Workplace bullying of immigrants working in Sweden

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ABSTRACT
The aim of this study was to investigate the risks of being bullied at work based on country of birth, and compared to natives. We used a representative sample of the Swedish workforce collected in the autumn of 2017 (n=1856). The results showed a more than doubled risk of being bullied for the foreign-born. Coming from a culturally dissimilar country, the risk of becoming a victim of bullying was almost fourfold. The increased risk was only for person-related bullying, indicating a risk of being excluded from the social work environment. From a social identity perspective, foreign-born is a salient out-group easy to single out and with a predatory bullying origin they easily become the scapegoat of the group or just an easy target of frustration. There was a greater risk associated with self-labelling as bullied than with the behavioural experience method. Self-labelling could possibly be construed as a mix of exposure to bullying behaviours, and being discriminated against, making it a less suitable method when studying bullying for minorities. The study shows the importance of working with these issues. It severely affects both individuals and the organization in which the negative treatment is occurring.

Introduction

Workplace bullying is a serious and detrimental problem found all over the world (for an overview see, e.g., Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012). The question this article poses is what happens when the world comes to you. Being born in another country coming to a new one for different reasons to start a new life, getting a job, and finding one's way in a

KEYWORDS
Workplace bullying; immigrants; social exclusion; harassment
society where one is viewed as a minority may involve a number of obstacles. Being viewed as the outsider in a group carries a risk of receiving a differential treatment in the workplace (Levine, 2017). This treatment could involve exclusion and other negative behaviours (Wesselmann & Williams, 2017).

Workplace bullying is defined as a systematic (e.g. weekly) negative treatment at work that continues for an extended period of time (e.g. six months) in situations where the victim has increasingly diminishing resources to defend him or herself (Einarsen et al., 2020b). Einarsen (1999) described possible origins of bullying as dispute-related or predatory in nature. Dispute-related bullying refers to escalated interpersonal conflicts where one part ends up in an inferior position unable to defend oneself (Einarsen, 1999; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Predatory bulling, on the other hand, refers to situations where the actions of the victim are not the main reason why bullying occurs. It is rather who the victim is, or what the victim represents for the bully, that can explain the exposure to bullying behaviours (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2020b), for example, belonging to an out-group in terms of scapegoating processes and prejudice (Thylefors, 1999), or simply being an easy target as a consequence of frustration and stress (Einarsen, 1999).

Bullying behaviours can involve a range of different acts and situations. Different dimensions of bullying behaviours have been suggested, for example work-related bullying, social isolation, personal attacks, verbal attacks, and physical violence (Einarsen, 1999; Zapf, 1999). The negative acts can be direct (actions directed at the victim, such as verbal attacks), or indirect, such as the spreading of rumours (Einarsen et al., 2009). Negative acts relating to workplace bullying can also be active or passive in terms of, for example, actively doing something to the victim, or simply ignoring what the victim says or does. When measuring workplace bullying a few different strategies have been used. One involves self-labelling based on a definition of workplace bullying (e.g., Clausen et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2018; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2013; Salin, 2015), or sometimes just a question about exposure without a definition (e.g., Ariza-Montes et al., 2015; Oxenstierna et al., 2012; Tsuno et al., 2015). Often studies have used inventories asking about exposure to a number of negative acts without explicitly mentioning bullying, for example, the Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised (NAQ–R, Einarsen et al., 2009). NAQ–R comprises 22 items focussing on work-related, person-related and physically intimidating bullying behaviours. Workplace bullying may involve physical negative behaviours, however, bullying behaviours are primarily psychological in nature (Einarsen et al., 2020b). The main dimensions of bullying used in this study were work-related bullying and person-related bullying. Rosander and Blomberg (2019)
showed that onset of at least a weekly exposure of work-related bullying behaviours precedes person-related negative acts, which become frequent later in the bullying process. This corresponds to the findings using latent cluster analysis (e.g., Notelaers et al., 2006).

There are relatively few studies that focussed on ethnicity in connection to workplace bullying, and even fewer that have included country of birth. An early study focussing on bullying and ethnicity in a European context was conducted by Lewis and Gunn (2007). They showed that ethnic minorities are more exposed to workplace bullying—and if bullied by a line manager they are more often exposed to what they called personalized bullying (e.g. being excluded, ignored or humiliated). Studies from the United States often include ethnic groups, but without addressing whether a person is a first-generation immigrant or has lived for generations in the country (e.g., Attell et al., 2017; Cassie & Crank, 2018; Fox & Stallworth, 2005). Some studies have focussed on what they call ‘racial’ or ethnic bullying which involves negative behaviours targeted at individuals ‘explicitly based on race or ethnicity’ (Fox & Stallworth, 2005, p. 439). Examples of items that measure ethnic bullying are ‘derogatory comments about your racial or ethnic group’ and ‘excluded you from social interactions during or after work because of your race or ethnicity’ (Fox & Stallworth, 2005, p. 444). Fox and Stallworth also included what they called ‘general bullying’ in their study. Others have only the ethnic bullying dimension (e.g., Wu et al., 2015). Discrimination is defined as unequal or differential treatment based on categorization of group membership ‘which [has] no relation either to individual capacities or merits, or to the concrete behavior of the individual person’ (Allport, 1954, p. 52). Based on this definition, ethnic bullying as defined by Fox and Stallworth (2005) could be seen as a form of discrimination. However, the introduction of the concept of ethnic bullying blurs the line between bullying and discrimination. The potential mix-up of bullying and discrimination was also discussed by Lewis et al. (2020). The concept of ethnic bullying also poses problems of comparison as it, in most cases, only applies to the ethnic minority, making it hard to compare results to the ethnic majority at a workplace. ‘Racial’ or ethnic harassment are examples of mistreatment at work, but are often regarded as a different kind compared to workplace bullying. In a meta-analysis on workplace mistreatment McCord et al. (2018) included a wider spectrum of negative behaviours in addition to bullying such as, for example, harassment, discrimination and incivility. They differentiated ‘racial’ or ethnic mistreatment, that is, behaviours motivated by ethnicity, from general mistreatment. The results showed that ethnic minorities do perceive more general mistreatment, although the effect size was small. Separating out bullying, the results showed a clearer difference, but still
only a small effect size. For ethnic minorities, ethnic mistreatment was seven times as higher than general mistreatment.

