially.

The participants in the empirical studies (Studies I, II and III) have been informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their identities and the data they provide are treated with confidentiality. For the respondents in the questionnaire study (Studies I and III) this was communicated in the email and the introductory letter that followed the questionnaire. In the interview study, information about the research project has been communicated through email. Moreover, informed consent was obtained from all informants in the interview study before proceeding with the interview. In order to ensure confidentiality, the real names of the informants have been replaced with fictitious names. Also, other types of revealing information, such as the identity of the informants' workplaces, have been excluded.

All data received from the questionnaire study and the interview study including data sets, audio files, transcripts have been stored safely from unauthorized persons.

The study design has been approved by the Regional Ethical Review Board, Lund, Southern Sweden (2012/619).

5. SUMMARY OF STUDIES

This thesis consists of a framing chapter and three individual studies, which have specific aims and research questions/hypotheses. In the following, the aim, research questions/hypotheses and main findings from each of the included studies are presented. The research design of the three studies can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of the three studies.

Study	Design	Participants	Data analysis
Study I	Cross-sectional, quantitative design	3371 respondents (51% men 49% women) between the ages of 25 and 65.	Descriptive statistics, Multivariate analysis, Cohen's d, T-test
Study II	Qualitative design	Eight individuals (four men and four women) working within Human Service Organisations (HSOs)	Thematic analysis
Study III	Cross-sectional, quantitative design	3371 respondents (51% men 49% women) between the ages of 25 and 65.	Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlations, Multiple linear regression analyses, Multicollinearity test, Collinearity diagnostic test.

Study I: Exploring cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in working life – Prevalence, targets and expressions

Aim and research questions

Since little research has concerned cyberbullying among adults in working life, there is a need to assess its existence. The aim of the first study was to explore how cyberbullying is expressed in Swedish working life. This involved examining how prevalent cyberbullying is and who is targeted. In this study, I argue that gender and organisational position are central elements in studying the phenomenon as this encapsulates matters of power. Moreover, I argue that the novelty of cyberbullying urges for a comparison with face-to-face bullying to reflect upon its (in)dependence on traditional forms and expressions. The following questions were examined in the first study: How prevalent is cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in working life? How are cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying related to gender and organisational position?

Main findings

While earlier research on workplace bullying often emphasised bullying as a downward process (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Rayner, 1997; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011) the results of the study showed that individuals in managerial positions were more often targets of cyberbullying than other employee groups. Moreover, in contrast to studies that highlight women's vulnerability to face-to-face workplace bullying (Björkqvist et al., 1994; O'Connell et al., 2007; Salin, 2003a), this current study showed that men were exposed to cyberbullying, as measured by the CBQ, to a higher degree than women. Important to note is that a similar gender disparity was not observed among the respondents who labelled themselves as cyberbullied.

An interesting result of the study is that men's and managers' vulnerability was only observed when the bullying behaviour took place online. The same vulnerability was not observed among the group being bullied face-to-face. This discrepancy between organisational position and gender among targets of face-to-face bullying

and cyberbullying suggests that electronic devices in cyberbullying challenge traditional power relations. However, this study showed that the expressions of cyberbullying in working life did not differ much from face-to-face bullying. Passive and excluding strategies were the most reported negative behaviour also in cyberbullying. Moreover, the preponderance of email in cyberbullying indicates that anonymity does not play an essential role in the interaction.

By using the cut-off criterion for bullying behaviour suggested by Leymann (1996), 9.7 per cent of the respondents in this study could be regarded as cyberbullied, and 0.7 per cent of the respondents claimed to have been victimised by cyberbullying in agreement with the definition provided. Comparing the result of this study regarding self-labelled victimisation by cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying, the latter still appears to be a more common phenomenon in Swedish working life, with a prevalence rate of 3.5 per cent.

Conclusion

Some of the results of this study are elaborated on in chapter 6. This includes the finding of managers' higher vulnerability to cyberbullying compared to non-managers, as it suggests that electronic devices in cyberbullying challenge traditional power relations. Moreover, in chapter 6, the reported preponderance for passive and excluding cyberbullying on email is discussed in relation to cyberbullying on social media.

Study II: Cyberbullying in a boundary-blurred working life – Distortion of the private and professional face on social media

Aim and research question

The aim of the study was to explore what characterises cyberbullying when it is performed in digital spaces and in an increasingly boundary-blurred working life context. The study was led by the following research question: How does the complex social interac-

tions between target, perpetrator and audience impact the cyberbullying situation?

Main findings

Three key themes were identified: *spatial interconnectedness*, *colliding identities*, and *the role of the audience*. *Spatial interconnectedness* considers the fact that cyberbullying behaviour in working life is not limited to a digital space. Although cyberbullying in working life is performed online, face-to-face meetings often occur between the targeted individual and the perpetrator. However, while social network sites such as Facebook and blogs tend to blur boundaries between the private and the professional, the private and the public, work and non-work, digital and physical spaces, this study also shows that cyberbullying in working life creates distinct situations for the targeted individual and differs from face-to-face bullying.

This was further explored in the second theme, *colliding identities*. This theme emphasises that the context of blurred boundaries evoked by social media creates situations of cyberbullying where disgracing one's professional face also negatively affects one's private face. This overlap was evident when the cyberbullying was performed in front of the target's private relations on Facebook, or when the content of the cyberbullying behaviour was searchable on the target's name. Moreover, the study stresses that these situations influence the targets' perception of available coping strategies. Hence, performing a professional role created situations where targets of cyberbullying behaviour found themselves in a defenceless position with few possibilities to protect themselves from the cyberbullying behaviour.

The role of the audience is a theme that concerns how perpetrators' engagement in cyberbullying behaviour may be as much a performance in front of an audience as an attack on the targeted individual. Considering social interactions on social network sites and blogs as a performance on a front stage where users perform an ideal version of themselves in front of an audience, cyberbullying behaviour can be understood as the perpetrator's own engagement

in contemplated self-presentation. While self-presentation strategies are commonplace in both online and offline interaction, cyberbullying includes new situations where the perpetrators have better control over the social cues given away in the performance.

Conclusion

The three identified themes are followed up and further elaborated on in chapter 6. In chapter 6, the face-to-face encounters revealed in Study II are placed in a broader discussion about spatial interconnectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. The role of the audience and the boundary-blurred nature of cyberbullying are discussed as examples of unique aspects of cyberbullying that emerge when cyberbullying is performed on Facebook and blogs.

Study III: Gender and organisational position: Predicting victimisation of cyberbullying behaviour in working life

Aim and hypotheses

The aim of the study was to examine antecedents of cyberbullying behaviour in working life by (1) investigating the relationship to some previously known predictors of face-to-face bullying and (2) analysing demographic variables such as gender and formal position in the workplace that may be specifically related to victimisation by cyberbullying behaviour in working life. The demographic variables were chosen in relation to the findings in the first study, which showed differences regarding gender and organisational position in cyberbullying distinctively different from most studies on face-to-face bullying. The following four hypotheses were tested on men managers, women managers, men non-managers and women non-managers:

Hypothesis 1: Influence over work will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour.

Hypothesis 2: Social climate at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour.

Hypothesis 3: Social support from managers at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour.

Hypothesis 4: Social support from colleagues at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour.

Main Findings

The first hypothesis (H1) postulating that influence over work will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour was not supported for any of the four studied groups. As digital communication changes the setting for bullying it is likely that some variables lose their explanatory power. A significant relationship between poor social climate and exposure to cyberbullying behaviour, on the other hand, was found for men managers, men non-managers, women managers and women non-managers. Thus, the second hypothesis (H2) postulating that social climate at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour was supported for all four studied groups.

For the other variables in the MR analysis, the predictors vary with gender and organisational position. While factors predicting exposure to cyberbullying behaviour showed a similar pattern for men managers, men non-managers and women non-managers, the same factors did not predict exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for women managers. The result of the MR analysis showed that low support from managers was significantly related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for men managers, men non-managers and women non-managers. For these three groups, the third hypothesis (H3) postulating that social support from managers at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour was supported. For women managers, however, no relationship between lack of support from managers and exposure to cyberbullying behaviour was observed. Thus, for women managers the third hypothesis (H3) was not supported. In contrast, only for women managers was low support from colleagues significantly related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour. Thus, the fourth hypothesis (H4) postulating that social support from colleagues at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour was supported for women managers, but not supported for the other three studied groups.

Conclusion

While Study II shows interspatial connectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying, Study III discusses whether factors in the work environment are still valid predictors of cyberbullying. In chapter 6, influence over work, social climate and social support is described as having different exploratory power in cyberbullying. Social climate at the workplace is discussed as influencing social interaction among colleagues and managers also in digital spaces. Social support from colleague and managers is further discussed as being as important in situations of cyberbullying from third parties as in other situations of bullying.

6. INTEGRATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis was to develop new knowledge on how cyberbullying in working life can be understood and explained. This has been accomplished by exploring how cyberbullying in working life is expressed and what individual, social and organisational implications it entails when bullying occurs in digital spaces. In this chapter, the results of the empirical studies are synthesised and elaborated on in relation to previous research and conceptual frameworks. The quantitative and qualitative research results are integrated in order to address the overarching research question which is formulated as: How are the characteristics of work life bullying transformed when bullying is performed through social interaction in digital spaces? Thus, the chapter concentrates discussion on three interrelated themes that have emerged from the results of the individual studies and the theoretical discussions that have been presented in this thesis. Lastly, the chapter ends by discussing how the results can be used to address cyberbullying in work organisations and by pointing the direction for future research.

The first theme, *power dynamics in cyberbullying*, lays out the view that power relations in cyberbullying differ to some extent from power relations expressed through face-to-face bullying. The theme focuses on digital communication as a powerful tool that enables people in formally lower hierarchical positions to target a manager. Moreover, the theme suggests that blurred boundaries in

working life enable people outside the work organisation such as students, pupils, customers, members of the public to become perpetrators of work-related cyberbullying.

The second theme, *media-specific expressions*, stresses that cyberbullying is performed differently on email compared to Facebook and blogs, and emphasises that cyberbullying should be understood as context- and media-specific. The type of audience and the embeddedness of the digital platform in the work organisation is claimed to influence how the cyberbullying behaviour is expressed.

The third theme, *conceptual challenges in accessing cyberbullying*, deals with the problems of investigating cyberbullying with traditional approaches. The theme discusses spatial interconnectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying and elaborates on the implications that overlaps between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying have regarding the interpretation of prevalence rates. Moreover, the theme addresses some difficulties of investigating cyberbullying with traditional approaches and operationalisation criteria.

Power dynamics in cyberbullying

The first theme, *power dynamics in cyberbullying*, focuses on how digital communication can transform power relations and that power relations in cyberbullying to some extent differ from face-to-face bullying. The theme is based on the results of Study I, showing that more men than women, and more managers than non-managers were exposed to cyberbullying. The result that men as a group and managers as a group are particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying can be interpreted as an inverse relation to previous research on face-to-face bullying which shows a preponderance of bullying exercised by managers towards individuals in low-power positions and a higher prevalence of women targets (Björkqvist et al., 1994; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; O'Connell, Calvert & Watson, 2007; Rayner, 1997; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). That cyberbullying differs from face-to-face bullying regarding the targets is further strengthened by the other result of this thesis, which shows that men's and managers' vulnerability is only observed online.

The fact that a similar preponderance for men's and managers' vulnerability was not observed among the group experiencing face-to-face bullying, indicates that the result is unique for cyberbullying.

While Study I does not show who the perpetrators are, conclusions about upward, horizontal, and downward bullying, or bullying from third parties, cannot be drawn. However, in the following, two possible explanations for managers' higher vulnerability to cyberbullying are discussed. First, the theme focuses on digital communication as a powerful tool. This includes the argument that faceless interaction signified by limited exposure of social cues and asynchronous communication, can give courage to people in low-power positions to bully a manager. Second, the theme concentrates a discussion on how digital communication is increasingly blurring the boundaries in working life and enabling new types of actors such as students, pupils, customers and members of the public to become perpetrators of work-related cyberbullying. In such situations, managers' vulnerability to cyberbullying can be understood as them becoming scapegoats for people's frustration and anger towards the work organisation.

Digital communication as a powerful tool

It is problematic to draw the conclusion that digital communication per se contributes to an increased prevalence of bullying. Still, the result indicates that it is necessary to understand the increased use of digital communication in working life as a factor that appears to influence the occurrence of bullying. Thus, one possible explanation for managers' higher vulnerability to cyberbullying is to stress how power dynamics can evolve in digital communication that can enable an employee to target a person in a formally superior position.

Discussions about power dynamics have occurred in previous research on cyberbullying among adolescents, suggesting that new dimensions of power arise with digital elements such as technical skills and anonymity (Campbell, 2005; DeHue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008; Li, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Schenk & Fremouw,

2012; Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak & Finkelhor, 2006; Suler, 2004). While anonymity is a commonly cited aspect in cyberbullying it is also one that can be questioned. In addition to the fact that most users on the Internet can be traced by the computer's IP address and therefore cannot to be considered fully anonymous when interacting online, users' perception of anonymity is related to the specific platform where the cyberbullying occurs. As is discussed under the next theme, this means that communication technologies create specific digital spaces for interaction. While some platforms on the Internet enable users to interact under pseudonyms, email communication, which was the most frequently reported communication technology for cyberbullying in Study I, is often performed based on the user's identity offline. Nor did anonymous interaction prevail in Study II, which analysed cyberbullying on Facebook and blogs. Rather, most narratives involved situations where the perpetrator was known by the target. While one of the narratives includes an example of fake Facebook accounts, it also showed how the structure on Facebook left clues that enabled the target to single out the fake Facebook account from the others and connect the fake Facebook account with individuals previously known by the target.

Instead of anonymity, this thesis emphasises how power dynamics are embedded in faceless communication and interaction online. Faceless interaction signified by lack of social cues and asynchronous communication is argued to enable bullying behaviour that differs from face-to-face bullying. Thus, embedded in the faceless communication are power advantages that can give courage to people in formally low-power positions to target a manager.

Power can be expressed in multiple ways but in face-to-face interaction it is often accompanied by body language and vocal tone. Absence of such social cues in digital communication has previously been suggested to reduce the influence of the users' status and authority offline (Suler, 2004). Disapproving body language and looks that in face-to-face interaction signal power and influence what direction a conversation takes, are hidden from the interlocutors in digital communication. When the ability for people in high

power positions to mediate power through bodily and facial expressions is removed it can be argued that power dynamics are affected.

Additionally, the asynchronous nature of most digital communication can further be argued to add to the power dynamics involved in cyberbullying. Asynchronous communication creates a time delay that gives the users time to think, reflect and build up arguments before responding, which enables the users to hone their arguments (Baym, 2015). Moreover, asynchronous communication allows users to finish their sentences without interruption (Broadbent, 2016). Through digital communication perpetrators can create situations where they have better control over how the self is presented (Goffman, 1959) thereby also minimizing the risk of negative consequences.

Although this thesis is based on the targets' experiences of cyberbullying and not the perpetrators', the empirical material confirms how some aspects embedded in the digital communication increase the perception of being in control in situations of bullying. The empirical results show how digital devices support actors to create backstage environments (Goffman, 1959) crucial for the performance without physical retreat from the front stage. This is exemplified in Study II when an informant chose to respond to the perpetrator on the smartphone although being present in the same physical space as the perpetrator.

An important matter to address, however, is that an increased perception of control over how the self is presented in digital communication does not mean that the communicating partners necessarily use the opportunity to control but act impulsively nevertheless. The presence of emotions such as anger and fear in situations of cyberbullying should not be underestimated (Vranjes et al., 2017). Thus, a counterargument to the discussion about increased control in digital communication is that the accessibility in digital communication can trigger a behaviour where users act on impulses and without self-censorship. Hence, while lack of social cues and asynchronous communication can provide a sense of control that gives

courage to people in low-power position to bully a manager, it is important to note that digital communication also is associated with loss of control and a source of misunderstanding that can aggravate the situation.

Blurred boundaries in working life, blurred relational boundaries in cyberbullying

An additional perspective on power dynamics in cyberbullying is to recognise how digital communication makes boundaries in working life extensively blurred and enables actors outside the work organisation to become perpetrators. This include third parties such as students, pupils, customers and members of the public. When the perpetrators are not part of the work organisation themselves, formal power and organisational hierarchies can be argued to become irrelevant in the understanding of the power dynamics involved. Instead, when including third parties in the analysis of bullying, managers' higher vulnerability to cyberbullying could be understood in relation to their being the work organisation's face outwards.

While the empirical data from Study I do not reveal who the perpetrators are, Study II and the pilot study confirm that third parties have a key role in situations of cyberbullying. Including third parties in the analysis of bullying is uncommon so far in the literature, albeit not new. Some leading researchers in the area of cyberbullying have previously acknowledged the role of third parties, i.e. customers, shareholders or members of the public in situations of cyberbullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2014; Farley et al., 2017). The argument for including people from outside the organisation in the understanding of work-related bullying, whose relation to the employee sometimes is short-term, lies in the new perceptions of power imbalance and repetition in digital contexts (Farley et al., 2017). D'Cruz & Noronha (2014) point out in their research on customer cyberbullying in call centres that power imbalance between target and perpetrator derives from customers' entitlement to service and the work organisation's use of the recorded phone calls to evaluate the employees' performances. Repetition is further analysed in the

context of the total amount of cyberbullying behaviour the target is subjected to on a weekly basis.

The material of this thesis adds to this line of research by showing examples of cyberbullying from third parties within HSOs where the relationship between the target and perpetrator is long-term. When the perpetrator is a student, a client or a parent at day-care, the relationship between the target and the perpetrator is continuous. When the employee is in control of resources or in charge of students grading, as often in the case of HSO workers, the relationship is additionally complex and embedded in power relations (Hasenfeld, 2009). This is exemplified when the informant who is working as a school leader finds herself being cyberbullied by a group of parents whose children are attending the school she is working at. The narrative of the school leader exemplifies both how the relationship is long-term and how her position as a manager makes her a scapegoat for the parents' critic against the school and the decision previously made by management.

The power imbalance emerging with cyberbullying from people outside the work organisation, I argue lies in the ability to publicly distort the targeted individual's social identity on a public platform and arises when the targeted individual is in a position of not being able to defend themselves from the cyberbullying behaviour. These situations are argued here to have emerged with digital communication and are based on the fact that the Internet has made people easier to approach. Regardless of geographical boundaries, people outside the work organisation can target an employee/manager, for instance on email or Facebook, either directly or indirectly, while at the same time maintaining a physical and emotional distance. For the individual being targeted, having their social identity negatively exposed on public platforms can be described as a form of public shaming (Solove, 2007) that potentially goes beyond the professional sphere. For the work organisation too, public shaming may affect the willingness to interfere as it is associated with bad publicity. Following Solove's (2007) reasoning on public shaming, I argue that public shaming is an effective way of destroying indi-

viduals' and organisations' reputation and credibility therefore embedded in power.

