

What Were They Thinking? A Meaning-Making Model of Workplace Incivility from the
Target's Perspective

by

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Abstract

I introduce the Meaning-Making Model of Incivility (MMI), which applies fundamental social, organizational, and cognitive psychological theories to illuminate the process through which incivility – a low-level form of interpersonal mistreatment with ambiguous intent to harm – is able to undermine employees. Studies demonstrating workplace incivility’s negative implications for employee well-being are replete, but it is not clear how a low-intensity form of deviance can significantly harm employees. I propose that concepts from the stress and coping literature, particularly cognitive appraisal, explain how these low-intensity social interactions affect targets’ well-being. Using two surveys of working adults, I demonstrate that targets form harm and even challenge (i.e., learning opportunity) appraisals of their uncivil experiences. Targets’ perceptions of their perpetrators’ goals (rooted in attribution theory) predict cognitive appraisal, making them integral to this meaning-making process.

In Study 1, data from a sample of women ($n = 419$) employed across diverse occupations confirms my hypothesis that the more incivility targets appraise their experiences as harmful, the worse their occupational outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction). Further, targets form more severe harm appraisals when they believe their perpetrators wielded intent and control in behaving uncivilly.

Study 2, consisting of a U.S. sample of men and women ($n = 479$) across occupations, confirms the findings from Study 1 and expands them by examining

whether targets ever form challenge (i.e., learning, growth) appraisals of uncivil encounters. Consistent with the posttraumatic growth literature, Study 2 results support my hypothesis that they do. Incivility targets who adopt challenge appraisals experience *improvements* in their organizational outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, thriving at work). Further, targets are more likely to appraise incivility as challenging when they perceive their perpetrators' behavior as unintentional.

I supplement this empirical work with a theoretically-oriented discussion of additional constructs that may play significant roles in the model: target individual differences, macro-level outcomes, and regional and organizational contexts. My theoretical propositions and empirical findings advance our understanding of workplace incivility's impact by incorporating fundamental psychosocial theories to illuminate targets' meaning-making of this insidious form of mistreatment.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Subtle yet insidious, workplace incivility has grabbed the attention of scholars within the last decade. The psychology and organizational behavior literatures are replete with studies demonstrating this interpersonal mistreatment's negative implications for employee well-being (e.g., Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001; Porath & Erez, 2007, 2009), yet few scholars have attempted to unearth the precise pathways through which incivility undermines employees and their organizations. In this dissertation, I integrate social, organizational, and personality psychological theories to create a model of incivility's impact on targeted individuals, coined the Meaning-Making Model of Incivility (MMI). Specifically, I situate cognitive appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) as a pathway at the heart of the model. Through appraisal, targets make meaning of events; the most anticipated form of appraisal with regard to incivility may be negative, given that incivility can harm or threaten targets. But in addition to this *harm appraisal*, I investigate whether targets can make *challenge appraisals* (i.e., opportunities for growth) for incivility. Stress experts discuss the formation of challenge appraisals for even serious medical conditions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984); this work raises important questions with regard to targets' meaning-making of incivility: Can incivility ever be perceived as a learning opportunity? Can incivility have positive outcomes?

In addition to investigating harm and challenge appraisals, I also discuss the predictive impact of targets' perceptions of perpetrator intent and control (rooted in causal attribution theory) on appraisal. The incivility literature often discusses – but rarely measures – perpetrator intent to harm. Capturing targets' beliefs about perpetrator intent and control will be critical aspects of their meaning-making process, influencing the appraisals they adopt. Overall, the MMI illuminates the process through which subtle, ambiguous social interactions at work affect targeted employees.

To empirically test portions of the model, I use data from two large-scale surveys of full-time working adults. In the first study, 419 women employed in Michigan responded to a mail survey that contained measures of workplace incivility, harmful cognitive appraisal, perpetrator intentionality and controllability, and job satisfaction. Using these data, I analyze the relationship between targets' harm appraisals of workplace incivility – as predicted by their beliefs about perpetrator control and intent – and their job satisfaction. I supplement this study with a nation-wide survey of 479 adults. This survey contains similar measures as Study 1 in order to cross-validate findings; it also extends those findings by including challenge appraisal, a more detailed measure of perpetrator intent, and a measure of thriving at work (in addition to job satisfaction) as an outcome. Specifically, I test in this second survey whether targets appraise incivility as challenging and, if so, whether this unexplored appraisal relates to more positive outcomes. To conclude, I propose future research projects for testing the MMI and offer practical and theoretical implications.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Model

Workplace incivility, a relatively new topic within interpersonal mistreatment research, has been found to be one of the most prevalent types of antisocial behavior in organizational environments (Cortina, 2008; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000). Upwards of 60% of employees from a broad range of employment settings annually report experiencing this form of workplace deviance (Cortina, 2008; Pearson et al., 2000). Though similar to other forms of antisocial work behavior (e.g., aggression, bullying), workplace incivility is a low-level form of deviance in which workplace norms for respect are violated (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al., 2001). “Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). This behavior can erode empathy and healthy relationships at work (Pearson et al., 2000).