There are a few studies from Sweden’s neighbouring countries focusing on ethnicity and bullying. In Denmark Hogh et al. (2011) studied healthcare students in Denmark and later how they experienced their first year of employment. About 10% of the sample were immigrants—most of them were what Hogh et al. defined as ‘Non-Western’ immigrants. In the total sample only 5% were male. The results showed that for immigrants, the risk of being exposed to bullying was between two and six times as high as the Danish respondents during the period of healthcare studies. The risk for Non-Western immigrants was almost double that of the Western immigrants. During the first year of employment, the risk for Non-Western immigrants was about double that of the Danish respondents, while Western immigrants did not experience a significantly higher risk. Hogh et al. (2011) explained this as a result of being most different from the majority in Denmark. As the study did not include a comprehensive measure of workplace bullying (only one question, self-labelling based on a definition), the results could possibly include examples of discrimination and prejudice instead of bullying. In Finland Bergbom et al. (2015) studied employees at a large bus company. The argument for using this sample was to be able to study workplace bullying in a situation where different working conditions would not affect the results, that is, to be able to study immigrant minority status rather than a reflection of different working conditions. A large majority of the respondent were male (90%). As in Hogh et al. (2011) they measured workplace bullying using self-labelling based on a definition, but Bergbom et al. (2015) also included seven items capturing different negative acts (inspired by e.g., the Negative acts questionnaire–Revised, NAQ–R, Einarsen et al., 2009). The results showed a risk of exposure to workplace bullying three times higher for immigrants than for natives. However, the cultural distance, here defined as dissimilarity to the natives of Finland, played an important role in this where the culturally closest group showed no difference and the most distant had eight times the risk of being exposed to workplace bullying compared to native Finns.

There are a few studies that use a representative sample to study ethnicity and ill-treatment at work, but they do not have a specific focus on bullying (Fevre et al., 2009; Krings et al., 2014). To our knowledge this is the first study with a nationally representative sample of the workforce to investigate ethnic minorities and exposure to workplace bullying using a comprehensive measure of the phenomenon. For a more thorough list of studies reporting prevalence of workplace
bullying or related concepts such as incivility, see Bergbom and Vartia (2019).

**Theoretical framework**

In the context of processes involving minority groups at work, social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is a reasonable theoretical framework when trying to understand mistreatment at the workplace—and especially self-categorization theory (SCT, Turner & Oakes, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). According to SIT and SCT people use salient categories to identify an ingroup and those who do not easily fit in become representatives of the outgroup. Ethnicity could be one such category. When forming ideas of an ingroup and having a salient out-group at hand, ingroup bias is likely to appear (Brown, 2000). This involves ingroup favouritism, often at the outgroup’s expense. Ramsay et al. (2011) used SIT as a framework for looking at the bullying process from a group perspective. They proposed that the stronger the group identity, the greater the risk of non-prototypical members becoming victims of bullying. A prototype in terms of SCT is a shared idea of an ideal or exemplary group member—a cognitive representation of features and attributes of the group (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Glambek et al. (2020) showed that non-prototypicality is a predictor of workplace bullying. According to SCT, self-categorization leads to depersonalization, a perceived similarity to others defined as the ingroup, and group behaviour (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). Self-categorization also leads to a stronger adherence to group norms. Deviating too much from a group’s prototype may be perceived as a threat to the group, making the deviant vulnerable to negative behaviours (Lewis et al., 2020). With deviant group members the social identity of the in-group may become less clear in comparison to relevant out-groups. By redefining the deviant as ‘them,’ the threat to the group is perceived as handled, and this opens up for scapegoating processes and displaced aggression towards the person now seen as the outsider (Thylefors, 1999; Zapf & Einarsen, 2020). Group identification can work both ways, as a uniting force against someone not fitting the idea of the group, and as a way to reduce the risk of being bullied. Escartín et al. (2013) studied the effects of individual identification with one’s work group and the risk of becoming a victim of bullying. The combination of own identification and a high level of identification within the group reduced the likelihood of being bullied—in the study this meant mainly work-related bullying, as the results regarding person-related were inconclusive.

Baillien et al. (2009) described workplace bullying as a possible response to norm violations or norm breaking. As norms are often connected to
a salient group identity (Hogg & Terry, 2000), breaking them can be interpreted as a threat to the group as such, and to unity and cohesion. An aggressive response could be seen as a form of social control in case of perceived norm violation (Felson, 1992), in order to come to terms with this threat. Coming from a different country and a different culture could pose a risk of norm breaking, and the more different the culture, the greater the risk. Although norm breaking can possibly come from breaking cultural norms—maybe even without realizing it oneself—the aggressive response is, according to Felson (1992), based on a perception of violation. This perception could, in terms of SIT, be a result of stereotypes connected to being categorized as a foreigner.

