



Bullying at work

Antecedents and outcomes

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Ph D Thesis

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"Prevention is better than cure"

Desiderius Erasmus (1466 - 1536)

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My interest in workplace bullying has lasted for many years. Throughout the 1990s I contributed to books and several papers regarding the subject. Subsequently, I was granted a 12 month sabbatical leave in 1998. Initially, I intended to write a thesis about another subject than work place bullying. Coincidentally, however, at that time we had collected some brand new survey data on bullying, with the participation of members of two bullying associations, “Stopp Jobbmobben” and “Landsforeningen mot mobbing”. Thus, we had revealed some interesting new findings about workplace bullying (e.g. MMPI-2 personality profiles of the respondents). Therefore, I started to wonder whether I now had enough data on the topic of work place bullying to write a thesis entirely devoted to this topic. I finally made up my mind in 1999 to deliver a doctoral thesis with work place bullying as the main topic.

I am indebted to many people. They all have in common that they have contributed to this thesis, directly or indirectly. The most important person and inspiration has been my supervisor professor Ståle Einarsen, with his devoting interest in science in general and work place bullying in particular. Ståle has a unique skill to motivate, and to ensure that the last - and very essential – improvements of the various papers are made in the editing process. Not the least, Ståle is also a very important co-author on all the papers in the present PhD thesis. Without his eagerness and enthusiasm I would probably not have started the work process to build up a complete PhD thesis on the subject of workplace bullying.

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Bergen, December the 30th, 2005

Stig Berge Matthiesen



LIST OF PAPERS

Paper 1

Einarsen, S., Matthiesen, S. B., & Skogstad, A. (1998). Bullying, burnout and well-being among assistant nurses. *Journal of Occupational Health and Safety - Australia and New Zealand*, 14, 263-268.

Paper 2

Matthiesen, S. B., & Einarsen, S. (2001). MMPI-2 configurations after persistent bullying at work. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 10(4), 467-484.

Paper 3

Matthiesen, S., Aasen, E., Holst, G., K., W., & Einarsen, S. (2003). The escalation of conflict: a case study of bullying at work. *International Journal of Management and Decision Making*, 4(1), 96-112.

Paper 4

Matthiesen, S. B., & Einarsen, S. (2004). Psychiatric distress and symptoms of PTSD after bullying at work. *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, 32(3), 335-356.

Paper 5

Matthiesen, S. B. & Einarsen, S. (Submitted paper). Perpetrators and targets of bullying at work: Role stress and individual differences.

ABSTRACT

The synopsis

The present thesis is titled "Workplace bullying. Antecedents and outcomes". Hence, it focuses on work place bullying, which is a relatively new research topic within psychology. The synopsis part of the thesis clarifies the construct of bullying and its prevalence. Related concepts, such as the aggression construct, interpersonal conflicts, emotional abuse, and extreme social stress, are discussed with reference to bullying. Ten subtypes of bullying, that may constitute a useful categorization (among those, predatory bullying and whistleblowing retaliation bullying), are suggested. The prevalence of bullying is reviewed. In most countries, the rate varies between 5 and 10 per cent. Leaders are most prone to become bullies, in statistically terms. Possible antecedent and outcome factors of workplace bullying, as documented in the research literature, are listed. Antecedent and outcome examples that can be outlined are e.g. antecedent conditions such as authoritarian leadership style, organizational culture with a "sense of permission to harass" and outcome factors like turnover and psychiatric after effects. Five empirical papers are presented in the thesis. These are reviewed in the synopsis part. A research model is applied as a tool in order to integrate the presented papers with the field of research. The papers supplement different parts of the research model with empirical knowledge, knowledge that thus is added to the research field of workplace bullying. In addition, the synopsis part of the thesis discusses various methodological aspects, such as lack of longitudinal studies, the legal perspective, various research levels (among those, the individual and dyadic level), and the dose-response issue, that still have not been implemented within the bullying research. Suggestions for future research are made.

Overview of the research papers

Among the five papers included in the thesis, one is submitted, whereas the rest are published peer review papers. Four of the papers are cross-sectional survey studies (2 work place studies, 2 bullied victims community sample studies), whereas the last paper comprises a qualitative single case study interviewing one bullying target. The papers have in common that they all investigate various antecedent and outcome factors of bullying.

Paper no. 1, entitled "*Bullying, burnout and wellbeing among assistant nurses*" (with Ståle Einarsen and Anders Skogstad as co-authors) investigates the prevalence of bullying in a representative work place sample, assistant nurses (n= 935, prevalence rate was found to be 3 per cent). The paper reveals significant interconnections between bullying and mental well-being, in the form of job dissatisfaction and burnout.

Paper no. 2, entitled "*MMPI-2 configurations after persistent bullying at work*" (with Ståle Einarsen as co-author) compares a bullied victim sample (n=85) with an American sample of harassed workers. The MMPI mean profiles were found to be almost identical, an elevated (psychosomatic) 3-2-1 profile on the clinical main scales. Further analyses, using a clustering technique, revealed that the Norwegian sample

could be split into three subgroups. One of those, labeled "The Commons" (25% of the sample), were found to have a normal (non-elevated) personality profile, whereas the other two subgroups ("Highly elevated" and "Elevated", comprise 32% and 43% of the sample) had elevated profiles on respectively seven and four of the clinical main scales. Surprisingly, the victims of the common cluster group reported the highest level of exposure to bullying. The paper discusses whether this finding may support a vulnerability factor among the other victims.

Paper no. 3, entitled "*The escalation of conflict: a case study of bullying at work*" (with Elizabeth Aasen, Giske Holst, Kenneth Wie and Ståle Einarsen as co-authors) investigates in retrospect a single case of workplace bullying. The single case is a happy one, meaning that the bullying conflict was resolved, and the interviewee was able to return to her work. The paper stresses the importance of social support to obtain such a good result. The case story and some significant conflict events within it are analyzed, using the conflict escalation model of Evert van de Vliert (1998), a model that also is recommended for subsequent case studies of work place bullying.

Paper no. 4, entitled "*Psychiatric distress and symptoms of PTSD after bullying at work*" (with Ståle Einarsen as co-author), with 102 participating victims of bullying, revealed a high level of psychiatric distress and posttraumatic stress (PTSD) symptoms. Three out of four victims reported symptoms above a recommended threshold for psychiatric caseness. The findings revealed that the personality dimensions positive and negative affectivity may be of importance, related to possible after effects of workplace bullying. Although survey no. 4 revealed that psychiatric distress and PTSD symptoms weakened somewhat as time goes by, the effect of the time relationship was moderate, supporting a notion that time only to a limited extent heals all wounds.

Paper no. 5. The last paper entitled "*Perpetrators and targets of bullying: Role stress and individual differences*" (with Ståle Einarsen as co-author) compares perpetrators and victims of bullying at work. The perpetrators have been coined as "the black hole" in the bullying research field by Rayner and Cooper (2003). 2215 respondents participated in this workplace study. 8,3 per cent were identified as targets of bullying, whereas 2,1 per cent were so-called "provocative victims", meaning that they are exposed to bullying, at the same time as they do admit that they are bullying others. Moreover, 5,4 per cent were perpetrators of bullying, which means that they recognize that they have exposed others to bullying. Perpetrators were found to have a higher level of aggression than the comparison group and the targets. Provocative victims reported a low level of self-esteem and self-evaluated social competency combined with a high level of aggressiveness. Targets of bullying revealed low levels of self esteem and social competency. Targets and provocative victims had more former experience with bullying than the control group, be it as a child, or at a previous work place. Targets, provocative victims as well as perpetrators reported elevated levels of role stress in the form of unclear or conflicting demands and expectations around work tasks and daily work, giving support to a hypothesis claiming that micropolitical behavior may be an important antecedent of workplace bullying.

THE BULLYING PHENOMENON

Background

This thesis deals with “mobbing” or bullying in the workplace, a form of interpersonal aggression that can be both flagrant and subtle, but is mainly characterized by its persistency. During the last decades there has been a growing awareness of the detrimental effects of exposure to bullying/ mobbing and non-sexual harassment in the workplace (Einarsen, 1999; Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999). The Scandinavian term "mobbing" was initially borrowed from the English word "mob" and was applied to describe animal aggression and herd behavior. Thus, it seems like a paradox that it is not the term used in English speaking countries. When bullying (in Norwegian “*mobbing*”; and “*mobbning*” in Sweden) was introduced as a concept in Scandinavia by Heinemann (1972) to characterize a specific type of aggression among school children, he had in mind the “mob” or group attacking a specific target. Soon the term was expanded to include incidents that take place when one single school pupil or student is bullying another single pupil or student (Olweus, 1978).

Later the term bullying or mobbing in the workplace was adopted to denote a specific type of work place aggression among adults, including the one by one combination of individuals confronting each other as perpetrator and target. Such forms of systematic negative treatment at the workplace had not been systematically described until Heinz Leymann, a Swedish family therapist, began investigating direct and indirect forms of conflict in the workplace (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). In 1982, Leymann began his empirical work in various organizations, where he encountered the phenomenon of mobbing (see, e.g. Leymann, 1987a, 1987b). Furthermore, Leymann broadened the construct to include non-sexual harassment in the workplace. Internationally, the term "mobbing" was later adopted by German-speaking countries, The Netherlands, as well as some Mediterranean countries, whereas "bullying" became the preferred term in English-speaking countries (Zapf &

Einarsen, 2005).

Bullying defined

In an American clinical case study dating from the 1970s, a psychiatrist defined harassment as persistent attempts on the part of one person to annoy, wear down, frustrate or elicit a reaction from another (Brodsky, 1976). Workplace harassment may be regarded as a synonym to bullying. According to Brodsky, harassment denotes behavior that continually provokes, presses, frightens, humiliates or in some other way creates unpleasantness for someone. Leymann (1996) describes it as hostile and unethical communication systematically directed at one or more persons. Leymann (1990b) claims that to be characterized as being bullied, a person must suffer episodes at least weekly for a period of six months. However, such bullying seems to develop gradually, the core being the victim's experience of being exposed to systematic, continuous and partly intentional aggression in a situation (in this case, the workplace) in which such behaviour should not to occur (Keashly, 1998).

Björkqvist define bullying as "repeated activities, with the aim of bringing mental (but sometimes also physical) pain, and directed toward one or more individuals who, for one reason or another, are not able to defend themselves" (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt Bäck, 1994). What has gradually become the most common definition of bullying focuses on negative actions occurring repeatedly over a certain period of time, and from which the persons affected find it difficult to protect themselves (Einarsen, 1996; Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). This definition of workplace bullying is adapted from Dan Olweus and his bullying at school research (see, e.g. Olweus, 1978; Olweus, 1993), and can be fully formulated as the following (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003a, page 15):

Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work tasks. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process it 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" is in conflict.

A feature of bullying is the imbalance of power between the parties. The persons targeted in workplace bullying find it difficult to protect themselves. Hence, there must be an imbalance of power between the parties involved in bullying. Consequently, it is not regarded as bullying if two more or less equally “strong” persons come into conflict, or when only an isolated instance has occurred. Typically, targets of bullying find it difficult to defend or protect themselves against the behavior, as their opportunity for retaliation is more or less ruled out (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005). Imbalance of power in the context of bullying means that the person concerned has little control. Little control combined with high stressors has been found to be particularly stressful (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). This situation of extreme social stress may thus explain the severe health damage often observed in victims (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005).

Types of bullying

Based upon clinical contacts with bullying victims, I would suggest some additional facets to the aforementioned definition. These facets will be that the exposed individuals: a) perceives

the bullying as intentional and directed against them, b) lacks opportunities to evade it, c) lacks adequate social support that could act as a “buffer”, d) experiences the bullying sanctions as unfair or out of place (over-dimensional), e) is vulnerable and f) experiences the treatment so often that it has the effect of making him or her feel insulted or humiliated. The latter aspect is a question of both time and quantity.

A model to illustrate and facilitate the understanding of bullying has been suggested by Zapf (2004). He draws a number of concentric circles (*figure 1, see next page*), whereby the outer circle consists of various social conflicts that take place within an organization. The next inner circle symbolizes when social stress arises and builds up over time, e.g. when people have to cooperate throughout a period of organizational restructuring, with decisions that have to be improvised, and time pressure to fulfill all the extra work tasks. The third inner circle concerns when unfair work practice or interactional injustice occurs, e.g. when resources or benefits are to be divided.

Zapf's fourth inner circle denotes negative acts or negative social behavior. The Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen, & Hellestøy, 1994) describes a host of such events, e.g. repeated "attacks" against a person, social isolation from colleagues, slanders or rumors about an individual being spread around. The inner circle in the Zapf model consists of bullying or mobbing, the subjective and victimized feeling of being the target of bullying.

A hypothetical example to illustrate the model would be a company undergoing organizational change and downsizing, including many lay-offs. Due to the uncertainty and certainly the speed of the transition process, many stressing episodes may arise (social stressor circle).

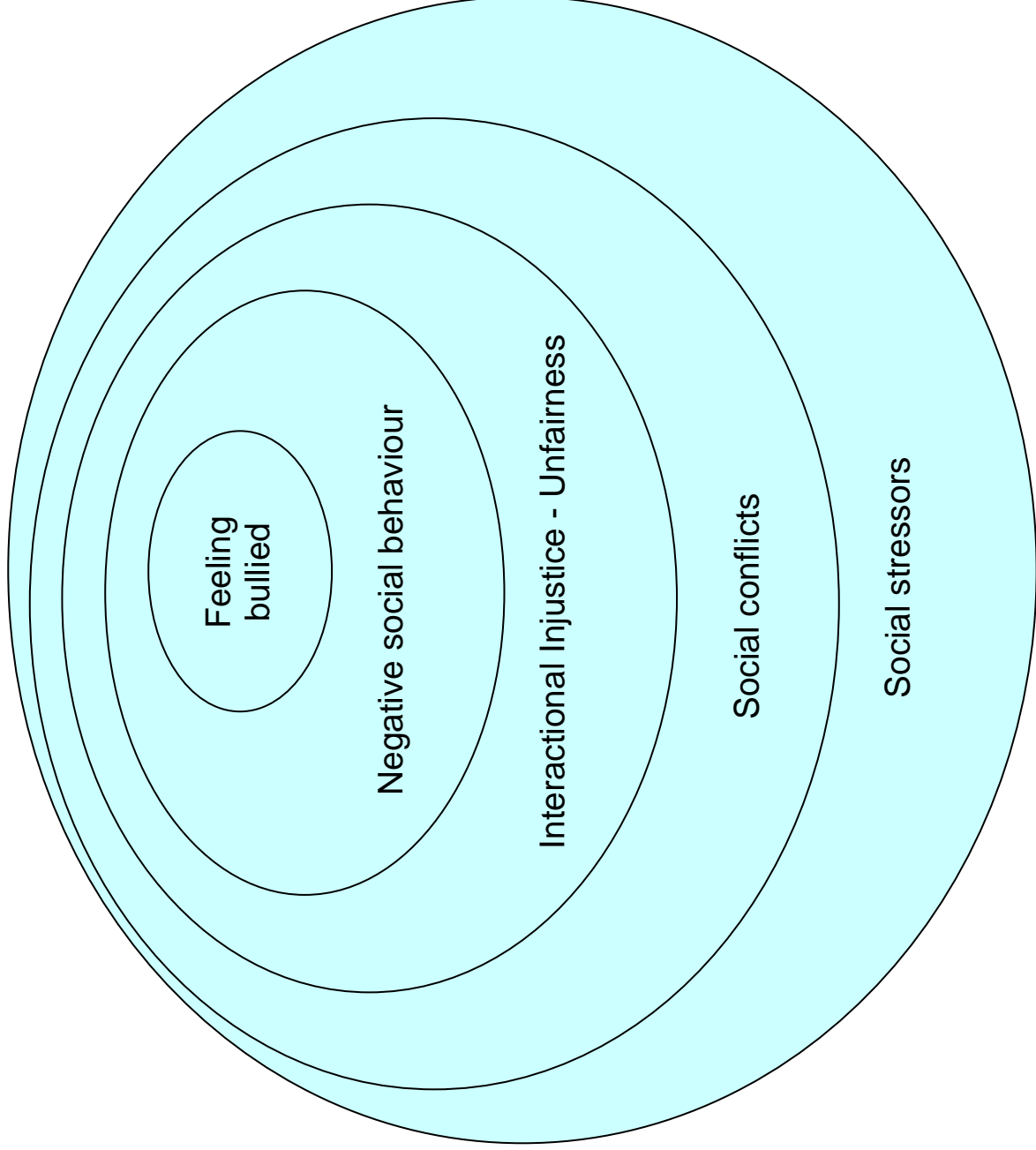


Figure 1. An illustrative view of the bullying process, according to Zapf (2004).