When including third parties in the analysis of cyberbullying, a reasonable question to ask is whether the cyberbullying behaviour is expressed differently than if the perpetrator and target works within the same organisation.

Study II shows that in situations where there is a close relationship between the target and the perpetrator such as when working in the same organisation, subtle and implicit cyberbullying was more common. In contrast, when the target and the perpetrator are not working in the same organisation but have a professional contact, the cyberbullying behaviour tends to be more explicitly performed. The type of relationship characterised by a close relationship versus a relational distance also impacts the occurrence of meetings face-to-face. Hence, subtle cyberbullying was more common when there was a closeness in relation between target and perpetrator and when face-to-face meetings occur on an occasional basis, whereas aggressive and direct behaviour was more common when a relational distance prevailed and few or no meetings face-to-face occurred. The results show that the cyberbullying behaviour involved can be understood according to the type of relationships established between the target and the perpetrator. Moreover, the result indicates that the risk of facing consequences for the cyberbullying behaviour mirrors how the cyberbullying behaviour is expressed.

In summary, as digital communication enables third parties to become perpetrators of work life bullying, cyberbullying is argued in this thesis to change power relations and create situations where individuals in managerial positions become particularly vulnerable to bullying behaviour. Moreover, formal position in the work organisation may have less impact when the cyberbullying behaviour is performed through third parties compared to when the bullying behaviour is performed by someone in the same work organisation.

Media-specific expressions in cyberbullying

The second theme stresses that cyberbullying is performed differently on email respectively on Facebook and blogs and is thus context- and media-specific. The type of audience and the embeddedness of the digital platform in the work organisation is claimed to influence how the cyberbullying behaviour is expressed. The theme is developed on the basis that Study I showed a preponderance of passive and excluding behaviour on email, while Study II together with subtle cyberbullying behaviour also showed examples of cyberbullying behaviour that was particularly aggressive and direct.

As the prefix cyber simply indicates that the bullying behaviour involves digital technology (Langos, 2012) cyberbullying is commonly understood and measured in research in relation to face-to-face bullying and not necessarily as a concept that involve a diverse set of communication platforms. Thus, while the previous theme discusses cyberbullying in relation to face-to-face bullying by emphasising behaviour and actors enabled by digital communication, the present theme engages in a discussion that aims at nuancing the understanding of cyberbullying in relation to communication technologies.

Communication technologies such as email and Facebook share certain features such as offering communication that crosses geographical boundaries. Moreover, both email and Facebook provide digital communication, and although they may differ as regards the timeframe in which a response to a message is expected, both possess the technological ability of asynchronous communication. This means that the cyberbullying behaviour can be conducted and received in different spaces. On the other hand, Facebook and email contain disparities that create fundamentally different digital spaces, which are crucial in the understanding of the cyberbullying behaviour involved.

This thesis supports the view of Kitchen and Dodge (2011), that digital platforms for communication create digital spaces that are

more than merely a backdrop. In line with Kitchin and Dodge (2011) this thesis argues that digital spaces, created by technological abilities and people's behaviours and practices, establish a defining context for social relations and social interaction. This implies that digital spaces rooted in email and in Facebook have their own socio-spatial circumstances that influence the behaviour of the people involved. In other words, the circumstances surrounding email or social media such as Facebook and blogs may trigger different types of cyberbullying expressions, as is further explored in the following section.

Differences in audience and embeddedness in the work organisation

While an audience is present in both group email and Facebook, the audience on the latter platform is often notably more complex and boundary-blurred. Compared to other communication technologies that involve crossing boundaries of time and space, interaction on Facebook additionally includes crossing relational boundaries (Ollier-Malaterre, 2013). Contrary to the audience segregation that Goffman (1959) discusses as elementary in actors' attempts at performing a solid and reliable image of the self, social interaction on Facebook is characterised by what Marwick and Boyd (2011) describe as a context collapse. The concept emphasises social network sites such as Facebook as spaces where users' contacts from different spheres of life, such as the private and the professional, merge into one platform. Consequently, social interaction on Facebook forces users to perform their selves in front of a diverse audience. While some of the issues evoked by the boundary-blurred nature of Facebook can be overcome by personal settings, it also requires that the user actively organises his/her Facebook profile, which is not always the case.

The multifaceted audience on Facebook is shown in this thesis to create a certain social dynamic. In situations of cyberbullying on Facebook, at least two sets of diverse audiences are present. This includes the audience of the targets whose face is jeopardised, and the audience of the perpetrator who initiates the cyberbullying situation. For the targeted individual, being exposed to cyberbullying

in front of a multifaceted audience that includes both private and professional relationships implies having both the private and the professional identity distorted. As discussed in Study II, not knowing by whom posts on Facebooks are viewed created a palpable anxiety. Moreover, cyberbullying on Facebook is likely to change the scene in regard to actors, as people from the targeted individual's private sphere can also become bystanders and active providers of support.

Moreover, the imagined audience (Litt, 2012), i.e. the mental conceptualisations of who the perpetrator is communicating with, is argued in this thesis to have an important role in cyberbullying. As is elaborated on in Study II, the perpetrators' engagement in cyberbullying behaviour may be as much a performance in front of an imagined audience as an attack on the targeted individual. Considering social interactions on social network sites and blogs as a performance on a front stage where users perform an ideal version of themselves in front of an audience, cyberbullying behaviour can be understood as the perpetrator's own engagement in contemplated self-presentation. While self-presentation strategies and impression management (Goffman, 1959) are commonplace in both online and offline interaction, cyberbullying represents new situations where the perpetrators have better control over the social cues given away in the performance. The role of the audience is present in this thesis in situations of flaming on Facebook where the targeted individual is receiving comments that questioned his/her intentions in various ways, and in situations of ostracism where the colleagues are not willing to accept a friend request by the target on Facebook because he/she is also being bullied face-to-face by a manager. Thus, the presence of the audience on Facebook and blogs includes both situations where the targeted individual openly has his/her face publicly distorted and in narratives where the cyberbullying behaviour is exercised in more subtle ways.

Another aspect of cyberbullying expressions concerns the embeddedness of the communication technologies in the work organisation. While email in the studied context is primarily to be seen as a work tool, Facebook, although it is sometimes used for social in-

teraction with people from the user's professional sphere, is ultimately a platform where the users interact based on their private profile. On such platforms employers' interference can be controversial. Determining when a particular situation on Facebook is work-related can be a complex task as it can be performed outside the physical space of the workplace and potentially at other times than during formal working hours. More importantly, it raises questions as to whether it is even legitimate for employers to meddle in employees' private Facebook pages. Difficulties in determining boundaries between the private and the professional can be argued to go two ways. While it is difficult to stress the employers' responsibility to act on content on the employees' private Facebook pages, similar delimitation problems may arise for the employee. When intermixing people from different spheres of life on one platform it may be difficult at times to determine in what role – private or professional – the person is communicating.

Considering that email often is a communication technology embedded in the work organisation, it is reasonable on the other hand to assume that the employers have a responsibility for the actions occurring on email. Taking this into account, it is likely that email conversation creates a self-reflective behaviour among the users. Hence, subtler forms of cyberbullying on email, as reported in Study I, may be understood in part in relation to the target's ability to use the digital content as evidence against the perpetrator.

In summary, this theme stresses that in order to understand the behaviour and expressions involved in cyberbullying it is important to notice the specific communication technology in use and the digital space it creates. Claims about subtler cyberbullying behaviour on email and the direct and aggressive cyberbullying behaviour on Facebook and blogs needs however also to be addressed in relation to the different research methods being used. This is a discussion that is brought up in the next theme.

Conceptual challenges in assessing cyberbullying

The third theme of this chapter discusses spatial interconnectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying and elaborates on

the implications that overlaps between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying have regarding interpretation of prevalence rates. Moreover, this theme addresses some of the problems of capturing cyberbullying with traditional approaches and operationalisation criteria and is partly linked to the previously discussed theme of media-specific behaviours in cyberbullying.

In the following, two aspects of conceptual challenges in assessing cyberbullying are addressed. First, this theme centres on a discussion about spatial interconnectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. Second, the theme elaborates on some of the problems in operationalising, measuring and assessing cyberbullying.

Spatial interconnectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying

In contrast to previous research that discusses overlaps between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in terms of negative behaviour that occurs both digitally and face-to-face (e.g., Gardner et al., 2016), this thesis addresses transgression in terms of face-to-face meetings. Although most narratives in Study II showed examples of cyberbullying behaviour restricted to Facebook or blogs, face-to-face meetings between the target and the perpetrator often occurred. While these face-to-face encounters were free from explicit bullying, they were often perceived as highly emotional by the targeted individual and are critical components of the informants' narratives of the cyberbullying situations.

Against this background, cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying are argued in this thesis to be interconnected. The interconnection reflects in my view how many contemporary communication technologies are interlinked with life in the physical space. The idea of digital spaces as isolated from everyday life in the physical world has been abandoned by many media scholars due to the increased use of social network sites (Baym, 2015). As has previously been discussed, interaction on social network sites such as Facebook is deeply embedded in the users' offline identities (Murthy, 2012). Therefore, media scholars such as Baym (2015) claim that the sep-

aration between the offline and the online is a dated categorisation. Hence, the spatial interconnectedness between the digital and physical spheres contributes in my view to the co-occurrence of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying.

The suggestion that cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying co-occurs has methodological implications. While the understanding of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying as interconnected has been developed throughout the work of this thesis and is strengthened by the results of Study II, this perception is not mirrored in how cyberbullying was measured in Study I. The practice underlying how the prevalence was measured is based on a clear separation between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. This approach, implemented by the self-labelling method, shows cyberbullying to be less common than face-to-face bullying. While this is an important finding alone, the result can also be interpreted in a broader sense where possible overlaps between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying are not to be ruled out. Thus, measuring cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying as separate phenomena does not align well with how digital and social media are used. In the same way as it is likely that cyberbullying behaviours tend to influence social interaction in the physical workplace, it is likely that bullying behaviour that primarily takes place in the workplace to varying extents also occurs on email or on Facebook and blogs.

The relation between influence over work, social climate, social support and the occurrence of cyberbullying

Elaborating on the blurred boundaries between digital and physical spaces as well as interconnections between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying, other questions emerge. Hence, a legitimate question to ask is whether factors from the work environment such as influence over work, social climate and social support are still valid when predicting exposure of cyberbullying.

While the work environment hypothesis has been the dominant framework in explaining face-to-face bullying (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen, 2000; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007), few studies have investigated the relation between antecedents in

the work environment and the occurrence of cyberbullying (Farley et al., 2017). A study by Gardner et al. (2016) reports, however, that less organisational support and fewer organisational strategies are associated with more cyberbullying. The results indicate that factors from the work environment are still of importance in the prediction of cyberbullying.

In Study III, variables from the work environment hypothesis such as influence over work, social climate and social support from colleagues and managers have different exploratory power in cyberbullying. On the one hand, influence over work, which is a variable related to how the job is carried out, showed no relation to cyberbullying behaviour and indicates that some variables lose their explanatory power in cyberbullying. On the other hand, social climate in the workplace was related to cyberbullying behaviour, which indicates that some factors from the work environment hypothesis are still valid.

From a social interactionist perspective, situational and interpersonal factors that in different ways influence the interplay between actors involved are of essential importance (Neuman et al., 2011). This announce that a poor social climate at the workplace negatively affects the social interaction among colleagues and managers in other spaces, such as in digital spaces created by email, Facebook or blogs. Similarly, a poor social climate at the workplace can create an atmosphere where individuals do not receive the support from colleagues and managers that is necessary in coping with and mitigating the negative effects of cyberbullying behaviour from third parties.

Study III also revealed differences between women managers and men managers, and between men and women non-managers when investigating the relation between cyberbullying behaviour and social support. Only for women managers was low support from colleagues related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour. In Study III, this is discussed in terms of men's and women's different experiences of holding a managerial position in working life. A study on face-to-face bullying by Hoel et al. (2001), which found that

women have a higher risk of becoming victims of bullying in management positions than men, and a study by Salin (2003b), showing that women managers experience more face-to-face bullying from subordinates than their male counterparts, supports the analytical perspective on women managers' vulnerability to bullying. Thus, Study III suggest that the relation between low support from colleagues and cyberbullying for women managers may both reflect a higher vulnerability to horizontal cyberbullying behaviour from peers, as well as a lower willingness on the part of colleagues to take a stand for women managers in situations of cyberbullying. The relation between low support from colleagues and exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for women managers may however be better explained with references to patriarchal structures in working life (e.g., Höök, 2001; Lipman-Blumen, 1976; Sörensdotter, 2008) than new situations emerging with digital communication.

Operationalizing, measuring and assessing cyberbullying

The predominance of subtle behaviour on email and the examples of direct and explicit aggression on Facebook and blogs, as discussed under the theme 'media-specific expressions in cyberbullying', should be addressed in relation to the varied methods applied in each study. The approach of investigating cyberbullying behaviour by a scale such as the CBQ can be criticised for limiting the respondents to respond only to previously listed cyberbullying behaviour, thereby failing to capture behaviour that has not previously been thought of. Considering the ever-changing nature of online communication and interaction, scales for measuring exposure to cyberbullying can be criticised for having a relatively short life span as well as an inherent shortcoming in capturing expressions not already considered.

Essential for the behaviour listed in the CBQ is to treat it as repetitive behaviour with a duration of a minimum six months. Somewhat trivial behaviour, such as not having emails responded to, is to be seen as part of a larger process and not as a single negative act. However, this method for capturing bullying behaviour, which is often accomplished with Leymann's (1996) criteria of weekly

exposure for the last six months, falls short in capturing aggressive and traumatic single events.

When cyberbullying behaviour is conducted once but is forwarded several times among its users, and/or conducted once but attracts multiple responses, repetition is difficult to determine in a traditional sense (Slonje & Smith, 2008). The understanding of repetition in this thesis has also gradually come to lean towards the view of scholars who problematize repetition in cyberbullying (Farley et al., 2017; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Vranjes et al., 2017). In a similar way, the understanding of bullying as an enduring behaviour is in my view difficult to apply to some situations online. Thus, short-lived but intense situations on Facebook or blogs is shown in this thesis to create traumatic events for the targeted individual.

Expressions absent in the questionnaire study but captured in the interview study are, for instance, the situation where a target is exposed to extraordinarily intense situations of flaming on Facebook for a few limited days but also with a profound effect on his work relations after. Another example of a cyberbullying situation where repetition is problematic to capture in a traditional sense is the narrative where the target is mocked and ridiculed by a pupil in a film. The film is spread on a blog and viewed by pupils for months although it does not come to the target's attention until later on and at that moment is removed from the blog. Capturing these types of situations with a criterion of weekly exposure during the last six months is difficult if not even impossible.

On the other hand, the inclusive and subjective approach to cyberbullying applied in the interview study can be criticised for broadening the concept of bullying. While all situations included in Study II are repetitively conducted in some sense, they may not fall under Leymann's (1996) criterion of weekly exposure to bullying behaviour the last six months. Besides not being strictly analysed in relation to repetition and duration, the narratives included in Study II vary in relation to perpetrator as well as in the occurrence in meetings face-to-face. By widening the concept there is an imminent risk of weakening the tie to interrelated concepts and behav-

ious such as online hate, a collective term commonly used by the Swedish media for threats and harassment online. The main argument for broadening the concept of bullying in this thesis is, however, related to an overall transformation of working life and its boundaries. Digitalisation of communication and interaction impact understandings of repetition and duration as well as communicating partners in working life. As discussed previously, third parties such as clients, customers, pupils and students can more easily than before target an individual either directly in one-to-one communication or indirectly by exposing the individual on public platforms.

The relationship between cyberbullying and online hate can however also be understood in relation to the targeted individual's position of being a public person. Hence, an additional perspective regarding boundaries between cyberbullying and online hate is that the latter often is associated with victimisation of people that are highly exposed in media. Although one informant in Study II has a semi-public role in the town where he lives, the narratives included in this thesis do not deal with cyberbullying directed towards public figures. Rather, all included narrative concerns informants who have been targeted within a work life context.

Concluding remarks

This first theme, arguing that new power dynamics evolve with cyberbullying, addresses aspects in the digital communication that enable cyberbullying. This perspective on cyberbullying must not be mistaken for an argument in favour of a strict technological determinism where external agency is attributed to the technology alone. In line with Kitchin and Dodge (2011) I argue for a relational understanding of technology, space and people. Organisational factors, social relations and technological abilities constitute a specific context for cyberbullying behaviour. As shown in Study III, some factors from the work environment are also valid in the prediction of cyberbullying. However, digital communication enables the bullying behaviour to be transmitted in other ways.

While the first theme involves a comparison to face-to-face bullying in order to understand the new features of cyberbullying, the second theme stresses the importance of engaging in a nuanced discussion in regard to the different communication technologies involved in cyberbullying. Thus, this thesis indicates that cyberbullying behaviour on email differs from cyberbullying on Facebook and blogs, which is suggested to be understood in part in relation to audience and the embeddedness of the communication technology in the work organisation. More research is however needed that addresses the relationship between cyberbullying behaviour and the specific platform in use. This thesis indicates that closeness in relationship between target and perpetrator and the occurrence of meetings face-to-face influence the type of behaviour involved. Considering that communication technologies differ in the way they create such circumstances, research that takes into consideration the distinctive aspects of each communication technology can contribute to a nuanced understanding of the relationship between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying.

The third theme concerns conceptual challenges in cyberbullying and mirrors the theoretical assumptions above. Questioning defining elements such as repetition and duration in studies of cyberbullying inevitably extends the concept and make the boundaries to interconnected dysfunctional behaviours such as online hate somewhat blurred. The variety of cyberbullying expressions described in this thesis, which include subtle and neglecting behaviour on email to aggressive and direct bullying behaviour on social media, indicates that cyberbullying is a wide and diverse concept. Despite the extended research on cyberbullying among children and adolescents, the results of this thesis indicate the need for more research on cyberbullying in working life. This includes conceptual development of cyberbullying that takes into account an overall transformation of working life and its boundaries as well as the specific communication technologies at hand.

The findings implications for workplace polices

In 2015 the Swedish Work Environment Authority established new provisions regarding organisational and social work environment

that oblige managers to work proactively to obtain a good psychosocial work environment (AFS 2015:4). In the provisions, preventing workplace harassment is emphasized as particularly important. Although the provisions also highlight new situations arising with digital communication and managers' obligations to clarify boundaries between work and non-work in order to prevent stress, the provisions do not deal with cyberbullying per se. Cyberbullying, as I interpret the provisions, is integrated in the overall understanding of harassment in the workplace.

This way of addressing cyberbullying is on the one hand in line with the research findings of this thesis that consider cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying as partly interconnected. Considering cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying as having overlaps, cyberbullying can be argued to be covered in the work organisation's overall obligations regarding the work environment. On the other, cyberbullying is emphasised in this thesis as a phenomenon with unique features that requires to be understood from other perspectives than face-to-face bullying in order to be fully addressed. Hence, with the entrance of cyberbullying in working life I argue that new situations arise that organisations need to respond to in different ways.

