Introduction

M. SANDY HERSHCOVIS AND NATHAN A. BOWLING

The need to establish healthy interpersonal relationships is a human universal (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). For workers, that need may be partially fulfilled through relationships with supervisors and coworkers. Indeed, supervisors and coworkers can be important sources of social support (Viswesvaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999) and friendship (Nielsen, Jex, & Adams, 2000). It is no surprise, therefore, that most workers derive satisfaction from the people with whom they work (Spector, 1997).

Other people at work, unfortunately, can also be a source of distress, such as when a supervisor, coworker, or customer subjects a worker to aggressive behavior. A growing body of research – much of which has been published since 2000 – has examined the potential causes and consequences of workplace aggression (for meta-analytic reviews, see Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Hershcovis et al., 2007). The goal of this book is to review, critically evaluate, and extend that research.

THE SCOPE OF OUR DEFINITION OF "WORKPLACE AGGRESSION"

We faced a critical decision when planning this book: The literature includes several conceptualizations of workplace aggression, so how inclusive should our treatment of the topic be? We have opted to use a broad definition of workplace aggression. Thus, we've included chapters examining the behavior of perpetrators (i.e., the "actor perspective") and chapters examining the responses of victims (i.e., the "target perspective"; for a discussion of the actor and target perspectives, see Fox & Spector, 2005). This book also addresses workplace aggression involving several types of perpetrators, including supervisors, coworkers, and customers. It also considers the

many labels that have appeared in the workplace aggression literature, such as "abusive supervision" (Tepper, 2000), "bullying" (Einarsen, 2000), "incivility" (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001), and "interpersonal conflict" (Spector & Jex, 1998), to name a few (for reviews, see Aquino & Thau, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011).

Although variety certainly exists in how researchers have conceptualized and measured workplace aggression, the constructs subsumed by our definition share a core theme: They each involve one or more perpetrators verbally or physically mistreating one or more victims within the context of the workplace. Thus, we define interpersonal workplace aggression as negative behavior perpetrated by one employee against another employee that targets are motivated to avoid. Unless otherwise stated, this definition applies across each of the chapters contained in this book. Although various types of aggression may differ in terms of intent, intensity, and frequency, we contend that most types share many of the same predictors and consequences. The current book thus examines *interpersonal* workplace aggression in its manifold forms.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS BOOK

Several excellent books have examined workplace aggression (e.g., Fox & Spector, 2005; Griffin & O'Leary-Kelly, 2004; Kelloway, Barling, & Hurrell, 2006). It was not our objective to repeat or update the content of these existing books; instead, our approach differs from these prior books in several important ways. First, we did not confine the book to a particular label or to different labels of workplace aggression. As noted earlier, we instead consider different types of aggression to have more similarities than differences, and with the exception of two chapters (Chapter 8 and 9) we apply the same broad definition of workplace aggression across the book. Second, while chapters in this book do review and update key content such as measurement (Chapter 1), predictors (Chapter 2), and outcomes (Chapter 3), and one chapter examines one relatively new construct (Chapter 8), the bulk of our book aims to contextualize workplace aggression. This unique emphasis contributes to our understanding of how third parties respond to aggression (Chapter 6), how aggression impacts other domains (Chapter 7), how identity and power influence the workplace aggression experience (Chapter 5), how culture comes into play (Chapter 10), and how the role of the victim (Chapter 9) and perpetrator (Chapter 4) are construed. Second, we charged our authors to push the field forward by taking a critical approach, being provocative, and by proposing new or expanded models

that raise novel research questions. Finally, we focus a section of our book on coping (Chapter 11) and prevention (Chapters 12 and 13), which, despite the abundance of research on the topic of workplace aggression, are topics that have been largely overlooked.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

This book is organized into three parts: Part I addresses the measurement, predictors, and consequences of workplace aggression; Part II addresses the social context of workplace aggression; and Part III addresses the prevention of workplace aggression. These are followed by a concluding chapter that critically evaluates some of the key themes in the preceding chapters and makes suggestions for future research directions.

Part I. In Chapter 1, Steve M. Jex and Alison M. Bayne discuss the assessment of workplace aggression. They address several measurement-related challenges, review commonly used workplace aggression scales, and offer suggestions for improving those scales.