In addition, social conflicts escalate, more and more often, for instance between union representatives and top management, but also between ground floor workers, who feel that they now are forced to compete for the remaining available positions within the company (social conflicts circle). Controversial decisions have to be made, especially related to layoffs. The subordinates disagree with many of the company change decisions that are made by their leaders, as the principle of justice is not always handled well, when it comes to the reciprocal ranking of workers (interactional injustice – unfairness circle).

Repeated negative acts occur, influencing the work content to several of the employees soon to join the group of lay-off workers; some even feel unwelcome or frozen out on a daily basis (negative social behavior circle). A couple of the workers even feel bullied as an outcome, due to the insensitive and uncaring behavior from some of their immediate superiors (feeling bullied circle). The Zapf model comprises an easy-to-comprehend model in order to illustrate the phenomenon of bullying, seen as an escalating process (cf. Zapf & Gross, 2001).

Bullying may either take a direct form, like verbal abuse, or be indirect (e.g. libel and slander, the withholding of information). It can also be distinguished between 1) work-related actions that make it difficult for victims to carry out their work or involve taking away some or all of their responsibilities, and 2) actions that are primarily person-related (Einarsen, 1999). Social exclusion, spreading rumors, libels, ignoring opinions, teasing/insolence, and undesired sexual approaches are all examples of the latter. Based upon empirical and theoretical evidence, Zapf (1999) broadens the categorization of bullying to five types. These five are 1) work related bullying (work tasks are changed or difficult to manage), 2) social isolation (exclusion from daily communication, or from daily events), 3) personal attacks (ridicule, insulting remarks), 4) verbal threats (criticism, telling-off, humiliation in front of others) and 5) spreading rumors (social reputation is attacked)

Bullying in the form of social exclusion involves being ignored, frozen out or excluded from social relationships. Organizational exclusion means that one feels superfluous, passed over or demoted within the organization. The issue of being blamed for poor work performance may take many forms, e.g. that one is unfairly criticized for one's work, that one's professional competence is brought into doubt, or that one's efforts are ridiculed or somehow. In other cases, the work of the victim may be checked or monitored unnecessarily. Hurtful jokes and teasing are matters of both unsuccessful attempts at humoring, and of more direct public ridicule.

Activities that comprise bullying may well involve most people at work from time to time (Leymann, 1990a). Single occurrences of negative encounters may in themselves be common in working life, and are more or less harmless. However, to the extent that they are systematically and continuously aimed at a particular person, and to the extent that the victim feels defenseless against the actions or against the persons performing them, they become acts of bullying and create a situation capable of threatening the victim's physical and psychological health (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Mikkelsen, 2000).

Exposure to systematic and long-lasting verbal, non-physical, and non-sexual, abusive and aggressive behavior at the workplace may cause a host of negative health effects in the target. Although single acts of aggression and harassment do occur frequently in everyday interaction, they seem to be associated with severe health problems only when occurring on a regular basis (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Leymann, 1987b). The extent or quantity of humiliating or aggressive acts required before one feels bullied probably differs from person to person, due to individual differences in vulnerability, although Heinz Leymann (1996) strongly claimed that personality is irrelevant as a cause of bullying.

Workplace bullying is a negative social transaction with one of its core features being that the target feels humiliated or affronted. Previously, Einarsen (1999) has suggested that

bullying can be divided into two subtypes. These subtypes are denoted as conflict related bullying and predatory bullying. Those subtypes will briefly be presented below. In addition, I will suggest eight more subtypes of bullying that may comprise a fruitful categorization (*see table 1 on next page*).

Table 1. Suggestions to some subtypes of workplace bullying

1. Conflict bullying
 2. Predatory bullying
 3. Scapegoat bullying
 4. Sexual harassment
 5. Humor-oriented bullying
 6. Work related stalking
 7. Extreme media exposure bullying
 8. Bullying of workplace newcomers
 9. The judicial derelicts (secondary bullying)
 10. Whistleblowing retaliation bullying
-

Conflict bullying originates from evolving interpersonal or social conflicts. Social conflicts are relatively normal phenomena across distinct workplaces. Sometimes the conflict does not abate after a period of time. Instead it develops into work place bullying. Another type suggested by Einarsen (1999) is *Predatory bullying*. The predatory bully is usually a leader who behaves in an inconsiderate, dominant way towards his subordinates, specifically serving as a power strategy. The targets may be hit fortuitously, as subordinates passing by in the workplace. Also, the predatory bullying may strike someone in a vulnerable position, with lack of social support from the surroundings. The third subtype listed in table 1 is *Scapegoat bullying*. Thylefors (1987) pointed out early that scapegoating is an important precursor of work place harassment. The scapegoat can also suffer from general frustration in the work environment. Theoretically, some of the frustration transfers into aggression that is “ventilated” against the scapegoat.

Sexual harassment is the fourth type listed in table 1. Sexual harassment suggests that the target, usually a woman of less than 35 years of age (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1993), is exposed to repeated and unwanted sexual attention. In addition, the target feels threatened by the unwelcome sexual attention. This attention is often combined with threats about future job prospects, in order to coerce the target to subjugation. *Humor-oriented bullying* is the fifth category presented in the table. In many work places, person oriented joking or humor may be widespread. Matthiesen and Einarsen (2002) contend that people oriented humor played out between equals, i.e. work colleagues within the same in-group, may indicate job satisfaction or work commitment. Humor can be symmetrical, so that employees tease one another. However, if the person-oriented humor is directed towards someone in an out-group position, the individual may come to experience it as bullying. Here, the jokes or humorous behavior may be imbalanced or asymmetrical. The consequence can be

that the person subjected to teasing perceives it as aggressive, and in the long run as bullying. The target is the targets of jokes, but none of the jokes are repaid.

Work related stalking is listed as the sixth example of bullying in the table,. When considered individually, the constellation of behaviors associated with stalking may seem inoffensive and not particularly threatening to the uninvolved observer. Examples are sending letters or gifts, making telephone calls, or waiting outside a person's home or workplace (Purcell, Pathe, & Mullen, 2004). Stalking can be defined as a course of conduct in which one individual inflicts upon another repeated unwanted intrusions and communications, to such an extent that victims fear for their safety (Pathe & Mullen, 1997). Most episodes of stalking covered by the media seem to consist of rejected ex-partners after separation or divorce, bombarding or terrorizing their former wives or husbands with telephone calls, SMS-messages, or e-mails. Sometimes the stalking is terminated with homicide of the victim. Celebrities, e.g. pop stars or sports heroes, may also be exposed to stalking because of their fame. In addition, more ordinary workers may be hit by stalking. In Norway, a tourist bus driver was stalked for years by one of the accompanying female tourists he met in his job. The male driver was terrorized with thousands of letters and telephone calls and stalked day and night. The stalker was finally imprisoned due to the vast number of bullying episodes that she initiated, despite several warnings.

Extreme media exposure bullying is a type of bullying that few "ordinary" people are exposed to. The targets are often politicians and others with high social status (e.g. media celebrities, rock stars or top leaders). If these pillars of community are accused of criminal or illegal activities, and the media compete throughout weeks to have the strongest headlines, this may develop into extreme media exposure bullying. This is particularly the case if the accusations are incorrect or exaggerated. The person in the spotlight may then feel subjected to bullying. Extreme media exposure cannot be countered easily with legal defense. Some

years ago, a former Norwegian cabinet minister committed suicide because of a number of such persistent and harsh incidents.

Bullying of workplace newcomers, or rite de passage bullying, comprises an old type of workplace bullying, known for centuries, especially occurring within shipping, military service, or numerous societies. In such cases, newcomers in the work place are met with intimidating behavior. This conduct can be regarded as a cultural tradition, in which the new person is checked out and "tested". The rites may be so intense or long lasting that the target feels hit by bullying. An old sailor once told me that he experienced the following in his youth, in the first years of his work experience. A young sailor colleague, on his first voyage, could not handle or endure the humiliating and frequent rite de passages. The outcome was fatal; he drowned himself.

Judicial derelicts is the ninth type of bullying listed in the table. This takes place when an individual feels bullied, but not by a specific, single person or group. Instead, the victim feels bullied by a system, particularly by bureaucrats and their decisions. In one example, reported in the Norwegian media, a citizen went into a struggle with his local municipality. The reason was that a current pole was placed too close to his house by the municipality authorities. For more than thirty years, he sent letters and tried to reverse the decision, without success. Thus, the judicial derelict most often feels bullied from a considerable number of executive officers and their administrative procedures for years, and struggles to rectify the injustice. Sometimes the judicial derelict bullying is the consequence of what Einarsen et al. (1999) labeled as *Secondary bullying*. If a person feels subjected to bullying in his work place, and then tries to stop this, asking for assistance from authorities, secondary bullying may arise. Thus, secondary bullying is when the targets of bullying are sent from one public office to the next one. In addition, when they try to stop it or seek redress, they are met with a lack of concern.

The tenth and last bullying type is *Whistleblower retaliation bullying*. Whistleblowing, in line with Near and Miceli's (1996) concept clarification, can be defined as an act that takes place when an employee is witnessing wrongdoing at the work place (e.g. unethical conduct, corruption, violence or bullying against others, criminal acts) from a fellow employee or a superior (or a group of employees or superiors). The whistleblower then tries to stop the wrongdoing by informing someone who is in the position to stop the wrongdoing. The whistleblowers may voice their concern internally (to e.g. a superior within the company), but may also do it externally (e.g. informing the authorities, a local nature conservation association, to give but a few examples). Sometimes whistleblowing leads to a whistleblowing process, that is, retaliation or bullying of the person that did not keep quiet. Whistleblowing turns out to be the second most frequent reason for work place bullying in a Norwegian survey conducted among a group of bullied victims (n= 221, own unpublished data), when they were asked to rank reasons why they were targeted for bullying.

In the whistleblowing literature it is common to differentiate between whistleblowing and informing (Miceli & Near, 1992). Whistleblowers do not take action with the intent of promoting their career ambitions. Blowing the whistle concerns important ethical or societal issues, and whistleblowers may feel that they do not have the conscience to keep quiet. Lives may be lost, serious pollution may get out of control, human rights might be seriously violated, or the company could be liquidated, in case anyone does not take action. On the other hand, if someone wants to get even with a colleague by telling something negative about the colleague to a superior, then the act is one of informer, not whistleblower. Many, including the judicial system, find it difficult to differentiate between whistleblowing and informing (Matthiesen, 2004). "Don't kill the messenger" is a rule quite often ignored. A typical mode of punishing or sanctioning whistleblowers is to meet them with tough ostracism, to completely isolate the person from others or from work tasks. Many

whistleblowers are simply sacked from their jobs, or their work contracts are not renewed. They may even experience that rumors about this “disloyal” worker are spread around widely, including other companies, making it difficult to obtain another job.

Bullying and related constructs

Bullying can be seen as an extreme form of social stress, and has frequently been associated with the experience of occupational stress (Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2002). In recent years, definitions of stress have tended to coalesce around a definition that explains stress as an interactive psychological process or a psychological state between the individual and the situation. Thus, stress is seen as the perceived imbalance between the combination of internal and external demands facing the individual and the perceived ability to cope with the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). An example of this kind of imbalance could be repeated aggressive acts directed against an employee at a work place. The target of these acts is unable to stop the hostility. Essential to the stress process is the individual’s subjective interpretation or appraisal of the situation, the potential threat it may entail, and to what extent the threat is perceived to be within the individual’s control (Cox, 1978). Hence, lack of control with a social distressing job situation can contribute to the employee’s perception of being exposed to work place bullying.

In addition, bullying can of course be considered as a kind of repeated negative acts, that is, behavior with the goal of harming or injuring another human being who is motivated to avoid such treatment (cf. Baron, 1977). A cornerstone in defining workplace aggression is that the behaviors must be intended to cause harm, thus distinguishing it from behavior that may cause harm but was not intended to do so (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). The intentional aspect differentiates workplace aggression from bullying as intent is generally not considered an essential element in bullying research (Zapf & Einarsen, 2005) with some exceptions.

Björkqvist (Björkqvist et al., 1994) claims there is no mobbing when there is no intention to cause harm. However, it is normally impossible to verify the presence of intent (Björkqvist et al., 1994; Hoel et al., 1999; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005), as indicated by research in the sexual harassment field (Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003).

There has been a growing recognition of physical violence as merely the "tip of the iceberg" concerning hostile behavior at work (Neuman & Baron, 2005). According to Keashly and Jagatic (2003), a variety of constructs fall under the rubric of hostile workplace behavior, in addition to workplace bullying and the term preferred by Keashly herself: emotional abuse at work. Buss (1961) argued that aggressive behavior could be conceptualized along three dimensions: physical-verbal, active-passive, and direct-indirect. The Buss dimensions can be divided into eight subtypes of behavior, outlined by Keashly & Jagatic (2003). Workplace bullying may take the form of all eight subtypes, that is, all combinations of being physical-verbal, active-passive, and direct-indirect. Overall, several studies have documented that the most common aggressive behavior among adults is verbal behavior, indirect or passive (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Neuman & Baron, 1997). In line with these findings, a study of 138 Norwegian bullying victims, identified three main types of bullying on the basis of how the victims themselves felt they were being bullied: (a) being blamed for poor work performance, (b) hurtful teasing, jokes and ridicule and (c) social and/or organizational exclusion (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994).