It is not possible to declare a policy for digital communication and social interaction on social media that is valid for all work organisations. As previously discussed, individuals as well as work organisation have different preferences regarding their interest in integrating or segmenting work and non-work (Hochschild, 1997; Kreiner, 2006). Thus, in a complex working life, there is no one solution or policy that can be generalised to all work organisations. Each individual, profession and work organisation has its own motivations for engaging on social media platforms or transgressing boundaries of time and spatial boundaries between work and home. Still, I argue for the importance of policies that recognise how blurred boundaries between work and non-work emerge with social media and digital communication, as policies create a preparation for employers to act if cyberbullying occurs.

Organisational policies that aim at preventing and mitigating the negative effects of cyberbullying should address the problematic situations that emerge with boundary-blurred platforms such as Facebook. While most users of Facebook engage in social interaction based on a private profile, the inclusion of work relations on such sites makes Facebook also embedded in the work organisation and a place for collegial interaction. Based on the findings in Study II, I argue that initiating a discussion where employers are allowed to formulate their preferences for integration or segmentation of professional contacts on such sites is a good starting point for clarifying work/non-work boundaries on Facebook. Likewise, for work organisations that encourage the employees to be active on social media it is as important to declare when and where the employee communicates in a professional versus a private role.

While face-to-face bullying traditionally has been occupied with the relations taking place within the work organisation and the social relations among managers and employees, the role of third parties in cyberbullying, such as students, clients, customers or members of the public, creates new situations for work organisations to handle. The recognition of bullying from third parties is relatively new and is emerging as a result of increased digital communication. Thus, this is an aspect that work organisations have not necessarily worked with before. In contrast to face-to-face bullying where the involved parties answer to the same management, third parties' involvement in cyberbullying makes the situations even more complex to address. The choice of actions to take in situations of cyberbullying from third parties is related to the specific context and varies according to whether it is parents at nurseries, students or clients. However, policies that in different ways recognise third parties as a source of cyberbullying are crucial in order for management to effectively respond to the cyberbullying behaviour.

The implications for policies discussed above do not cover all new dimensions emerging with cyberbullying, but in my view these aspects of cyberbullying are important to consider in order to prevent and mitigate the negative effects. Moreover, the emphasised aspects

capture unique features of cyberbullying that have not necessarily been dealt with previously in work organisation's development of policies regarding the psychosocial work environment.

Suggestions for future research

Despite the extended research on cyberbullying among children and adolescents, research on cyberbullying in working life is still at a relatively early stage. On a general level, there are many aspects of cyberbullying that have not yet been discovered or where more research is needed in order to make general claims about patterns in cyberbullying.

Research on cyberbullying in working life benefits in my view from having different methodological approaches. On the one hand, longitudinal studies that examine the negative health effects of cyberbullying on the target are needed in order to address the severity of cyberbullying. This type of research can simultaneously address whether short but intense situations of cyberbullying have the same negative impact on targets health as repetitive and enduring bullying behaviour, which has implications for the conceptualisation of cyberbullying. On the other hand, in-depth studies with a qualitative approach are needed in order to understand the social interaction and power dynamics involved in cyberbullying. For instance, netnographic studies, i.e. ethnographic studies on the internet (Berg, 2015), can give researchers access to the actual cyberbullying situations and knowledge of how the cyberbullying behaviour unfolds. This in turn provides valuable insight into how power relations can be exercised in cyberbullying as well as the targets' choice of coping strategies. Moreover, complex phenomena such as cyberbullying benefit in my view from a mixed method research approach. With qualitative and quantitative data, mixed methods research offers different and complementary perspectives on cyberbullying which can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

On a more specific level, this thesis reveals findings that require further investigation. That men as a group and managers as a group were particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying behaviour in

working life is an important finding with implications for work organisations' pro-active work against cyberbullying. However, more research is needed in order to make claims about the generalisability of the results to other cultural and social contexts and whether cyberbullying in working life is associated with upwards bullying.

There are also other findings in this thesis that require more attention in research. This includes research that emphasises the variety of communication technologies involved, as these in my view create certain socio-spatial practices that influence the cyberbullying behaviour involved. As shown in this thesis, cyberbullying can have variety of expressions and encapsulate situations that are more or less consistent with traditional understandings of bullying. Thus, research that take into account the different communication technologies involved can be argued to strengthen the analyse of cyberbullying's conceptual differences and similarities between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying.

Cyberbullying in working life is a phenomenon that needs to be understood in relation to the digitalisation of working life and everyday life. These dimensions create new situations for bullying. Research that investigates the unique aspects that emerge with digital communication is therefore critical in order to give work organisations the tools needed to prevent cyberbullying from occurring and mitigating its negative effects.

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8. STUDIES I-III

I

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Computers in Human Behavior

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/comphumbeh

Exploring cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in working life – Prevalence, targets and expressions

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 February 2015

Received in revised form

30 December 2015

Accepted 5 January 2016

Available online 1 February 2016

Keywords:

Cyberbullying
Face-to-face bullying
Prevalence
Social media
Power
Gender

ABSTRACT

While cyberbullying among children and adolescents is a well-investigated phenomenon, few studies have centred on adults' exposure to cyberbullying in working life. Drawing on a large sample of 3371 respondents, this study investigates the prevalence of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in Swedish working life and its relation to gender and organisational position. Using a cyberbullying behaviour questionnaire (CBQ), the result shows that 9.7% of the respondents can be labelled as cyberbullied in accordance with Leymann's cut-off criterion. Fewer respondents, .7%, labelled themselves as cyberbullied and 3.5% labelled themselves as bullied face-to-face. While no significant relationships with gender or organisational position was found for individuals exposed to face-to-face bullying, this study showed that men to a higher degree than women were exposed to cyberbullying. Moreover, individuals with a supervisory position were more exposed to cyberbullying than individuals with no managerial responsibility.

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1. Introduction

More and more of today's communication at workplaces is conducted via electronic devices. Information is mediated via email and text messages, or on social network sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. With Facebook being used by more than half of the Swedish population, social network sites have become a part of everyday life and are primarily used for private purposes (Findahl, 2013). Nonetheless, 18% of the Swedish employees who are members of Facebook include work relations in their social network (Findahl, 2012). By sharing photos, videos and texts on digital platforms, a new way of distributing insights into the private realm among individuals belonging to the professional sphere arises. While social network sites illustrate the blurred boundaries between work and private life, the predominant online communication tool of today is email, which two of three Swedish employees use on a daily basis (Findahl, 2012). With the use of digital communication technologies, previous assumptions about time and space are challenged as information can be received and shared from other places than the workplace and at other times than during working hours.

With increasing online communication it is reasonable to

assume that dysfunctional behaviour such as workplace bullying also is expressed via digital channels. Cyberbullying, i.e. bullying via electronic devices, has attracted considerable media attention during the last decade (Brack & Caltabiano, 2014). As an emerging field, research on cyberbullying has centred on children and adolescents' exposure to that type of negative behaviour. Yet few studies have focused on cyberbullying among adults in working life (Brack & Caltabiano, 2014). Research on cyberbullying among children and adolescents has enriched the understanding of the phenomenon on a general level. Knowledge of cyberbullying that is produced in these empirical contexts, however, might not be fully informative regarding cyberbullying in working life, where other types of power structures and social relations have to be taken into account.

1.1. Research on cyberbullying

Smith et al. (2008 p. 376) define cyberbullying as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly, and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself". Based on Olweus' (1993) theorisation on bullying between school children, the definition involves three fundamental components. Bullying is defined as behaviours that are (1) aggressive, (2) involving an imbalance of power between the target and the perpetrator, and (3) conducted

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.01.003>

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repeatedly and over time. As cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon conceptual issues exist. On the one hand, cyberbullying can be understood as merely an extension of face-to-face bullying. Studies on cyberbullying among school children have shown that cyberbullying often coincides with face-to-face bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Li, 2007; Privitera & Campbell, 2009). In other words, face-to-face bullies tend also to bully online and cyberbullying victims tend to be victims also of face-to-face bullying. Hence, some researchers argue that cyberbullying merely adds an extra element to face-to-face bullying (Li, 2007). On the other hand, the overlap is not so large (Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007). Moreover, cyberbullying has characteristics distinctively different from face-to-face bullying (Greene, 2006; Kowalski, Limber, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Tokunaga, 2010).

First, the use of digital devices in cyberbullying gives the perpetrator several advantages. By using pseudonyms or creating temporary accounts perpetrators can deliberately hide their true identity. Anonymous interaction online has been suggested to have a disinhibiting effect on the perpetrator, involving behaviour s/he would not practise in real life (Kowalski et al., 2012). Furthermore, the geographic distance and the inability to see the responses of the target make the perpetrator less aware of the consequences of his or her negative behaviour. Not seeing facial and bodily responses may result in decreased feelings of empathy for the targeted individual (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Second, lack of supervision in electronic media makes cyberbullying conceptually distinct from face-to-face bullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). Since Web 2.0 is user-generated, the content of the platforms is not published or created by certain individuals. Instead the content is continuously produced and modified by all users in a participatory manner (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Hence, there are no clear individuals or groups who regulate deviant behaviours on the Internet (Tokunaga, 2010). Apart from anonymity and lack of supervision, a third feature of cyberbullying is that increased accessibility makes it more difficult for the targeted individual to escape the negative behaviour (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). When bullying behaviour is conducted via digital devices the target can be reached at other places than the workplace, such as the home, traditionally seen as a “safe haven” by targets of bullying. Moreover, by communicating via digital devices the target can be reached at other times than during work hours. Since work-related cyberbullying can take place outside traditional work related spaces, the negative acts can become visible for a large audience. Hence, cyberbullying becomes a public form of bullying.

In addition to the three features of cyberbullying often referred to in the cyberbullying literature, questions have been raised as to whether definitions derived from traditional perspectives are suitable for understanding cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008). For instance, what is repetition when one uploaded clip or web-post can be clicked on and shared several times by its audience? Similarly, new dimensions are brought into the conceptualisation of power imbalance as technical skills and anonymity can create new power advantages (Campbell, 2005; DeHue, Bolman, & Völlink, 2008; Li, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2006).

1.2. Power imbalance, gender structures and organisational position

Power is a central element in the conceptualisation of workplace bullying (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Vartia, 1996). Power imbalance derives from formal position and

informal status in the work organisation (Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2001) as well as in the number of individuals involved in the bullying behaviour (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). Hence, bullying is most often a downward process (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Rayner, 1997; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011). Those in low-power positions, such as subordinates, entry-level employees and women, are more likely to become victims of bullying (Keashly & Jagatic, 2011). In contrast, those in high-power positions are hypothesised as more likely to engage in hostile workplace behaviour. The Scandinavian countries and Finland deviate from this pattern. Studies from these countries show colleagues as often as supervisors being reported as perpetrators (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996).

As women often have lower organisational positions than men (Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009; SCB, 2014; SOU, 2014:80) it is reasonable to assume that women to a higher extent than men are victims of bullying. While large-scale studies have shown no significant difference between gender and victimisation (Hoel & Cooper, 2000), some studies have identified higher prevalence rates for women's exposure to bullying (Björkqvist, Österman, & Lagerspetz, 1994a; O'Connell, Calvert, & Watson, 2007; Salin, 2003; Simpson & Cohen, 2004). Comparing gender with hierarchical position, a large-scale nationwide survey in Great Britain found that women in middle management or senior management positions were more often bullied than their male counterparts (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001).

1.3. Prevalence of work-life bullying

If cyberbullying exists also in working life, how large can the phenomenon be expected to be? Previous research shows extensive variation in the prevalence of workplace bullying both between and within countries (Agervold, 2007; Nielsen et al., 2009). While Scandinavian countries show a prevalence rate for workplace bullying between 3.5% and 16% (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001) a Turkish study reported the prevalence of bullying among white-collar workers as 51% (Bilgel, Aytac, & Bayram, 2006). These protruding variations have been explained with references to cultural differences within countries such as power distance, egalitarianism and masculine/female values (Agervold, 2007; Hofstede, 2001) as well as methodological differences (Nielsen et al., 2009). Variations in measuring bullying contribute to an inconsistency in prevalence rates between studies (Ybarra, Boyd, Korchmaros, & Oppenheim, 2012). Conservative methods of measuring exposure to workplace bullying include asking the respondent directly if he or she has been exposed to bullying and/or measuring perceived exposure to specific bullying behaviour listed by the researcher (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2010).

The first approach, often referred to as self-labelling, is occasionally supplemented with a definition. Presenting a definition and including the word bullying tends to impact the prevalence rate negatively (Ybarra et al., 2012). Bullying victimisation is often associated with feelings of shame, creating a resistance to recognising the label (Felblinger, 2008; Lewis, 2004). The label bullied may threaten self-esteem as it can show signs of weakness (Van Beest & Williams, 2006). Hence, women are more likely than men to label their negative experience as bullying (Salin, 2003; Salin & Hoel, 2013). Workplace bullying is emotional and psychological in nature (Keashly, 2001) rather than physical or explicit. While workplace bullying is connected to risk taking, most bullying acts in the workplace are verbal, indirect and passive (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994b; Keashly & Jagatic, 2011). This means that the harm is most often caused indirectly, by words rather than physical violence, and by

withholding of actions (Baron & Neuman, 1996). Given this, workplace bullying includes negative behaviours such as social isolation (not communicating with someone or excluding someone from social events), ignoring, spreading rumours and lies (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009), where the intention of the negative behaviours is often covered.

The second approach, operationalised by giving the respondents an inventory of negative behaviour identified with bullying, shows variety in defining criteria for when an individual is regarded as bullied. Conservative approaches suggest at least one negative act on a weekly basis with a reporting period over 6 months in order to label the negative behaviour as bullying (Leymann, 1996). The rationale of the criterion is to differentiate bullying from short-term personal conflicts (Agervold, 2007). However, frequency varies among studies from weekly to monthly or even occasional exposure, while the period of exposure can range from 6 or 12 months to anytime in the respondents' working life (Agervold, 2007).

The handful of studies investigating cyberbullying in working life indicate a variety in prevalence rates, ranging from 9 to 21% (Baruch, 2005; Brack & Caltabiano, 2014; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Sprigg, Axtell, Coyne, & Farley, 2012), and a methodological inconsistency in measuring the exposure. The studies differ in reporting periods (6–12 months), and the defining criteria for when a person is being bullied (from weekly exposure to at least 2–3 times during the previous year). The studies also vary in what electronic channels are included. While some studies include a variety of technological media such as text messaging, phone calls, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, social network sites (Brack & Caltabiano, 2014; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Sprigg et al., 2012), other studies concentrate on a specific medium such as email (Baruch, 2005). Further, variations concerning the demographic characteristics, e.g. gender, occupation and/or age, limit comparisons across studies.

1.4. Research aims of this study

Since little research has concerned cyberbullying among adults in working life, there is a need to assess its existence. The aim of this study is to explore how cyberbullying is expressed in Swedish working life. I argue that gender and organisational position are central elements in studying the phenomenon as it encapsulates matters of power. It is important to understand power relations in face-to-face bullying (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen, & Hellesøy, 1994; Leymann, 1996; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). Of equal importance are the new dimensions of power brought to life by digital elements (Campbell, 2005; DeHue et al., 2008; Li, 2007; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Ybarra et al., 2006). Moreover, I argue that the novelty of the phenomenon urges for a comparison with face-to-face bullying to reflect upon its (in) dependence on traditional forms and expressions. The following questions are examined in the article: How prevalent is cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying in working life? How are cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying related to gender and organisational position?

2. Method

2.1. Procedure/questionnaire

To answer the questions of this study an online questionnaire was developed. Methodological inconsistency in the past calls for a comprehensive approach to the study object. In this study, three levels of bullying have been measured using two methodological approaches. Perceived victimisation of face-to-face bullying and perceived victimisation of cyberbullying have been investigated using a self-labelling method, while exposure to cyberbullying

behaviour has been measured using a questionnaire.

2.2. Selection of respondents

TNS Sifo, a public poll and market research company, was consulted to collect respondents for this study. TNS Sifo has access to an online web panel consisting of a nationally representative random sample of 140,000 people aged 16 years or older. As the aim of this study was to investigate cyberbullying in working life, the sample was restricted to involve individuals between the ages of 25 and 65. The higher figure is related to the likelihood that individuals over 65 have retired. The lower figure was set in relation to the obstacles many young people experience when entering the labour market and/or in relation to the years some spend in university studies. Since there was a plan to follow up the result of the questionnaire later with some in-depth interviews, restrictions were also made regarding location. The questionnaire was distributed to a random sample of individuals resident in Scania, Southern Sweden.

Having access to a large online web panel, a decision was made that the data collection was completed when 3885 individuals had responded the questionnaire. As the aim was to study cyberbullying behaviour in working life, respondents that had been unemployed during the last six months ($n = 514$) were excluded from the sample. The total number of respondents was therefore 3,371, which gives the study a response rate on 42%.

2.3. Sample

The final sample of 3371 respondents consisted of 49% women and 51% men. The sample had a mean age of 49.9 ($SD = 9.63$). In total, 60% of the respondents had a university degree and 32% had a supervisory position at their workplace. A majority, 73%, reported a use of digital devices such as computer, mobile phone, iPad very often or always in their daily work.

2.4. Measures

2.4.1. Exposure to cyberbullying behaviour (CBQ)

To investigate the prevalence and also how cyberbullying in working life is expressed, a cyberbullying behaviour questionnaire (CBQ) developed by Jönsson et al. (submitted) was used.

The CBQ is influenced by the negative act questionnaire (NAQ-R) developed by Einarsen et al. (2009) and a preliminary questionnaire of cyberbullying called the Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire developed by Sprigg et al. (2012), together with the results of a study on cyberbullying by Forsell (2014). The CBQ consists of 20 items related to bullying, covering a variety of digital channels such as email, text messages, social media sites and the Internet in general (see Table 1 for full description of items). The inventory refers to work-related negative acts occurring in the last six months, including behaviours such as: not having email responded to, receiving aggressively worded messages, being excluded from the social community online, having false statements spread on the Internet. A 5-point Likert scale was applied to assess the frequency with which the respondents experienced the cyberbullying behaviour, ranging from "never" to "now and then", "monthly", "weekly" or "daily" exposure. The respondents were given instructions to report exposure to each of the items in their working life during the last six months. The following instructions were given the respondents:

"The statements below exemplify behaviours that can be aimed at workers via digital media such as email, instant messaging, text messages or on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube. Specify how often you experienced the following situations in the

Table 1
Cyberbullying behaviour experienced by the participants (N = 3291–3363).