In Chapter 2, Lisa M. Penney, Allison Martir, and Cody Bok review both theory and research concerning the work environment–workplace aggression relationship. They give particular attention to work stressors' (e.g., organizational constraints; exposure to interpersonal mistreatment) and psychological climate's relationships with enacted aggression.

In Chapter 3, Aaron O. Manier, Kevin Kelloway, and Lori Francis examine the consequences of workplace aggression for people and organizations. In particular, they examine the health, attitudinal, psychological, and behavioral outcomes of workplace aggression. In addition, this chapter considers some of the key moderators and mediators of aggression-outcome relationships.

Part II. In Chapter 4, Mark J. Martinko, Jeremy D. Mackey, Rebecca Michalak, and Neal M. Ashkanasy consider how characteristics of both perpetrators and targets might impact abusive supervision. Of particular note, their chapter considers the interaction effects of perpetrator characteristics and target characteristics, which takes a more relational approach to workplace aggression than is generally seen in the literature.

In Chapter 5, Lilia M. Cortina challenges the victim precipitation perspective. She discusses the history of victim precipitation research, which has roots in criminology (rape and homicide), and argues that this approach has been long discredited by criminologists, sociologists, and feminists. Cortina argues that the reemergence of the victim precipitation model in the workplace aggression literature is dangerous, as it places the focus on

what the victim should do to prevent workplace aggression, instead of what perpetrators and organizations should do. Cortina posits a new model – the perpetrator predation model – which places agency of workplace aggression back with the perpetrator.

In Chapter 6, Courtney L. McCluney and Lilia M. Cortina contextualize workplace aggression within a social structural framework. They argue that social identity and social structure are absent from much of the workplace aggression literature, despite their critical role. McCluney and Cortina first situate workplace aggression within a social structure characterized by power inequality; they then consider the methodological practices that obfuscate the importance of social location and power in research on workplace aggression. Finally, they describe some key research programs that focus on social identity and structure as examples of ways forward.

In Chapter 7, Manuela Priesemuth, Marie S. Mitchell, and Robert Folger review the literature on third-party reactions to workplace aggression. They define the nature of a third party, highlighting central theoretical perspectives used to examine third-party reactions, and proposing future directions for investigating third-party responses. Furthermore, they also examine how third parties react toward both perpetrators and targets, and consider both the positive and negative potential responses to each party of an aggressive interaction.

In Chapter 8, Merideth Thompson, Dawn Carlson, and Jenny Hoobler examine the social context more broadly by considering how workplace aggression can both spill over and cross over into other domains, with a particular focus on the family domain. They develop a dynamic process model that summarizes and extends existing research on spillover and crossover and considers key mechanisms and moderators that influence these relationships.

In Chapter 9, Sandra L. Robinson and Kira Schabram focus on one particular type of workplace aggression – workplace ostracism. They argue that ostracism is different from other forms of workplace aggression. Specifically, they suggest that ostracism is an act of commission instead of omission, that it is highly dependent on the norms of the social context in which it occurs, and that it has multiple motives. Robinson and Schabram also describe some of the key social outcomes of workplace ostracism, and they discuss why it is more impactful than other forms of aggression.

In Chapter 10, Xinxin Li and Sandy Lim consider cross-cultural differences in workplace aggression. Specifically, they argue that cross-cultural differences may exist in workplace aggression's (1) conceptualization and

measurement, (2) its causes, and (3) its consequences. This chapter is noteworthy, because most workplace aggression studies have been conducted within Western cultures.

Part III. In Chapter 11, Raymond T. Lee and Céleste M. Brotheridge draw from the transactional model of stress to develop a model of how targets cope with workplace aggression. Lee and Brotheridge identify attributions as a key mechanism that explains target coping responses; they also identify contextual factors at the individual and organizational level that influence coping choices. These factors, in turn, contribute to various health and behavioral outcomes of coping.

In Chapter 12, Paul R. Sackett and Oren R. Shewach discuss how personnel selection practices could be used to prevent workplace aggression. Their review suggests that several tests used to screen applicants – including measures of integrity, some Five Factor Model characteristics, and the Dark Triad characteristics – may be useful for identifying future perpetrators.

In Chapter 13, Michael Leiter, Emily Peck, and Anne Baccardax discuss organizational interventions as means of reducing workplace aggression. Their review focuses on both organization-initiated interventions (e.g., perpetrator-focused and target-focused training) as well legislative efforts to criminalize workplace aggression.