A hallmark of incivility is that its intent to harm is ambiguous to at least one of the parties involved: victims, perpetrators, or observers (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Did a co-worker ignore you because he dislikes you or because he accidentally overlooked you? Did your supervisor question your judgment over a topic on which you are an expert because she doesn't respect you or because she is trying to promote creativity? Most employees experience this ambiguous but bothersome treatment at some point during their careers (Pearson et al., 2000).

Why is workplace incivility critical to examine if it is not overtly severe in nature, like workplace harassment or violence? Despite its low intensity, incivility can become a chronic feature of organizations' climates, constituting a daily stressor for employees. Experiencing daily stressors leads to numerous harmful consequences, such as negative mood, depression, fatigue, and physical ailments (e.g., flu, headaches, back pain) (DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1982; DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988; Jandorf, Deblinger, Neale, & Stone, 1986; R. Lazarus, 1999; McGonagle & Kessler, 1990). Daily stressors are actually stronger predictors of individuals' physical and psychological well-being than major negative events or daily, positive events (DeLongis et al., 1982; Jandorf et al., 1986; McGonagle & Kessler, 1990).

More specifically, workplace incivility has been linked to numerous negative work-related, mental health, and physical outcomes (Cortina, 2008; Cortina et al., 2001). Work-related outcomes of incivility include job dissatisfaction, lower job commitment, and higher job stress, burnout, and turnover, while psychological outcomes include negative mood, cognitive distraction, perceived injustice, damaged social identity, anxiety, and even depression (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Barling et al., 1996; Barling, Rogers, & Kelloway, 2001; Cortina et al., 2001).

Although studies have documented workplace incivility's detrimental consequences, the mechanisms through which incivility undermines employee well-being have received less attention. In particular, the roles of cognitive appraisal and perceived intentionality of uncivil behavior deserve further research. Revisiting its definition, workplace incivility is "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999,

p. 457). Determinations of whether behavior violates norms of respect, as well as whether it contains intent to harm, are subjective in nature. Previous literature has highlighted subjective perceptions as an important aspect of incivility (Cortina & Magley, 2009). Interpreting another's behavior as disrespectful may drive the negative outcomes associated with incivility (Lim & Cortina, 2005). These personal judgments inherent in incivility give rise to my key questions: how do cognitive appraisal and perceived perpetrator intent and control play roles in labeling behavior as uncivil? How do these judgments relate to target wellbeing?

In this paper, I develop a model of the mechanisms involved in the relationship between workplace incivility and target well-being, termed the Meaning-Making Model of Incivility (MMI). First, I build on literature on the cognitive appraisal of incivility (Cortina & Magley, 2009), detailing appraisal as a central mechanism through which target's experiences of incivility relate to work-related and psychological outcomes. Rooted in classic theories of stress and coping (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), this aspect of my model suggests that targets can appraise uncivil incidents as harmful or even challenging (i.e., an opportunity to grow). Which of these primary appraisals is adopted poses important consequences for targets' well-being. Next, I incorporate concepts from attribution theory by theorizing about the integral role of perceived perpetrator intent and control in targets' meaning-making processes. Whether targets believe perpetrators intended to behave uncivilly should serve as a key predictor of the appraisals they adopt.

In the discussion section, I expand the Meaning-Making Model of Incivility by theorizing about the roles of other constructs in the model. First, I discuss the MMI's relation to secondary appraisal, during which targets assess potential coping strategies.

Targets' primary appraisals have important implications for their assessments and execution of coping strategies, subsequently influencing their well-being. I then discuss the role that target personality may play in their appraisals of incivility. Much variation exists in people's appraisals of the same stressful events, and individual traits help explain these disparities. Next, I propose that employee well-being mediates incivility's effect on organizations. That is, incivility takes a negative toll on organizations primarily through its effect on individual employees. Further, I purport a reciprocal loop between organizations' and employees' outcomes (i.e., they can compound one another over time) and a feedback loop between organizations' outcomes and the occurrence of future workplace incivility (i.e., organizations can promote or hinder further incivility). Finally, I mention contextual factors (e.g., regional and national culture) as important boundary conditions for the MMI. The contexts in which targets experience incivility will shape their understandings and interpretations of these incidents.