In the context of minorities at work the concept of social power (see e.g., Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Hodson & Esses, 2005; Keltner et al., 2003) is another aspect that could help to explain the treatment of immigrants at work. Keltner et al. (2003) defined power as ‘an individual’s relative capacity to modify others’ states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments’ (p. 265). By resources the authors referred to both material and social resources (e.g., friendship). The focus of the current study is not on the bully but the bullied, and in terms of social power on the ones without power. Hodson et al. (2006) found an association between powerlessness and vulnerability to bullying. Keltner et al. (2003) discussed the greater sensitivity to threats of the powerless as well as a greater inclination to interpret ambiguous behaviours as threatening.

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework presented above, and on previous research, we present four hypotheses. First, there are studies on immigrants and bullying (e.g., Bergbom et al., 2015; Hough et al., 2011; Lewis & Gunn, 2007) showing that people with a different ethnic background are more likely to be bullied than natives. This is something that can be understood in terms of SIT and non-prototypicality, as shown by Glambek et al. (2020). We tested the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Foreign-born are at greater risk of being exposed to workplace bullying than Swedish-born.

There is also reason to believe that deviance from what is considered the majority position at a workplace could mean a higher risk of negative treatment. Coming from a different culture could, for example, mean a greater risk of norm breaking, which could lead to bullying (Baillien et al., 2009). In terms of SCT (Turner & Reynolds, 2012), the salience of an immigrant being different from the in-group is probably
greater the more deviant the person is. This difference will probably also mean a greater deviance from the group prototype. In the current study, deviance is operationalized similar to the reasoning of Hogh et al. (2011) and Bergbom et al. (2015)—in relation to distance, culturally and based on actual distance. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis was tested:

**Hypothesis 2.** The more deviant from the ingroup/prototype a foreign-born is, the greater the risk of being exposed to workplace bullying.

The way a deviant is treated may also differ. Bergbom et al. (2015) found that immigrants more often were exposed to social exclusion, and Lewis and Gunn (2007) reported personalized bullying more frequent for an ethnical minority. We tested the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3.** Foreign-born are at greater risk of being exposed to person-related bullying than to work-related bullying.

Being part of an ethnic minority at work could mean a lack of social power, something that may lead to a greater sensitivity to threats and higher likelihood of interpreting behaviour as threatening (Keltner et al., 2003). There is also a possibility of a mixture of discrimination and bullying behaviours when the exposed are to assess their vulnerability. Thus, we tested the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4a.** Foreign-born face a greater risk of victimization (self-labelled bullying) than Swedish-born.

**Hypothesis 4b.** Foreign-born face a greater risk of victimization (self-labelled bullying) than bullying based on behavioural experience.

Bergbom et al. (2015) discussed possible differences in working conditions for immigrants compared to natives, and that these differences could be reflected in differences in workplace bullying. As poor working conditions are a well-known antecedent to bullying (Salin & Hoel, 2020) we included a number of work-related factors such as, for example, role clarity and job satisfaction, so that we could separate a general dissatisfaction with one’s work situation from exposure to bullying behaviours.

**Methods**

**The context of the study**

Immigration to Sweden has increased at a steady rate in recent decades. In the year 2000 Sweden had 11.3% foreign-born residents, and by the end of 2017 this figure was 18.6% (Statistics Sweden, 2018). In 2015,
Sweden and the rest of Europe had to deal with one of the greatest migrations in modern times (Alkopher & Blanc, 2017). This made the idea of immigration salient. It also led to changes in immigration policy from the Swedish government and an increase in xenophobic tendencies reflected in an increase in populist nationalism (Christensen & Christensen, 2019) and a more negative attitude towards immigrants in the Swedish society (Ahmadi et al., 2020).

Participants

The study used questionnaire data from a representative sample of the Swedish workforce collected in the autumn of 2017. The government agency Statistics Sweden (https://www.scb.se/en) handled the selection process using a simple random selection of people working at workplaces with at least 10 employees (ages 18-65 based on a sampling frame from 2015). A total of 1856 questionnaires were answered (the questionnaire was in Swedish). The mean age was 44.1 years (SD = 11.9), ranging from 21 to 67 years. There were 51% women in the sample. Almost half had some university or college education (48%); 42% had ten to twelve years of education while the remaining 10% had nine years or less. A little more than half were married (56%) and 51% had at least one child. The majority were born in Sweden (84%). Finally, 11% worked in some form of leading position, and 94% had a fixed contract.

Groupings in the study

In the study, comparisons are made between those born in Sweden (n = 1625) and those born outside of Sweden (n = 229). Of those not born in Sweden, 21% came from the other Nordic countries, 43% from the rest of Europe, 20% from Asia, and the remaining 16% from Africa, North and South America, and Oceania. Of the foreign-born, 76% were Swedish citizens, and of the non-citizens 43% were born in the Nordic countries and 48% in the rest of Europe. In the results, the group born in Sweden was compared to: (a) the foreign-born; (b) those not born in Sweden in three groups based on distance, those born in the other Nordic countries, those born in Europe (except the Nordic countries), and the rest of the world; and (c) those born in culturally similar countries (i.e., the other Nordic countries, Europe, North America, and Oceania) and culturally dissimilar countries (i.e., Asia, Africa, and South America).

‘Race’, ethnicity and other ways of categorizing people into groups can be problematic in that they do not have clear definitions (for an overview see Bergbom & Vartia, 2019). In this study the division is
clearer—it only depends on if the person is born outside or in Sweden. This could include a few people with Swedish-born parents who worked abroad when the child was born. We have no way of knowing this, but it is reasonable to assume that there would be very few such people, if any, in this study, and that the vast majority in the group foreign-born are immigrants. The division is based on data taken directly from the Swedish population register (from Statistics Sweden). We did not have access to the exact country of birth, only grouped country of birth: Sweden, Nordic countries (except for Sweden), Europe (except for the Nordic countries), Africa, Asia, North America, South America, and Oceania. As for Oceania, according to the official statistics of Sweden the majority of immigrants born outside of Sweden from Oceania come from Australia (Statistics Sweden, 2018) which is why we included Oceania in the category ‘culturally similar countries’.