In the concluding chapter, Rima C. Tarraf, M. Sandy Hershcovis, and Nathan A. Bowling identify several key concerns that emerged from the previous chapters (e.g., measurement, theoretical approaches, and research methods). In doing so, they propose several ways forward to address some of these gaps.

REFERENCES

Aquino, K., & Thau, S. (2009). Workplace victimization: Aggression from the target's perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 717–741.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497–529.

Berry, C. M., Ones, D. S., & Sackett, P. R. (2007). Interpersonal deviance, organizational deviance, and their common correlates: A review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 410–424.

Bowling, N. A., & Beehr, T. A. (2006). Workplace harassment from the victim's perspective: A theoretical model and meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 998–1012.

Cortina, L. M., Magley, V. J., Williams, J. H., & Langhout, R. D. (2001). Incivility in the workplace: Incidence and impact. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 6, 64–80.

Einarsen, S. (2000). Harassment and bullying at work: A review of the Scandinavian approach. *Aggression and Violent Behavior: A Review Journal*, 5, 371–401.

Fox, S., & Spector, P. E. (2005). *Counterproductive workplace behavior: Investigations of actors and targets*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Griffin, R. W., & O'Leary-Kelly, A. M. (2004). An introduction to the dark side. In R. W. Griffin & A. M. O'Leary-Kelly (Eds.), *The dark side of organizational behavior* (pp. 1–19). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Hershcovis, M. S. (2011). "Incivility, social undermining, bullying … oh my!": A call to reconcile constructs within workplace aggression research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32, 499–519.

Hershcovis, M. S., & Barling, J. (2010). Towards a multi-foci approach to workplace aggression: A meta-analytic review of outcomes from different perpetrators. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31, 24–44.

Hershcovis, M. S., Turner, N., Barling, J., Arnold, K. A., Dupré, K. E., Inness, M. LeBlanc, M. M., &. Sivanathan, N. (2007). Predicting workplace aggression: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 228–238.

Kelloway, E. K., Barling, J., & Hurrell, J. J. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook of workplace violence*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Nielsen, I. K., Jex, S. M., & Adams, G. A. (2000). Development and validation of scores on a two-dimensional workplace friendship scale. *Educational and Psychology Measurement*, 60, 628–643.

Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction: Applications, assessment, causes and consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Spector, P. E., & Jex, S. M. (1998). Development of four self-report measures of job stressors and strain: Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale, Organizational Constraints Scale, Quantitative Workload Inventory, and Physical Symptoms Inventory. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 3, 356–367.

Tepper, B. J. (2000). Consequences of abusive supervision. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 178–190.

Viswesvaran, C., Sanchez, J. I., & Fisher, J. (1999). The role of social support in the process of work stress: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54, 314–334.

PART I

THE MEASUREMENT, PREDICTORS, AND CONSEQUENCES OF WORKPLACE AGGRESSION

1

Measurement of Workplace Aggression

STEVE M. JEX AND ALISON M. BAYNE

Interpersonal mistreatment is a broad term that has been used to describe a myriad of negative employee behaviors within organizations that are harmful to employees, as well as to organizations as a whole (Cortina & Magley, 2003). Under this general umbrella of interpersonal mistreatment there are a number of constructs such as workplace incivility, workplace bullying, interpersonal conflict, social undermining, workplace deviance, and counterproductive work behavior. One of the biggest challenges for the interpersonal mistreatment literature has been to somehow distinguish these related constructs in a meaningful way; that is, at both *conceptual* and *operational* levels (see Hershcovis, 2011).

The most common ways of distinguishing among these forms of interpersonal mistreatment have been to look at differences in *severity* as well as *intent to harm*. If we use these two dimensions to distinguish different forms of interpersonal mistreatment, what emerges is an important sub-construct that most researchers have labeled *workplace aggression*. Specifically, workplace aggression represents forms of interpersonal mistreatment that are (1) relatively severe, and (2) where there is a clear intent on the part of the perpetrator to harm the victim of such behaviors.

This chapter examines and critiques five of the most frequently used measures of workplace aggression. These include the Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale (Spector & Jex, 1998; 884 citations in the previous decade), Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (Spector, Fox, Penney, Bruursema, Goh, & Kessler, 2006; 436 citations since publication), Workplace Deviance Scale (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; 1,200 citations in the previous decade), Negative Acts Questionnaire – Revised (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthieson, & Hellsey, 1994; 390 citations since 2009 publication), and the Social Undermining Scale (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; 595 citations in the previous decade).