Keashly and Jacatic' (2003) list examples of hostile or aggressive work behavior that may be categorized according to the Buss (1961) conceptualization of aggression. Workplace bullying in the course of negative acts may take the form of any of them. The list comprises examples as name calling or insulting jokes (verbal/ active/ direct behavior), unfair treatment, being subject to false accusations (verbal/ active/ indirect behavior), expressing silent treatment, having your contributions ignored (verbal/ passive/ direct behavior), been given

little or no feedback, deliberately excluded (verbal/ passive/ indirect behavior), physically assaulted, sexual or racial harassment (physical/ active/ direct behavior), theft or destruction of property, deliberately assigned work overload (physical/ active/ indirect behavior), and finally expected to work with unreasonable deadlines, lack of resources (physical/ passive/ indirect behavior). Bullying can also be described as a certain subset of conflicts (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Evert van de Vliert defines conflict as: *"Two individuals, an individual and a group, or two groups, are said to be in conflict when and to the extent that at least one of the parties feels it is being obstructed or irritated by the other"* (van de Vliert, 1998, page 351).

Van de Vliert contends that important aspects covered in this definition are: a) conflicts are subjective experiences (they do not necessarily have an objective basis), b) the frustration may be cognitive or affective, or both (e.g. blocked goals, feelings of hostility), c) the frustration is blamed on the other individual or group, d) the magnitude of the frustration may vary (conflicts escalate or de-escalate across a time dimension), e) the frustration is not necessarily coupled with particular conflict behavior towards the other party, and f) the conflict can be one-sided (e.g. when only one party feels frustrated or attributes the frustration to the other).

Conflict can also be perceived as a divergence of interest between individuals or groups - a belief on the part of these entities that their current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). In certain cases conflicts can poison the social climate and escalate into serious personal conflicts and internal office war (van de Vliert, 1998).

According to Zapf and his colleagues, the bullying process may start between two equal parties as an interpersonal conflict, but their relative strength may alter in the course of time (Zapf, Knorz, & Kulla, 1996). If the victim is forced into an inferior position in which it is difficult to defend oneself, a conflict may turn into bullying. In such cases, the total destruction of the opponent seems to be the aim of each of the parties (Einarsen et al., 2000;

Glasl, 1980) Denial of the human qualities of the opponent opens the potential for manipulation, revenge, elimination and destruction, according to Glasl. Denial of the human qualities may be a core reason why work place bullying in some instances may last for several years, even if the mental health of one of the conflicting parties deteriorates dramatically (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002b).

The van de Vliert definition of conflict (1998) presented share many similarities with the Olweus/ Einarsen definition of bullying presented earlier in this thesis; the subjective experience is crucial and both cognitive and affective elements may be part of the experience of bullying as well as other types of conflict. The target of bullying is typically blaming the perpetrator for the bullying behavior, which is felt to be unjust and improper conduct. Like other types of conflicts, the bullying conflict can be one-sided. The bully can for example reject that there is any conflict or bullying taking place whatsoever. The distinction between single incidents and enduring hostile interaction is, however, important when workplace bullying is compared with interpersonal conflicts in general (Keashly, 1998). While escalation is a key concept of the conflict literature (e.g. Thomas, 1976; van de Vliert, 1998), it has only recently made its way into the research literature on workplace aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Thomas, 1976; van de Vliert, 1998). Discussion of escalation have implicit assumptions of dynamic interaction between actor(s) and a target, mutuality of these actions and increasing severity of behavior (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003).

As aforementioned, two labels are primarily used to signify severe non-sexual harassment at work: bullying and mobbing. Generally, bullying seems to be the preferred label in English-speaking countries (in Europe), whereas mobbing is the label or term most commonly applied in Central Europe and Scandinavia. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2005), however, it is not merely national preferences which differentiate between the concepts of bullying and mobbing. Researchers who prefer the term "bullying" often focus on

the bully or the behavior of bullies, whereas the "mobbing" research focuses on the victim. An example of the "bully" orientation is the influential book written by Adams (1992), presenting many illustrations of the bully "in action". According to Leymann (1996), the choice of the term "mobbing" in preference to "bullying" was a conscious decision. It reflected the fact that the phenomena among adults refer to subtle, less direct forms of aggression as opposed to the more physical forms of aggression commonly identified with the term "bullying".

The distinction between bullying and mobbing remains unclear. However, among the Scandinavian workplace researchers, the primary concern has been the experiences of the bullied victims, and their reports of subjective health and well-being (e.g. Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994; Mikkelsen, 2001). It is possible that "bullying" is used instead of "mobbing" in workplace research because of the influential impact from school research, especially the studies by Dan Olweus (1993; 2003). In his highly influential works, Olweus used the term "mobbing" in Norwegian and Swedish, and "bullying" when communicating in English.

The more subtle term of mobbing is probably a more suitable concept than bullying in terms of establishing an overarching concept to embrace this special type of sub-conflict, for example occurring in a typical white collar workplace or in the social service sector. The acting out bully, behaving in a rude and dominant way, very loudly speaking or demanding, the stereotype of the perpetrator expressing overt tyrannical behavior, is probably not the typical bullying case in Scandinavia. A partial explanation for this may be that culturally there seems to be minor power distances between leaders and their subordinates in Scandinavian countries, as compared to most other countries (cf. Hofstede, 1980). Of course, bullying can also take place between people of equal status, in cultures with little power distances. The power base in a work unit can change. Informal power, for example the "mob" or group freezing out one of their colleague constitutes one example of this.

In addition to the concept of work place bullying, several other constructs denote aggressive behavior that, among adults, most typically is verbal, and has an indirect and passive form. Some of these concepts, that all have been applied in various published papers, may share a considerable overlap with the term work place bullying (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003). This may especially be the case, since workplace bullying is not an established concept in the US, where most of these corresponding concepts stem from. Thus, Keashly and Jagatic list behaviors like a) *workplace deviance* (voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms, and that threatens the well-being of the organization or its members), b) *workplace aggression* (efforts by individuals to harm others with whom they work/ have worked, or the organizations in which they are currently, or were previously, employed; the harm-doing is intentional and includes psychological as well as physical injury), and c) *workplace incivility* (low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect; uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others), d) *Ethnic harassment* (threatening verbal conduct or exclusionary behavior that has an ethnic component and is directed at a target because of his/ her ethnicity) and finally f) *emotional abuse at work*, that covers interactions between organizational members that are characterized by repeated hostile verbal and non-verbal, often nonphysical behavior directed at a person such that the target's sense of him/ herself as a competent worker and person is negatively affected.

The array of constructs related to workplace bullying can be expanded even more (see, e.g. Neuman & Baron, 2005). Relating to leaders and managers, Ashforth (1994) applies the term "*petty tyranny*" reflecting a ruler who exercises absolute power oppressively or brutally. Tepper (2000) refers to the term abusive supervision as subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact. The construct of *social undermining* bears

close interconnections with bullying. The construct of social undermining involves behavior intended to hinder, over time, the ability to establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work related success, and favorable reputation (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). The concept of *organizational misbehavior* should also be mentioned. Vardi and Wiener (1996) define it as "*any intentional action by members of organizations that violates core organizational and/ or societal norms*" (page 151). However, most typical for the American perspective on such hostile workplace behavior is the almost exclusive focus on specific or frequent incidents of hostile behavior from undefined actors, with little attention paid to persistent or patterned hostile behavior from an identifiable actor who is experienced differently by the targets (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003).

Summarizing so far, workplace bullying denotes a type of strong interpersonal long lasting conflict with aggressive manifestations. The interpersonal conflict consists of repeated negative acts. The target of bullying is unable to stop or defend oneself in the actual situation, leading to victimization of one of the parties. The target of bullying perceives the negative acts as intentional. In some instances, however, this may not be the case. Several different labels are applied by different authors to describe this special subtype of conflicts. Among these labels are terms like harassment, mobbing, emotional abuse, in addition to the bullying term. In the rest of the present thesis, these terms are treated as equal synonyms to bullying.

PREVALENCE, ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF BULLYING

Prevalence on workplace bullying

The measurement of bullying is sensitive to the definition in use and the type of questions asked. It is not simple to provide reliable numbers regarding the distribution of bullying (Zapf, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2003). Bullying may be measured by using a single "main question" format, with fixed response categories. This is in line with bullying research among school children (e.g. Olweus, 2003). The individuals are directly asked if they feel bullied, after they have been presented for a definition of bullying. In addition bullying may be screened by the use of a list of response items (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Zapf et al., 2003), as in the Negative Acts Questionnaire, already mentioned, or in the Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terrorization (comprising 22 and 45 items, respectively).

The apparent prevalence of bullying will be influenced by the research strategy applied. Where bullying is measured by means of a precise definition and refer to a regular experience on a weekly basis, less than 5 per cent of the population were found to be bullied, according to the Martino report (Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003). Thus, using the single item methodology, a prevalence of 3-7 per cent is most typical (Zapf et al., 2003). For example, in a study of 745 Norwegian assistant nurses, 3 per cent were being bullied at the moment, whereas 8 per cent had previous experiences as victims (Einarsen, Matthiesen, & Skogstad, 1998).

An meta study undertaken in Norway, in which 14 sub-samples were summarized to encompass 7118 subjects in total, demonstrated that 8.6 per cent had being bullied during the last six months (Einarsen, 1996). Specifically, 1.2 per cent were bullied weekly, 3.4 per cent "now and then" and 4 per cent once or twice. An operational "cut off point" convention

distinguishes the "weekly" and the "now and then" group from the "once or twice" group. Thus, an operational number of victims with those response categories combined summarizes to 4.6 per cent. Leymann and Tallgren (1989), who defined bullying as the exposure to one out of 45 predefined negative acts on a weekly basis for more than six months, found that 4 per cent of the employees of a Swedish steelmaking company were targets of bullying at work.

The prevalence of bullying varies greatly, with figures ranging from 1 per cent at the lowest level to above 50 per cent at the highest level, dependent upon the applied measurement strategy, occupation or sector, as well as country (Martino et al., 2003). For instance, Quine (1999) in a 1100 persons study of National Health Service employees revealed a prevalence rate of 38 per cent. O'Moore (2000, ref. in Martino et al., 2003) in a 1009 person random national Irish sample found a prevalence rate of 17 per cent, whereas a 2410 representative Spanish sample revealed an occurrence of 16 per cent (Piñual & Zabala, 2002, referred in Martino et al., 2003). Correspondingly, British studies have found that about 30 per cent of employees report that they are faced with negative behavior directed against them as often as weekly and for a time period of 6 months or more, and half of these also label themselves as bullied (Rayner & Keashly, 2005). These prevalence numbers seem extremely high. If bullying exists at such a level, one may ask whether the organization or department is able to continue functioning under such extreme social stress (cf. Hoel et al., 2002).

On the other hand, in a representative Swedish sample of employees (n= 2438) Leymann (1992) found the incidence rate of bullying to be relatively low (4 per cent). According to Martino et al (2003) a representative German sample (n= 1317) had an incidence level varying between 3 and 6 per cent,. Bullying frequencies between 8 and 10 per cent have been reported repeatedly, when less restricted frequency criteria, such as less often

than weekly have been included in the prevalence estimates (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Zapf et al., 2003). There are large differences in the occurrence of undesirable behavior as work place aggression, as concluded in a study with 66 000 employees representing 11 sectors in The Netherlands (Hubert & van Veldhoven, 2001). Sectors that were more prone to systematic undesirable behavior were education, industry and remaining services. Keashly and Jagatic (2003) assert that the lack of common terminology makes it difficult to determine prevalence. Where bullying is measured by means of a precise definition and refers to a regular experience on a weekly basis, less than 5 per cent of the population in EU were found to be bullied as reported by Martino et al. (2003).

Bullying is a long lasting process consisting of recurring negative acts. Large representative samples in Sweden (Leymann, 1996) and Norway (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) have found the average duration of bullying to vary between 15 and 18 months (Zapf et al., 2003). A British study revealed that 39 per cent of the victims had been bullied for more than two years (Hoel & Cooper, 2000). Correspondingly, another study found that 67 per cent of the sample had been bullied for more than 1 year (Hoel, Cooper, & Faragher, 2001). A Finnish study found a mean bullying occurrence of 2.7 years (Salin, 2001).

Gender differences, with regard to the probability of being exposed to bullying, seem to exist. In most workplace studies of bullying the targets of bullying are about one-third men and two-thirds women (Zapf et al., 2003). However, gender differences in the Scandinavian countries regarding prevalence of bullying are minor. No significant gender differences were found in a major study (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994). About the same gender prevalence of bullying among male and female employees can be explained with a high integration of female employees in the Scandinavian work force across occupations. Some exceptions regarding gender do exist in the Nordic countries, however. Vartia (2003) for example, refers to a Finnish study among police

officers. In this study, 8 per cent male and 14 per cent female police officers were subjected to work place bullying.

Men seem to bully both men and women in the work place, whereas women are bullied by other women. In the aforementioned meta study, where Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) presented an overview of the bullying prevalence across many sub-samples in Norway, as many as 70 per cent of the male respondents in a total sample of 392 victims were bullied by men only, while 10 per cent were bullied by women only. Female victims were to a larger degree bullied by both men and women. While 48 per cent reported being bullied only by women, 31 per cent reported men only as their bullies.

Leaders are more prone to bully in statistical terms, compared to others in the workplace. The majority of the employees are non-leaders, thus the leaders are overrepresented among the perpetrators. A recent victim study has revealed that the bully most likely is a leader (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2005). About 80 per cent of members of two victim associations were subjected to bullying by their leaders, according to the Nielsen-study. The overrepresentation of bullied leaders may be associated with the power dimension. If leaders for instance use their management prerogative, but in the same time behave in a rude and insensitive way, it is more likely that subordinates feel humiliated or subjected to bullying, compared to when interpersonal conflicts take place between workers of equal position in the organizational hierarchy. In the major 1994 workplace study, where members of 7 different labor unions took part, 54 per cent reported one or more superiors among the bullies (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996).

Antecedents of bullying

Bullying can be analyzed from different angles, for example the situational or the individual or person-oriented perspective. Bullying may be the result of situational aspects in the

workplace, such as a poor psychosocial work environment, characterized by poor communication and lack of co-operation. Zapf (1999) provided support for the view that bullying is associated with a negative work environment. He compared victims of bullying with a control group of non-victimized individuals. Victims assessed their environment more negatively than the control group on all features related to quality of work environment, including the work environment quality that existed prior to the onset of bullying. Based on interviews with victims, Leymann (1993) claimed that four factors are prominent in eliciting bullying at work. These were 1) deficiencies in work design, 2) deficiencies in leadership behavior, 3) a socially exposed position of the victim, and 4) a low moral standard in the department.