How often during the last six months have you experienced: 0 = never, 1 = now and then, 2 = monthly, 3 = weekly, 4 = daily	M	SD
1. Your supervisor/colleagues are not responding to your emails or text messages	.57	.98
2. Your work performance has been commented on in negative terms on the Internet	.08	.36
3. Rude messages have been sent to you via digital media	.09	.37
4. Persistent criticism of your work or performance has been made against you via digital media	.06	.31
5. Necessary information has been withheld making your work more difficult (e.g. being excluded from email lists)	.17	.46
6. Aggressively worded messages (e.g. capital letters, bold style or multiple exclamation marks) have been sent to you via email, text messages or the like	.14	.41
7. Threatening personal messages have been sent to you via digital media	.03	.21
8. Allegations have been made about you on the Internet	.03	.20
9. Threatening messages about your friends/your family have been sent to you via digital media	.02	.18
10. Others have commented on the Internet that you should quit your work	.02	.16
11. Assaults on digital media have been made of you as a person, your values or your personal life	.05	.28
12. Your computer identity has been hijacked	.02	.16
13. Gossip or rumours about you have been spread on the Internet	.03	.20
14. Extracts from your messages have been copied so that the meaning of the original message is distorted	.03	.19
15. Offensive photos/videos of you have been posted on the Internet	.01	.15
16. Jokes about you have been spread on the Internet or via email to several recipients	.01	.11
17. Viruses have intentionally been sent to your email address	.16	.48
18. Your mistakes or errors at work are repeatedly commented about in emails, text messages, or the like	.05	.24
19. False statements about you have been spread on the Internet	.03	.20
20. Colleagues have excluded you from the social community online (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	.03	.18

last six months.”

The CBQ has been distributed both to a Swedish sample (n = 3371) and an American sample (n = 238) in order to analyse the inventory's reliability and validity. Psychometric properties of the CBQ are discussed in Jönsson et al. (submitted), and the authors conclude that the CBQ is a reliable and valid measure for assessing cyberbullying behaviour in working life. The results of the confirmatory factor analyses showed that the one-factor CFA model had an excellent fit to data; $\chi^2(170) = 986.7$, CFI = .97 and RMSEA0.037. The internal consistency reliability of the CBQ, measured by Cronbach's alpha was .76 in the Swedish sample and .95 in the American sample.

2.4.2. Self-labelled victimisation of cyberbullying

The prevalence of cyberbullying was also assessed using a self-labelling method. The self-labelling method singles out whether or not respondents perceive themselves as cyberbullied. The respondents were requested to report if they had been cyberbullied in accordance with the following definition:

“Negative acts carried out by a group or an individual using digital media. The acts are carried out repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself. Online harassment can be expressed by offensive or rude text messages, email, or someone posting unpleasant and offensive information (picture, videos, or text) on the Internet.”

Based on this definition the respondents were requested to answer the following question:

– Have you been exposed to cyberbullying in relation to your work during the last six months? (yes/no).

2.4.3. Self-labelled victimisation of face-to-face bullying

A self-labelling method was also used when investigating the prevalence of face-to-face bullying. The respondents were requested to report whether or not they had been exposed to face-to-face bullying according to the following definition:

“Bullying occurs when a person repeatedly becomes a target for unpleasant, disparaging, or hurtful acts in the workplace. In order to label an activity as bullying, the acts need to occur over a period of time, and the target is having difficulties in defending him or herself.”

Based on the definition the respondents were requested to answer the following question:

– Have you been exposed to bullying in relation to your work during the last six months? (yes/no).

2.5. Data analysis

Bullying experiences were separated in this study into four different groups – individuals who (1) were exposed to cyberbullying behaviour; (2) were exposed to cyberbullying in accordance to Leymann's criteria; (3) labelled themselves as victims of cyberbullying; (4) labelled themselves as victims of face-to-face bullying. Descriptive statistics were used to investigate the prevalence of bullying within each group.

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was used to analyse differences regarding gender and organisational position while controlling for age and educational level. The MANOVA contains three dependent variables (1) exposure to cyberbullying behaviour; (2) self-labelled cyberbullying; (3) self-labelled face-to-face bullying.

In order to estimate the magnitude of the effect size, Cohen's d was performed. A standardised interpretation of effect size offered by Cohen (1988) has been applied to the results suggesting $d = .2$ as a small effect, $d = .5$ as a medium effect and $d = .8$ as large effect.

Moreover, a t-test was performed to examine the use of digital devices between supervisors and non-supervisors.

3. Results

3.1. Expressions and prevalence of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying

The most frequently reported cyberbullying behaviour was not receiving responses to emails or text messages sent to supervisors/colleagues, followed by being withheld necessary work-related information. The latter act was exemplified in the survey as being excluded from email lists. In general, excluding and passive acts (e.g. items 1 and 5) where the targeted individual was ignored were more frequently reported than active and direct acts (e.g. items 12, 15, 16) where the individual was actively targeted by its perpetrator/s. Nonetheless, active and direct forms of cyberbullying

behaviour were reported. Having a virus intentionally sent to one's email address and receiving aggressively worded messages (e.g. items 17, 6) were reported as the third and fourth most common negative acts online.

The four most reported cyberbullying behaviours (items 1, 5, 17, 6) all refer to email. Therefore, email was the most common digital channel for work-life cyberbullying in this study.

Applying Leymann's cut-off criterion of workplace bullying, that is, at least weekly exposure to negative acts during the last six months, 9.7% ($n = 306$) of the respondents in the current study can be regarded as victims of cyberbullying. Of these 56.9% ($n = 174$) were men, 43.1% ($n = 132$) were women and 39.9% ($n = 122$) had a supervisory position. The prevalence rate departs from the result of the inquiry based on the self-labelling method. .7% ($n = 24$) respondents labelled themselves as cyberbullied in accordance with the definition given, while 3.5% ($n = 116$) respondents labelled themselves as face-to-face bullied in accordance with the definition. Of the respondents that labelled themselves as cyberbullied 54.2% ($n = 13$) were men, 45.8% ($n = 11$) were women and 70.8% ($n = 17$) had a supervisory position. Of the respondents that labelled themselves as face-to-face bullied 41.4% ($n = 48$) were men, 58.6% ($n = 68$) were women and 33.6% ($n = 39$) had a supervisory position in their workplaces.

3.2. Variations in result regarding gender and organisational position

Experience of cyberbullying behaviour measured by CBQ was non-normally distributed, with a skewness 4.26 ($SE = .04$) and kurtosis of 30.69 ($SE = .09$). As often in studies on bullying, the last two categories, weekly and daily exposure, are seldom reported (Einarsen et al., 2009). Consequently, statistics on bullying are often non-normally distributed. In order to compensate for the skewness, the three categories monthly, weekly and daily exposure of cyberbullying behaviour has been collapsed into one variable when comparing differences regarding gender and organisational position. While Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for different expressions of cyberbullying behaviour related to working life, Table 2 presents differences between men and women, supervisors and non-supervisors exposure to cyberbullying and face-to-face

Table 2
Differences related to gender and position regarding exposure to bullying behaviours.

	M	SD	Cohen's d
Exposure to cyberbullying behaviour measured by CBQ			
Gender:			.16
Male ($n = 1616$)	.08	.14	
Female ($n = 1533$)	.06	.11	
Supervisory position:			.23
Supervisors ($n = 1011$)	.09	.14	
Non-supervisors ($n = 2135$)	.06	.12	
Self-labelled cyberbullying			
Gender:			0
Male ($n = 1710$)	.03	.17	
Female ($n = 1648$)	.04	.20	
Supervisory position:			.20
Supervisors ($n = 1068$)	.02	.13	
Non-supervisors ($n = 2286$)	.00	.06	
Self-labelled face-to-face bullying			
Gender:			-.05
Male ($n = 1710$)	.03	.17	
Female ($n = 1644$)	.04	.20	
Supervisory position:			.05
Supervisors ($n = 1069$)	.04	.19	
Non-supervisors ($n = 2281$)	.03	.18	

Note. $d = .2$ small effect, $d = .5$ medium effect, $d = .8$ large effect.

bullying, expressed by means, standard deviations and effect sizes.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted and the results revealed a significant multivariate main effect for gender, Wilks' lambda $\Lambda = .995$, $F_{(3, 3103.00)} = 2.47$, $p < .022$ and for supervisory position, Wilks' lambda $\Lambda = .989$, $F_{(3, 3103.00)} = 11.60$, $p < .001$ when controlling for the covariates age and educational level.

Given the significance of the overall test, the univariate main effects were examined. While no significant difference regarding gender was observed for face-to-face bullying, $F_{(3, 3103)} = 1.19$, $p = .306$, significant gender differences were observed among targets of cyberbullying behaviour, $F_{(3, 3103)} = 4.08$, $p < .017$. The results showed men being more exposed to cyberbullying behaviour than women. A similar significant difference between men and women was not observed among the respondents who labelled themselves cyberbullied, $F_{(3, 3103)} = .22$, $p = .806$.

While no significant difference regarding supervisory position was observed for face-to-face bullying, $F_{(3, 3103)} = .074$, $p = .786$, a significant effect for supervisory position was obtained for individuals exposed to cyberbullying behaviour $F_{(3, 3103)} = 26.50$, $p < .001$. The difference remained significant when using the self-labelling method on cyberbullying $F_{(3, 3103)} = 14.16$, $p < .001$. The result shows supervisors were being more exposed to cyberbullying than non-supervisors. In the total sample, more men than women reported having a supervisory position in the workplace. However, the MANOVA shows no interaction between gender and supervisory position, $F_{(3, 3103)} = 8.05$, $p = .37$. Hence, men and supervisors' vulnerability to cyberbullying are independent of each other. Nonetheless, a t-test shows that there is significant difference between supervisors and non-supervisors use of digital devices in their daily work ($t = 7.660$, $df = 3357$, $p = .00$) indicating that supervisors use digital devices to a higher degree than non-supervisors.

Although the MANOVA shows a significant difference between men and women, supervisors and non-supervisors exposure to cyberbullying, the effect size can be categorised as small. Cohen's d shows the effect size for gender to be .16 and for supervisory position to range between .20 and .23.

4. Discussion and conclusion

While research on cyberbullying among children and adolescents has grown during the last decade, cyberbullying in working life has remained a relatively unexplored field. The aim of this study has been to explore cyberbullying in working life by investigating its expressions, prevalence and relation to face-to-face bullying. Moreover, this study has examined how cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying are related to gender and organisational position.

While earlier research on workplace bullying often emphasised bullying as a downward process (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Rayner, 1997; Zapf & Einarsen, 2011) the results of this study shows that individuals in supervisory positions are more often victims of cyberbullying than other employee groups. Moreover, in contrast to studies that highlight women's vulnerability to face-to-face workplace bullying (Björkqvist et al., 1994a; O'Connell et al., 2007; Salin, 2003), this current study shows that men were exposed to cyberbullying, as measured by the CBQ, to a higher degree than women. Important to note is that a similar gender disparity was not observed among the respondents who labelled themselves as cyberbullied. However, since previous studies have reported that men are less likely than women to label themselves as bullied (Salin, 2003; Salin & Hoel, 2013) this result was not unexpected. An interesting result of this study is that men and supervisors' vulnerability was only observed when the bullying behaviour took place online. The same vulnerability was not

observed among the group being face-to-face bullied. This discrepancy between organisational position and gender among victims of face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying suggests that electronic devices in cyberbullying challenge traditional power relations. Earlier studies support this notion of power, advocating that online anonymity can help formally weaker individuals to get revenge on more powerful aggressors (Campbell, 2005; DeHue et al., 2008; Li, 2007; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Ybarra et al., 2006). However, it is important to note that supervisors reported a more frequent use of digital devices in their daily work than non-supervisors, which can contribute to supervisors' higher vulnerability to cyberbullying. Power has been investigated in this study using the concepts of gender and organisational position. Along with ethnicity, this is a conventional operationalisation of power in the literature on workplace aggression and abuse (Keashly & Jagatic, 2011). Nonetheless, power in workplaces can be more than a hierarchical source of power (French & Raven, 1959) such as for instance social power and social networks (Lamertz & Aquino, 2004).

In contrast to studies on cyberbullying among school children (Slonje & Smith, 2008), email was the most reported medium for cyberbullying behaviour. The most frequently reported online negative act was systematically and over time not receiving responses to emails or text messages sent to supervisors/colleagues, followed by being withheld necessary work-related information, for instance being excluded from email lists. The preponderance of passive and excluding behaviour over active and direct aggressions observed in this study is in line with earlier studies suggesting that workplace bullying rather is passive and indirect (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Keashly & Jagatic, 2011). Moreover, the dominance of email as a medium of cyberbullying questions the importance of anonymity often highlighted in cyberbullying literature, as email correspondence in most cases reveals the sender's identity. Still, emailing encapsulates elements of faceless communication that can decrease the perpetrator's awareness of the victim's emotional reactions (Kowalski et al., 2012). Not seeing the facial and bodily responses can decrease feelings of empathy for the victim. Although email was the most frequently reported medium of cyberbullying in working life, single negative acts on social media sites should not be underestimated as they can have far-reaching consequences (Slonje & Smith, 2008). As cyberbullying challenges notions of time, one status update on a social network site or information uploaded on a blog or website can be clicked on and viewed several times by its public.

This study shows that the relation between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying is multifaceted. It still remains unclear whether cyberbullying should be viewed as only an extension of face-to-face bullying or as a new and unique phenomenon. One the one hand, this study shows that the expressions of cyberbullying in working life do not differ much from face-to-face bullying. Passive and excluding strategies were the most reported negative behaviour also in cyberbullying. Moreover, the preponderance of email in cyberbullying indicates that anonymity does not play an essential role in the interaction. On the other hand, men and supervisor's higher vulnerability to cyberbullying implies that the digital media do have an impact on social relations and traditional power structures.

By using the cut-off criterion for bullying behaviour suggested by Leymann (1996), 9.7% of the respondents in this study could be regarded as cyberbullied. .7% of the respondents claimed to have been victimized of cyberbullying in agreement with the provided definition. Is this to be considered as high or low prevalence? The gap observed between the two methods of measuring cyberbullying is in line with previous research, showing lower prevalence rates for bullying when using a self-labelling method compared to

the use of inventories (Nielsen et al., 2010; Ybarra et al., 2012). Comparing the result of this study regarding self-labelled victimisation of cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying, the latter still appears to be a more common phenomenon in Swedish working life, with a prevalence rate of 3.5%.

One of the strengths of this study is the relatively large sample and that it consists of ordinary people and not only students. Like most studies, this study has limitations. There is a need to conceptually define the phenomenon of cyberbullying. The operationalisation of cyberbullying derives in this study from the established literature on workplace bullying. While traditional approaches originate in face-to-face relations, they can be criticised for not capturing the unique nature of cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Using the criterion of repetition in the definition that was provided to the respondents in this study may have created an understanding of cyberbullying in a traditional way.

It is also important to underline that some of the examples of cyberbullying behaviour of can be questioned for being commonplace. Items such as "your supervisors/colleagues are not responding to your emails", and "viruses have intentionally been sent to your email address", are examples of negative acts that most people have experienced. However, repeatedly and over time not receiving responses to one's email can create a feeling of being bullied. For the latter item, the word intention indicates that the sender deliberately sent virus to the receiver, thereby an intention to cause harm to the person targeted. Moreover, the study was carried out in a Swedish working environment, which limits the generalisation of the results to other cultural contexts.

Since cyberbullying in working life is a new research field, more studies are needed for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The finding in this study, that men more often than women and supervisors more often than other employee groups are victims of cyberbullying behaviour, calls for more research investigating the impact of electronic devices on power relations in working life. Also, more studies are needed to understand the predictors of cyberbullying and whether they differ with gender and formal positions in the workplace. Moreover, similar studies in other countries would increase the generalisability of the results. Finally, qualitative studies are required for a deeper understanding on how employees become targets of cyberbullying and what coping strategies that are at hand, as well as what impact it has on the targets health and everyday life.

Ethical consent

The study was approved by the Regional Ethical Review Board, Lund, Southern Sweden (2012/619).

Disclosure statement

No competing financial interests exist.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by a grant from Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte) under Grant 2012-0230.

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II

Cyberbullying in a boundary blurred working life – Distortion of the private and professional face on social media*

**This is the author's version of a paper that is under peer review after a first revision (December, 2018)*

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore what characterizes cyberbullying when it is performed in digital space and in an increasingly boundary blurred working life context.

Design/methodology/approach

Cyberbullying is explored through the lens of Erving Goffman's theories on everyday life interaction and social media scholars understanding of social life on the Internet today. The empirical material for the study is grounded in eight in-depth interviews with individuals who have been subjected to cyberbullying behavior in their professional life. The interview data was analyzed by means of thematic analysis.

Findings

Three key themes were identified: spatial interconnectedness, colliding identities, and the role of the audience. The empirical data indicate that in order to understand cyberbullying in working life it is necessary to consider the specific context that emerges with social network sites and blogs. Moreover, this study shows how social network sites tends to blur boundaries between the private and the professional for the targeted individual.

Originality/value

Cyberbullying in working life is a relatively under-researched area. Most existing research on cyberbullying follows the tradition of face-to-face bullying by addressing the phenomenon with quantitative methods. Given the limited potential of this approach to uncover new and unique features, this study makes an important contribution by exploring cyberbullying with a qualitative approach that provides in-depth understanding of the new situations that emerge when bullying is performed online.

KEYWORDS: *Cyberbullying, Working Life, Social network sites, Impression management, Front-and backstage, Audience*

Introduction

Today, boundaries between work and private life are becoming increasingly blurred (Allvin et al., 2006; Kossek and Distelberg, 2008; Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton, 2006; Sennett, 2011). Mobile devices such as laptops and smartphones make it possible to share and receive work-related information regardless of location and time. “Boundaryless jobs” (Allvin, 2008) are often associated with task-oriented “knowledge workers” with flexible working hours. However, with the increasing use of social media platforms such as Facebook and blogs, difficulties in maintaining boundaries between work and non-work may become problematic to individuals regardless of profession. When individuals’ online social networks constitute a mix of friends, family, work colleagues, managers, customers, and clients, previously separate social spheres become increasingly mixed and overlapping (Marwick and boyd, 2011).

While more of the private social interaction is conducted online, work relations are also maintained and performed on social media platforms. This article focuses on the dysfunctional sides of such interactions by exploring the experiences of individuals who have been subjected to cyberbullying behavior in working life. This is done by the use of Erving Goffman’s theories on everyday life interaction (1959) and social media scholars’ understandings of social life on the Internet today. Cyberbullying in working life can be defined as *“all negative behavior stemming from the work context and occurring through the use of ICTs, which is either (a) carried out repeatedly and over a period of time or (b) conducted at least once but forms an intrusion into someone’s private life, (potentially) exposing it to a wide online audience. This behavior leaves the target feeling helpless and unable to defend”* (Vranjes, Baillien, Vandebosch, Erreygers, and De Witte, 2017). Currently, cyberbullying among adults and in working life is a relatively under-researched area (Bartlett and Bartlett, 2011; Brack and Caltabiano, 2014; Göransson, Näswall, and Sverke, 2011; Privitera and Campbell, 2009). Nonetheless, an increasing number of studies on cyberbullying in working life emphasize its existence (Forssell, 2016; Kowalski, Toth, and Morgan, 2018; Privitera and Campbell, 2009). In a study on male manufacture workers in Australia, Privitera and Campbell (2009) found that 11% had experienced cyberbullying. A large survey from Sweden shows a similar prevalence rate, reporting that 9.7% of the working population had experienced weekly exposure to cyberbullying behavior in the last six months (Forssell, 2016). Moreover, Kowalski et al. (2018) found in their study on workers in the United States that 24% of the respondents had their first incident of cyberbullying in their adulthood. Among this group, the cyberbullying incidents were primarily reported to take place on social network sites, followed by instant messaging and email. Moreover, there is a growing number of studies on cyberbullying in working life that show negative implications related to the targeted individual’s health (Coyne et al., 2017; Muhonen et al., 2017). This includes stress (Snyman and Loh, 2015) and mental strain (Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell, and Subramanian, 2015). Moreover, research has shown that cyberbullying is related to decreased job satisfaction (Coyne et al., 2017).

