



ADAM MICKIEWICZ  
UNIVERSITY  
POZNAŃ



## International Conference on (Cyber)bullying

*Critical and interdisciplinary approaches of online violence phenomena*

5-6-7 December, 2022, Nancy, University of Lorraine (Grand Est, France)

### Call for proposals

Bullying – or harassment – can be defined as a repetitive and intentional hurting of one person by another or by a group, in a situation of power imbalance (the bully has physical and/or psychological control over his/her target or mistreats him/her with a group of followers that he/she has gathered around him/her) (Olweus, 1999). Bullying can have multiple consequences, with both short and long-term effects: anxiety, loss of self-confidence, sleep disorder, depressive disorder, social phobia, etc. Bullying is a phenomenon that occurs in many social contexts: high school (Smith, Sharp, 2000; Catheline, 2015; Roberge, Beaudouin, 2016); university (Hamel, 2008), workplace (Hirigoyen, 2017); family – bullying among siblings – (Tippet, Wolke, 2014); domestic sphere (Hirigoyen, 2003). Street harassment can also be included (Gayet-Viaud, 2021). Bullying can take many forms: verbal (insult, mockery), psychological or moral abuse (denigration, humiliation, threats, rumors), physical (pushing, hitting) or sexual violence (touching, forced kissing, sexual advances). With the emergence of the Web 2.0 and smartphones in the mid-2000, new forms of bullying and violence have appeared: sending insulting or threatening text messages, sending explicit or sexually suggestive emails, happy slapping, identity theft, revenge porn... Several studies – some of which were conducted with an intersectional approach (Stoll, Block, 2015; Angoff, Barhart, 2021) – converge on the fact that this type of violence is oftentimes gender-based, and strongly rooted in gender stereotypes and sexism. For example, among teenagers, girls are twice as likely to be victims of cyberbullying as boys, and young LGBTQIA+ people are four times as likely (Couchot-Schiex *et al.*, 2017; Felmee, Faris, 2016; Hinduja, Patchin, 2020). In addition, racism, fatphobia and the stigmatization of students with disabilities also play a significant role in both school bullying and cyberbullying (Sentenac *et al.*, 2016; Debarbieux *et al.*, 2018).

There is no consensus on the definition of cyberbullying. Some scholars define it as attacks perpetrated through digital tools, while others define it similarly to bullying (Vandebosch, Van Cleemput, 2008; Smith *et al.*, 2008). However, while the imbalance of power is almost always present in a digital context (bullies can act anonymously or pseudonymously; content can spread virally involving many others as witnesses), the repetitive nature and the intention to harm are more difficult to grasp. Repetition can come from the fragmentation of actions (each like or comment participates in the dissemination of content) or from the permanence of digital traces (compromising content can resurface months later), but the intention to harm is not always indisputable, as one can “like” or “retweet” out of habit, inadvertently, under the influence of emotion or in order to publish content to entertain others and gain popularity (boyd, 2015) without anticipating the online violence that can result (Stassin, 2021). Furthermore, the emotional intensity attached to content can facilitate its online dissemination, while digital mediation can also lead to the distancing of emotions (Quemener, 2018; Alloing, Pierre, 2020).

Many studies have been dedicated to examining the link between school bullying and cyberbullying between students (Li, 2007; Dooley *et al.* 2009; Pyżalski, 2012), providing characterization of cyberbullying dynamics (Willard, 2007; Blaya, 2013) or focusing on the actors and devices involved in their prevention (Blaya, 2015; Dilmaç, Kocadal, 2019). Other studies have pointed out that this peer violence continues at the university (Faucher *et al.*, 2014), but also at the workplace (Dupré,

2018) where different forms of digital incivilities are observed which, when repeated, have deleterious effects (Carayol, Laborde, 2021). Finally, others have focused on the private and domestic sphere, where digital technology has become a tool for control, domination and humiliation, within a couple or after a divorce or separation (Fernet *et al.*; 2019). For example, one can cite the use of revenge porn by men as retribution against their partner or ex-partner after a sentimental rupture or an infidelity: in a “name or shame” strategy to affect their reputation, they humiliate by publishing private and identifying content online without their consent (Hall, Hearn, 2019).