**Measures**

We measured workplace bullying using the Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised (NAQ–R, Einarsen et al., 2009). In the study we used the Swedish version of NAQ–R (Rosander & Blomberg, 2018). Cronbach’s alpha (α) for NAQ–R was .91 (.90 for the Swedish-born and .94 for the foreign-born). We also measured bullying using self-labelling based on a definition (being subjected to negative treatment, repeatedly and over time in situations of power imbalance) with answers on a frequency scale (never, now and then, monthly, weekly, and daily).

Six scales from the PSYWEQ (Blomberg & Rosander, 2020; Rosander & Blomberg, 2018, 2019) were used to measure experience of work, working conditions, and negative exposure. The scales were Individual work experience (IWE), Organizational conditions for work (OCW), Roles in the organization (RIM), Quality & efficiency (Q&E), and Joint job satisfaction (JJS). All subscales were based on items using a seven-point Likert scale. IWE comprises six subscales from PSYWEQ (I1-I6, Rosander & Blomberg, 2019), 28 items measuring an individual level work experience including perceived supportive leadership and support from close co-workers, job satisfaction, energy level, perceived influence and conditions for work (α = .96). OCW is also a combined variable of six other subscales from PSYWEQ (G1-G6, Rosander & Blomberg, 2019). It includes 34 items capturing the level of active and constructive leadership, cooperation and climate among the closest co-workers as well as the whole workplace, aspects of a well-functioning organization (e.g., roles, goals and systematic approach in how to deal with work environment issues), the social work environment, and staffing (α = .96). RIM contains six items and measures aspects of role clarity.
in the organization, including a clear division of tasks, clear roles and role expectations as well as an orderly organization with well-functioning routines ($\alpha = .89$). Q&E comprises two items focusing on the efficiency of the organization, where time and resources are used in the best way, and that the work carried out leads to high quality products or services ($\alpha = .76$). Finally, JJS is based on two items capturing a more general experience of job satisfaction: that all who work together enjoy and have fun together at work ($\alpha = .89$).

The questionnaire did not include questions about sex, age, marital status, country of birth, income, education level, or city population. All these variables were added by Statistics Sweden taken directly from the population register. We categorized marital status as either married or not, and education level when presenting results as having university or college education, ten to twelve years of education, or nine years or less. When using education as covariate we used the full eight ordinal education levels from the population register.

**Calibrated weights**

Data were collected through a simple random selection of the Swedish workforce. The response rate was 25%, however to enhance the representativeness of the data, calibrated weights (population weights) were calculated by Statistics Sweden based on Särndal and Lundström (2005). In this study the variables sex, age, marital status, country of birth, income, education level, work sector, and the number of employees at the workplace were used for the auxiliary vector. Sweden's total population register, that is, a complete listing of the population of individuals in Sweden, informed the calculation of the population weights.

**Statistical analyses**

For statistical analyses Stata 15.1 for Mac was used (StataCorp, 2017). The calibrated weights were associated with the dataset using the svyset command. All analyses in the study utilized the svy prefix in Stata to include the weights. In the analyses ‘mean’ together with ‘test’ (an adjusted Wald test) was used to compare two group means. For more than two group means we used regression for comparison to the base or reference. In this study the reference group was the Swedish-born. All logistic regression included income, city population, marital status, age, sex, and education as covariates.
Cut-off scores for NAQ–R

For the logistic regression cut-off scores for NAQ–R were used. For overall exposure to negative acts, 33 or higher and 45 or higher were used to assess if being bullied or not (Notelaers & Einarsen, 2013). There was also an interest in finding corresponding cut-off scores for only work-related bullying (WRB), and person-related bullying (PRB). To our knowledge, such cut-off scores have not been presented earlier. To not just select arbitrary scores for this, a strategy for this was formulated. In the current sample, 19.4% of the participants were over the cut-off at 33, so the same was used for WRB and PRB when seeking cut-off scores to use in the logistic regression analyses. It happened to be equal to 15 or higher for both. For WRB this meant that 18.3% of the participants were categorized as being exposed to WRB. For PRB, 19.2% of the participants were categorized as being exposed to PRB. For self-labelled bullying based on a definition, the cut-off was set to ‘now and then’, that is, not answering completely ‘no’ to the question.

Results

In Table 1 the overall means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the measures of bullying as well as the continuous or ordinal demographic variables from the population register are presented.

The main result of this study involves comparing Swedish-born to foreign-born working in Sweden. The foreign-born are treated as one group, but also divided into three categories (a) born in the Nordic countries, (b) born in Europe (except the Nordic countries), and (c) born outside Europe, and as two categories (a) born in a country with a similar culture, and (b) born in a country with a dissimilar culture.