The situational perspective emphasizes the work situation, organizational factors, and features of leadership as antecedents or causes of bullying. Bullying is seen as a symptom of organizational dysfunction. Workplace bullying is correlated with many characteristics within the organization. These are experienced role conflicts, work control, a heavy work load, organizational restructuring, change of management, "negative management" styles, organizational climate, and conflicts in general (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Björkqvist et al., 1994; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994; Vartia, 2003; Zapf, 1999).

The influence of psychosocial factors on the occurrence of bullying has gained support from a couple of studies. Approximately 30 Irish victims of bullying described their workplace to be a highly stressful and competitive environment, troubled with interpersonal conflicts and a lack of a friendly and supportive atmosphere, undergoing organizational changes and managed through an authoritarian leadership style (Seigne, 1998). Victims of bullying have reported that their superiors are autocratic, and the environment competitive, strained and stressful (O'Moore, Seigne, McGuire, & Smith, 1998). Low quality work environment and increased role conflicts, as well as dissatisfaction with the social climate and

leadership at the workplace, have been reported more often by both victims and observers of bullying (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994). Having a weak superior, competition for tasks, status or advancement, or competition for the supervisor's favor are other perceived reasons for bullying to occur (Einarsen, 2000; Zapf & Einarsen, 2005).

In a Norwegian study among almost 2200 members of six different labor unions, both victims and observers of bullying at work reported being more dissatisfied than others with their work environment (Einarsen, 1999). Respondents noted a lack of constructive leadership, lack of possibilities to monitor and control their own work tasks and especially a high level of role conflict (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994). Thus, incompatible demands and expectations regarding roles, tasks and responsibilities may create frustration and stress within a work group, especially in connection to rights, obligations, privileges and positions.

Bullying can be linked to individual aspects, such as the worker with a traumatic background, or with a provocative or sensitive personality. Personality characteristics of the perpetrator and of the target of bullying have been studied by e.g. Coyne and associates (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000). In their empirical study they found victims to be highly conscientious, more traditional, rigid, and moralistic than the non-victims. Such qualities may collide with group norms (Zapf & Einarsen, 2003), causing frustration among colleagues who may respond with aggressive behavior.

A recent study (Glasø, Matthiesen, Nielsen, & Einarsen, submitted paper), with 72 bullied victims who were matched with a control group, revealed significant differences on four out of five personality dimension. Victims tended to be more neurotic and less agreeable, conscientious and extraverted than non-victims. However, cluster-analysis split the bullying sample. One sub-sample which comprised 77 per cent of the victim group did not differ from non-victims as far as personality was concerned. It was actually the 23 per cent part of

bullied victim group that was found to have a personality profile significantly different from the major bullying group, as well as the matched control group. These findings may indicate that some bullied victims may possess a personality style or vulnerability that causes them to be more prone to feel subjected to bullying when they are exposed to negative social acts.

There is a tendency in humans to simplify complex social interconnections. Envy is considered by many victims as a core reason behind bullying (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; Vartia, 1996). A widespread assumption among the public and in the media has been that many victims of bullying cause their own misfortune, by acting in a provocative or conflict-escalating way, or with what Zapf and Einarsen (2005) denote "querulous behavior". Zapf and Einarsen (2005) contend that there is no such thing as a victim personality that can explain bullying in general. Several theoretical frameworks can account for the role of environmental factors as antecedents of bullying. Bullying may be the result of an imbalance between the work environment and the individual person, be it the bully or the bullying target, in line with what Caplan (1983) has denoted as lack of "P-E fit" (person-environment fit). Such imbalance may occur when for instance the expectations regarding productivity are not met, or the worker is not being socially accepted and not included in the "in-group" at the workplace.

The social-interaction approach to aggression (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993) is another model that spells out environmental factors as antecedents of bullying (Vartia, 2003). The social-interactionist perspective argues that situational or external factors may affect bullying indirectly by eliciting rule and norm-violating behavior. This approach maintains that stressful events affect aggression indirectly through their effect on the victim's behavior. Stressful events and social surroundings may cause people to behave in ways that make others attack them. In a bullying situation, a person who is distressed by an unsatisfactory or stressful work situation may irritate others, with provoked aggressive or hostile behavior as a result.

Bullying may be seen as an intentional response to such behavior and an instrument for social control (Hoel et al., 1999).

Moreover, the organizational culture may comprise an important precursor of workplace bullying. Organizational culture is a multifaceted concept, based on the assumptions, beliefs, values and expectations that members take for granted and have come to share (Schein, 1985). Culture tends to manifest itself at the group level, with specific norms and rules covering the behavior of group members (Hoel & Salin, 2003). Values and norms within the organizational culture, for instance a general low level of mutual support and understanding, may foster bullying. The organizational culture may permit hostile work behavior like bullying, what Brodsky (1976) refers to as a "sense of permission to harass". Brodsky claimed that the precursor of workplace harassment, namely hostile behavior, may be the result of a general belief in industrial society that workers are most productive when subjected to the goad or fear of harassment. This notion implies that harassment is viewed as something functional by the management, and perhaps necessary to achieve productivity and acceptable performance from employees. Brodsky proposed that harassment at work cannot occur without the direct or indirect agreement of management.

One of the targets of bullying interviewed by Einarsen and associates (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994) admits that he was severely punished in his job as a middle manager, due to his lack of ability to "act like Hitler" against his subordinates. McGregor (1960) has suggested that two types of leadership, "theory X and theory Y", unfold in organizational practice. Theory Y implies a supportive and communicative leadership, whereas Theory X means that the leader behaves in an instructive, oppressive way (workers need to be forced to work). Thus, the middle manager seemed to be subjected to bullying because he did not follow the "theory X" cultural practice within his company.

Keashly and Jagatic (2003) found that higher rates of emotionally abusive behaviors were reported in organizations in which respondents perceived that employee involvement was not facilitated, morale was low, teamwork was not encouraged, and supervision was vague. Andersson and Pearson (1999) use the term "incivility spiral" . This spiral, which may be a part of a destructive organizational culture, may culminate with bullying. This can be the outcome, if repeated episodes of uncivil or rude behavior have been allowed to unfold, especially if the episodes systematically have been directed against one person, a scapegoat (cf. Thylefors, 1987). An illustrative example of organizational cultures that may allow bullying is the luxury restaurant kitchen. Here the chef is often viewed as an artist, whose bullying and abusive behavior can be understood as idiosyncratic behavior born out of artistry and creativity (Johns & Menzel, 1999). The bullying and abusive chef is excused, since the raw materials are refined into top class gourmet food. Everyone around has to adapt to this kind of demanding, oppressive behavior from the talented chef artist. Thus, the norms and values within an organization as well as the type and quality of the organizational communication patterns, may constitute some of the essence of the bullying problem.

Perceptions of injustice play an important role in bullying, as proposed by Dieter Zapf (cf. figure 1). Neuman and Baron (2003) delineate between "unjust" situations that a) violate norms, b) produce frustration and stress, c) induce negative affect, and d) assault individual dignity and self-worth. All those kinds of felt injustice may be precursors of bullying. Formal norms may be violated when people are treated differently. Individuals may perceive that they have been unfairly benefited or have been unfairly disadvantaged. If this happens repeatedly, they may feel subjected to bullying. Lack of distributive justice for some period of time, e.g. related to downsizing (who should be the "layoffs" or "survivors" after organizational restructuring), career promotion (feeling "parked" in one's job without understanding or accepting "why"), wage increase (witnessing that colleagues receive frequent pay increases,

contrary to one's own situation) may attack the worker's dignity and self-worth, and the feeling of being bullied may arise. Neuman and Baron (1997, in Neuman & Baron, 2003) found that individuals who reported that they had been treated unfairly by their supervisors were significantly more likely than those who not were treated unfairly to indicate that they engaged in some form of workplace aggression.

Summarizing, bullying is a multifaceted phenomenon. Earlier in this synopsis part, different types of bullying have been suggested. Different precursors may also lead to workplace bullying. Bullying has been described as a complicated interactive and escalating process in which the work environment and organization, the personality traits of both the victim and the bully, the general characteristics of human interaction in the organization, and the other members of the work unit, all have specific roles (Hoel et al., 1999; Vartia, 2003). Work place bullying may have organizational antecedents, be it high job stress (e.g. extensive role conflicts or tough work demands), or be it negative organizational cultural features (e.g. lack of sanctions or regulations established within the organization against bullying).

In addition, the bullying antecedents may be individual ones (e.g. general lack of social skill or ability to communicate with others, abusive personalities among the perpetrators, vulnerable personalities among the targets of bullying, or general lack of professional competency, to give but a few examples). Different person-environment combinations may mediate or moderate bullying. Bullying can for instance be the outcome of a stressful and competitive work environment, combined with unclear and little person-oriented leadership. Thus, the antecedents of workplace bullying may be a combination of organizational and individual antecedents. Certain risk factors combined may elicit work place bullying.

Outcomes of bullying

From the onset of research on workplace bullying, attention has primarily been focused on the

negative effects the experience has on victims (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003). As with other forms of social stress, bullying is likely to manifest itself behaviorally as well as attitudinally. For instance, Quine (2001) found that nurses who had been bullied reported significantly lower levels of job satisfaction and significantly higher levels of anxiety, depression, and propensity to leave. A Finnish study among hospital staff demonstrated that risk of medically certified sickness absence was 51 per cent, or 1.5 times higher, for those who had been bullied, compared to the others in the study sample (Kivimäki, Elovainio, & Vahtera, 2000). Others have found the association between bullying and sickness absenteeism to be rather weak (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994).

Organizational turnover is another possible outcome of workplace bullying. Several studies have found a link between bullying and intentions to leave the organization (e.g. Quine, 1999). Victims may be expelled from the organization or forced out against their own wills, sometimes as a result of the organization's attempt to solve the bullying conflict (Leymann, 1996). Leaving the organization represents a positive coping strategy for some, protecting their mental health and well being (Hoel et al., 2003). Others, who quit in despair, have enduring health problems (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994). A "ripple effect" can be observed in bullying (Hoel et al., 1999). Several studies have found that observers of bullying reported higher levels of generalized stress and lower job satisfaction than those who had not observed bullying take place. Enforced team-work can increase the likelihood of bullying in the first place (Zapf, 1999), as well as the change of third parties being drawn into emerging conflicts (Zapf 1996).

Bullying should, theoretically, have a negative impact on the general productivity of an organization. This is a link that is difficult to measure, and most estimates are anecdotal (Hoel et al., 2003). In a study of Norwegian trade union members (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994), 27 per cent agreed with "bullying at my workplace reduces our

efficiency" (totally or partially). Reduced organizational efficiency means that bullying will cost the organization money. In a study of bullying at two Finnish hospitals, Kivimäki and his associates (Kivimäki et al., 2000) estimated that the annual cost of absence, from bullying alone, accounted for about £125 000. Correspondingly, Shehan et al (2001, in Hoel et al., 2003) calculated bullying costs of \$0.6 to \$3.6 million per year for an Australian business with 1000 employees. Thus, workplace bullying costs organizations and the society billions of dollars, pounds, or euros, in Australia, US, or in other industrialized countries.

According to Niedl (1995), those exposed to aggressive actions will feel bullied only if they experience these actions as hostile, unpleasant, degrading, and aimed directly at them. If they feel incapable of defending themselves or are unable to flee from the situation, serious health problems may occur. The actions that victims experience as personally insulting seem to have particularly negative consequences for their health (Niedl, 1996). To be a victim of intentional and systematic psychological harm by another person, thus, produces severe emotional reactions such as fear, anxiety, helplessness, depression and shock (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002a). The reactions are especially pronounced if the perpetrator is in a position of power or the situation is unavoidable or inescapable (Einarsen, 1999; Niedl, 1996). Hence, the workplace seems to be a setting where people are especially vulnerable if they are facing aggression, abuse, or harassment (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997).

Bullying may take a different course within distinct types of organizational and company cultures. In a study of 450 male industrial workers, no less than 88 per cent had experienced at least one type of negative and unwanted action in the course of the previous six months, according to Einarsen and Raknes (1997). Victimization, in this case exposure to intense bullying at work, can be shown to individuals' perceptions of their work-environment and life in general to one of threat, danger, insecurity and self-questioning (cf. Janoff-Bulman,

1992). Pervasive emotional, psychosomatic, and psychiatric problems are seen as effects (Leymann, 1990a).

About 100 victims of harassment by stalking were interviewed in order to assess the impact of the experience on their psychological, social, and interpersonal functioning (Pathe & Mullen, 1997). Increased levels of anxiety were reported by 83 per cent. The majority of the victims had been subjected to multiple forms of harassment such as being followed, repeatedly approached, and bombarded with letters and telephone calls during periods varying from 1 month to 20 years. Threats were received by 58 per cent and 34 per cent were physically or sexually assaulted.

Many victims of long term bullying at work suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002a). The literature on posttraumatic stress focuses primarily on factors such as life-threatening menaces, object loss and physical harm as the main risk elements in development of PTSD (Davidson & Foa, 1993). A study of post-traumatic stress, among women abused by their husbands, concluded that psychological abuse, even in rather subtle forms, seems to produce clear cut symptoms of PTSD (Vitanza, Vogel, & Marshall, 1995). On the basis of case studies, Scott and Stradling (1994) argue that enduring psychosocial stress in the absence of one single acute and dramatic trauma may produce full symptomatology of PTSD.

In a Finnish study of 350 University employees, 19 persons subjected to victimization by harassment were interviewed in a follow-up study (Björkqvist et al., 1994). They reported high levels of insomnia, various nervous symptoms such as anxiety, depression, aggression, melancholy, apathy, lack of concentration, and socio-phobia, leading the authors to conclude that these victims portrayed symptoms reminiscent of posttraumatic stress disorder. In his 1992 report, the Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann (1992) argued that PTSD probably was the correct diagnosis for approximately 95 per cent of a representative sample of 350

victims of bullying at work. A Swedish study of PTSD, in a group of 64 victims attending a rehabilitation program for victims of bullying at work, revealed that most of these victims were troubled with intrusive thoughts and avoidance reactions (Leymann & Gustavson, 1996). A Danish study of 118 bullied victims revealed that 76 per cent portrayed symptoms that indicated posttraumatic disorder (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002a).

According to Janoff-Bulman (1992), post-traumatic stress following victimization is largely due to the shattering of the basic assumptions that victims hold about themselves and the world. The feeling of personal invulnerability consists of an important part of basic cognitive assumptions. The assumptions of targets of bullying are thus shattered when there is severe bullying taking place. The sense of invulnerability is tied to the three core beliefs: a) the world as benevolent, b) the world as meaningful, and c) the self as worthy. The just world hypothesis (Lerner, 1980), i. e. our need to believe that we live in a world where people get what they deserve and deserve what they get, is threatened by the experience of being bullied. The belief in a just world and the three core beliefs enable the individual to confront the physical and social environment as if it were stable, orderly, coherent, safe and friendly. A traumatic event presents information that is incompatible with these existing mental models or schemas (Horowitz, 1975, 1979).