Humiliating or compromising messages can be sent to a single person by dozens or hundreds of people. This phenomenon, called “flaming”, is now recognized by the French Law of 3 August 2018 as “pack cyberbullying” and stipulates that anyone participating in this kind of action, even by a single like or comment, can now be convicted. These “digital raids”, which generally target women (famous or not), LGBTQIA+ people or other minorities, or human rights advocates (Corroy, Jehel, 2019), feminist or anti-racist activists (Bibié, Goudet, 2018), can be compared to online hate speech (Monnier, Seoane, 2019). Indeed, the latter is based on the alleged feeling of hatred towards a minority group – sexual or gender minority, ethnic minority, people with disabilities – (Pyżalski, 2022) and/or based on the instigation of hatred by inciting violence or reinforcing stigmas.

For this conference, unpublished, innovative papers focusing on – but not limited to – the following topics are welcome:

### **1. Theoretical approaches to online violence and cyberbullying**

- Definition, characterization and conceptualization of cyberbullying (school cyberbullying, cyberbullying at the workplace), of digital incivilities or hate speech;
- Links between “bullying” and “cyberbullying”, “bullies” and “cyberbullies”;
- Exploration of the terminology: “cyberbullying” versus “cybermobbing”, or versus “cyberharassment”.

### **2. The role of emotions and feelings**

- Affective dimension of online violence, bullying, harassment or hate;
- The role played by emotions in bullying or cyberbullying (among bullies, witnesses or bullied, but also among people involved in the fight against bullying or even among researchers studying this violence);
- The place taken by emotions in discourses about cyberbullying (for example in the media);
- The socio-technical specificities of platforms and the way in which the affective intensity of contents related to violence can facilitate their circulation and the intensity of the reactions they generate;
- The way in which technical mediation can contribute to a distancing of emotions and empathy.

### **3. Intersectional approaches**

- Power dynamics in online violence and hate speech;
- The role played by victims or aggressors belonging to a minority or to a privileged group in the dynamics of bullying/harassment ;
- Hate speech against feminist activists, human right advocates and intersectional activists;
- The emergence of support or mutual aid groups induced by intersectional approaches.

### **4. Prevention of cyberbullying and online violence**

- Actors and tools involved;
- Educational initiatives and the role played by school, teachers, etc.;
- Digital literacy and digital citizenship;
- Psychosocial skills development;
- Hashtag activism (#metoo, #stopbullying, #stopbodyshaming);
- Empowering youth to combat bullying and cyberbullying;
- Legal responses to cyberbullying;
- The responsibilities of social media companies in the regulation of cyberbullying and hate speech.

## **Submission guidelines**

**Proposals should be sent by 15 April 2022 to the following address:**  
[colloquencyberharcèlement@protonmail.com](mailto:colloquencyberharcèlement@protonmail.com)

In order to guarantee the double-blind evaluation process, please send:

- An anonymous document containing your presentation proposal: maximum length of 6000 characters (2 pages), with a title, the chosen topic from the conference call, an abstract of the presentation including the research question, a brief review of the literature and/or theoretical perspectives, elements of methodology and essential bibliographic references;
- A second document specifying the title of your paper, your name, your first name and your institutional affiliation.

Notifications of acceptance will be sent **between 30 June and 15 July 2022**. The issuing of a collective publication is planned at a later date, following the conference.

The registration fee is €50 for permanent faculty members (professors). The conference is free for students, PHD students and non-permanent faculty members (lecturers, adjuncts).

### **Contact:**

Delias Lucie: [lucie.delias@gmail.com](mailto:lucie.delias@gmail.com)

Lallet Mélanie: [melanie.lallet@yahoo.fr](mailto:melanie.lallet@yahoo.fr)

Stassin Bérengère: [berengere.stassin@univ-lorraine.fr](mailto:berengere.stassin@univ-lorraine.fr)

### **Steering committee**

Belhadi Morgane, Irmécen, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle  
Delias Lucie, LERASS-Céric, Université Paul Valéry-Montpellier 3  
Lallet Mélanie, CHUS-Arènes, Université Catholique de l'Ouest  
Lechenaut Émilie, Crem, Université de Lorraine  
Philippe Sandrine, Crem, Université de Lorraine  
Promonet Aurore, Crem, Université de Lorraine  
Pyżalski Jacek, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (Pologne)  
Schneider Anne-Cécile, IUT Nancy-Charlemagne, Université de Lorraine  
Stassin Bérengère, Crem, Université de Lorraine  
Walter Natalia, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (Pologne)

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Galand Benoît, GRES, Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgique)

Gevrey Vincent, LIRFE-LACES, Université Catholique de l'Ouest (France)  
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Pyżalski Jacek, Université de Poznań (Pologne)  
Theviot Anaïs, CHUS-Arènes, Université Catholique de l'Ouest (France)  
Walter Natalia, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (Pologne)

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