<p>| Table 1. Overall means, standard deviation, and inter-correlations for measures of bullying and continuous or ordinal demographic variables. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 NAQ-R</td>
<td>28.33</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 WRB</td>
<td>11.93</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>.90***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 PRB</td>
<td>13.01</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>.92***</td>
<td>.68***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bullying (definition)</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>.60***</td>
<td>.42***</td>
<td>.67***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Age</td>
<td>44.05</td>
<td>11.94</td>
<td>−.11***</td>
<td>−.12***</td>
<td>−.09***</td>
<td>−.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Income*</td>
<td>380 707 057</td>
<td>−.08**</td>
<td>−.05*</td>
<td>−.09***</td>
<td>−.06**</td>
<td>.31***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Seniority</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>−.08***</td>
<td>−.08***</td>
<td>−.06**</td>
<td>−.01</td>
<td>.56***</td>
<td>18***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 City population</td>
<td>203 420 290</td>
<td>−.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>−.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>−.13***</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>−13***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Education</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>−.04</td>
<td>−.00</td>
<td>−.07*</td>
<td>−.03</td>
<td>−.21***</td>
<td>.18***</td>
<td>−.23***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SEK = Swedish crowns (SEK 10 ≈ EUR 1). *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.
Note. NAQ–R (Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised), WRB (Work-Related Bullying), PBR (Person-Related Bullying).
Tables 2 and 3 present comparisons between these categories and the Swedish-born for demographic variables. For comparisons to the foreign-born in Table 2, an adjusted Wald test was used, and for the other two ways of categorizing the foreign-born regression analysis with the Swedish-born as reference was used. In Table 3, for sex, marital status and education level, χ² was used to compare the proportions of the Swedish-born and categories of the foreign-born.

There were some differences between groups, but most of them were in the ‘right’ direction, that is, less risk of bullying for the foreign-born group, based only on the particular demographic variable in isolation. For example, the mean age for the foreign-born group was higher than in the Swedish-born group. However, the correlation between age and NAQ-R score (Table 1) is negative. Although small, it indicates a small decrease in NAQ-R score with age. There was a higher percentage married in the foreign-born group and comparing mean NAQ-R for married and unmarried in the whole sample showed a higher score for the unmarried, F(1, 1844) = 3.58, p = .058. The only difference in the

### Table 2. Demographic data on age, income, city population, and seniority over ethnic groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Age Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Income Mean (SD)</th>
<th>City Population Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Seniority Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swedish-born</td>
<td>43.76 (12.29)</td>
<td>378,540 (222,107)</td>
<td>193,141 (288,505)</td>
<td>11.08 (1.95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td>46.14 (9.82)</td>
<td>382,090 (170,992)</td>
<td>272,379 (294,176)</td>
<td>10.54 (9.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic</td>
<td>50.64 (9.98)</td>
<td>467,898 (276,587)</td>
<td>286,324 (352,060)</td>
<td>14.76 (12.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>45.69 (1.03)</td>
<td>395,577 (158,373)</td>
<td>242,130 (248,850)</td>
<td>11.65 (9.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>44.58 (9.00)</td>
<td>330,799 (106,061)</td>
<td>299,358 (308,803)</td>
<td>7.35 (6.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally similar</td>
<td>46.97 (10.31)</td>
<td>416,763 (194,458)</td>
<td>255,814 (283,346)</td>
<td>12.41 (10.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally dissimilar</td>
<td>44.68 (8.82)</td>
<td>324,027 (107,607)</td>
<td>301,433 (307,560)</td>
<td>7.24 (6.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ‘Nordic’ means all Nordic countries except Sweden, ‘Europe’ means all European countries except for the Nordic countries, and ‘World’ means all countries in the World except for countries in Europe. ‘Culturally similar’ includes all of Europe (except Sweden), North America, and Oceania, ‘Culturally dissimilar’ includes Africa, Asia, and South America. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

### Table 3. Demographic data on sex, marital status and educational level over ethnic groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Education level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>% women</td>
<td>% married</td>
<td>9 or less years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish-born</td>
<td>1625</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>42 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>52 %</td>
<td>54 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56 %</td>
<td>46 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>53 %</td>
<td>55 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>48 %</td>
<td>57 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally similar</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>53 %</td>
<td>51 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally dissimilar</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>49 %</td>
<td>60 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ‘Nordic’ means all Nordic countries except Sweden, ‘Europe’ means all European countries except for the Nordic countries, and ‘World’ means all countries in the World except for countries in Europe. ‘Culturally similar’ includes all of Europe (except Sweden), North America, and Oceania, ‘Culturally dissimilar’ includes Africa, Asia, and South America.
‘wrong’ direction, that is, the difference between foreign-born and Swedish-born points to a higher risk of bullying based only on the demographic variable in isolation, involves a higher percentage of the foreign-born with 9 or less years of education. However, the correlation with NAQ-R is not significant and a regression analysis showed no significant differences in NAQ-R score comparing lowest level of education to the rest, $F(2, 1844) = 1.15$, $p = .315$.

There were clear differences in prevalence both using the lower cut-off of NAQ-R at 33 (29% for foreign-born vs. 18% for Swedish-born, $\chi^2 = 20.5$, $p < .001$) and the higher cut-off at 45 (9% vs. 4%, $\chi^2 = 11.7$, $p = .008$). Testing our first hypothesis, using logistic regression and odds ratio for a clearer presentation, the risk of foreign-born being exposed to occasional bullying (NAQ-R ≥ 33) was more than two times, and the risk of being a victim of bullying (NAQ-R ≥ 45) was almost 2.5 times. For immigrants from a culturally dissimilar country the risk of being a victim of bullying was close to fourfold, which supports our second hypothesis. However, for those born in Europe (not counting the Nordic countries) the risk was lower for the lower cut-off and equal to the Swedish-born for the higher cut-off, so in total, the second hypothesis only got partial support. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4.