While the fundamental purpose of communication technology is to exchange messages across geographical locations, digital spaces change users' perceptions of time and space (Baym, 2015). As digital spaces are not physically bounded in the same way as material spaces of bodily presence, users can be present in several online spaces simultaneously (Turkle, 2011). The absence of bodily presence of users in digital spaces also implies a detachment from bodily expressions. Facial gestures, eye contact, and body language are largely replaced in the digital communication by pressing buttons on a keyboard and watching the text develop on the screen. The lack of non-verbal social cues in digital interaction has been suggested to decrease feelings of empathy for the targeted individual (Slonje and Smith, 2008; Dooley, Pyżalski and Cross 2009). Moreover, the faceless communication may reinforce the users' perception of being anonymous or invisible when interacting in certain online forums. These characteristics have been proposed to have a disinhibiting effect in cyberbullying, leading offenders to behave in a way they would not do face-to-face (Suler, 2004; Kowalski et al., 2012).

Another feature of cyberbullying is the vastness of potential audience, also referred to as reach or publicity within the cyberbullying literature (Slonje and Smith, 2009). Digital contents in cyberbullying messages are accessible for perpetrators and bystanders to copy, paste, and forward (Kowalski et al., 2012). Thus, cyberbullying is a public bullying that potentially can have a viral reach (Langos, 2012). Moreover, the accessibility in digital communication and the ability to exchange messages regardless of time and space makes cyberbullying an intrusive form of bullying. In their qualitative study on targets of cyberbullying in working life, Heatherington and Coyne (2017) describe this intrusiveness as an accentuation of how boundaries between work and home are transgressed when targets receive the cyberbullying acts at home. According to the authors, the targets' experiences of having their perceived boundaries between home and private life violated contribute to their negative experiences of cyberbullying (Heatherington and Coyne, 2017). D'Cruz and Noronha (2013) also underscore the boundaryless character of cyberbullying in working life. Based on their study of cyberbullying among IT workers in India, the authors highlight how cyberbullying behavior goes beyond the physical workplace into the targets' home and includes relationships from the targets' private sphere such as family members and significant others.

Digital communication challenges traditional notions of bullying in working life. Unlike face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying does not only occur during the working day. Moreover, cyberbullying occurs in other places than the workplace. Thus, cyberbullying challenges previous notions of *when* bullying is work-related. Moreover, the accessibility to digital communication invites actors that are not necessarily members of the target's work organization. Customers, clients, students and pupils can target an employee more easily than before. Thus, cyberbullying challenges previous understandings of *who* are offenders in bullying. Finally, digital communication is a faceless communication and

when performed on Facebook or blogs, the communication takes place in front of a potentially large audience. Thus, interaction on social media platforms matters for *how* cyberbullying occurs.

Cyberbullying from a social interactionist perspective

Erving Goffman's (1959) theories on everyday life interaction offer a way to explore mechanisms behind cyberbullying. Although Goffman's theorization draws from observations of face-to-face interaction, his dramaturgical approach is often considered useful in understanding online presentation of the self (Hogan, 2010). Along with Goffman's low attention to cultural factors in the interaction, some of his drama metaphors have been criticized for being lightweight and inconsequential (Smith, 2002). However, some concepts from Goffman's analysis, such as his understanding of performance, have endured and have proven useful for analyses of the mediatized society (Johansson, 1999).

Goffman analyses social interaction by using theatrical metaphors such as actor, stage, mask, performance, and audience. Goffman's understanding of the individual is as a social interactive agent that presents an idealized version of herself/himself to others who constitute her/his audience. Thus, Goffman suggests that individuals can be seen as actors performing different sides of themselves. According to Goffman, fundamental to individuals' performances are their attempts to manage the impressions of themselves among the different audiences. Thus, with his concept of "impression management," Goffman emphasizes how people use different communication strategies in order to manage others' impressions of themselves (Johansson, 2009).

In order to prevent contradictory images of oneself from being performed in front of the same audience, Goffman (1959) argues that it is in individuals' interest to keep different types of audiences separated. However, when interaction is taking place online, such as on Facebook and blogs, "audience segregation" (Goffman 1959) may become difficult to maintain. Marwick and boyd (2011) use the term "context collapse" to describe how social network sites flatten multiple audiences into one platform. Unlike in face-to-face interactions where individuals can present themselves differently depending on who they are interacting with, users of social network sites address a diverse group of audiences that are not normally brought together. Thus, when posting messages on social network sites it becomes impossible for the user to differentiate self-presentation strategies according to the audience (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Considering the infinite character of digital spaces and the ability to share messages to different sites and platforms, grasping the width of the audience of one's posted messages is often difficult. Litt (2012) suggests that users of social media project an "imagined audience," i.e. a mental conceptualization of the audience before crafting a message. Many factors are involved in such process. Baym and boyd (2012) argue that the user's imagined audience can involve anyone from a supervisor at work to other individuals who have commented on the user's posts in the past.

While impression management often involves considerable self-control exercised by the individual, stage performance is also a joint effort where the audience can act as a team around the individual. The audience can maintain, enhance, or even destroy a person's performance. According to Goffman (1967), an individual's self-image and reputation should be considered as a "loan" from society. Goffman (1967) uses the concept of "face" to describe the positive social value that a person achieves in the eyes of the other by adhering to approved social attributes. Face can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and thus a person must constantly pay attention to it in interaction with others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). When presenting an image that is perceived as internally consistent and supported by others, an individual is maintaining face. When the self-image is not supported, individuals experience loss of face (Goffman, 1967).

Face-threatening acts can hurt or damage one's reputation. These situations can occur unintentionally, or they can be of a kind that Goffman refers to as "aggressive use of face-work." That is, "*face-threatening acts that are done maliciously with the intention of causing open insult or destroying someone's face*" (p. 39). Elaborating on Goffman's face-threatening act, Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish on the one hand between face-threatening acts that are clear and unambiguous and on the other hand those whose intentions are difficult to decipher.

In bullying, disguised forms where the intent is covered are common and can be understood as a way for the offender to avoid retaliation or negative consequences (Baron, Neuman, and Geddes, 1999). Indirect acts where the bullying behavior occurs through a third person are more common than acts that directly target an individual (Björkqvist, 1994). Similarly, passive acts that involve giving someone "silent treatment" are more common than active acts as in direct insults (Neuman and Baron, 1997). However, according to Neuman (2012) this pattern is likely to change when the contact between offender and target is limited, as in situations where the offender is a customer, client, or patient.

In Goffman's analysis of social interaction, he particularly identifies two performative "regions." *The front stage* is the region where the performance is carried out and this is where individuals engage in self-presentation strategies directed at their audience. *The backstage* region exists in relation to the front stage, although safely separated from it. The backstage region is a place where actors can let go of the presented image of the self and digest the impressions collected in the frontstage. According to Goffman, neither frontstage nor backstage is associated with a particular place but should rather be understood in relation to audiences. Tseëlon (1991) argues that the division between frontstage and backstage can be traced to the individual's perception of being exposed. Audiences that evoke self-conscious behavior in an individual denote the frontstage. Similarly, an audience that creates an unselfconscious behavior in the individual denotes the backstage. In the same dynamic and relational

way, the conceptions of the private and the public can be understood in relation to the audience and the behavior they induce in the individual (Tseëlon, 1991).

Goffman's performative regions are sometimes used in research on bullying and cyberbullying. According to Svensson (2010), all bullying is conducted on a frontstage. Backstage environments are places where targets can withdraw from the bullying and build alliances. The size of the working organization, the access to physical places to retreat, and how the work is organized influence the targets' abilities to recover from the negative acts and receive support from others. In their study of cyberbullying among girls between 12 and 15 years of age, Kernaghan and Elwood (2013) explored how the use of technology creates new and complex ways of participating and experiencing bullying. According to Kernaghan and Elwood (2013), cyberbullying acts are openly received by the target on their frontstage, but often conducted by the offenders in their private backstage environment. Kernaghan and Elwood (2013) argue that this setting allows us to think of cyberbullying as a performance. In the backstage environment the offenders can deliberately construct their performance without the presence of the audience. Time and spatial separation from the audience enable offenders to plan their action and manage the impressions given off in the performance. Thus, cyberbullying can be argued to create a safer environment for offenders. By hiding their identity and/or creating messages open for interpretation, the bullies can try to avoid confrontation (Kernaghan and Elwood, 2013).

Previous studies have often described social network sites and blogs as stages for contemplated self-presentation (Murthy, 2012), that is, as a type of frontstage regions. With status updates through texts, photos, or videos, users construct public images of themselves under controlled circumstances. Receiving positive comments or "likes" connected to the presented images often evokes feelings of self-affirmation among users (Murthy, 2012). However, in some type of situations social network sites can also be regarded as a backstage region. In their study of privacy settings on social network sites, Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis (2008) reflect upon the activity of employers logging into Facebook in order to get a glimpse of a job applicant's backstage region. As the information presented on Facebook can diverge from the image that the job applicant wants to present in a job interview, insight into users' backstage environment on Facebook may have negative consequences for the individual (Lewis et al., 2008).

As social media platforms merge private and professional relations, it can be argued that people may get more insight into colleagues' backstage regions. However, it can also be argued that images on social network sites such as Facebook are only highly polished representations of what the users would like to portray as their backstage. Both on- and offline, people engage in strategic activities in order to form their impressions in others. When it comes to self-presentation strategies, Goffman

(1959) distinguishes between cues intentionally “given” away in a performance and cues unintentionally “given off.” Online, cues intentionally given can be enhanced by the asynchronous communication that gives the users time to reflect upon the impression they want to give before responding. Cues unintentionally given off can be exemplified with poor spelling that the audience may interpret as signaling the sender’s social status or state of mind.

Aim of the study

There is need for research that explores the distinct characteristics of cyberbullying (Brack and Caltabiano, 2014; D’Cruz and Noronha, 2013; Slonje and Smith, 2008). Most studies on cyberbullying in working life follow the tradition of face-to-face bullying by addressing the phenomenon with quantitative methods. Given the limited potential of this approach to uncover new and unique features, there is a need to explore cyberbullying with a qualitative approach that provides in-depth understanding of the new situations that emerge when bullying is performed online. Considering that cyberbullying involves a move from the physical workplace to a boundary blurred digital space, I argue that space is a central aspect in the understanding. Faceless communication, perception of anonymity, large and cumulative audiences, constitute a specific context for social interaction online. In order to address the spatial circumstances that contextualize situations of cyberbullying, this article explores the phenomenon of cyberbullying through the lens of Erving Goffman’s theories on everyday life interaction (1959), in combination with social media scholars’ understandings of social life on the Internet today. The aim of the study is to explore what characterizes cyberbullying when it is performed in digital space and in an increasingly boundary blurred working life context. The study is led by the following research question: How does the complex social interactions between target, offender and audience impact the cyberbullying situation? Social relations and spatial distances are central in understanding communication and interaction in cyberbullying situations and will be further elaborated in the results section.

Method

Informants and procedure

The empirical part of this study is based on interviews with eight informants (four men and four women). Most of them were recruited via a questionnaire study among randomly selected individuals between the ages of 25 and 65, living in southern Sweden. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. After further information was given to the respondents about the research project, five of the informants were recruited by this procedure. Three informants approached the researcher after having read about the research project in the media or in other ways received information about the project. In Table 1 the background characteristics of the informants can be found.

Table 1. Background characteristics of the informants (fictitious names).

	Gender	Hierarchical position	Profession	Age group	Type of offender/s
1. Lena	Woman	Non-manager	Public administrator	45–50	Colleagues, manager
2. Paul	Man	Manager	Law enforcement officer	45–50	Colleagues, subordinates
3. Eric	Man	Non-manager	Administrator	40–45	Colleagues, friends
4. Eva	Woman	Manager	School leader	55–60	Parents
5. Marie	Woman	Non-manager	Teacher	50–55	Students
6. Kerstin	Woman	Manager	School leader	45–50	Colleagues
7. Hans	Man	Non-manager	Local politician	50–55	Citizens
8. Thomas	Man	Non-manager	Security administrator	45–50	Client

While cyberbullying is well understood within school children, there is still a shortage of research on middle age workers. Considering the explorative approach of the study, the only selection criterion was that the informants were adults and had experienced cyberbullying in their working life. Similarly, the study had no selection criteria for type of work organization. However, all informants that volunteered to participate in the study were working within Human Service Organizations (HSOs). HSOs is an umbrella term for organizations designed to handle education, child care, health care and social service etc. (Hasenfeld, 2009), and involves establishments such as schools, nurseries, public and authority offices. In the initial communication with the informants, the term “internet bullying” was used instead of cyberbullying. Internet bullying is the term commonly used in media reporting on the phenomenon in Sweden and is a term better known outside academia than cyberbullying. The narratives expressed in the interviews involved cyberbullying behavior mainly on Facebook and on blogs.

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted from one hour to one and a half hours. The interviews were based on open questions that let the informants describe the *situations* around cyberbullying, what perceived *consequences* the cyberbullying have had for them, what *coping strategies* the informants found available and what *support* the informant received from their employer. Most interviews were conducted at the university where the researcher is affiliated. However, due to geographical distance some were conducted over telephone. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The majority of the interviews were conducted in 2015.

Data analysis

The interview data was analyzed by means of thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes occurring in the empirical material (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The rationale for using thematic analysis in the current study was to interpret several aspects of the

research topic. The common ground for thematic analyses is their epistemological and theoretical flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thus, the analysis can involve both a reflection of the reality and an unravelment of the surface.

The themes were identified after the interviews were conducted. Since the identified themes are constructed on the informants' narratives rather than the researcher's preconceptions of the studied phenomenon, the themes are only loosely related to the questions that were asked during the interviews. The analytical process involved moving back and forth between the entire data set, the initial generation of codes, and the broader themes that were gradually identified. A theme is operationalized in this study as something that both captures important elements in relation to the research question and represents a patterned response within the study (Braun and Clark, 2006).

Ethical considerations

Bullying, in any form, is a sensitive subject. Therefore, the informants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their identities and the data they provided would be treated confidentially. In this paper, the real names of the informants have been replaced with fictitious names. Also, other types of revealing information, such as the identity of the informants' workplaces, have been excluded. The study design has been approved by the Regional Ethical Review Board, Lund, Southern Sweden (2012/619).

Results

Descriptions of the cyberbullying situations

In this study, the informants had different relations to their offenders. The relations varied between those that had contact with their bullies on a daily basis at work and those that had never met their bullies face-to-face. In the following, the cyberbullying situations that informants have experienced are presented briefly.

Lena is working as a public administrator. The cyberbullying behavior experienced by *Lena* is closely interwoven with the face-to-face bullying she experienced previously from one of her managers. *Lena* described herself as being excluded from the social interaction taking place among her colleagues on Facebook after returning to work following a period of sick leave.

Paul is working as a first-line manager within a larger public organization. In the interview, *Paul* expressed a constant awareness of having his actions as a manager being a subject of discussions by colleagues in his work organization's Facebook group. The Facebook group included members of the

organization from all over the country and had become a forum for internal complaints about different aspects of the work environment.

Eric, who is working as an administrator, finds himself being attacked on Facebook by people in his private and professional network after posting a controversial status update. The status update receives massive traffic during four days and infects *Eric*'s relation to one of his colleagues. The conflict on Facebook results in a situation where he finds himself the subject of face-to-face bullying conducted by one of his colleagues.

Eva is working as a school leader and experiences cyberbullying behavior from parents whose children are attending the school she is working at. Parents at the school had created a Facebook group where some school leaders had been openly criticized and mocked.

Marie is working as a teacher. Her experiences of cyberbullying behavior occur when one of her students publishes a video where *Marie* is mocked and ridiculed. The student posted the video on her own blog and the video was spread among students and staff members at the school.

Kerstin became a target of cyberbullying behavior on a local political blog after accepting a job as a school leader in a small town. On the blog, discrediting information was put forward about *Kerstin* and the reason why she got her position as a school leader was questioned.

Hans is a local politician and has a semi-public role in the town where he is working. *Hans* has witnessed repeatedly and over time how the image he portrayed of himself on Facebook was twisted, repeatedly criticized and commented upon in negative terms. The negative comments were always posted by the same group of individuals and varied from aggressive threats to remarks questioning *Hans*'s trustworthiness.

Finally, *Thomas* is working with security issues at a public authority. When investigating a case where other member of his organization had become targets of cyberbullying behavior, he ended up becoming a target himself. The cyberbullying behavior directed at him involved the spread of false and offensive information about him and his family on a blog.

In Figure 1, the narratives have been placed out with regard to the closeness in relation between target and offender, meetings face-to-face and the type of aggressions involved in the cyberbullying situations. The figure indicates that closeness in relation and meeting face-to-face influence the type of behavior involved. When there are few or no meetings face-to-face and the relationship between target and offender is distant, the cyberbullying behavior tends to include more direct aggressions. On the

contrary, in those narratives where there is a close relationship between the target and offender and when occasional meetings occur face-to-face, the cyberbullying tends to include more passive and/or indirect aggressions.

When the target works in the same organization as the offender/s as is the case with Lena, Paul, and Eric, face-to-face meetings occur on a regular basis. In these narratives the cyberbullying behavior is primarily expressed with indirect and passive aggression. In situations where there is a greater relational distance between target and offender, as expressed by Hans and Thomas, the aggression is particularly direct and actively expressed. These situations are more reminiscent of “online hate,” a collective term commonly used by the Swedish media for threats and harassment online. While online hate often is associated with highly exposed people in the media, the informants in this study are not public figures, although one of them has a semi-public role in the town where he lives. The narratives of Eva, Marie, and Kerstin are placed in the middle of the continuum of aggression. Here, the target and offender are not working in the same organization but have professional contact in different ways.

Figure 1. The figure illustrates how closeness in relations and meetings face-to-face influence the type of behavior involved in the cyberbullying situations.

The key themes in the cyberbullying situations

Three key themes were identified in the narratives. These themes highlight different aspects of the informants' experiences of being targeted by cyberbullying in working life. The themes are: 1) Spatial interconnectedness, 2) Colliding identities, and 3) The role of the audience.