Overall, this theoretical model of workplace incivility advances our understanding of the mechanisms through which incivility undermines employees and their organizations. I provide practical suggestions for organizations to combat and for employees to cope with incivility and propose directions for future research on workplace mistreatment.

Defining Workplace Incivility

The first noteworthy characteristic of workplace incivility is its breach of norms of respect within an organization (Pearson et al., 2001), or violations of the "web of moral understandings and commitments that tie people together" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). When uncivil incidents occur, targeted employees do

not all interpret them the same way. Although foundational norms for respectful interactions exist in organizations (Hartman, 1996), individual employees have differing (even if only slightly) understandings of these interpersonal norms and what types of behavior violate them. Even formal institutional practices can be subject to numerous interpretations, particularly when standards are ambiguous (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). A behavior such as “stood impatiently over your desk” may be an egregious breach of norms in one organizational setting but fairly typical in another. When targets (or witnesses) perceive behavior as violating norms of cooperation and mutual understanding, the conduct signifies incivility.

The second critical characteristic of workplace incivility is its ambiguous intent to harm. Unlike mistreatment such as violence, bullying, or social undermining, incivility does not always contain an overt intent to harm. Did a coworker verbally snap at you because he dislikes you or because his day has been stressful? Perpetrators may commit incivility for numerous reasons: to benefit themselves or to harm targets, teams, or organizations. Or, perpetrators may not have any goal in mind and may commit incivility due to social unawareness (Pearson et al., 2001). To constitute incivility, intent must be ambiguous to at least one party involved: the target, the perpetrator, or an observer. In this work, I focus on the target’s perspective.

Objective aspects of the behavior, such as the frequency and variety of behaviors involved, also affect determinations of whether an encounter constitutes incivility (Cortina & Magley, 2009). The more frequently a potentially uncivil behavior occurs and the greater variety of behaviors involved, the more opportunities exist for targets to recognize the breach of norms and deem it stressful (Cortina & Magley, 2009). The

duration of a behavior (i.e., the period of time one incident lasts) has also been proposed to affect employees' appraisals of misconduct (e.g., sexual harassment; Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997), such that longer-lasting experiences will be appraised more negatively. While duration may affect individuals' appraisals of other types of deviance, the duration of uncivil encounters has not been found to affect employees' appraisals of incivility (Cortina & Magley, 2009).

An employee can appraise an encounter in a number of ways (e.g., as malicious or even challenging). Experiences of all stressful events, from frequent but minor transgressions to more severe antisocial behavior like sexual harassment, are affected by subjective criteria (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). As noted by Simon (1995), "Individual perception determines reality for the victim" (p. 51). Understanding how targets cognitively appraise the nature of uncivil work experiences is critical for predicting their well-being. In the next section, I review stress and coping theory to explain targets' cognitive appraisals of incivility.

Cognitive Appraisal of Workplace Incivility

To uncover the impact of workplace incivility on employees, one must understand how individuals appraise these breaches of respect. What was the underlying nature of the mistreatment? Appraisal is a universal process through which people evaluate the implications of events for their well-being (R. Lazarus, 1993b; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The same stressful situations can be evaluated differently between people. One employee may appraise an encounter as offensive, while another may find it mildly annoying. I theorize that cognitive appraisal mediates the relationship between workplace incivility and targets' personal outcomes.

My model is rooted in the historic and empirically-based Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which states that individuals' experiences of stress are affected by the interaction of the person and his/her environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress is the result of an individual's subjective evaluation of a stressor, including his/her perceived resources and opportunities for effective coping. In other words, individuals experience stress not simply due to exposure to objective environmental conditions but also due to their appraisals of these experiences. "Cognitive appraisal can be most readily understood as the process of categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being. ...it is largely *evaluative* [emphasis original] focused on meaning or significance, and takes place continuously during waking life" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 31).