This incongruity gives rise to stress responses, requiring reappraisal and revision of the schemas. The person tends to use avoidance strategies in order to ward off distressing thoughts, images, and feelings caused by the incident, thus giving the control system tolerable doses of information. Phases of intrusion and avoidance occur as the person attempts to process or “work through” the experience (Horowitz, 1975). The bullied victim may repeatedly re-experience the most humiliating or frustrating aggressive events, or the person may systematically avoid certain work situations, be it lunch breaks, meetings or other people

while at work. They can even find it difficult to approach or pass a former workplace, as described in one case study (Einarsen & Hellesøy, 1998).

In a theoretical framework of trauma at work, Williams (1993) argues that individual variables in personality and coping styles may have some overlap with PTSD, as regards emotional distress. Although the causal relationship between certain individual differences and victimization from bullying is a debatable one (Einarsen, 1999, 2000; Leymann, 1990a, 1996), victims of bullying at work do differ from non-bullied workers on a range of factors. For instance, Vartia (1996) found a high level of negative affectivity among a group of Finnish victims of bullying at work, while Zapf (1999) found German victims of bullying to be high on negative and low on positive affectivity compared to a control group. Experiences of negative social interactions in general seem to be associated with an increase in negative affectivity as well as low self-esteem and many dysfunctional attitudes (Lakey, Tardiff, & Drew, 1994).

Whereas Zapf (1999) argues that these characteristics may have caused bullying in the first place, Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002a) claim that negative affectivity acts as a mediator and thus accounts for the relation between the victimization and symptomatology by explaining how bullying takes on a psychological meaning. In a study of battered women, the relationship between abuse and PTSD depended to a certain degree on vulnerability factors of psychological dysfunctions such as cognitive failure and private self-consciousness (Saunders, 1994). The former is defined as the tendency to have perception and memory failures as well as engaging in misdirected action, while the latter refers to people who tend to focus on their own perceptions, feelings, and thoughts. Both concepts are considered to be produced by the excessive worry and anxiety caused by a highly threatening situation. Therefore, they may be seen as partial mediators of the relationship between the experience of abuse and the evolving post traumatic stress symptoms.

Summarizing, workplace bullying produces negative consequences for the person, the target of bullying, as well as for the organization. Still, most research has addressed the targets of bullying, and the negative impact on health and well-being. The organizational perspective and organizational consequences of workplace bullying has to a small extent been mapped. Psychosomatic health deterioration and post-traumatic stress symptoms among the targets of bullying comprise some of the most frequent negative individual outcomes scrutinized so far. When it comes to organizational outcomes of workplace bullying, the research is scarce. Turnover and absenteeism is associated with bullying, although the findings are not clear-cut. Bullying is also associated with productivity, but this link is difficult to measure, especially since almost all workplace bullying research so far has been cross-sectional and not longitudinal.

AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Workplace bullying research has been conducted for more than 15 years. With reference to previous empirical research as well as theoretical contributions, the thesis has clarified some important aspects with regarding the construct of bullying. Different definitions have been presented as well as similar constructs, some which may overlap somehow with bullying. Various subtypes of bullying have been suggested. Prevalence along with various antecedent and outcome factors are outlined. Next step in the current synopsis presentation will be to offer the overarching scientific foci, the research aims which will be addressed. Five empirical studies are included in the thesis. In next section a review of the research papers will be given. The research aims are linked with one aim per study. The following aims will be addressed:

- 1) To identify the frequency of bullying among a representative sample of workers, and the relationship between such bullying and psychological well-being of the targets of bullying.
- 2) To investigate whether targets of bullying report a distorted personality profile, and to reveal whether the personality profiles of the victims are related to the type of behavior and the intensity of the behaviors they have experienced.
- 3) To follow the course of conflict escalating in a bullying case, and de-escalating events that also took place. The aim will be to investigate an actual conflict, which grew to be experienced as bullying by the interviewee, and to pinpoint some issues that can be learned about the phenomenon of bullying (e.g. the importance of social support).

- 4) To examine a) the level of psychiatric symptoms and symptoms of PTSD among current and former victims of bullying at work, using a community sample, and to inquire how the PTSD symptoms relate to the kinds of bullying experienced by the victim and the duration of and time since the termination of the bullying, and b), as part of the same study, to examine the role of state negative and positive affectivity as possible mediators or moderators of the relationship between bullying and health outcomes, and correspondingly, the direct effect of state negative and positive affectivity on the health outcomes.
- 5) To investigate some individual differences between perpetrators and targets of bullying in terms of personality, former experiences of bullying, and experienced micropolitical behavior, operationalized as reported role stress.

OVERVIEW OF THE FIVE PAPERS

Paper 1: Bullying, burnout and well-being among assistant nurses, in

Journal of Occupational Health and Safety - Australia and New Zealand, 14, 6, 263-268.

Violence, verbal abuse and mistreatment at work are growing areas of interest among researchers in the field of occupational health and safety (Keashly, 1998), especially among researchers in the health and caring professions (Bast-Pettersen, Bach, Lindstrøm, Tomingas, & Kiviranta, 1995). In an American study of 175 registered nurses 64 per cent reported experiences of verbal abuse from a physician at least once every second month, while almost as many reported being yelled at or verbally insulted (Cox, 1987). In a study of 99 Norwegian nurses and assistant nurses working within a psychiatric hospital, 10 per cent felt exposed to bullying at work (Matthiesen, Raknes, & Rokkum, 1989). Bullying has not been extensively studied among adult females working in female-dominated organizations, perhaps due to the myth of the “non-aggressive female” (Björkqvist & Niemela, 1992).

The aims of the present study were to investigate the frequency of bullying among a representative group of Norwegian assistant nurses and the potential negative consequences of such bullying on the psychological well-being of the victims. The prevalence rate was found to be 3 per cent. In addition, relationships between exposure to bullying and the victims' psychological health and well-being, job satisfaction and symptoms of burnout were investigated. A highly elevated level of burnout symptoms was expected among bullied assistant nurses as compared with non-bullied assistant nurses in the present study.

Bullying at work was studied in a representative sample of 745 Norwegian assistant nurses, with an 80 per cent response rate. The assistant nurses responded to a cross-sectional survey questionnaire, in which most of the questions presented were structured with fixed

response categories. After introducing a definition of bullying, respondents were asked whether or not they felt bullied themselves, whether they had observed others being bullied at work, and to what degree they felt that bullying was a serious strain within their daily lives. Three inventories were included in the study design. It included a 20 item scale on job satisfaction (O'Brien, Dowling, & Kabanoff, 1978), a 25 item measure on burnout (Matthiesen & Dyregrov, 1991; Matthiesen & Dyregrov, 1992) and an 18 item version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994).

While 4.8 per cent of the assistant nurses currently experienced problems with bullying, 8.4 per cent had former experiences as victims of bullying. Moreover, one out of five had witnessed others being bullied. The most common kinds of bullying behavior experienced by the victims were serious slander, rumors and serious slander, rumors and silent hostility. Fellow assistant nurses and nurses were seen as the offenders in most cases. None of the victims felt bullied by patients or relatives. This supports the notion that a kind of systematic aggression does exist within female peer groups and within female subordinate-superior relationships, with high levels of distress among the victims of such behavior. The results clearly indicate that bullying at work is a problem among assistant nurses. Bullied assistant nurses had significantly higher levels of burnout, and reported a lowered level of job-satisfaction and psychological well-being compared with their non-bullied colleagues. In sum, the study showed that some assistant nurses have experienced the highly aggressive behavior of other nurses against them, causing them to feel victimized and bullied. Symptoms of burnout, lowered job satisfaction and lowered psychological well-being were highly related to these experiences of victimization.

**Paper 2: MMPI-2 configurations among victims of bullying at work, in
European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 10, 4, 467-484.**

Bullying at work, the systematic exposure to psychological violence and harassment in the workplace, places a serious strain on many employees. Few studies have investigated the personality dimension related to bullying. Heinz Leymann (1996) is frequently cited, due to his claim that personality is irrelevant in terms of bullying. The second paper covers a retrospective survey study with the aim of investigating personality correlates of bullying among former and current victims using the MMPI-2. MMPI and the subsequent MMPI-2 are probably the most commonly applied personality instruments in psychology, measuring mental personality dysfunctions. The length of the MMPI-2 questionnaire (566 items) may be considered as an obvious reason why MMPI to a very little extent has been utilized in workplace bullying research. Gandolfo (1995), however, investigated 47 harassed individuals who claimed compensations from insurance companies for harassment in the workplace. The above was used as a comparison within the present study.

A questionnaire was mailed to some 180 members of two support associations for victims of bullying at work. The questionnaires were distributed by the support associations. A total of 85 individuals, recruited among members of two Norwegian associations of bullying victims, participated in the study, answering all the inventories including MMPI-2 (Butcher, Dahlstrom, Graham, Tellegen, & Kaemmer, 1989). The mean age of the sample was 51 years of age, 77 per cent of the participants were women. Although most sectors were represented in the sample, most of the participants had worked or were working in the office/administrative sector, health care and teaching sector (39%, 27% and 13%, respectively). MMPI-2 consists of 566 items with 10 main clinical scales. Bullying was measured using the 22 items version of Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). The respondents

were presented with a definition of bullying (presented elsewhere in the synopsis, see page 10). They were then asked to indicate which, of a total of 22 types of specific bullying actions they had experienced while at work, and how often these had taken place.

Two hypotheses were tested; 1) Bullied victims have an elevated personality profile on the MMPI-2, although different kinds of personality profiles may be distinguished. This hypothesis was confirmed. The next hypothesis addressed was 2) The personality profiles of the victims are related to the type of behavior and the intensity of the behaviors experienced by the victim. This hypothesis was also confirmed. Moreover, the overall personality configuration revealed almost entirely replicated the findings of the Gandolfo (1995) study. Gandolfo did not test if there were any subgroup differences in his smaller sample of individuals seeking economical harassment compensation. The present study demonstrated, however, using cluster analysis, that the sample of bullied victims actually could be divided into three personality groups («highly elevated», «elevated» and «common» personality configurations, comprising respectively of 32%, 43% and 25% of the sample). The elevated 3-2-1 psychosomatic MMPI-2 profile was found to be the most typical profile.

Surprisingly, the victims of the “common” cluster reported the highest level of exposure to bullying, suggesting a vulnerability factor among the other victims. The scores on the new MMPI-2 Content scales were also analyzed. The highly elevated group reported a high level of generalized anxiety, fear of specific incidences, and health concerns, as compared with the other two subgroups of bullied victims. In sum, the study revealed clear-cut within-group differences regarding victims of bullying, which should be taken into consideration when the phenomenon of bullying is investigated and explained.

**Paper 3: The escalation of conflict: A case study of bullying at work, in
International Journal of Management and Decision Making, 4, 1, 96-112.**

Many workplace victims of bullying lose their job, be it by long term sick-leave or by plain notice. Bullying is also associated with loss in self-confidence and self-respect (Leymann, 1987a), with shattered cognitive assumptions about the world and one's place within it (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002a). People exposed to workplace bullying may also be hampered with health problems such as anxiety, depression, and various psychosomatic and mental complaints (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001). A single-case study describes an individual person in the course of a short period of time, usually in retrospect. Thus, case studies can contribute with an in-depth understanding of the bullying phenomenon, analyzing the actual stories of individual victims. Qualitative studies are almost non-existent in work place bullying research, a contribution called for by many researchers (e.g. Hoel et al., 1999).

This paper presents a case of bullying which is an exception of the typical negative fate of bullied victims. The individual selected for this research, a target of bullying, was interviewed along with an examination of her written documentation about the bullying story in question. It is a rare case in the literature of bullying that has been scrutinized: A female victim, who faced several bullying episodes over a course of time until she finally got dismissed, took her case to court, won, and then continued in her job, surrounded by her former bullies. Moreover, she claims to be in good health and good spirit. The aim of the psychological case study is to gain an understanding of the person, and if possible, others in similar situations (Kvale, 1983). Hence, the objective of the present paper is to gain insight into the atypical, special, unique and deviant story of this target, in order to shed light on the bullying process.

The theoretical conflict escalation model of Evert van Vliert (1998) was used to identify significant events and behavior in the conflict process, categorizing them as either conflict-escalating or conflict de-escalating, as well as strategic or spontaneous, in accordance with conflict theory. Different sources of information were assembled and integrated, such as interview data and legal court papers. The significant events were interpreted separately. Social support is discussed as a possible explanation of the “happy ending” of this particular bullying episode. The interviewee was given what she characterizes to be absolute essential social support, especially from her husband (emotional support) and her lawyer who assisted her in the court process (informational and evaluative support). Almost ten years have passed since the bullying incidences took place, which may weaken the vivid details, as they are remembered by the case interview person. The distinction between different levels of research is discussed. A version of the conflict that is valid in the eyes of the victim may not be regarded as such by the opponent, nor by the group or organization involved. However, we cannot ignore the individual research level in the attempt to understand bullying.

The present paper utilized a theoretical model of conflict to study an actual case of conflict and a case of perceived bullying at work. Earlier, Zapf and Gross (2001) have shown that a conflict perspective is highly useful in analyzing and understanding bullying at work. Van de Vliert’s (1998) conflict escalation model presents the premises for the methodology, and was evaluated to be a very useful tool when this particular story was decomposed. The study of an individual case has told us something about the applicability of the model related to this particular case. Paper no. 3 argues that it is indeed possible to integrate this particular case and the theoretical model of conflict. To the extent that the sampling unit is regarded as being relevant to the study purpose, in this case the development of an interpersonal conflict in to a case of at least perceived bullying at work, analytical generalization of the case may be possible, comprise one of the concluding points of the paper.

Paper 4: Psychiatric distress and PTSD symptoms after bullying at work, in *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling*, 32, 3, 335-356.

Work place bullying may be regarded as an extreme subtype of workplace stress. During the last decade there has been a growing awareness of the detrimental effects on employee health and well-being caused by exposure to bullying and non-sexual harassment in the workplace (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2003a). Exposure to systematic and long-lasting verbal, non-physical, and non-sexual, abusive and aggressive behavior at the workplace may cause a host of negative health effects in the target. Although single acts of aggression and harassment do occur fairly often in everyday interaction, they seem to be associated with severe health problems when occurring on a regular basis (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Leymann, 1987b). Bullying at work is claimed to be an extreme form of social stress at work (Zapf et al., 1996). Paper no. 4 maps the mental health condition of individuals who claim to have been subjected to bullying at the work place.