Spatial interconnectedness

With the new and emerging phenomenon of cyberbullying, issues around the relationship of cyberbullying to traditional bullying have been accentuated. The issues concern whether cyberbullying should be understood as a distinct phenomenon or merely as an extension of face-to-face bullying (cf. Privitera and Campbell, 2009; Slonje and Smith, 2008; Vranjes et al., 2017). The empirical findings of this study indicate that new aspects emerge when bullying is performed on social media. However, the deep embeddedness of social network sites in everyday life practices of the physical world prevents a total separation of the two spheres. Even when restricted to Facebook or blogs, the cyberbullying described in many narratives in this study is not entirely separated from the informants' lives in the so-called physical world. This was illustrated by the face-to-face encounters that often occurred between the targeted individual and the offender. Although explicit bullying did not occur in the face-to-face meetings, some informants perceived these encounters as highly emotional. This was expressed by Eva when she spoke about situations where she occasionally meets the parents who engage in spreading derogatory and false information about her on Facebook or people that in other ways, such as "liking" a certain comment, signal an antagonistic position towards her.

"I met one of these dads yesterday in connection with another meeting. I actually pretended not to see him and went aside. Because I felt that I didn't have the strength. What am I supposed to say? When he sits there 'liking' that comment about me, that I am a certain kind of person. It's just too hard for me." (Eva)

The underlying cyberbullying as well as a sudden appearance in face-to-face meetings evoke feelings of uncertainty and discomfort, leaving Eva with a negative sentiment of not knowing how to cope with the situation. Inadequately handled, Eva feared that the denigration she experienced on Facebook would only escalate and therefore avoided face-to-face contact.

Spatial interconnectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying expressed in physical meetings are not restricted to a particular time or place. While the previous extract involves a time delay between cyberbullying behavior on social network sites and meetings face-to-face, the next extract illuminates how cyberbullying and face-to-face meetings can coincide in time and space. This was expressed by Eric, who was in the middle of a flaming situation (i.e. a brief, heated online exchange between two or more people) on Facebook, receiving comments that questioned his intentions in various ways. While this was going on Eric attended a work-related event where he saw

the colleague whom he found to have been most hostile towards him on Facebook. However, instead of approaching the colleague Eric decided to pick up his smartphone and respond to her message on Facebook.

“So, I actually stood there and answered her message [on the smartphone] because I didn’t want to talk to her. I didn’t know how to address her. It’s because it was so aggressive. Of all the posts, hers was the most aggressive.” (Eric)

The extract illuminates how cyberbullying in working life simultaneously can occur in different spaces and among different relational contexts. While sharing the same physical space as the offender, Eric creates a backstage environment by using his smartphone. In this backstage region, Erik can respond to the offender in a way that he feels more comfortable with than he would face-to-face. As stated by scholars such as Baym (2015), the digital communication provides the communicating partners with several advantages. The time delay in asynchronous communication gives the communicating partners time to think, reflect and build up arguments before responding, which enables the users to hone their arguments. Moreover, asynchronous communication allows the users to finish their sentences without interruption (Broadbent, 2016). With these advantages, the digital communication can help the target to hide emotions and put up a professional front and create situations where he/she has better control over the social cues given away in the performance.

Asynchronous communication and the perception of control it allows may also encourage a behavior among the users that they would not perform face-to-face. While both Eva’s and Eric’s narratives are examples of how cyberbullying in working life cannot be separated from spatial practices in the offline world, they also show how interaction is played out differently among spaces. In Eric’s case, the flaming conflict arising on Facebook later evolved into what he experienced as face-to-face bullying in the workplace. Feeling neglected and excluded from social interaction by his offender, Eric expresses a situation of ostracism when returning to the workplace. The kinds of treatment that Eric experienced from his offender in their interaction online and in the workplace differ greatly. While the flaming on Facebook was outspoken and direct, the aftermath in the physical workplace was non-confrontational and passive. Similarly, most face-to-face meetings Eva experiences with the offenders are free from bullying behavior, thus greatly differing from the treatment of denigration she experienced from the same persons online.

The different behavior acted out in the digital versus the physical spaces can be understood from the perspective of performance. In this performance, the target is not the primary addressee but the receiver of the negative behavior that emerges when the offender performs in front of a like-minded audience on Facebook. Proceeding from Goffman’s conceptual framework of social interactions as a performance, Kernaghan and Elwood (2013) describe cyberbullying as a public bullying that is

received by the target on a frontstage but conducted among users situated in a backstage environment. Backstage environments are often associated with intimacy among the participants. Thus, it is likely that users in such environments feel inclined to adopt a certain vocabulary, language, and behavior they would not use otherwise. This complexity of simultaneously performing in front of several audiences on social media relates to another theme, “the role of the audience,” that will be discussed later in this paper.

Colliding identities

Research often emphasizes cyberbullying as intrusive bullying since it has a capacity to target an individual 24/7 (D’Cruz and Noronha, 2013; Heatherington and Coyne, 2017; Kowalski et al., 2012). Issues concerning time as well as spatial boundaries are also expressed in this study. Hans, for instance, states that in order to avoid negative attention to his posts on Facebook he avoids making status updates in the evening when many of his followers are online. Eva and Kerstin express how they only handle the cyberbullying messages on their private computers at home, as a way of separating the cyberbullying behavior from their professional duties at work. Consequently, the coping strategy applied by Eva and Kerstin involves a limitation of ‘places for retreat’ from the bullying behavior (Svensson, 2010).

Digitalization contributes to the undergoing transformation where boundaries between work and private life are becoming increasingly blurred (Allvin, 2008; Broadbent, 2016). While time and spatial consequences were discussed by the informants, boundlessness was also expressed as the targets’ difficulties in separating their private and professional identity when being exposed to cyberbullying behavior. Most of the informants expressed concern about having their face impaired or in other ways questioned on a digital platform. Face-threatening activities are not restricted to cyberbullying but are common in all types of bullying. However, when bullying is performed on social network sites or blogs, face can be lost in front of a potentially large and limitless audience.

When users mix audiences from different spheres of life in one social media platform, a threat to the private face caused by cyberbullying behavior may transform into a threat to the professional face and vice versa. Marwick and boyd (2011) use the term “context collapse” to stress the difficulties that emerge with users having to perform and maintain multiple social relations on a single social network site. Thus, social network sites such as Facebook contribute further to the overall perception of blurred boundaries between the private and professional. The anxiety evoked by not knowing how and by whom postings on Facebook are viewed was expressed by Eric when reflecting on the conflict he became a part of on Facebook.

"I get very worried about that [the image created about him]. You can check, what did you think? And, oh, that's good. But all other 800 [Facebook friends] out there. Has there been an image created that Eric probably is a Sweden Democrat¹ and all that? Because that might have happened. People draw the most stupid conclusions from nothing. And I am like, I don't care, you stupid idiot! But at the same time, when you apply for that job or you do something then, it [the created image] can affect you in all sorts of ways." (Eric)

Eric's choice of including people from his professional sphere in his private Facebook account gave the conflict both a private and a professional character. Moreover, the massive attention Eric's post received in the form of comments, emojis, and discussions among users made Eric's post particularly visible. The architecture of Facebook made the post receive a prioritized spot in many users' Facebook news feeds for days.

Difficulties in separating the private from the professional, as well as the private from the public, are also manifested when private content available on social media is used as a way to damage the target's professional image. This was illustrated by Thomas when speaking about how his family also became involved in a cyberbullying situation.

The other dimension was that he [the offender] immediately realized that my parents are on Facebook, and there he found some pictures [...] So I learned that it is not only about me on social media, it is also about my friends and family." (Thomas)

The threatening and harassing communication to which Thomas was exposed can be referred to as a form of cyberstalking, which refers to the activity of using electronic communication to stalk another person (Kowalski, Limber, Limber, and Agatston, 2012). Although Thomas does not have a Facebook account of his own, Facebook's aim of connecting people with each other and displaying users contacts made Thomas's friends and family visible and accessible to the offender. Today, information about individuals' private and professional identity is often available online. Search engines such as Google make the cyberbullying behavior available to people outside the targeted individuals' professional sphere. As cyberbullying in working life blurs boundaries between the private and the professional, the targeted individual becomes particularly vulnerable. Accordingly, the repeated activity by some informants of googling their name was commonly described by them as an attempt to gain control of the potential face-damaging information online. This was expressed by Kerstin, who found disparaging information about herself visible online.

¹ The Swedish Democrats are a controversial nationalistic far-right political party in Sweden.

“You can find it today, yeah, and I have contacted Google about trying to get them to remove it. I have also been talking with a lawyer about the harassment, and they have talked to this woman [the offender] and they told her it is good if she removes it, but it is still there. But I have changed my name after this, so my new name is not there.” (Kerstin)

Changing her name shows how profoundly affected Kerstin felt by the face-damaging information online. The activity of googling the name can be seen as a consequence of the anxiety evoked by having their reputation damaged online. Beside googling the name, some informants also described strategies that involve interacting with the offenders online. What these informants had in common was that they responded to the offenders on the social media platform by using a professional and objective tone without showing any negative emotions.

While many informants perceived the cyberbullying behavior as directed towards them both as professionals and as private persons, most informants considered themselves to be restricted to a professional role when defending themselves against cyberbullying behavior. Engaging in behaviors that deviate from professional performance may only further damage the target's reputation. In line with Goffman (1959), for a person in a prominent position it often lies in that person's interest to segregate certain audiences from his/her informal appearances as it may otherwise harm the attributes ascribed to his/her professional role. Thus, being exposed to a large and mixed audience on a public platform may contribute to the targets' perceptions of having their hands tied and acting accordingly to frontstage norms of behavior. Now and then, however, feelings of anger and frustration may slip out, as witnessed by Eva who described how one of her work colleagues departed from her professional role and in an emotional rush directly responded to some of the parents on Facebook:

“She crossed the line, so to speak, because she wrote that – ‘If you are not happy you can take your children off the day care because what you are writing is not OK. Take your children away from here!’ Yes, of course, as a teacher you can't write that via Facebook to a group of parents. But I guess it came over her one night, she called me at half past ten in the evening.” (Eva)

Eva never confronted the offenders on her own. To her the incident expressed in the extract above confirmed her decision not to intervene directly with the offenders. For many informants, neither face-to-face confrontations nor confrontations on social network sites such as blogs seemed like a suitable option.

Lack of non-verbal cues in digital interaction supports the coping strategy of performing a professional role. The downside, however, is that the offenders remain unaware of the negative effects the cyberbullying evokes. These are important aspects in cyberbullying, as lack of non-verbal cues tends to decrease feelings of empathy and has been suggested to amplify the cyberbullying behavior (Slonje and Smith, 2009).

The role of the audience

The informants who had tried to talk to the offenders online often experienced these attempts as fruitless. This was expressed by the informants as feelings of “*being ignored*” or deliberately “*misunderstood*” by the offenders. The following extract illuminates the difficulties that some of the targets experienced when trying to engage in a constructive dialog with the offenders on social media. Here, Hans expresses a sense of powerlessness as his offenders repeatedly targeted him with disparaging or offensive comments.

“Like I said, there is this group of people who are being constantly negative and non-receptive. You notice that they don’t care about what I write. They have decided to continuously put forward the same message.” (Hans)

The cyberbullying experienced by Hans continues over a long period of time and involves many different, albeit, fruitless attempts by Hans to mitigate the experience. Lack of interest in participating in dialog with the targeted individual raises questions about who is being addressed in these cyberbullying situations. Although described in various ways, the audience is often present when the informants talk about their experiences of cyberbullying behavior. The following extract illustrates the essential role the audience plays when bullying is performed on social media. Being a victim of face-to-face bullying at the workplace, Lena perceives that her work colleagues do not want to be associated with her on Facebook. This is expressed by Lena who describes her social exclusion from the social and collegial interaction online as a power play.

“When I got back from sick leave I realized what it could be like on Facebook and how vulnerable you can become. Because when a manager is bullying an employee, and no one dares to stand up for you, you become very lonely. [...] There were several in that group who didn’t respond to my friend requests and I can see that they are friends with like 60 people including work colleagues. It becomes so obvious on Facebook, this power play.” (Lena)

The social exclusion Lena experienced on Facebook can be referred to as ostracism. In general, ostracism is a form of bullying where the offenders’ intention remains hidden or ambiguous. However, when ostracism is performed on Facebook, the “passive” bullying behavior becomes visible and

therefore possible to confront with evidence. Lena could observe that her friend requests to colleagues were neglected, which also enabled her to walk up and confront them. The transparency on Facebook that enabled Lena to identify the negligent treatment may, however, also be the source of the social exclusion. As participation on Facebook involves a visualization of the user's social network, accepting a friend request means that the users openly let themselves be associated with the other person. The user's social connections steer the impressions they make on others (Baym, 2015). Thus, the willingness to accept a friend request may be detrimental to that person's social status. Following Litt's (2012) theorization about the user's "imagined audience," the colleagues' mental conceptualization of who is observing their activities on Facebook may impact their inclination to respond to the contact request. Imagining the audience to be other members of the work organization, exposing a connection to the bullied individual on Facebook may reflect badly on the colleagues.

While the extract above illustrates indirect cyberbullying expressed by ostracism and exclusion from social interaction, the presence of an audience also prevails in situations of outspoken forms of cyberbullying behavior. When cyberbullying behaviors are explicit and public on social network sites, the audience takes on the role as receivers of the distorting and denigrating image of the target, but also as legitimizers, if they confirm the twisted image. This became clear in the interview with Kerstin when she described how other people read her student's blog and confirmed the disparaging information written about her.

"Yeah, other people had gone in [to the blog] and made comments that they thought it was well written, and yeah, confirmed her [the offender] in some sense." (Kerstin)

The presence of the audience when communicating on social media is also evident in the next extract, which illustrates how the offenders try to manage the audience impressions by using fake Facebook accounts and correct language. According to Eva, some of the parents that were involved in spreading false and discrediting information about her in the Facebook group used fake accounts to present themselves as a larger group of complaining parents than they actually were.

"Two of the parents are using both their own names and fake names. There might be more fake names I don't know, but there are at least two fake names. They write something and then they 'like' it in their own names. You can see that it is the way they are doing it. In a way, it becomes... I can see it by the language. They are trying to use a language that is...correct. Well, not correct because what they are writing isn't very nice, but they are well articulated." (Eva)

Digital communication creates new possibilities to present ourselves to others (Baym, 2015). The sparsity of social cues in the electronic interaction makes it easier to make false statements. Eva's perception of the offender's use of fake accounts is based on her investigation on Facebook. Facebook's display of each users' social contacts led Eva to the conclusion that some Facebook accounts were set up for the purpose of creating the impression to others that the Facebook group was larger, and therefore more powerful, than it actually was.

Discussion

The aim of this study has been to explore what characterizes cyberbullying when it is performed in digital space and in an increasingly boundary blurred working life context. To address this aim, eight interviews have been conducted with individuals who have experienced cyberbullying behavior directed towards them in their working life. Based on these interviews, three themes were identified. These are: 1) Spatial interconnectedness, 2) Colliding identities, and 3) The role of the audience. These themes uncover new aspects when bullying in working life is performed on Facebook and blogs. Considering the novelty and the scarcity of research about cyberbullying in working life, there is a need for studies that explore the distinct characteristics of cyberbullying (Brack and Caltabiano, 2014; D'Cruz and Noronha, 2013; Slonje and Smith, 2008). Most existing research on cyberbullying follows the dominant quantitative research tradition and is rather atheoretical (Heatherington and Coyne 2014). Thus, by employing a qualitative approach and using Goffman's theories of everyday life interaction, this study provides an in-depth understanding of the new situations that arise with cyberbullying in working life that may have practical implications for management and work organizations.

The results of this study illuminate that it is necessary to consider the specific contexts that emerge on social media in order to understand cyberbullying in working life. This study shows that cyberbullying behavior in working life is not limited to a digital space. Although cyberbullying in working life is performed online, face-to-face meetings often occur between the targeted individual and offender. Social media scholars such as Baym 2015; Berg, 2014; Ellison, 2007, stress that while there are online platforms that enable social interaction with a clear separation from the offline world, social network sites such as Facebook are often interwoven with life in the physical world in a complex way.

In addition to previous research that have reported overlaps between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying (cf. Ford, 2013; Gardner et al, 2016; Raskauskas and Stoltz, 2007), this study addresses overlaps in regard to spatial interconnectedness. When online platforms are interlinked with life in the physical space through personal relations, it becomes problematic to separate cyberbullying from the social interaction in the physical workplace. Thus, considering digital spaces as constituted by both

technological abilities and people's behaviors and practices within space (cf. Kitchin and Dodge, 2011), digital spaces are also relational (cf. Massey, 1994).

However, while social network sites such as Facebook and blogs tend to blur boundaries between the private and the professional, the private and the public, work and non-work, digital and physical spaces, this study also shows that cyberbullying in working life creates distinct situations for the targeted individual and differs from face-to-face bullying.

Firstly, an important theme has been that the audience has a critical part to play in cyberbullying. This confirms previous research showing that the potential of cyberbullying behavior to reach a large audience creates uncertainty and anxiety for the targeted individual (Kowalski, 2012; Langos, 2012; Slonje and Smith 2009), but it also provides a different approach to the role of the audience. The present study reveals that offenders' engagement in cyberbullying behavior may be as much a performance in front of an audience as an attack on the targeted individual. Considering social interactions on social network sites and blogs as a performance on a frontstage where users perform an ideal version of themselves in front of an audience, cyberbullying behavior can be understood as the offender's own engagement in contemplated self-presentation. While self-presentation strategies are commonplace in both online and offline interaction, cyberbullying represent new situations where the offenders have better control over the social cues given away in the performance. This finding is in line with Kernaghan and Elwood's (2013) study that showed the asynchronous communication and the safe backstage environment from where the bullying is performed give the offender several advantages. As the digital communication gives users time to think and reflect before creating a message, the offender may be able to target an individual while simultaneously creating a positive image of the self. In addition, this study suggests that the targets can also create a backstage environment where they can have better control over how they present their responses.

Secondly, the context of blurred boundaries evoked by social media creates situations of cyberbullying where disgracing one's professional face also negatively affects one's private face. This overlap was evident when the cyberbullying was performed in front of the target's private relations on Facebook, or, when the content of the cyberbullying behavior was searchable on the target's name. As in previous studies by Heatherington and Coyne (2017) and D'Cruz and Noronha (2013), this study found cyberbullying to go beyond the physical workplace and include relationships from the targets' private spheres. In addition to previous findings, this study stress that these situations influence the targets' perception of available coping strategies. Considering the mix of social relations online, the targets in this study often perceived themselves as being restricted to performing a professional role when managing the cyberbullying attacks. This involved hiding the negative emotions evoked by the cyberbullying behavior or not interacting with the offenders at all. Performing a professional role

created situations where targets of cyberbullying behavior found themselves in a defenseless position with few possibilities to protect themselves from the cyberbullying behavior.