Appraisal addresses the question "what is the nature of this violation of norms?" and provides meaning to a situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Spell & Arnold, 2007). Based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory, targets can appraise events in a number of ways, including: *irrelevant*, meaning not influential or applicable; *harmful* or *threatening*, meaning the event has caused harm or loss or threatens future harm; *challenging*, meaning posing a growth or learning opportunity. These appraisals are not mutually exclusive, and targets may adopt more than one appraisal at a time (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example, employees may find an event to be simultaneously harmful and challenging. They can believe an event has harmed them but that it may also benefit them in the future. Though not the focus of this paper, incivility witnesses and perpetrators also adopt appraisals when assessing the nature of uncivil incidents. An

uncivil coworker may evaluate his behavior as challenging, while a nearby witness may assess the behavior as threatening to herself or the target.

When applying cognitive appraisal theory to investigations of stressful events, scholars tend to focus on negative appraisals – how stressors cause harm or threaten to do so. That is, researchers most commonly (and perhaps logically) study harm appraisals following people’s experiences of mistreatment, illness, and loved ones’ deaths. As will be discussed in the subsequent section, harm appraisals result in many detrimental physiological and psychological outcomes. As such, harm appraisals may play a central role in workplace incivility’s ability to undermine employees.

More recently, scholars have begun considering more positive – challenging – appraisals of stressful events. Some stressors assumed to be negative can in fact be (and often are) assessed as important learning and growth opportunities. Selye (1976) mentioned this idea in his pioneering work by differentiating between distress (i.e., stress that is negative, unwanted) and eustress (i.e., stress that fosters growth, development, and motivation). Hobfoll (1989) echoed this perspective, stating that everyday stressors are often not clearly positive or negative, and as such, are subject to personal appraisal. He provided an example in corporate takeovers, which may be assessed in terms of what can be gained (e.g., rise in executive ranks) or lost (e.g., job layoffs). Because workplace incivility is low-intensity and contains ambiguous intent, target appraisals are likely to range from harmful to challenging.

Discussion of challenge appraisals has, perhaps surprisingly, centered on major life events. For instance, Folkman and colleagues have repeatedly demonstrated that caregivers of partners with AIDS experience positive appraisals both before and after the

deaths of their partners (Moskowitz, Folkman, & Acree, 2003; Stein, Folkman, Trabasso, & Richards, 1997). These caregivers do experience negative psychological states greater than the general population, but their positive states often remain similar to non-bereaving individuals (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000b). Challenge appraisals also occur following heart attacks (Affleck, Tennen, & Croog, 1987), student bullying (Matsunaga, 2011), war, captivity, divorce, rescue work, chronic physical illnesses, and terminal cancer diagnoses (Schaefer & Moos, 1998). Overall, challenge appraisals, even during serious life events, occur with surprising frequency (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000a; Schaefer & Moos, 1998).

Challenge appraisals may occur during seemingly negative events for a number of reasons. According to conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), people strive to accumulate and protect their resources (e.g., social, psychological, physical). While some individuals will perceive a stressor as a threat from which they must protect their resources, others may assess the stressor as a challenge through which they can gain resources. Individuals' differing perspectives toward conservation of resources may explain how they can appraise similar stressors as harmful or challenging. Challenge appraisals may also be adaptive by providing a psychological reprieve, fostering successful coping strategies, preventing negative thoughts associated with depression, buffering physiological stress reactions, infusing positive meaning into experiences, and, as supported by conservation of resources theory, replenishing resources (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000a). Thus, many explanations exist for the emergence of challenge appraisals of stressful events, despite their seeming unlikelihood.

While research on positive appraisals of chronic life conditions is increasingly prevalent, discussion of challenge appraisals of organizational events is limited. One exception is the two-dimensional stressor framework by LePine, Podsakoff, and LePine (2005). This empirically-based framework classifies organizational stressors into hindrance or challenge classifications. Hindrance stressors obstruct performance, retention, and worker well-being. Examples include role ambiguity, organizational politics, and job security (LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007). Challenge stressors, on the other hand, foster positive worker outcomes (e.g., loyalty) and include factors such as high workload, time pressure, breadth of job scope, and greater job responsibility (Boswell, Olson-Buchanan, & LePine, 2004).

The two-dimensional stressor framework advances our understanding of work stress by expanding the rote view that stress is assessed as uniformly negative. Rather, some stressors offer employees learning opportunities, ultimately improving their performance and well-being. The MMI builds on this perspective by proposing that variance exists in targets' assessments of uncivil behavior; some targets may find uncivil acts to be hindrances – what I refer to as *harm* appraisals, while others may find them to be developmental and learning opportunities – what I refer to as *challenge* appraisals. Which of these appraisals an incivility target adopts should pose consequences for his/her work-related outcomes (discussed more below).