The paper presents the results of a retrospective survey study based on a paper and pencil questionnaire, in which most questions and statements applied were made up of fixed response categories. Several well-established measures of mental health and post traumatic stress symptoms were employed, such as Hopkins Symptom Check List (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974), Post Traumatic Stress Scale (Raphael, Lundin, & Wæiseth, 1989) and Impact of Event Scale Revisited (Weiss & Marmar, 1997). Negative and positive affectivity was also measured, using the PANAS questionnaire (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Bullying was measured in two ways. First, a common definition of work place bullying, presented elsewhere in this synopsis (page 10), was presented.

Following this, the respondents were asked: "Have you been exposed to bullying at work?", with three response alternatives (No, Yes to some extent, and Yes to a great extent.). A quantitative measure of bullying, the Norwegian version of the 22 item Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ, Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; NAQ, Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994), was also used. The aim of this study was a) to examine the level of psychiatric symptoms and symptoms of PTSD among current and former victims of bullying at work using a community sample, and b) to inquire how the PTSD symptoms relate to the kinds of bullying experienced by the victim and the duration of and time since the termination of the bullying, c) to examine the role of state negative and positive affectivity as possible mediators or moderators in this stressor-strain relationship.

The 102 participants in the study were recruited among members of two Norwegian national associations against bullying at work. In total, 180 victims of on-going or prior exposure to bullying at work were members of these associations, by the onset of the survey (response rate= 57%). All participants received a survey questionnaire, distributed by the two associations (by mail). Attached to the questionnaire was a letter of recommendation from the heads of the associations. The questionnaires were anonymously returned directly to the researchers.

A high level of distress and PTSD symptoms were revealed within the sample, both according to recommended cut point scores for HSCL-25, PTSS-10 and IES-R, and when comparing the sample with other Norwegian samples in which these scales have been applied. Three out of four victims reported a HSCL-25 level higher than the recommended threshold for psychiatric cases. 60 and 63 per cent of the sample reported a high level of IES Intrusion and IES Avoidance, respectively. The level of bullying, operationalized as the frequency of negative acts the individual had been exposed to at work, showed a stronger interconnection with distress and PTSD than a more unspecified, subjective measure of bullying. This was

also the case regarding the variables "the time since the bullying took place" and "the duration of the bullying episode".

Bullied victims still being troubled with this kind of workplace aggression reported a higher level of distress and PTSD than victims in which the bullying episodes were terminated more than one year ago, but the findings were somewhat mixed. Positive and especially negative affectivity contributed significantly to the explained variance of distress and PTSD in various regression analysis models, but did not interact with the measures of bullying, with one exception. Positive affectivity and time period since bullying occurred gave a significant interactive contribution in terms of explaining psychological distress (HSCL-25).

The personality aspect is important in workplace bullying. This notion is supported in paper no. 4, with positive affectivity and especially negative affectivity adding a significant increase of explained variance to the bullying- posttraumatic stress and bullying – psychological distress regression models. The study corresponds with previous research conducted by e.g. Leymann and Gustavsen (1996) and Mikkelsen and Einarsen (2002a). In addition, these studies found a high occurrence of post-traumatic stress symptoms in their bullying-samples of victims. Posttraumatic stress implies that the health weakening symptoms persist, or emerge with new intensity long after the actual trauma has ceased. Although this survey revealed that symptoms weakened somewhat as time goes by, the effect of the time relationship was moderate. The small differences between victims exposed to present bullying and victims in which the bullying ceased more than a year ago, support a notion that time only to a limited extent heals all wounds.

Paper 5: Perpetrators and targets of bullying at work: Role stress and individual differences (submitted paper)

Bullying is considered to be a subset of the overarching concept of aggression (Griffin & Gross, 2004). Although important empirical knowledge about the phenomenon of workplace bullying has been collected throughout the last decade (Einarsen et al., 2003a; Zapf et al., 2003), a paradox do exist, coined by Rayner and Cooper (2003) as a "black hole" in the bullying research field. This black hole refers to the fact that the targets of bullying have almost exclusively been the source of data and the focus in this research. Thus, there are only few published studies in which the perpetrators of bullying have contributed with direct answers to the data collection. Paper no. 5 breaks this "targets solely"-trend by also investigating perpetrators of bullying. Perpetrators, be it superiors or subordinates, are employees who admit having exposed others to bullying in the workplace. The present study therefore investigates personality characteristics and experiences of role stress of targets as well as among the perpetrators of bullying at work.

The paper also introduces the concept of the provocative victim, inspired from child bullying research, which can be described as employees who report being subjected to bullying and who also admit bullying others. Four hypotheses were addressed in the present study. These were 1) Provocative victims will report more prior acquaintance with bullying compared to others victims, be it in a) former job(s) or b) in their childhood (at school). Provocative victims will also c) report more childhood experiences as perpetrators of bullying. 2) Perpetrators of bullying will report high levels of aggression, a high but unstable level of self-esteem, and a low level of social competence. 3) Provocative victims will a) report a low level of self esteem, combined with a high level of aggressiveness, and low level

of social competence. Targets of bullying will report a low level of self esteem combined with a low level of social competence. 4) Targets of bullying, as well as provocative victims and perpetrators, will report an elevated level of role conflict and role ambiguity

The survey was of cross-sectional design, and consisted of questions and statements that mostly had fixed response categories. Respondents were randomly selected among members of six Norwegian labor unions and members of the Norwegian Employers' Federation (NHO). The participating unions, all situated in the geographical area around the city of Bergen, represented a convenient sample that reflected a diversity of work environments, hence increasing the validity and generalizability of the results. The labor unions included the Teachers Union, the Union of Hotel and Restaurant Workers, the Union of Trade and Commerce consisting mainly of employees in shops and the administration of private businesses, the Union of Graphical Workers, the Union of Electricians, and the Union of Clerical and Officials consisting of employees in the city administration of Bergen. A total of 2215 employees took part in a survey with a response rate of 47 %.

The study contained three measures of aggressive tendencies adopted from research on schoolyard bullying (Olweus, 1987, 1991), such as Aggression after provocation, Aggression against superiors, and Aggression against peers. One measure on self esteem was included in the study, measuring General self esteem (Alsaker & Olweus, 1986; Rosenberg, 1965). A four item measure on Social anxiety was added (Alsaker & Olweus, 1986), measuring perceived incompetence and anxiety in social settings. In addition, two measures on Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity (Rizzo, House, & Lirzman, 1970) were included. The respondents were given a definition of bullying at work (see our definition elsewhere in the synopsis, page 10). Bullying was then surveyed by the use of three single questions which measured exposure to bullying at work during the last six months as well as and earlier exposure to bullying (in present job, or in earlier jobs). The respondents were also asked if

they had bullied others in the work place. Respondents that confirmed that this was the case were defined as perpetrators of bullying. Provocative victims are those who claim to be both a victim and a perpetrator of bullying. Two additional questions addressed childhood experiences with bullying at school, be it as a target or a perpetrator of bullying. In addition to the single questions on bullying, the 18 item version of Negative Acts Questionnaire and 5 item Bergen Bullying Index (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994) were applied.

The study revealed that about 16 per cent of the sample may be categorized as either perpetrators (5,4%), provocative victims (2,1%), or as targets of bullying (8,3%). Provocative victims reported more prior experiences with bullying compared to other targets, be it in their former jobs or in their childhood. Targets of bullying, provocative victims and bullies were compared with those 86 per cent who did not report any involvement with respect to bullying at work, on self-esteem, aggressive tendencies, prior experiences of bullying and experiences of role stress. Perpetrators were found to have a higher level of aggression than did the comparison group and the targets. This is in line with Olweus' (2003) findings from the school bullying research. The bullies in the work place tended to react more aggressively than others across different social situations. Provocative victims manifested a low level of self esteem and social competency combined with a high level of aggressiveness. Targets of bullying revealed low levels of self esteem and self-evaluated social competency. Low self-esteem rooted in the past of the individual, especially in the childhood, may consequently lead to the person being highly susceptible as a target of bullying.

Targets, provocative victims, as well as perpetrators, reported elevated levels of role stress in the form of unclear or conflicting demands and expectations around work tasks and daily work, supporting a hypothesis claiming that micropolitical behavior may be an important antecedent of workplace bullying (Salin, 2003; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003). The

concept of micropolitics is based on the premise that organizations do not consist of fully determined structures and processes (Neuberger, 1989). Thus, the organizations expect its members to assist and “close” the gap in the formal structure, for instance by striving for achieving personal goals, participating in decision making, improving their level of influence, protecting one’s status. Intense micropolitical behavior may be experienced as stressful of those involved. In sum, the study demonstrates, in line with previous bullying research among children, that there exist individual differences, when perpetrators and targets of bullying are compared. Bullied victims can be divided into at least two groups; targets of bullying, and provocative victims.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BULLYING RESEARCH FIELD

Next step in the synopsis presentation will be to pinpoint the substantial empirical contribution of the five reviewed papers to the field of bullying research. I will do so by the use of a research model presented by Ståle Einarsen and his co-authors (Einarsen et al., 2003a). The model (*see figure 2, next page*) is presented in the influential “state of the art” book regarding workplace bullying, entitled “Bullying and emotional abuse in the workplace”, co-edited by Ståle Einarsen, Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf and Cary L. Cooper (2003b). I will try to link the empirical contribution from each of the research papers to different parts of the model mentioned above. Thus, the model in figure 2 will constitute the frame of reference for my attempt to integrate the five paper contributions in the present thesis, and link them to the scientific field of workplace bullying.

The workplace bullying research field is growing as new empirical studies are added continuously. Using the major psychological research facility PsychInfo and the search term "workplace bullying/ bullying at work/ mobbing at work/ work mobbing/ work harassment/ job harassment/ emotional abuse at work" revealed 87 published papers that have used one or more of these terms, in abstracts, headlines or as keywords. Only six of the papers on the list were published in the years 1990-1995, whereas 60 were published between the years 2000-2005. In other words exactly 10 times as many papers were published in the second time period as compared to the first one. The comparison above is informal. It should be recognized that not all scientific papers concerning work place bullying are published in journals cited by PsychInfo (for instance Social science journals or Sociological journals).

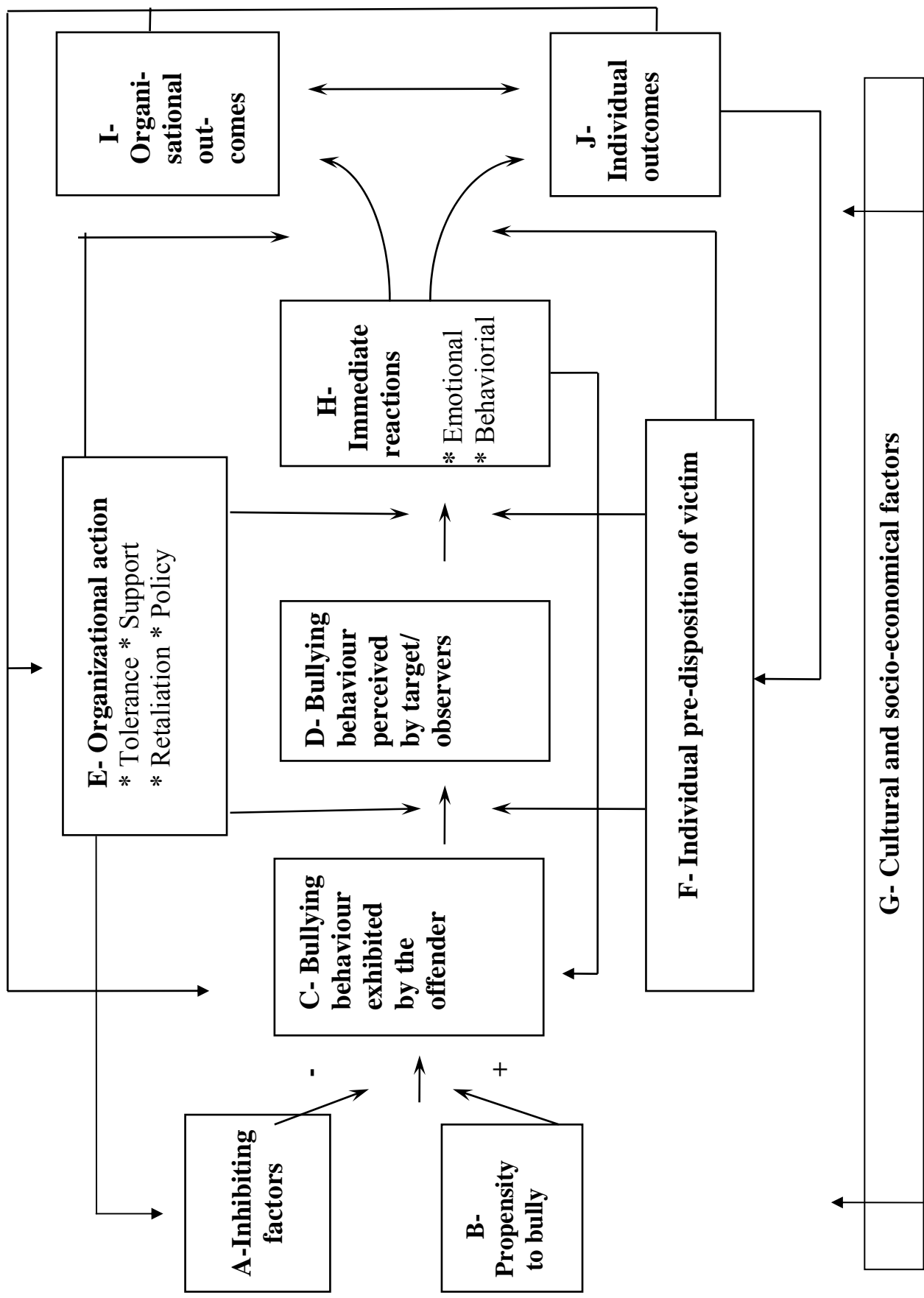


Figure 2. A comprehensive, multifaceted model of bullying (Einarsen et al., 2003). Sign letters A-J's are added to the model.

Still, the comparison demonstrates the significant increase in published peer review papers regarding work place bullying.

As demonstrated, the research field of bullying has expanded extensively throughout the last 15 years, yet workplace bullying is a relatively new area of research. Ståle Einarsen and his associates (Einarsen, 2000; Yamada, 2003) have presented a psychosocial perspective and framework for future research and theory development in the field of bullying and harassment at work.

According to Einarsen et al (2003), the model identifies the main classes of variables to be included in future research efforts and future theoretical developments in the field. The societal level of explanation, consisting among others of national culture, historical, legal and socio-economical factors, is pinpointed by the model. The causal factors and the antecedents underlying the occurrence of harassment at work have so far only been investigated to a limited degree (Einarsen, 2000). Einarsen et al. (2003) argue that individual, social and work-related outcomes of exposure to bullying must be scrutinized. Bullying behavior may be a result of the combination of a propensity to bully due to personal or situational factors, and lack of organizational inhibitors of bullying behavior. The model reflects that organizational aspects, as well as an effective support system for victims, are the key factors that may moderate the perception and the reaction of the victim. The theoretical framework illuminated by the model also gives some credit to the dynamic processes involved in the interaction between perpetrator, victim, and organization.