Testing our third hypothesis, looking at work-related and PRB separately revealed an interesting finding. Although having a somewhat higher percentage above the cut-off of 15 for workplace bullying (22% vs. 19%, not significant) the logistic regression showed no significant increased risk of being exposed for any of the foreign-born groups. However, for PRB the share of people over the cut-off (34% vs. 16%, $\chi^2 = 54.3$, $p < .001$) was more than double, and the logistic regression showed that for the immigrants, the risk of being exposed to PRB was three times higher than for the Swedish-born. For immigrants from a culturally dissimilar country

| Table 4. Logistic regression predicting bullying based on Negative Acts Questionnaire–Revised (NAQ-R) cut-offs. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| NAQ-R ≥ 33 | NAQ-R ≥ 45 |
| N | n | % | OR | CI 95% | p | n | OR | CI 95% | p |
| Swedish-born | 1625 | 250 | 18 % | 1 | base | 60 | 4 % | 1 | base |
| Foreign-born | 229 | 60 | 29 % | 2.13 | 1.49–3.04 | 17 | 9 % | 2.41 | 1.32–4.42 | .004 |
| Nordic | 47 | 13 | 30 % | 2.55 | 1.23–5.27 | 4 | 1 % | 3.71 | 1.14–12.10 | .030 |
| Europe | 99 | 24 | 26 % | 1.81 | 1.09–3.00 | 4 | 4 % | 1.06 | 0.35–3.19 | ns |
| World | 83 | 23 | 28 % | 2.33 | 1.35–4.04 | 4 | 9 % | 3.60 | 1.64–7.92 | .001 |
| Culturally similar | 152 | 39 | 28 % | 2.04 | 1.34–3.11 | 8 | 6 % | 1.57 | 0.69–3.56 | ns |
| Culturally dissimilar | 76 | 21 | 32 % | 2.27 | 1.28–4.02 | 9 | 15 % | 3.87 | 1.75–8.57 | .001 |

Note. ‘Nordic’ means all Nordic countries except Sweden, ‘Europe’ means all European countries except for the Nordic countries, and ‘World’ means all countries in the World except for countries in Europe. ‘Culturally similar’ includes all of Europe (except Sweden), North America, and Oceania, ‘Culturally dissimilar’ includes Africa, Asia, and South America. Cov.: income, city population, marital status, age, sex, education.
the risk was fourfold. As with the total NAQ-R score the risk of being exposed to PRB was lower for those born in Europe. Table 5 presents the results of the analyses.

Testing our fourth hypothesis, investigating self-labelled bullying, the results pointed in the same direction as when using negative acts to measure workplace bullying. In line with the hypothesis, the risk of self-labelling oneself as bullied was higher for immigrants compared to natives, and higher compared to the behavioural experience method (NAQ–R). There was a higher percentage of foreign-born labelling themselves as bullied at least now and then compared to the Swedish-born (15% vs. 6%, \( \chi^2 = 24.5, p < .001 \)). The same pattern as for the other measures of workplace bullying for those born in Europe was found also here and for this group there was even a lower percentage self-labelling as bullied compared to the Swedish-born. For the other immigrants the risk was about threefold. The results are presented in Table 6.

### Table 5. Logistic regression predicting work-related bullying (WRB) and person-related bullying (PRB).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WRB ≥15</th>
<th>PRB ≥15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish-born</td>
<td>1625</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally similar</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally dissimilar</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ‘Nordic’ means all Nordic countries except Sweden, ‘Europe’ means all European countries except for the Nordic countries, and ‘World’ means all countries in the World except for countries in Europe.
‘Culturally similar’ includes all of Europe (except Sweden), North America, and Oceania, ‘Culturally dissimilar’ includes Africa, Asia, and South America.
Cov.: income, city population, marital status, age, sex, education.

### Table 6. Logistic regression predicting bullying based on a definition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bullied by definition (at least Now &amp; Then)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish-born</td>
<td>1625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally similar</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally dissimilar</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ‘Nordic’ means all Nordic countries except Sweden, ‘Europe’ means all European countries except for the Nordic countries, and ‘World’ means all countries in the World except for countries in Europe.
‘Culturally similar’ includes all of Europe (except Sweden), North America, and Oceania, ‘Culturally dissimilar’ includes Africa, Asia, and South America.
Cov.: income, city population, marital status, age, sex, education.
Taken together, the foreign-born were more exposed to negative acts at work, and especially person-related negative acts. The respondents born in a culturally dissimilar country had the highest percentages over the cut-offs. Of them, the ones born in Asia were the most exposed. About 36% had an NAQ-R score above the cut-off at 33, and 18% were victims of workplace bullying (above the cut-off at 45). As with the other foreign-born there was no difference in prevalence for WRB, but almost half of the Asian-born had a score on person-related negative acts of 15 or above (compared to 1 in 5 for the Swedish-born). The odds ratio for the Asian-born on PRB was over fivefold that of the Swedish-born.

Although they were more exposed to bullying behaviours and above all to PRB behaviours, there were no differences in how the immigrants perceived their work and the working conditions. The foreign-born even perceived the roles in their organization as clearer than the Swedish-born ($p = .051$)—unclear roles otherwise known as a risk factor for bullying. Table 7 presents comparisons between Swedish-born and foreign-born for some work-related variables.

### Table 7. Experience of work and working conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Swedish-born ($n = 1620$)</th>
<th>Foreign-born ($n = 228$)</th>
<th>Adjusted Wald test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual work experience</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>5.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IWE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational conditions for work (OCW)</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>5.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles in the organization (RIM)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and efficiency (Q&amp;E)</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>4.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Job satisfaction (JJS)</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

The study investigated the risks of workplace bullying for foreign-born working in Sweden. The results clearly showed that merely being born in another country results in a doubled risk of being exposed to bullying behaviours. There are a number of possible explanations for this result. From a social identity perspective (e.g., Turner & Reynolds, 2012), an immigrant is a potential threat to the uniform social identity of the work group. Coming from another country could also mean that one,
perhaps not knowingly, breaks the norms of the group—something that has been connected to workplace bullying (Baillien et al., 2009). Aggressive responses to perceived threats to a salient group identity and possible norm-breaking could be seen as a form of social control (Felson, 1992). However, the perception of threats does not need to be grounded in actual facts: it can be based on stereotypes of immigrants. People tend to see what they expect to see, and by categorizing a person as an immigrant it is likely that people notice and highlight category-consistent behaviours—the normative fit in terms of SCT (Turner & Reynolds, 2012).