However, unlike the two-dimensional stressor framework in which researchers categorize each work event as either a hindrance or challenge, I contend that each *individual* determines whether an event is harmful or challenging. Appraisals of the same event vary across employees. This variance complicates linking particular work

conditions to strains (Cummings & Cooper, 1998). Researcher-defined work stressors oversimplify consideration of environmental stressors, “remov[ing] the subject’s appraisal from the assessment...” (p. 154; Spector, 1998; Briner, Harris, & Daniels, 2004). As Spector (1998) contends, “[m]any job stressors involve rather abstract concepts... which are not easily assessed with methods other than human judgment” (p. 154). Moreover, as many scholars note (e.g., Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000a; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), people often derive *both* harm and challenge appraisals for the same events; assignment of *either* harm or challenge appraisals to stressful events creates a one-dimensional scenario that does not adequately reflect reality. Targets each form unique meanings of events, which can include multiple appraisals. In this work, I capture that variance, investigating both harm and challenge appraisals of incivility, from the target’s perspective.

Drawing from stress and coping literature – traditional perspectives on stress appraisal, as well as more modern posttraumatic growth theory – I propose that targets of workplace incivility engage in cognitive appraisal to assess the natures of these encounters (see Figure 1). Incivility targets likely form harm appraisals with great frequency, though they may also report challenge appraisals.

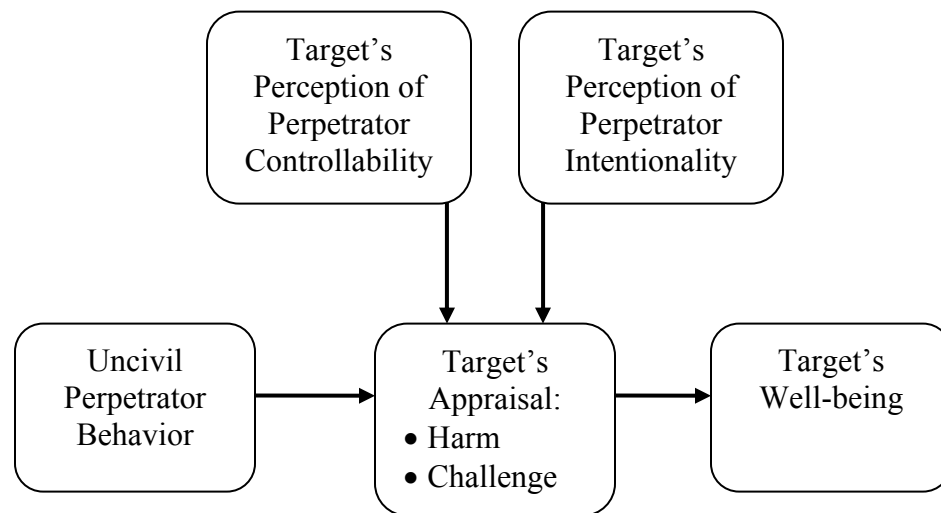
The more uncivil events targets encounter, the more opportunities they have to form harm or challenge appraisals. Previous work suggests that greater mistreatment frequency is linked to greater stress appraisals (Barling et al., 1996; Cortina & Magley, 2009). At the same time, individuals appear to increasingly convert stressful events into challenges as they experience more ordeals (Finkel, 1975).

Given this literature, I begin by hypothesizing that:

Hypothesis 1: Targets will report more harm appraisals as they experience more incivility.

Hypothesis 2: Targets will report more challenge appraisals as they experience more incivility.

Figure 2.1. Meaning-Making Model of Incivility



The Relationship between Appraisal and Targets' Outcomes

Seemingly negative events do not lead to predictable, inevitable outcomes for targets (Lazarus & Eriksen, 1952). Employees continually evaluate stressful situations in a variety of ways, and differential appraisals result in different outcomes (Smith & Dust, 2006).