The variety of relations and the different expressions of cyberbullying behavior expressed by the informants suggest cyberbullying to be a multifaceted phenomenon. In order to organize in these different situations, *a third* aspect of the nature of cyberbullying behavior exposed in this study is that the expressions of cyberbullying vary with the relation established between the targeted individual and the offender. Subtle expressions of cyberbullying behavior where the intention behind the negative acts was hidden or ambiguous often occurred in situations where target and offender belonged to the same work organization. When no such closeness in relation was present, the cyberbullying behavior often was more outspoken or even aggressive. When working in the same organization as the targeted individual, the offenders run the risk of being confronted due to their bullying. Subtle cyberbullying behavior where the intention is ambiguous or unclear may avoid such confrontation. In contrast, the findings of this study suggest that a more distant relationship between the targeted individual and the offender, for example as when they do not belong to the same work organization, may allow the offender to express more aggressive and direct cyberbullying behaviors. This is in line with the suggestion put forward by Neuman (2012) that stresses that direct and active bullying are more common in situations where the contact between the offender and the target is limited.

Future research

As this study identifies important situations evoked by cyberbullying, these situations deserve further research. The nature of cyberbullying in working life needs to be studied further, as well as the relation to other counterproductive behavior in working life such as “internet hate.” All targets of cyberbullying in this study worked in the public sector, and some of the targets were exposed to cyberbullying from offenders outside their own work organization. Thus, this indicates that in organizations where the employees work close to other individuals, such as in HSOs, situations can emerge where employees become vulnerable to cyberbullying behavior. Moreover, earlier studies indicate that men and individuals in a supervisory position are more exposed to cyberbullying behavior than women and individuals in non-supervisory positions (Forssell, 2016). Thus, gender and organization may also be important for understanding the mechanisms behind cyberbullying behavior.

In general, more studies are needed in order to understand the complexities within cyberbullying and the new situations that emerge when social media become platforms for work life interaction. This includes studies that continue the exploration of cyberbullying on Facebook and blogs, as well as on other media platforms. Moreover, research is needed that addresses how cyberbullying can be prevented in working life. While this study shows that the audience has an important role to play in the performance of cyberbullying by confirming the cyberbullying behavior, intervention studies that

focus on how bystanders of cyberbullying can intervene to support the target and prevent the cyberbullying situation would be an important contribution to the research area.

Practical implications

Implications for organizations and practitioners should be addressed. This study shows the importance of re-thinking work life boundaries in situations of cyberbullying. Although users of Facebook and blogs engage in social interaction based on their private profile, inclusion of work relationships on such sites make Facebook and blogs embedded in the work organization. The boundary blurred nature of cyberbullying raises questions for practitioners on when and where to intervene. Workplace health and safety policies that consider the blurred working life boundaries and the new situations that emerge with cyberbullying are important as they provide work organizations tools to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of cyberbullying when it occurs. Moreover, cyberbullying is associated with new types of consequences for the targeted individual. This includes the difficulty to separate threats on their professional face from their private face, and the negative digital footprint the cyberbullying behavior leaves behind. These are aspects that practitioners need to be aware of and should be recognized in the development of workplace health and safety policies.

Conclusion

The empirical data indicates that in order to understand cyberbullying in working life it is necessary to consider the specific context that emerges with social network sites and blogs. The study shows, that social network sites and blogs tend to blur boundaries between the private and the professional lives for the target. This includes the difficulties of separating the professional and personal identity when being exposed to cyberbullying.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported by a grant from Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte), DNR: 2012-0230.

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III

Gender and organisational position: predicting victimisation of cyberbullying behaviour in working life

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate possible predictors of cyberbullying behaviour in working life by examining previously known predictors of face-to-face bullying as well as demographic variables such as gender and formal position in the work organisation. Multiple regression analyses were conducted on a random sample of 3371 respondents. The results show that a poor social climate at work predicted exposure to cyberbullying behaviour. The study also found differences related to gender and organisational position. While low support from managers was related to higher exposure to cyberbullying behaviours for men managers, men non-managers and women non-managers, this relation did not apply to women managers. For women managers alone, low support from colleagues was associated with exposure to cyberbullying behaviours. Further, only for women managers age had no protective effect of exposure to cyberbullying behaviour. These findings imply that men and women have different social experiences in terms of holding power in working life. As women managers are in a minority in working life, other factors may be involved in predicting exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for women managers than for the other three groups. This article contributes to the sparse knowledge on cyberbullying in working life by recognising triggering factors.

KEYWORDS

Cyberbullying behaviour; work environment; gender differences; organisational position; predictors

Introduction

Severe negative outcomes for employees and work organisation due to bullying often make managers motivated to prevent bullying behaviour in the workplace (Salin, 2003b). Increased attention to face-to-face bullying in the last few decades has contributed to a rich body of knowledge (Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2011) that ultimately can help to prevent or mitigate the negative effects. However, with the development of communication technology such as e-mails, text messages and social network sites, new forms of deviant behaviour in workplaces have emerged, referred to as cyberbullying. So far, most studies on cyberbullying have

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This article was originally published with errors. This version has been amended. Please see Corrigendum(<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1494944>).

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been conducted among children and adolescents, whereas few studies take their departure in a working life context (Brack & Caltabiano, 2014). Being a new area of study, those studies that have investigated cyberbullying in working life have mainly been engaged in determining its prevalence (Brack & Caltabiano, 2014; Forssell, 2016; Privitera & Campbell, 2009). Nonetheless, there are a growing number of studies on cyberbullying that show negative implications related to the health of the targets (Coyne et al., 2016; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell, & Subramanian, 2015; Snyman & Loh, 2015) and job satisfaction (Coyne et al., 2016; Farley et al., 2015). Moreover, studies on cyberbullying in working life have shown differences regarding gender (Forssell, 2016) and hierarchical status (Forssell, 2016; Gardner et al., 2016) distinctively different from most studies on face-to-face bullying, hence bringing forward the idea that new strategies for individuals to impose power may arise with digital communication.

The focus for this study is the targets' experiences and not the perpetrators' motives. Growing evidence of the existence of cyberbullying in working life and its negative implications indicates the importance of identifying predictors of victimisation of cyberbullying behaviour. Thus, identifying underlying factors is necessary in order to prevent and take action against cyberbullying behaviour in work organisations. There is a debate among scholars as to whether cyberbullying should be seen as a unique phenomenon or merely as an extension of face-to-face bullying (Li, 2007; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Slonje & Smith, 2008). Thus, investigating factors that are previously known to predict face-to-face bullying can bring not only increased knowledge about cyberbullying as a phenomenon, but also help contribute to a theoretical understanding of its relationship to face-to-face bullying. Moreover, identifying new predictors can create enhanced understanding of the specific nature of cyberbullying. Thus, the aim of the present study is to examine predictors of cyberbullying behaviour in working life by (1) investigating the relationship to some previously known predictors of face-to-face bullying derived from the 'work environment hypothesis' and (2) analysing demographic variables such as gender and formal position in the workplace that may be specifically related to victimisation of cyberbullying behaviour in working life.

Features of cyberbullying

As cyberbullying is carried out via digital devices such as the smartphone and the computer and includes threatening or excluding messages sent via email, text messages or posts on social media, cyberbullying is suggested to have specific features of its own (Kowalski, Limber, Limber, & Agatston, 2012; Slonje & Smith, 2008). When communicating via digital devices, the perpetrator cannot see the facial or bodily reactions of the target. Consequently, the perpetrator becomes less aware of the responses the messages cause in the target, which can lead to decreased feelings of empathy (Slonje & Smith, 2008). In some cases, the sender may have a perception of being anonymous when interaction is taking place online. When using

pseudonyms or a temporary account, the sender can hide her/his true identity, which can create a disinhibiting effect (Kowalski et al., 2012). While these features of digital communication may affect the perpetrator's behaviour, the increased accessibility embodied in digital communication may have a direct impact on the target. When using digital devices, the targeted individual's possibilities to escape the harassing behaviour are reduced (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). With the accessibility of email and social media the target can be reached at other places than the workplace, and at other times than during work hours. Moreover, digital messages are often saved, transparent and possible to forward in order to harm the targeted individual or to be used as evidence of the ill treatment suffered by the victim. Thus, the meaning of repetition in cyberbullying has been questioned as one status update on social media can be clicked on several times by its users (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Cyberbullying is defined in this study as

a situation where over time, an individual is repeatedly subjected to perceived negative acts conducted through technology (e.g. phone, email, web sites and social media) which are related to their work context. In this situation the target of workplace cyberbullying has difficulty defending him or herself against these actions. (Farley, Coyne, Axtell, & Sprigg, 2016)

Bullying is an escalating process that often starts with negative acts characterised by indirect, discreet and subtle aggressions that can be difficult to recognise and/or confront (Notelaers & Einarsen, 2013). As the bullying process continues, the frequency and intensity of the aggressions tend to increase. Frequently discussed in the bullying literature is how often a negative behaviour must occur to be categorised as bullying. Traditional approaches to separate victims from non-victims involve a cut-off criterion, often operationalised as weekly exposure over a duration of six months (Leymann, 1996). While this approach can be criticised for reducing the complexity of the victimisation process, recent research has addressed these issues by also including targets of less intensive bullying in the assessments (Notelaers & Einarsen, 2013).

Predictors of cyberbullying behaviour

Social organisational climate

The existence of organisational antecedents of bullying, often referred to as 'the work environment hypothesis', has been the dominating framework in explaining face-to-face bullying (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen, 2000; Johan Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2007). The hypothesis highlights job-related factors such as role conflicts, role ambiguity and lack of clear goals related to how the work is organised and designed; team-related factors such as leadership; and organisational factors such as culture and climate (Baillien, Neyens, & De Witte, 2008; Baillien, Neyens, De Witte, & De Cuyper, 2009; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2010; Johan Hauge et al., 2007; Salin et al., 2011).

From the very early research on bullying, organisational culture and climate has been argued to be of most importance for understanding workplace bullying. In the view of Brodsky (1976), bullying only exists if the organisational culture permits and rewards it. Hence, Einarsen (1999) suggest that bullying is prevalent in work environments where employees and managers feel that they have the support from upper management to engage in such behaviour. Similar reasoning about organisational tolerance is put forward by Salin (2003c), stating that if the risk of being punished for bullying is low the likelihood that the members of the organisation get involved in bullying behaviour increases.

Organisational climate can be defined as 'those behaviour and attitudinal characteristics of people that are accessible to external observers' (Moran & Volkwein, 1992) and can be seen in the contexts of the social climate of a workplace (Dallner, 2000). Social climate in the workplace has commonly been reported as one important contribution to the emergence of bullying (Agervold, 2009; Baillien et al., 2008; Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). In her study on risk factors of bullying, Vartia (1996) found bullying to be prevalent in workplaces described as sullen, strained, competitive and with an authoritarian way of settling differences. The association between competitive social climate and bullying was further supported by Salin (2003a), who reported a positive correlation between a high degree of organisational politics and bullying among business professionals. Moreover, a qualitative study by Baillien et al. (2008) found that bullying is related to a lack of balance concerning the organisational goals and employees well-being, the social atmosphere and hierarchy in the workplace.

As research on cyberbullying among adolescents has shown similar predictors to be present for cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying (Casas, Del Rey, & Ortega-Ruiz, 2013), some researchers argue for considering the same predictors for workplace cyberbullying as for face-to-face bullying (Vranjes, Baillien, Vandebosch, Erreygers, & De Witte, 2017). In line with this argumentation, a recent study by Gardner et al. (2016) showed a poor work environment to predict both cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying.

Social support

Low social support at work, i.e. resources provided by significant others for the individual, have shown to be associated with sick leave, job satisfaction, well-being and health (Cassidy, McLaughlin, & McDowell, 2014; Michie & Williams, 2003). Also in the bullying literature, low social support has been identified as a risk factor that can trigger bullying behaviour (Hubert, Furda, & Steensma, 2001; Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). In line with this, Gardner et al. (2016) found in their study on cyberbullying among the New Zealand workforce that the perception of the work organisation as supportive reduced the reporting of cyberbullying exposure. Still, targets of bullying frequently rate support from managers as low (Einarsen, 1996; Zapf et al., 1996). As social isolation is a form of bullying, one

common effect is the diminishing accessibility and availability of social support for the targeted individuals. Lewis and Orford (2005) suggest that bystanding, i.e. observing bullying without taking action against it, is a symptom of fear of bullies' organisational power rather than an expression of the bystanders' apathy. Similar reasoning is put forward by Hoel and Cooper (2000), arguing that depending on the colleague's own hierarchical position in the work organisation, s/he may risk becoming a target herself/himself by intervening in the bullying situation.

Previous research on face-to-face bullying has shown gender differences associated with social support. In their meta-analysis to examine gender differences in coping with bullying, Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson (2002) reported that women were more likely to use strategies that involved verbal expressions while men tend to avoid ventilating their problems with others in bullying situations. Different socialisation processes for women and men give insight into why women and men tend to act differently (Salin & Hoel, 2013). Women's tendency to use indirect strategies such as seeking support of others, in contrast to men's self-reliant strategies, is in line with traditional gender norms, where men to a higher degree than women are permitted to show direct aggression (Jóhannsdóttir & Ólafsson, 2004).

Considering that more men than women are in superior positions in working life (Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009; SCB, 2014; SOU 2014:80), Kanter (1977) argued that gender differences at work are primarily an expression of unequal access to power. Hence, belonging to the majority or minority group within the work organisation may affect individuals' willingness to either seek or give support. As women managers are in a minority, they are exposed to high visibility and therefore often experience that they have little room for manoeuvre (Kanter, 1977). Being in a deviant position, it is argued that women managers often have to defend against constructions of being less competent than their male counterparts (Ely, 1995; Holgersson, 2003). Thus, violation of norms may have fatal consequences. Furthermore, the deviant position women managers often experience may prevent them from being included in a 'homosocial practice'¹ in the workplace, i.e. turning to other women for help and support. In order to be included in the homosocial practices it is important to contribute a positive impact on the group's standing (Lipman-Blumen, 1976). However, as bullying victimisation is often associated with weakness and shame (Felblinger, 2008; Lewis, 2004), bullying can be argued to have the opposite effect.

Influence over work

Another feature of the psychological work environment is the possibilities to influence one's own work. In line with the job demands-control model of Karasek (1979), the level of influence over decision and control over work load may influence how demands are handled by individuals. When an individual experiences a great deal of pressure but little or no control, the situation is thought to be particularly stressful (Boswell, Olson-Buchanan, & LePine, 2004). In line with

the job demands-control model, little control over work in combination with a high-pressure work environment could be argued to create frustration that triggers workplace bullying. A relationship between influence over work and bullying has been observed in the early literature on face-to-face bullying. Vartia (1996) identified lack of possibilities to influence matters concerning work as having strong associations with bullying. Moreover, Einarsen et al. (1994) identified work control as a factor in the work environment that correlated most strongly with bullying. A more recent study by Baillien, De Cuyper, and De Witte (2011) showed that low job autonomy, i.e. the ability to make decisions about work activities, was associated with being a target of bullying. The relationship between job autonomy and face-to-face bullying was further reported in Baillien et al. (2008), whereas job autonomy was identified as one of the most important job-related risk factors of bullying.

Gender and formal position in the workplace

As with all forms of bullying, power imbalance is a central aspect. Power imbalance can be understood in relation both to formal position in the workplace, which refers to position in the organisational hierarchy, and to informal position, which relates to one's standing in the work community, for instance belonging to a certain group. In this study power is related to organisational structure and is defined as organisational position within the workplace.

Most studies on face-to-face bullying have focused on 'downwards' bullying where the manager is identified as the perpetrator, or 'horizontal' bullying that refers to bullying between peers (Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2007). Less attention has been paid to managers' exposure to bullying behaviour. Like employees, managers can be subjected to bullying behaviour from their managers as well as from their colleagues. As power imbalance can be established by other sources than formal power, such as position in the organisation, contacts and networks with other influential individuals, skills and expertise, control over information and knowledge of the targeted individuals' vulnerabilities (Branch et al., 2007), managers can also be targeted by subordinates. Due to managers' control over rewards and punishments, overcoming the formal power of a supervisor is difficult. Hence, earlier research on face-to-face bullying shows that managers are seldom bullied by subordinates, although for managers who receive low support from their managers or colleagues the risk of being targeted by a subordinate increases (Zapf, Escartín, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2011).

Organisational power differences are often related to power differences on a societal level (Salin, 2003c). Research shows that gender inequality in work organisations creates obstacles for women's career advancement (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Lee, 2002). In a broader social order and within workplaces, power is often biased towards men and masculine values of power and control (Keashly, Fox, & Lituchy, 2012; Lee, 2002). Some argue that women's advancement in working

life may be perceived as challenging patriarchal power structures and therefore causes a reaction whereby increased face-to-face bullying towards women can be interpreted as way to retain patriarchal social control (Cortina et al., 2002). Due to gender-related power imbalance, it is reasonable to believe that women are more exposed to face-to-face bullying. However, empirical studies on bullying victimisation show a mix of results (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). While some studies indicate no gender differences (Hoel & Cooper, 2000), other studies show women more likely to be victims of face-to-face bullying than men (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Lagerspetz, 1994; O'Connell, Calvert, & Watson, 2007). Applying the perspective of organisational position to men's and women's exposure to face-to-face bullying enhances the understanding of gender influences. A study by Hoel, Cooper, and Faragher (2001) found that women managers were more likely to be bullied in management positions while men were more likely to be bullied as workers or supervisors. Moreover, in her study on business professionals, Salin (2003b) found that while women were bullied by managers, colleagues and subordinates, men were only bullied by the two first categories and not by subordinates.

Recent studies on cyberbullying in working life show differences regarding gender and organisational position distinctively different from most studies on face-to-face bullying (Forssell, 2016; Gardner et al., 2016). Unlike studies on face-to-face bullying, Forssell (2016) found that men and managers were exposed to cyberbullying to a higher extent than women and non-managers. A similar observation was made by Gardner et al. (2016), who found that managers experienced more cyberbullying than non-managerial employees, and that women were more exposed to face-to-face bullying but not more cyberbullied than men. Hence, these results suggest that gender and organisational position need to be taken into consideration when examining the phenomenon of cyberbullying in working life (cf. discussions on face-to-face bullying by Hoel et al., 2001; Keashly et al., 2012; Lee, Brotheridge, Salin, & Hoel, 2013).

Hypotheses

Previous studies on cyberbullying in working life have shown differences regarding gender and organisational position in the workplace (Forssell, 2016; Gardner et al., 2016). As possible effects might be concealed in the analyses if they are not divided by gender and formal position (Albertsen, Nielsen, & Borg, 2001), separate analyses were conducted for men managers, women managers, men non-managers and women non-managers. The following four hypotheses were tested:

- Hypothesis 1: Influence over work will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour.
- Hypothesis 2: Social climate at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour.