Compared to the results from the behavioural experience method (exposure to bullying behaviours), the risk was even higher when it comes to labelling one’s experience as bullying. Normally, when comparing results from measurements focussing on bullying behaviours, the behavioural experience method (without mentioning bullying), and self-labelling as bullied, the latter often indicates fewer victims of bullying (Nielsen et al., 2009). Here the greater risk was found for the self-labelling method. Experiencing and identifying as a victim of bullying is connected to feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness (Nielsen et al., 2020). As part of a minority, and in terms of social identity possibly also deviating from the prototype of the group (Hogg & Terry, 2000), an immigrant is more likely to have a lower social power. This is connected to a greater sensitivity to threats and a greater probability of interpreting ambiguous behaviours as negative (Keltner et al., 2003)—something that could mean that a wider array of behaviours are construed as bullying. There are also methodological aspects that might explain the greater risk of self-labelling for immigrants. When researchers define bullying, the definition often excludes discrimination and sexual harassment (Einarsen et al., 2020a; Lewis et al., 2020). For a respondent as a layman, the definition presented when answering a question about one’s own exposure does not include information about this—only that bullying occurs when one is subject to a negative treatment (systematic and hard to defend against). This could possibly make people who feel discriminated against include also these types of negative treatment when self-labelling as bullied. Although questions about gender differences were not part of the current study, similar reasoning could be made for women and sexual harassment. In her review, Salin (2018) found that a majority of studies showing women to be more exposed used the self-label method, whereas the behavioural experience method has typically been used in studies showing men to be more exposed. A similar result was found by Rosander et al. (2020). Lewis et al. (2020) described it as ‘a potential blurring of boundaries between discrimination and bullying’ (p. 364). The current results on self-labelling could thus be understood in terms of workplace bullying and different forms of
discrimination becoming mixed using self-labelling, while the behavioural experience method (in this study measured by the NAQ–R) shows a more comparable result with natives not coloured by discrimination based on ethnicity. This is not to say that discrimination based on ethnicity is not a serious problem, only that measures of workplace bullying may be more difficult to compare with a native population when asking a direct question about being bullied—both Hogh et al. (2011) and Bergbom et al. (2015) used a single question, self-labelling approach in their studies. Bergbom et al. also asked for exposure to a number of negative acts and here in line with the reasoning above, the risks were lower and only one of seven different negative acts showed a heightened risk compared to the natives. Our results indicate the self-labelling method might be less suitable when studying minorities, such as immigrants, if the focus is on exposure to bullying behaviours and not to overall exposure to a variety of negative treatments at work.

The distance from Sweden of the immigrants’ country of birth, and especially cultural distance, seems to be important in determining the risks of exposure to workplace bullying. The immigrants with origins in a country more dissimilar to Sweden have a three- or fourfold risk of exposure. Non-prototypicality seems to be an issue and our results support the ideas put forth by Ramsay et al. (2011) and Glambek et al. (2020). Bergbom et al. (2015) showed a dramatic increase in the risks based on cultural distance. The more salient the difference, the more likely one is to become a victim of bullying. In the current study we saw a clear increase using cultural distance, but as discussed above we base it on a different measure of bullying which in this context is more conservative, and probably a more pure measure of ‘general bullying’ in terms of how Fox and Stallworth (2005) framed it. A note is needed on the somewhat unexpected result that there were higher risks for bullying for those born in the Nordic countries than in the rest of Europe. Of the Nordic countries Finland stands out and there are almost twice as many immigrants from Finland as there are from the other Nordic countries in total. Swedish people also have a special relation to Finland, which was a part of Sweden from the thirteenth century up until 1809, and for many years was the country from which the overwhelming majority of foreign-born in Sweden came from—all countries included (Statistics Sweden, 2018). In 2017, Finland was demoted to second place by Syria, but as a comparison, 20 years ago there were four times as many Finnish-born in Sweden compared to the second most common immigrant country (then Iraq). Also, in Sweden there have been relatively widespread stereotypes about Finns, as heavy drinkers and violent, that possibly still linger (Ågren, 2016). The origin of the stereotypes can probably be traced back to the race biology of the
nineteenth century, where the Finns were described as less white and less developed than the Swedes (Laskar, 2017). This tendency to devalue citizens from certain neighbouring countries has also been found in other studies on mistreatment at work—for example, Krings et al. (2014) showed that German and French immigrants reported more exposure to incivility than other immigrants to Switzerland.

An important finding was that the foreign-born were only at higher risk to be exposed to PRB. The hypothesis was that the PRB would be greater than the WRB as previous studies on immigrants have indicated that social exclusion and more personalized forms of bullying were more common (Bergbom et al., 2015; Lewis & Gunn, 2007). However, we were surprised to find that for WRB there was no heightened risks at all, and no difference based on distance or cultural distance. On the other hand, the risk of PRB was threefold compared to native Swedes, and for those born in a country with dissimilar culture the risk was fourfold. This indicates an origin of bullying based on what Einarsen (1999) called predatory bullying, being excluded and ignored on the basis that one does not fit the idea of the typical Swede or non-prototypicality in terms of SCT (Hogg & Terry, 2000). It is not a different treatment regarding one’s work or the working conditions; one is excluded based on a salience of one’s appearance.