If we apply the previously mentioned criteria of severity and intent, all of the aforementioned constructs would qualify as forms of workplace aggression – the one exception would be workplace incivility. This is because most forms of incivility (e.g., failing to return a phone call) are rather mild, and the intent behind uncivil behavior is often ambiguous. It is also worth noting that while three of the measures included in this review (the ICAWS, the NAQ, and the Social Undermining Scale) exclusively address workplace aggression, the other two scales (the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist and the Workplace Deviance Scale) assess workplace aggression in addition to other content, best described as counterproductive work behavior directed at the organization (e.g., tardiness, stealing supplies, etc.).

The focus of this chapter is to review and critique measures of the major forms of workplace aggression that are being studied by occupational health researchers. We chose to focus this review and critique on workplace aggression because there have been previous reviews that have focused on the measurement of workplace incivility (e.g., Jex, Burnfield-Geimer, Clark, Guidroz, & Yugo, 2010), and there have been few attempts to critique specific measures of any form of interpersonal mistreatment. We begin the chapter with a brief discussion of the general challenges associated with measuring workplace aggression, regardless of the specific measure used. We then focus specifically on five commonly used measures, and then discuss the problems that we identify as being common to all five of these measures. We conclude the chapter with some general suggestions to improve the measurement of workplace aggression.

THE CHALLENGES OF MEASURING WORKPLACE AGGRESSION

Regardless of the specific instrument used, measuring workplace aggression can be a challenging endeavor for researchers. One of the major reasons for this is the nature of the construct itself. Like many constructs in the organizational sciences, workplace aggression is largely subjective. In addition, as stated in the preceding section, one of the defining characteristics of workplace aggression is a clear intent to harm on the part of the person perpetrating the aggression. The concept of intent to harm is relatively clear, yet in practice, unfortunately, this is rather difficult to demonstrate. The reality is that the only person who knows whether or not harm is intended is the person who is perpetrating the aggression.

Another major challenge in measuring workplace aggression, and most other forms of interpersonal mistreatment for that matter, is that

respondents are often asked to recall behaviors that may have occurred several months or, in some cases, even more than a year ago. Long time frames are often used out of necessity, since base rates for many forms of workplace aggression are low. Nevertheless, respondents may have considerable difficulty remembering instances of workplace aggression that have occurred several months or years in the past.

A third major challenge in measuring workplace aggression is that some forms of workplace aggression are not observable to victims, and thus if measurement is done from the victim perspective (which is quite common), the level of workplace aggression would be underestimated. For example, it is quite possible for social undermining (Duffy et al., 2002) to occur without the victim of undermining being present or aware that he or she is being undermined. The same can be said for many forms of Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB) such as theft, sabotage, or a fellow employee deliberately refusing to provide help (Spector et al., 2006).

A final challenge in measuring workplace aggression, as with all forms of interpersonal mistreatment, is that it can be measured from multiple perspectives. As stated earlier, the most common perspective used in measuring workplace aggression has been the victim (Duffy et al., 2002; Einarsen et al., 2009). An example item assessing interpersonal mistreatment from the victim's perspective might ask how frequently a person has been shouted at in the previous six months (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009). However, there are some forms of workplace aggression, most notably CWB, that are typically measured from the perpetrator perspective (Spector et al., 2006). An example item from the perpetrator perspective might ask whether a person has played a mean joke or prank on a coworker (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). In recent years there has also been some effort to measure mistreatment from the perspective of those who *observe* such behaviors being perpetrated within their organization. Such measurement might entail asking people about their reactions toward instigators and targets in an observed instance of mistreatment (e.g., Reich & Hershcovis, 2015).

What makes these multiple perspectives somewhat problematic, at least from a measurement perspective, is that very little workplace aggression research has attempted to triangulate measures from these different perspectives. One exception is in the area of CWB where it has been shown, via meta-analysis, that self-reports converge well with measures from other data sources such as supervisors or coworkers (Berry, Carpenter, & Barratt, 2012). Conversely, Spector, Dwyer, and Jex (1988) found relatively modest convergence (r = .30) between incumbent reports of the level of interpersonal conflict in their jobs and supervisor reports of incumbent