- Hypothesis 3: Social support from managers at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour.
- Hypothesis 4: Social support from colleagues at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour.

Method

Procedure

The data were collected by TNS Sifo, a public poll and market research company with access to a representative sample of 140,000 individuals within Sweden. From this data-set, a questionnaire was sent out to a random sample of individuals in working age – in this case defined as individuals between the ages of 25 and 65 living in Scania in south Sweden. The main argument for restricting the sample in age was to obtain respondents in working life. The higher age was set because many people retire at this age, while the lower age takes into account that many young people, due to university studies and/or obstacles on the labour market, enter the labour market a few years after graduation.

In total 3885 respondents replied to the questionnaire. As the aim was to study cyberbullying behaviour in working life, respondents that had been unemployed during the last six months ($n = 514$) were excluded from the sample. The total number of respondents was therefore 3371, which gives the study a response rate of 42%.

Participants

Among the 3371 respondents in the sample, 51% were men and 49% women. The mean age of the respondents was 50 years. Moreover, 60% had a university degree and 32% of the respondents had a supervisory position at their workplace. Altogether, 73% of the respondents reported the use of digital devices such as computer, mobile phone or iPad as ‘very often’ or ‘always’ in their daily work.

Measures

Demographic variables and internet use

The questionnaire included demographic questions concerning gender (men/women), organisational position (manager/non-manager), and educational level (university degree/no university degree). One item also elicited the respondents’ use of digital devices in their daily work by using a five-point scale ranging from ‘never/almost never’ to ‘always/very often’.

Cyberbullying

Exposure to cyberbullying behaviour was measured by the cyberbullying behaviour questionnaire (CBQ) consisting of 20 items related to negative acts online (Jönsson, Muhonen, Forssell, & Bäckström, 2017). The CBQ is influenced by the negative act questionnaire (NAQ) developed by S. Einarsen, Hoel, and Notelaers (2009). The NAQ and revised NAQ-R are validated scales that are often used in research to measure exposure to face-to-face bullying in the workplace. However, the scales do not capture negative acts conducted via digital devices.

The following instruction was given to the respondents when answering the CBQ:

The following behaviours are often seen as examples of negative behaviour in the workplace that may occur via the use of technology. When responding consider every act in relation to these eight types of technologies: Text messaging; pictures/photos or video-clips, phone calls; email; chat rooms; instant messaging; websites; and social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). Over the last six months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts related to your work though different forms of technology?

Example items from the inventory were ‘not having email responded to’, ‘receiving aggressively worded messages’, ‘having the work performance commented upon in negative terms on the Internet’, and ‘having false statements about oneself spread on the Internet’ (Jönsson et al., 2017).

A five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘never’, ‘now and then’, ‘monthly’, ‘weekly’ to ‘daily’ was provided to the respondents. Exposure to at least one of the negative acts in the scale at least ‘now and then’ during the last six months has been categorised as being subjected to cyberbullying behaviour in this study. Face-to-face bullying is often a gradually escalating process that involves different stages (Nielsen et al., 2011). When applying a strict either-or criterion, individuals exposed to bullying acts but at a lower frequency are singled out from the sample. This study includes varying degrees of exposure to cyberbullying behaviour. Individuals who are ‘sometimes bullied’ are included in the sample with individuals who are exposed to bullying behaviour more frequently. When labelling the experiences as exposure to cyberbullying behaviour, the study captures early signs of mistreatment that may escalate into more frequent cyberbullying.

The internal consistency reliability of the CBQ, measured by Cronbach’s alpha, was .76.

Social organisational climate

Social climate was measured by using QPSNordic (Dallner et al., 2000). The respondents were asked ‘What is the social climate like in your work unit?’ Five examples of work atmospheres were given: (1) Competitive, (2) Encouraging and supportive, (3) Distrustful and suspicious, (4) Relaxed and pleasant, (5) Rigid and rule-based. The respondents were asked to respond using a five point-scale

ranging from 'very little/not at all' to 'very much'. Responses were coded so that higher values indicated better social organisational climate.

Cronbach's alpha was .78.

Support from managers and colleagues

Support from managers was measured by two items from COPSOQ II (Pejtersen, Kristensen, Borg, & Bjorner, 2010). One example item was 'How often is your nearest superior willing to listen to your problems at work?'

Support from colleagues was also assessed by two items from COPSOQ. An example item was 'How often do you get help and support from your colleagues?' Both items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 'very often' to 'very rarely'. Before analyses the original values were reversed so that higher values indicate increasing support.

Cronbach's alpha was .90 for the scale measuring support from managers, and .93 for the scale measuring support from colleagues.

Influence over work

Influence over one's own work was measured by four items from COPSOQ II (Pejtersen et al., 2010). An example item was 'Can you influence decisions that are important for your work?' Answers were given on a five-point scale from 'very often' to 'very seldom'. Responses were coded so that higher value indicated higher influence over work.

Cronbach's alpha was .84.

Statistical analyses

Pearson's correlations and descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation were analysed for all studied variables and are presented in Table 1. Missing values were addressed by SPSS default setting and excluded listwise.

Table 1. Means, standard deviation and correlations for the continuous variables included in the study.

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cyberbullying behaviour	3152	21.6	2.9	–						
2. Age	3355	49.9	9.6	–.12**	–					
3. Use of digital devices	3367	4.6	.9	.07**	–.04*	–				
4. Influence over work	3308	13.4	3.9	–.09**	.09**	.13**	–			
5. Social climate	3297	18.8	3.8	–.27**	.06**	.04*	.40**	–		
6. Support from managers	3276	8.0	2.1	–.24**	–.01	.11**	.29**	.48**	–	
7. Support from colleagues	3290	8.7	1.7	–.17**	–.01	.11**	.15**	.39**	.54**	–

Notes: *N* = 3371–3152.

Cyberbullying behaviour.

p* < .05; *p* < .01.

Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine predictors of cyberbullying behaviour in the work environment and are presented in Table 2. In order to understand differences regarding gender and organisational position, four separate analyses have been conducted, one each for men managers, women managers, men non-managers and women non-managers.

When two or more independent variables correlate to a high extent the effect on the dependent variable becomes difficult to determine. To test the independent variables' correlation, a multicollinearity test was conducted among the significant variables in model three. The cut-off criteria of $<.8$ was used to identify multicollinearity (Field, 2013). The correlations for the total group range between .15 and .54, thereby multicollinearity was not considered to be problematic. The largest correlation was observed between the variables support from managers and support from colleagues.

To further ensure that no problematic multicollinearity existed between the independent variables, a collinearity diagnostic test was conducted. Variance inflation factor (VIF) larger than 10 and tolerance statistics below .2 were used to indicate bias or potential problems with multicollinearity in the models (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990; Field, 2013; Menard, 2002). The collinearity diagnostic test confirmed that the study has no signs of serious multicollinearity by identifying the VIF as not larger than 1.60 and tolerance statistics not lower than .63.

Results

Of the 3371 individuals participating in the study, 1542 reported exposure to cyberbullying behaviour at least 'now and then' during the last six months. Of these, 371 respondents were men managers, 200 respondents were women managers, 468 were men non-managers and 500 were women non-managers. Two of the respondents did not specify organisational position and one did not specify gender.

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations and correlations for the study's variables. Cyberbullying behaviour correlates to all factors in the study. The strongest correlation is between cyberbullying behaviour and social climate at work ($r = -.27$).

Predicting cyberbullying behaviour in working life

The result of the linear multiple regression analysis for predicting cyberbullying in working life is presented in Table 2. In the first step, the demographic variable age was entered. Age was significantly correlated with cyberbullying for all groups except for women managers, meaning that the lower the age of men managers, male and women non-managers, the greater the likelihood of reporting exposure to cyberbullying behaviour. A negative correlation between educational level and exposure to cyberbullying behaviour was observed for men managers. This means

Table 2. Results of a linear multiple regression analysis that predicts cyberbullying among men and women managers, man and women non-managers.

Variables	Men managers (n=680)			Women managers (n=390)			Men non-managers (n=1033)			Women non-managers (n=1256)		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Step 1												
Age	-.031	.014	-.086*	-.011	.016	-.036	-.036	.010	-.113***	-.030	.007	-.127***
Educational level	-.556	.252	-.086*	-.447	.337	-.067	-.356	.207	-.056	-.006	.144	-.001
F			7.249			3.343			8.810			11.420
ΔF			7.249			3.343			8.810			11.420
ΔR^2			.020			.013			.016			.019
Step 2												
Use of digital devices in the daily work	.477	.185	.101**	-.108	.257	-.022	.192	.106	.060	.256	.075	.100***
F			6.142			2.244			6.022			9.490
ΔF			3.860			.063			.455			5.534
ΔR^2			.025			.011			.16			.023
Step 3												
Influence over work	-.040	.040	-.043	-.031	.044	-.040	-.007	.030	-.009	-.016	.022	-.024
Social climate	-.195	.039	-.227***	-.227	.047	-.292***	-.125	.032	-.148***	-.114	.023	-.181***
Support from managers	-.338	.071	-.225***	.088	.093	.060	-.243	.064	-.159***	-.184	.044	-.152***
Support from colleagues	.111	.081	.064	-.330	.098	-.199**	.030	.074	.016	-.067	.051	-.044
F			16.289			9.145			12.511			23.383
ΔF			23.21			14.060			17.067			32.958
ΔR^2			.151			.140			.079			.127

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

that it was only for men managers that low educational level increased the risk of becoming a subject of cyberbullying behaviour.

In the second step, reported use of digital devices in the daily work was entered. The model showed that the use of digital devices has a positive correlation to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for men managers and for women non-managers, but not for the other two groups.

Factors in the work environment, i.e. influence over work, social climate, support from managers, and support from colleagues were entered in step 3. The model showed no significant relation between influence over one's work and being subjected to cyberbullying behaviour for any of the four examined groups, and hypothesis 1 was therefore rejected. Poor social climate in the respondents' working life was strongly correlated with exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for all four groups. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported regardless of gender and formal position in the workplace. A difference was observed between women managers and the other three groups regarding social support. For all observed groups except women managers, support from managers was significantly negatively related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour. For these three groups, low support from managers increased the likelihood of being exposed to cyberbullying behaviour. The model thus partly supports hypothesis 3. As perceived level of support from managers did not predict women managers' exposure to cyberbullying behaviour, the likelihood of this group being subjected to cyberbullying behaviour proved to be significantly related to the level of support they experienced from colleagues. Only for women managers did low support from colleagues increase the likelihood of being exposed to cyberbullying behaviour. Hence, hypothesis 4 was partly supported.

The total model fitted men managers ($R^2 = .151$) followed by women managers ($R^2 = .140$) better than men non-managers ($R^2 = .079$) and women non-managers ($R^2 = .127$).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate possible predictors of victimisation of cyberbullying behaviour in working life by examining some previously known predictors of face-to-face bullying as well as demographic variables such as gender and formal position in the workplace.

Contrary to previous results reported by Einarsen et al. (1994) and Vartia (1996), the MR analysis showed no relation between the lack of possibilities to influence one's own work and exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for any of the observed groups. Thus, the first hypothesis (H1) postulating that influence over work will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour was not supported for any of the four studied groups. As digital communication changes the setting for bullying it is likely that some variables lose their explanatory power. The specific features of cyberbullying, such as faceless communication, perception

of anonymity, increased accessibility and blurred boundaries between work and home, stress the relational aspects in bullying. Thus, job-related factors connected to how the work is carried out may become of less importance in explaining the existence of cyberbullying.

A significant relationship between poor social climate and exposure to cyberbullying behaviour was found for men managers, men non-managers, women managers and women non-managers. Therefore, the second hypothesis (H2) postulating that social climate at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour was supported for all four studied groups. As being subject to cyberbullying behaviour may be linked to the perception of the work environment as poor, and/or poor social climate may create conditions for bullying behaviour to emerge, this result was one that could reasonably be expected. In line with research on face-to-face bullying, competitive work environments, rigid workplaces and non-supportive atmosphere create environments where bullying can flourish (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Einarsen et al., 1994; Salin, 2003a).

For the other variables in the MR analysis, the predictors vary with gender and organisational position. While factors predicting exposure to cyberbullying behaviour showed a similar pattern for men managers, men non-managers and women non-managers, the same factors did not predict exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for women managers. The result of the MR analysis showed that low support from managers was significantly related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for men managers, men non-managers and women non-managers. For these three groups, the third hypothesis (H3) postulating that social support from managers at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour was supported. For women managers, however, no relationship between lack of support from managers and exposure to cyberbullying behaviour was observed. Thus, for women managers the third hypothesis (H3) was not supported. In contrast, only for women managers was low support from colleagues significantly related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour. Thus, the fourth hypothesis (H4) postulating that social support from colleagues at the workplace will be negatively related to cyberbullying behaviour was supported for women managers, but not supported for the other three studied groups. Additionally, the results of the MR analysis showed that age was not related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for women managers, while for the other three observed groups, younger individuals were more likely to become targets of cyberbullying behaviour. As younger women managers were not more/less likely to be subjected to cyberbullying behaviour than their older counterparts, age had no protective effect for women managers.

Why is it that lack of support from managers was not related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for women managers while the opposite was the case for the other three observed groups? Moreover, why was lack of support from colleagues related to exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for women managers but not for the other groups? Women managers' low rating of support from colleagues

may reflect a higher vulnerability to cyberbullying behaviour from peers, as well as a lower willingness from colleagues to take a stand for women managers in situations of bullying. While this study has focused on the target, the perpetrator of the cyberbullying behaviour has not been identified. However, it seems likely that men and women may be bullied by different sources and/or to a different extent by certain sources. Men and women have different social experiences in terms of holding power in working life. As women managers are in a minority in working life, other factors may be involved when predicting exposure to cyberbullying behaviour for women managers than for the other three groups. A study on face-to-face bullying by Hoel et al. (2001), which found that women managers have a higher risk of becoming victims of bullying in management positions than men, and a study by Salin (2003b), showing that women managers experience more face-to-face bullying from subordinates than their male counterparts, supports the analytical perspective on women managers' vulnerability to bullying. Thus, the result may reflect that women managers to a larger degree than the other three observed groups are subjected to horizontal bullying, i.e. cyberbullying behaviour from their colleagues. However, more research is needed in this area. Furthermore, social power and informal status of the target may impact colleagues' willingness to give support in situations of bullying. For colleagues witnessing bullying, acting upon and actively giving support involves taking a risk (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Depending on the target's informal standing in the organisation, active support may make the colleague appear to be associated with the targeted individual and increase the risk of becoming a target of bullying him or herself. The relationship between low rating of social climate in work organisation and reporting of cyberbullying behaviour supports this interpretation.

New practices in working life emerging from digital communication influence human resource management (HRM) as a field of practice. With the development of communication technology such as e-mails, text messages and social network sites that give rise to new expressions of bullying, traditional understanding of bullying may no longer be accurate. Hence, in order to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of cyberbullying behaviour it is important to identify factors that may trigger its existence. Considering the novelty of the phenomenon (Brack & Caltabiano, 2014; Farley et al., 2015) and the practical implications cyberbullying has on working life and human resource management, this study makes an important contribution to the field of research. However, cyberbullying is a complex phenomenon that involves many variables. The explanatory effects of the models can in total explain the variance of cyberbullying up to 15.1%.

Possible limitations to the findings should be noted. First of all, since this is a cross-sectional study causality cannot be tested. Previous studies have provided support for the assumption that psychosocial factors in the work environment may trigger the occurrence of face-to-face bullying (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen, 2000; Johan Hauge et al., 2007). However, when causality remains uncertain an inverse relationship cannot be ruled out. Thus, longitudinal studies are

needed to confirm the findings regarding the distinctive results of men managers, men non-managers, women managers and women non-managers. Second, the perpetrators of the cyberbullying behaviour were not identified. Not knowing the gender and organisational position of the aggressors hinders the ability to examine the relational aspects of the phenomenon and to further analyse power relations within cyberbullying. Third, the mean for cyberbullying behaviour is fairly low, which indicates that exposure to cyberbullying behaviour is not yet a frequent phenomenon in Swedish working life. This may have an effect on the generalisability of the results. However, while this study is based on a cross-sectional sample of the working population in Sweden, a study conducted on a specific work organisation may show different results. Fourth, the external validity connected to the study's sample should be addressed. The study was carried out in a Swedish working environment, which limits the generalisation of the results to other cultural contexts. Moreover, the sample shows a relatively high mean age of 50 years as well as a fairly high educational level. The sample composition may impact the relations in the MR model. Fifth, given the size of the sample, even small correlations can emerge as significant. Thus, there is a need to be careful in the interpretation of the results.

Considering that cyberbullying in working life is a rather new phenomenon, more studies are needed. The results of this study indicate that there are reasons to particularly explore women managers' vulnerability to cyberbullying behaviour. Moreover, there is a need for studies on cyberbullying in working life that identify the sources of bullying. This is particularly important as this study indicates that formal power structures in work organisations may be challenged with digital communication. Further research on work life cyberbullying needs to engage in such studies.

Note

1. The concept of 'homosocial practices' was developed in the 1970s by Lipman-Blumen to describe men's preferences for other men, and to explain why men dominate powerful positions in the workplace and society. However, the concept has also been used to describe relationships between women (cf. Höök (2001) and Sörensdotter (2008)).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This research was supported by a grant from Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte) [grant number 2012-0230].

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In Sweden and many other countries, working life is undergoing a digitalisation process that changes behaviour and patterns for how work is conducted in the most profound way. Important dimensions of digitalisation are the psychosocial aspects that are accentuated with increased digital communication. Among these are cyberbullying which refers to bullying via digital devices and includes negative behaviour mediated via email, text messages, blogs or on social network sites such as Facebook.

The aim of this PhD thesis is to develop new knowledge on how cyberbullying in working life can be understood and explained. The aim is addressed by exploring how cyberbullying in working life is expressed and what individual, social and organisational implications it entails when bullying occurs in digital spaces. The thesis has an interdisciplinary approach where theoretical perspectives from the fields of urban studies, sociology and organisational psychology are applied. Moreover, the thesis is grounded in mixed methods research design, which purpose here is to gain complementary knowledge by using methods that add different perspectives on the same phenomenon.

The results of the thesis are integrated into three themes: power dynamics emerging with digital communication, media specific expressions, and conceptual challenges in accessing cyberbullying. Power dynamics in cyberbullying, focuses on how digital communication can transform power relations and that power relations in cyberbullying differs to some extent from face-to-face bullying. Media specific expressions stresses that cyberbullying is performed differently on email and on Facebook and blogs and emphasises that cyberbullying should be understood as context- and media-specific. The type of audience and the embeddedness of the digital platform in the work organisation is claimed to influence in part how the cyberbullying behaviour is expressed. Finally, conceptual challenges in accessing cyberbullying, discusses spatial interconnectedness between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying and elaborates on the implications that overlaps between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying have regarding the interpretation of prevalence rates.

ISBN 978-91-7104-952-0 (print)

ISBN 978-91-7104-953-7 (pdf)

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