In the study by Bergbom et al. (2015), one reason for selecting only one organization for the study was that they did not want a systematic underlying difference in working conditions be the true reason for differences in bullying. In the current study we investigated a number of work-related factors to see if the natives and immigrants in the study perceived their respective working conditions differently. The results show practically no differences in how the organization and the working conditions were perceived; comparing natives with the foreign-born, no differences were found. Two factors were close to significant: role clarity, which indicated that foreign-born viewed roles as clearer, and joint job satisfaction, which indicated a somewhat lower satisfaction among the foreign-born. Role clarity is a work-related factor, and joint job satisfaction is more person-related, so both these are in line with the results about risks of bullying. For the other factors about the experience of work and working conditions, there were almost identical results comparing the two groups. So, the results on workplace bullying for foreign-born in Sweden do not seem to be an expression of some form of more general dissatisfaction with one’s work situation.

Our results showed an increased risk of bullying for people working in Sweden but born in another country. It is important to highlight this, but also to find ways to reduce the risk of bullying. Reducing the
risk of bullying in general has been addressed elsewhere (see e.g., Zapf & Vartia, 2020). In general, for example, role clarity, an orderly organization, and a supportive leadership are examples of factors that can reduce or prevent bullying from occurring (Blomberg & Rosander, 2020; Salin & Hoel, 2020). Reducing the overall level of bullying in an organization will most likely also improve the situations for immigrants, although there are also some ways to focus preventive actions specifically on immigrants. According to SCT, one way to reduce exclusion from the in-group and increase the level of inclusiveness is to provide possibilities for recategorization (Turner & Reynolds, 2012). This could be achieved by introducing a higher-order superordinate in-group. In an organizational context, this could mean making the whole organization more salient in comparison to the current work group or department—what defines ‘us’ as a company as opposed to ‘us’ as a work group. Similar reasoning was put forth by Escartín et al. (2013), where individual identification with one’s work group which could reduce the likelihood of being bullied.

**Strengths and limitations**

The study was based on a representative sample of the workforce in Sweden working at workplaces with ten or more employees. By 2017 there were 18.6% foreign-born in Sweden (Statistics Sweden, 2018) to be compared to 15.5% foreign-born in the sample, that is, people working in organizations with ten or more employees. The unemployment rate in Sweden for immigrants is higher than for Swedish-born, so a lower percentage was to be expected. A strength is that we not only have a simple random selection of the Swedish workforce, we also utilize population weights informed by eight variables taken from the Swedish population register. The response rate was somewhat lower than average for this kind of survey, but there seems to be a clear trend of declining response rates in recent years (Stedman et al., 2019). This means that the response rate of the current study may not deviate or deviate much from the current average. Also, it should have no impact on the internal validity (Schalm & Kelloway, 2001).

We use two different ways of assessing workplace bullying, a behavioural experience method and self-labelling based on a definition. This enabled us to both compare the two ways and to relate the results to other studies using only one of them. Also, the self-labelling method is probably diluted by ethnic discrimination, making it less suitable for comparisons to native born. McCord et al. (2018) showed that mistreatment at work based on ethnicity is many times greater than more general forms of mistreatment,
such as the negative acts measured by NAQ–R. Still we found a risk of exposure two to four times higher than those born in Sweden.

The study included foreign-born people and we had no way to know if they were sufficiently fluent in the Swedish language. As the questionnaire was in Swedish this could imply that differences found were in part due to language difficulties. However, as the majority of the variables focusing on the work and working conditions had almost identical results comparing those native Swedes and the foreign-born, it is probably not a question of language difficulties in the study. It is possible that a few foreign-born did not respond due to difficulties understanding Swedish. In our results there was a small, but significant negative correlation between PRB and level of education (which is probably related to the ability to understand Swedish), so we can assume that this data loss did not contribute to an overestimation of the problem, rather the opposite.

Another possible limitation is that we do not know if the label ‘foreign-born’ also means having parents that are foreign-born. It could be possible that a few of the foreign-born actually are not ethnically different from the majority in Sweden and were born outside of Sweden when their parents, for example, had temporary employment abroad. Further, we only know the country of birth and not if a participant is second-generation immigrant or if he or she feels part of an ethnic minority. However, both of these limitations have not exaggerated the results as it is possible that a few ethnic Swedes may be part of the foreign-born group, and people belonging to an ethnical minority in Sweden are very likely part of the group of Swedish-born in our data. Both of these probably reduce the differences found, and the risk could be even higher if we had been able to include second-generation immigrants who felt part of an ethnic minority. Also, we had no way of knowing if a respondent categorized as European was born in, for example, Ukraine, Russia, France or the UK. This means that the culturally similar may include people from cultures less similar to Sweden. Again, this may reduce the differences in risks, not exaggerate them.

Of interest for future research would be to collect information of the nationality of the respondents’ parents, in order to also include second generation immigrants when studying the risk of bullying, and to compare the risk faced by first- and second-generation immigrants. It would also be of interest to know the ethnicity of the bullies, to better understand the bullying process.

**Conclusions**

We can conclude that being born in another country has consequences for how one is treated at work, and the perception of mistreatment is not the result of a general dissatisfaction with one’s work situation. The
results indicate that foreign-born are being excluded and are not let in, in the same way as natives, in the social work environment. The risks of workplace bullying is only present when it comes to person-related negative acts such as social isolation and personal attacks, all indicating a predatory origin of the bullying behaviours. People exclude those whom they see as not fitting in, a salient outgroup that may be seen as a threat to the group or merely as an easy target when frustrated or under time pressure. The results show the importance of addressing these issues at work, as it severely affects each individual exposed to the negative treatment, but also probably the organization as a whole and the work group in which the negative treatment is occurring.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, MR, upon reasonable request.

**References**


StataCorp (2017). *Stata software (version 15.1).* http://www.stata.com