Some of the papers in the aforementioned PsychInfo search-session are included in the present thesis. The empirical contributions of the thesis (and the papers included) to the research field of workplace bullying will be discussed, using the Einarsen model in figure 2 as a frame of reference. The Einarsen model will be commented from left to right, starting with box A.

Hence, the papers will be discussed as they contribute to the model, from box A at the left side of figure and so on, and not by the number given to each paper. As one may recall, the paper numbers only refers to the rank order of when the various papers were published.

To the left in the Einarsen model is box A (*"Inhibiting factors"*) and box B (*"Propensity to bully"*). These boxes reflect important antecedent factors regarding the onset of bullying. Propensity to bully may be linked to a combination of such factors as power imbalance between the parties, job stress and leadership style. Paper 5, about perpetrators and targets of bullying, add knowledge to this part of the theoretical model. Aim no. 5 in the present thesis was to investigate some individual differences between perpetrators and targets of bullying in terms of personality, former experiences of bullying, and experienced micropolitical behavior. The paper demonstrates that levels of aggression, self-esteem and social competency may be of importance as antecedent factors of bullying, be it as "Inhibiting factors" (box A) or as "Propensity to bully" (box B). Targets of bullying are less prone to react aggressively after provocations from the surroundings, compared with subgroups of perpetrators and provocative victims.

Paper 5 introduces the concept of provocative victim, borrowed from child bullying research, which can be described as employees who report being subjected to bullying and who also admit bullying others. In general, the provocative victims and perpetrators report about more aggressive tendencies than the rest of the study sample. They do react more aggressively when provoked, and are also more apt to behave aggressively against their superiors and friends. The control group, not being exposed to bullying, reported a higher level of self-esteem than the groups of targets and provocative victims. Self-esteem may constitute an inhibiting factor in bullying.

In addition, paper 5 applies the term micropolitical behavior reflecting that

organizations not fully consist of determined structures and processes, leading the organization to "expect" its members to close the gap in formal structures, for instance by achieving personal goals and improving the level of influence. Micropolitical behaviour may be experienced as stressful by those involved. Employees with bullying experiences, be it as targets, perpetrators or as provocative victims, reported elevated levels of micropolitical behavior, as compared with the control group. Thus, paper five contributes to the model and the bullying field with empirical knowledge about micropolitical behavior as a possible antecedent factor of workplace bullying.

Several studies have shown the importance of social support related to work place stress, and its possible mediating or moderating effect in the stressor-strain relationships (see, e.g. Cutrona & Russel, 1990). Social support may constitute an example of a so-called "inhibiting factor", which can reduce the experience among the bullying targets of being or feeling alone (box A in the figure, *"Inhibiting factors"*). Aim no. 3 of the present thesis was to follow the course of conflict escalating in a bullying case, and de-escalating events that also took place. The aim was to investigate an actual conflict, which grew to be experienced as bullying by the case interviewee individual, and to pinpoint some issues that could be learned about the phenomenon of bullying, such as the importance of social support. The case study does underline the importance of social support, and demonstrated some important instances of such support, given to the case interviewee. The target of bullying contended that the main reason for why the course of bullying had a happy ending was the access of social support, given from her caring husband, as well as a skilful lawyer. The husband gave her, above all, emotional support, whereas her lawyer contributed with informational, practical and judgemental support.

Several of the papers presented add knowledge to box C (*"Bullying behavior exhibited by the offender"*) and box D (*"Bullying behavior perceived by target/ observers"*). Papers

numbered as 1 and 4 contribute with specific knowledge in this respect. However, one important limitation does exist. None of the present studies add direct knowledge about the perpetrators' perspective, how they actually performed the bullying behavior (box C). Thus, the content and behavior of bullying exhibited by the offender is measured entirely as it is seen in the eyes of the beholder, i.e., the bullied victim (box D in figure 2, "Bullying behavior perceived by targets/ observers").

In line with this box, paper no. 1 (bullying among assistant nurses) and paper no. 4 (bullying and PTSD) both survey negative acts, as they are listed in the Negative Acts Questionnaire (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997). Paper no. 1 reveals that the assistant nurses reported serious slanders as the most common method of bullying (highest mean score), followed by "frequently met with silence or hostile attitudes" as the second most frequent type of negative acts reported. Paper no. 4 focuses on what negative acts were found to have the strongest interconnection with symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in a sample of bullied victims. As one may recall, part of aim no. 4 of the present thesis was to examine the level of psychiatric symptoms and symptoms of PTSD among current and former victims of bullying at work, using a community sample. In addition, it sought to inquire how the PTSD symptoms relate to the kinds of bullying experienced by the victim and the duration of and time since the termination of the bullying. Several measures of PTSD were applied in the study. Seven negative acts seemed to have the strongest association with PTSD, across measures. These acts were ridiculing, hostile/ dismissive attitude, ignoring, downgrading due to age, downgrading due to gender, exploiting, and negative reactions because of working too much/ too little.

Paper no. 3, the case study, also illuminates several negative acts taking place as the bullying conflict presented escalated. An example of such an act is that the interviewee was told that if she did not adapt, meaning not talking too loudly about what she knew or

witnessed, she would have to leave. Somewhere in the work conflict the interviewee began to feel exposed to bullying. The conflict escalation model of Evert van de Vliert served as a useful tool to retrospectively decompose and analyze subsequent conflict episodes in the actual conflict, step by step. The paper revealed that the case person after some time was met with several organizational actions as the work conflict proceeded (box E in the model, "*Organizational action*"). The interviewee was dismissed, something the interviewee regarded to be a retaliatory action in the ongoing conflict. Before that, she was also "parked", i.e. she was ordered to conduct other work task than she typically used to do. Just before the court case, initiated by the interviewee, was about to start, the company management withdrew and agreed to go to arbitration. The social support interviewee received from her colleagues was limited (box A - "*Inhibiting factors*"). Crucial social support was provided her outside the workplace, from her husband and her lawyer, as previously outlined.

Personality is not a central part of the bullying phenomenon, Heinz Leymann (1996) once claimed. Leymann argued that bullying is primarily related with psychosocial work factors. Several studies (e.g. Coyne et al., 2000; Glasø et al., submitted paper), have presented findings that oppose Leymann's notion (box F in the research model "*Individual pre-disposition of victim*"). This thesis adds knowledge that may give further understanding to the F box. Aim no. 2 of the present thesis (part a) was to investigate whether targets of bullying shows a distorted personality profile. Paper 2, "bullying and MMPI-2", unveiled that an n=85 sample of bullied victims had personality configurations almost identical to an American sample of harassed victims, presented by Gandolfo (1995). The respondents in the Gandolfo study all had in common seeking indemnification from their insurance company, because of pain and suffering related to workplace harassment. The present sample reported in general a distorted personality profile, seven out of 10 of the clinical MMPI-2 scales were found to be elevated, according to the MMPI-2 specifications (cf. Butcher et al., 1989; Duckworth &

Anderson, 1995). Thus, the personality pattern in our study sample was found to be quite different from that of a control group. The replication of a previous harassment study adds further knowledge to the bullying – personality association, as we in paper no. 2 conducted a specific type of cluster analysis revealing that the bullying sample actually could be split into 3 sub-samples.

Aim no. 2 (part b) of the present thesis addressed whether the personality profiles of the victims are related to the type of behavior and the intensity of the behaviors they have experienced. The sub-sample of bullied victims with the least atypical personality configuration in paper no. 2 ("The commons") reported that they had been exposed to more negative acts than the other two groups. Contrary, the group with the most disturbed or elevated personality configuration, labeled as "The seriously affected", had been involved in the least number of negative incidents. Thus, the paper 2 findings may support a vulnerability hypothesis related to work place bullying, which may also be considered as a valuable empirical contribution to the F box in figure 2. Some people may be more apt to experience negative acts than others as events of bullying.

Moreover, paper no. 4 ("bullying and PTSD") provides some insight to the F box in the bullying model. One part of aim no. 4 in the present thesis was to examine whether the role of state negative and state positive affectivity actually act as possible mediators or moderators in the special bullying stressor-strain relationship. Paper 4 reveals that positive affectivity, and particularity negative affectivity, seems to be relevant personality factors related to bullying, especially when it comes to negative health after-effects. The direct effects between positive/ negative affectivity and self-reported mental health and post-traumatic stress were rather strong, whereas the mediator and moderator effects were weaker. The individual tendency to face the world in an emotionally positive way, or to worry or think anxious thoughts about what may happen in the future, constitute important personality

dimensions which is of relevance when a person is confronted with bullying. Paper 4, "bullying and PTSD", replicates earlier findings about the association between bullying and negative affectivity, respectively (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002b), and thus add further knowledge to box F of the model.

Part of aim no. 5 of the thesis, which initially was presented in paper no. 5 ("perpetrators and targets of bullying"), is also related to box F of the model. The aim addressed whether there were individual differences between perpetrators and targets of bullying in terms of former experiences of bullying. Targets of bullying, as well as provocative victims, reported more prior experiences with bullying, be it in former work places, or in childhood, as compared with the comparison group. Thus, prior experiences with bullying, in the role as a target, may serve as an individual pre-disposition of bullying, as box F states.

Box H in figure 2 covers "*Immediate reactions*" that bullying may lead to. The immediate reactions can be seen on the individual level, as well as on the organizational level. Immediate actions can for example be that leadership send out clear prohibiting signals to stop bullying, or that the target of bullying goes to the physician to ask for a sick note. Paper no. 1 (bullying among assistant nurses) illuminate some important aspects related to box H. As we may recall, aim no. 1 (part b) of the present thesis was to investigate the potential negative relationship between bullying and psychological well-being. The paper portrays that bullying corresponds with job dissatisfaction and burnout. The survey study conducted does, of course, not indicate anything about cause and effect. Still, paper no. 1 indicates that exposure to work place bullying is strongly connected to lack of psychological well-being, as measured by job dissatisfaction and burnout. It seems reasonable to assume that workers exposed to bullying will experience immediate reactions (box H) as a decline in job satisfaction, and also feel more stressed in general. In addition, the link between bullying and

reduced job satisfaction is discovered elsewhere (Matthiesen et al., 1989; Quine, 2001).

The association between bullying, burnout and job dissatisfaction can be linked to box I in the presented model ("*Organizational outcomes*"). High proportions of burnout and low levels of job satisfaction may influence e.g. the total productivity of a company. A previous study demonstrated that workers in organizations with a co-existent bullying problem, reported more job stress and less job satisfaction than others, even if they were not targets of bullying themselves (Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen et al., 1994). Several of the papers in the present thesis add empirical knowledge to box J in figure 2, "*Individual outcomes*" of bullying. Paper no. 1 demonstrated, as mentioned above, the link between bullying and burnout. It may be recalled that bullying is seen as an extreme type of social stress (cf. Hoel et al., 2002). Burnout has previously been regarded as an outcome reaction to long lasting chronic stress (Schaufeli & Buunk, 1996; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Thus, it is more likely that burnout will emerge as a long lasting individual outcome (box J) than as an immediate reaction (box H). This notion needs, however, to be investigated more thoroughly.

Paper no. 2 ("bullying and MMPI-2") demonstrates that many bullied victims are troubled with major psychological disturbances, such as paranoid delusions, anxiety and depressive thoughts. The typical MMPI-2 configuration found in this paper indicates that a psychosomatic response pattern seems to be a characteristic feature and possible outcome of bullying among many targets of bullying. Moreover, paper no. 4 ("bullying and PTSD") pointed out that workers exposed to bullying seem to suffer from severe health after-effects. A majority of the study sample reported post traumatic stress symptoms equal to PTSD. The stress scores revealed that the major part of the bullied victim group exceeded the recommended cut score indicating the so-called "caseness" level of PTSD, as this is suggested by the authors of the two stress trauma measures applied in paper no. 4.

Paper no. 5 ("perpetrators and targets of bullying") shows, as previously mentioned,

that the bullied victims report a lower level of general self-esteem, and more worry (social anxiety and depression) than the remaining participants in this survey study. A low level of general self-esteem and worry, as reflected by social anxiety and depression, can be seen as possible antecedent factors to bullying, as stated early in this section of the thesis. This makes the individual more vulnerable when facing for example insulting remarks or aggressive behavior from colleagues or superiors. Moreover, low self-esteem and elevated level of worry can represent the individual outcome result of work place bullying, as box J states.

The very last box in figure 2 is box G, labeled "*Cultural and socio-economical factors*". This is an issue in the work place bullying research field that is only partial covered in the present thesis. Bullying may comprise a problem in the work-place, due to for example the organizational culture. The organizational culture is difficult if not impossible to measure by the use of survey design. Some authors, for example Edgar Schein (1985), contends that it impossible to measure organizational culture by the use of survey questionnaires, the main research tool of the present thesis. Fundamental organizational values and norms about bullying and related issues are difficult to grasp with questionnaires, as for instance when the leaders send informal steering commands or leadership signals to prevent.

Findings of paper no. 5 ("perpetrators and targets of bullying") do indicate, however, that bullying may be a result of so-called micropolitical behavior. As recalled, one of the elements of aim no. 5 in the present thesis was to examine the extent of micropolitical behavior, and its relationship with work place bullying. Micropolitical behavior may manifest itself as internal rivalry and lack of cooperation among the employees. The occurrence of role conflict and role ambiguity may indicate micropolitical behavior. Paper no. 5 found that the targets of bullying, as well as the perpetrators, did report more micropolitical behavior, operationalized as role conflict and role ambiguity, as compared with the control group. Micropolitical behavior can be interpreted as a possible visible artifact of the organizational

culture (cf. Schein, 1985). Thus, the micropolitical findings may (at least indirectly) reflect one possible aspect regarding the organizational culture which may lead to bullying.

However, concerning box G, when it comes to cultural and socio-economical factors at the societal level, it can not be argued that the present thesis contributes with empirical knowledge, be it directly or indirectly. It is possible that future longitudinal studies of workplace bullying, for example with national representative samples, can map this domain of figure 2. An example of this could be when the prevalence of workplace bullying was measured before the onset of economical recession, and with follow-up data collections .

The five papers that constitute the present thesis have now been reviewed in terms of the Einarsen et al. (2003) model, as presented in figure 2. Finally, to give a short summarize of the empirical findings of the present thesis, it can be argued that the 5 empirical papers combined have added some direct empirical knowledge to box A ("Inhibiting factors"), box B ("Propensity to bully"), box D ("Bullying behavior perceived by target/ observers"), box E ("Organizational action") and box H ("Immediate reactions") in the Einarsen model, but also to box J ("Individual outcomes"). The knowledge added to box C ("Bullying behavior exhibited by the offender"), I ("Organizational outcomes") and G ("Cultural and socio-economical factors") are more indirect, but still interesting to note. It should not be forgotten, however, that none of the data presented in the thesis, whether they are linked to the Einarsen model or not, reveal any cause-effect relationships.

GENERAL METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has recognized workplace bullying in the broader context of violence at work. In a 2000 monograph, it was observed that workplace bullying “by itself may be relatively minor but which cumulatively can become a very serious form of violence” (Yamada, 2003). Bullying in the workplace is, however, a difficult research area to embrace conceptually. The workplace bullying definition applied in this thesis has previously been presented (page 10). Bullying concerns repeated negative acts and implies an imbalance in the power relationship between the parties involved. This is quite similar to the definition that Olweus and other child researchers on bullying employ in their field of research (Olweus, 1993). However, there seems to be an important distinction between workplace and child bullying. Olweus pinpoints that the perpetrator intends to bully the victims, and claims that this is an essential part of bullying. The bully harasses others, as an intentional act, according to the conceptual view of childhood bullying.

Among workplace bullying researchers, it seems to be a well established notion that the subjective experience of being bullied is the crucial aspect (Einarsen et al., 2003a; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Bullying occurs as long as the target experiences it as such, even if the perpetrator had no intent to perform bullying, or (showing low empathy) does not realize that such an experience may be the outcome of one's own behavior. Thus, an aggressive person, with low social skills, and a limited conception of how others may perceive the expression of anger or hostility, can be labeled as a bully. The target may misinterpret or exaggerate the intent of the perpetrator. A vulnerable person, for instance, an individual who has experienced a range of bullying episodes in the past (e.g. in previous jobs, or in childhood), would be more prone to attribute intentional negative acts of bullying. The

target may well feel subjected to bullying even if he or she is uncertain whether the perpetrator actually intended to bully (cf. Jones & Davis, 1965). In sum, there is a difference between the child and workplace bullying researchers and their conceptualizations of bullying.

The psychological perspective on workplace bullying is that bullying originates in "the eyes of the beholder", i.e. the target's subjective experience of being hit by workplace bullying. A fundamental point in psychology is that the feelings of the individual should be accepted as valid information as such, and taken seriously by others. This notion does not oppose the old saying that a story always concerns two parts. The target may have provoked negative behavior directed towards him/ herself, with the consequence of being subjected to bullying. He or she may constitute a so called "difficult" or counter productive worker (Sackett & DeVore, 2001). On the other hand, if the target is bullied in a legal sense, then the person "is right" in judicial terms, at least in Norway, and will receive economical compensation in damages. Alternatively, the target may obtain reengagement in his or her former job, if the person was discharged or frozen out from the workplace. In other words, a person may constitute a victim of bullying in psychological terms, but not in judicial terms.

According to Norwegian case law, a crucial point for defining something as bullying is the claim about foreseeability (Pedersen, 2002). An example would be that an employee is subjected to aggressive acts or negative conduct from his superiors, or from the organization. These acts are so severe that they lead to severe mental strain or sickness as well as negative after effects. If this negative outcome should have been foreseen by the leaders, the employee has a legal right to compensation. An instance would be if all positive job contents were removed from the worker in a stroke, without any justifiable explanation.

A similar judicial practice exists in the US, where the tort claim for emotionally abusive treatment at work has been intentional inflicting of emotional distress (IIED). The tort

of IIED is defined (Yamada, 2003): 1) The wrongdoer's conduct must be intentional or reckless; 2) The conduct must be outrageous and intolerable in that it violates the generally accepted standard of decency and morality, 3) There must be a causal connection between the wrongdoer's conduct and the emotional distress, and 4) The emotional distress must be severe. According to Yamada, however, few IIED plaintiffs win their cases in the US court system. The most frequent reason given by court for rejecting workplace related IIED claims is that the complained of behavior was not sufficiently extreme and outrageous to meet the requirement of the tort.

It has been pointed out previously that bullying can be investigated from the individual research level, as well as from the dyadic level. Thus, the perpetrator may totally disagree when targets assert that they were bullied. Still, this will be defined as bullying in psychological terms. An act will also be accepted as bullying when the perpetrator actually agrees that bullying took place, and that this was also the intent. The bully may even admit that he or she systematically tried to get rid of the worker, exposing the person to an escalating number of negative incidents. However, what if the bullied victim disagrees, not reporting the subsequent negative work place episodes as bullying, even if this was the sole intent of the perpetrator? Should this still be labeled as bullying? In this instance the perpetrator will intentionally want to bully, there will be lots of negative episodes, but no actual victim. The target simply lacks the subjective experience of being exposed to workplace bullying. As the above example demonstrates, attempts to clarify the bullying concept entail methodological challenges and no clear-cut answers.

Another point worth noting is that, in some instances, there will be no distinct delineation between workplace bullying and violence at work. In the school-yard, among children, most aggressive acts, physical or verbal, will be termed bullying. The case is different in the adult world within a workplace. Usually one may claim that bullying and

violence are different phenomena. Violence at work is physical in some respect. When a person is slapped, hit, kicked or shot, then this is regarded as violence at work. Bullying will probably consist of negative acts that occur more frequently than violence at work, in most cases. One may assume that the probability of defining something as violence at work will differ across workplaces. For instance, in a white collar workplace the probability of labeling tough physical contact as violence may be low, as compared to male dominated blue collar work places. The conceptualization of bullying vs. violence could be an "artifact" of the organizational culture (cf. Schein, 1985).

The difference between violence at work and bullying can also be seen when the conflicting case is taken into court, at least in Norway. Bullying is most typically associated with violations of the Work Environment Act, especially the psychosocial section (§12), that declares that workers should not suffer from harassment. In court, the employer is accused, as the organization has not ceased the bullying. If the target of bullying wins the case, the employer has a liability for the inflicted psychological and social damages. Violence at work, on the other hand, is dealt with by the Norwegian Criminal Code. The opponents in court will now be the prosecuting authority against the assailant. Among children, violence and bullying is barely distinguished. Here, most of the aggressive behavior directed against specific targets, including physical behavior, will be labeled as bullying.

How much harassment or negative acts must occur before an individual experiences it as bullying? Work place bullying can also be understood in terms of the dose-response perspective. According to this, a person must be exposed to a certain amount of bullying episodes (dose), before the bullying feeling sets in (response). The dose-response perspective is well known within medicine and epidemiology. A significant dose-response relationship was for instance observed between career solvent exposure, blood lead level, and subsequent personality disturbance symptoms among painters (Condray, Morrow, Steinhauer, Hodgson,

& Kelley, 2000). Another study demonstrated a dose-response association between exposure to sexual assaults, and subsequent manifestations of health problems, as arthritis, in a population-based study of older adults (Stein & Barrett-Connor, 2000). Correspondingly, scores of adverse childhood experiences were found to have a strong dose-response graded relationship to the probability of lifetime and recent depressive disorders, with an increased odds ratio probability of about 2.5, as compared to a control group (Chapman et al., 2004).

The dose-response perspective is not applied empirically within the work bullying research field. Thus, little is known about the “dose” of bullying episodes that is a prerequisite for the unique and subjective feeling of being bullied. How many bullying episodes that must take place before the onset of the unique feeling of being bullied, will most likely vary from person to person. Distinctive individual features, such as former work experience, personal vulnerability, childhood experiences, age, educational level, represent but a few of the conditions that may interfere with the feeling of being exposed to bullying. What kind of personal factors that may lower the dose-response ratio, and opposite, factors that may increase it, has still not been investigated. A dose-response perspective may be implicit in the judicial view of what comprises workplace bullying. When a person is exposed to a certain amount of insulting episodes during a specific period of time, it may be regarded as bullying.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The former Prime Minister of Norway, Kjell Magne Bondevik, addressed in his 2003 New Year Eve speech, the need for an increased focus on the issue of workplace bullying. The present thesis should be regarded as a contribution in this direction. The combined results of the five studies indicate that workplace bullying poses major psychological and health impacts on the employees exposed to this kind of behavior. This is in line with existing research, as outlined in previous reviews (Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen et al., 2003a; Hoel et al., 1999; Rayner & Hoel, 1997; Zapf & Einarsen, 2003; Zapf et al., 2003).

Severe long-term negative effects of bullying are demonstrated, particularly in paper 2 ("bullying and MMPI-2") and paper 4 ("bullying and PTSD"). Psychosocial factors, such as increased levels of job stress, burnout or decreased levels of job satisfaction, may enhance the probability of bullying. Personality functioning was distorted among many of the individuals being exposed to bullying, as paper 2 demonstrates. However, some of the bullying targets did overcome the extreme social stress that they had experienced, as the present single case study illuminates (paper 3).

The personality dimension, not only psychosocial work factors, is important to focus on with respect to bullying. Some individuals may be more prone to work place bullying than others, due to for instance individual vulnerability, as shown in paper 2. Furthermore, bullying may deteriorate mental functioning and important personality functions causing e.g. social shyness or paranoid disruptions. A broad knowledge basis about workplace bullying, including the personality issue, may lay a better foundation for the organizations or the society in general to prevent or stop workplace bullying. An important part of this preventive picture regarding work place bullying is access and use of social support. Social support can

moderate the social stress bullying - strain association, and escalation of the bullying process as indicated by paper 3. In this study, the interviewee stresses the importance of social support as the crucial aspect explaining why she has overcome the bullying incidents, and how she is able to continue her professional work life, surrounded by her former perpetrators of bullying. The appropriateness of the design and the validity of measures are important matters. Generally, the present design should be well suited for the basic research questions, such as measuring the prevalence and covariates of bullying at work, mental distortions among the victims, to give but a few examples. The aims have not been to investigate cause and effects or to investigate all nuances or features of bullying at work.

Some limitations do of course exist in the present studies and in the thesis as a whole, and should therefore be noted. Many of these limitations have earlier been discussed in one or more of the five papers that comprise this thesis. The premise in all workplace bullying research, as in research on other groups of victimized subjects, is that all the respondents do report their inner feelings and social experiences in an honest (valid) and consistent (reliable) way. Nevertheless, there is no guarantee for that. Methodological flaws, such as social desirability effects (cf. Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), may occur. The results may be somehow inflated, because the targets of bullying may try to "persuade" the world, manifested as the bullying researchers, about their felt injustice and humiliating experiences. On the other hand, there may be targets of bullying (e.g. participating in ordinary psychosocial workplace studies), that do the opposite. Intentionally or unintentionally, these persons are apt to minimize or deny the severity of bullying they are faced with in their organization.

The pillar of the present thesis, in terms of data collection, is the survey approach. Thus, the research approach and methodological weaknesses herein will to some extent be discussed. One single source of data was gathered in the survey studies, using questionnaires with structured response categories. It is indeed a limitation that the respondents are not

followed over a certain time period. Thus, the bullying process has not been followed or investigated longitudinally. Cross-sectional designs mean that various psychological phenomenon are compared or correlated, and that all of the data stem from the same source (single source invariance). A feature of most survey research is that the complexity and content of the phenomena being studied are given in the study design since items with limited response alternatives restrict newer aspects to enter the picture. The empirical findings may be invalid, if the survey design does not address relevant or central questions about the research subject, or if the response categories are limited, or comprise irrelevant response alternatives. The alternative is of course a design which use open ended questions, and that might be one alternative route in future studies.

Important aspects of the validity of the measures pertain to content validity and construct validity. Bullying at work has no unified and universal definition. The one used in the present study is rather concrete and specific, and the questionnaire seems to catch the defining features of the concept such as the experience of repeated negative acts. Thus, the content validity should in my opinion be satisfactory. The construct validity refers to what degree the concept being studied (such as bullying at work) is a meaningful concept and that the measures capture this. There is no safe procedure to establish construct validity. What is required are several studies within the same area, sharing methods and analyses, and subsequently the usefulness of the concept and measures may possibly emerge. As outlined previously, there are rather few empirical studies published within the bullying research field, but this limitation is about to change. The field seems to flourish with new and upcoming studies, many of them longitudinal in design. This impression has been transmitted for instance on international research conferences, where bullying researchers share their common experiences within the field.

There are specific procedures one may utilize to get closer to an answer regarding construct validity, for example discriminant procedures (where one tests whether the items at stake correlate highly with other specified measures and phenomena) and method triangulation (one gets information from more than one source about the same phenomenon). Such procedures were not utilized in the present survey study papers. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that construct validity is established for many of the scales applied in the various papers, such as MMPI-2 (paper no. 2), and IES-R (paper no. 4). It should also be mentioned that the questionnaire that was used to measure negative acts (NAQ, papers 1, 4 and 5), which comprises a type of quantitative measure on work place bullying, is utilized in more and more countries, showing similar psychometric reliability and factorial properties.

However, a limitation is represented by the fact that many of these NAQ results are preliminary, which means they are presented at research symposiums and in congresses only. So far, few psychometric NAQ results have been published in peer journals (with some exceptions, such as e.g. the Einarsen and Raknes, 1997 and the Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996 studies). Hopefully, this picture will eventually change. An international NAQ data base is about to be established. The conclusion might be that the validity of the survey study part of the thesis seems promising, but only future studies may establish this more confidently.

The reliability of the methods and measures within the study are overall satisfactory. First, the design is well known within the field, and the research group that the present author is a member of has gathered some expertise in conducting research with such designs. Second, most of the measures utilized are developed and refined within the international research community (such as the personality scales). The ones developed by our research team show satisfactory reliability coefficients (such as e.g. the Negative Acts Questionnaire). Indeed, reliability like test-retest reliability and alternate forms reliability are lacking, due to the choice of method (survey cross-sectional data collection in stead of longitudinal design).

No causal conclusions can be drawn from the data in the present thesis about what constitute causes and effects, as already mentioned. This would, however, not have been possible even though a longitudinal survey study had been conducted. The only possible strategy to collect cause-effect data would be to apply the experimental design method, with random selection of respondents to an experimental group and a control group (Cozby, 1993). Of course, the experimental method is almost impossible to employ practically, when it comes to everyday working life and the mapping of complex psychosocial phenomena such as workplace bullying.

Also important to underline is that every paper in the thesis reflects the individual analytic level, i.e. the subjective experience of the victim is the essence of the research. In addition, knowledge on the bullying phenomenon may be collected by the application of the dyadic analytic research level. In such research the perpetrator in the same actual conflict is interviewed too, not only the target. Very few, if any, such dyadic bullying study have been published. Empirical findings may be obtained from the organizational level perspective. A promising statistical trend in this vein is the application of multilevel statistical analysis, where individual and organizational parameters are implemented within the same advanced research models. To my present knowledge, however, no such work place bullying studies have yet been published. Another shortage within the research field is the lack of workplace bullying intervention studies. Among school children, several positive intervention effect programs have been documented (Olweus, 2003). The workplace bullying research field is thus embraced with several interesting and intriguing challenges the following years.

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