Harm and threat appraisals are typically most damaging. They increase negative emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and anger (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Ohbuchi et al.,

2006). Harm and threat appraisals adversely affect attitudinal (e.g., interpersonal dissatisfaction) and occupational (e.g., turnover intentions, task-related stress) outcomes (Barling et al., 1996; Sinclair, Martin, & Croll, 2002; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey, & Leitten, 1993). Much work has also demonstrated threat appraisal's toll on physical health (e.g., headaches, sleep and gastric problems, upper respiratory infections) (Barling et al., 1996). Catecholamine levels increase, preparing individuals to "fight or flight" by increasing heart rate, sweat, blood pressure, tremors, and blood glucose (Ennis, Kelly, Wingo, & Lambert, 2001). Vascular reactivity (or vasoconstriction) also occurs, decreasing blood flow to tissues (Tomaka et al., 1993). It should be noted that researchers have demonstrated that appraisal precedes physiological responses, contrary to theories that appraisal may result from physical arousal (Tomaka, Blascovich, Kibler, & Ernst, 1997). Finally, negative appraisals utilize more mental resources than other appraisals, causing greater strain and urgency in developing successful coping methods (Koeske & Koeske, 1993). Subsequently, one's choice in coping strategies may not be optimal and may even result in negative implications. Thus, the more strongly targets of workplace incivility appraise their experiences as harmful, the worse outcomes they should demonstrate.

Conversely, challenge appraisals are associated with improved psychological, physical, and social functioning – the opposite of most outcomes just described. Specifically, challenge appraisals increase morale (Stein et al., 1997; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and decrease anxiety (Ennis et al., 2001) and depression (Mak, Blewitt, & Heaven, 2004). People who use negative events as growth opportunities develop greater self-reliance, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-image (Aldwin & Sutton, 1998;

Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). Behaviorally, they exhibit greater perceived and actual performance (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Tomaka et al., 1993), fewer performance detriments following stereotype threat (Berjot, Roland-Levy, & Girault-Lidvan, 2011), higher daily creativity and proactive behavior at work (Ohly & Fritz, 2010), and greater innovation and initiative at work (Fay, Sonnentag, & Frese, 1998). Physically, challenge appraisals result in fewer somatic problems and increased well-being in patients with existing illnesses (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2003; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Heart attack survivors who appraise their experiences as challenges are less likely to experience reinfarctions or die within eight years of their first attack (Affleck et al., 1987).

Several processes may link challenge appraisals to these positive outcomes. First, challenge appraisal may foster more effective forms of coping. Challenge appraisals increase motivation and perceived self-control and predictability (Affleck et al., 1987; Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger, 1995). They indicate that something can be done to improve environmental conditions. These perceptions could facilitate the goal-directed and problem-focused coping that typically follow challenge appraisals (Aldwin & Sutton, 1998; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000a). Second, challenge appraisals likely influence physiology differently than harm appraisals. “Higher-order” brain regions may communicate appraisals via neural activity to more basic regions (e.g., hypothalamus) that are responsible for triggering physiological responses to stress (Wainwright & Calnan, 2002). When cognitive appraisals imply harm or negativity, the limbic system may “overhear” these assessments and release stress hormones (e.g., cortisol) that increase blood pressure, inflammation, and immune reactions; when cognitive appraisals imply safety, security, or positivity, the limbic system should not release stress hormones.

Applied to the present study, the more targets appraise workplace incivility experiences as challenges and the less they appraise these experiences as harms, the better their outcomes – psychological or physical – should be.

To provide an example, if an employee receives a harsh critique from her supervisor, she may evaluate the incident as challenging, believing the critique will improve her performance. Her challenge appraisal may foster coping mechanisms through which she uses the feedback to actively develop her skills. Because this employee appraised her supervisor's incivility as a learning opportunity and executed presumably effective coping, she is likely to later report good psychological and occupational health. Conversely, an employee could appraise the uncivil incident as harmful. Subsequently, she may decide the only coping behavior she can successfully execute is to ignore the mistreatment and suppress negative feelings. This style of coping is likely to result in poorer psychological and work-related well-being for the target.

In a related literature, organizational justice researchers have discussed appraisal in relation to employees' perceptions of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. For example, Judge and Colquitt (2004) found that interpersonal and procedural injustices are associated with the greatest increases in stress, compared to other types of injustice. Greenberg (2004) theorized about the application of cognitive appraisal to injustice and provided practical solutions for executives to address employees' perceptions of fairness.

The MMI differs from and advances justice-based discussions of appraisal in several ways. First, organizational justice typically refers to (and is operationalized as) fairness regarding formal work-related procedures and allocation of resources. As such,

studies of justice are often top-down in nature, assessing subordinates' perceptions of their supervisors' or overall companies' behavior. In contrast, workplace incivility refers to low-intensity, person-directed mistreatment during any type of interpersonal workplace interaction between any individuals (including customers). It captures employees' everyday social experiences – with and without regard to formal or management-related procedures. Second, appraisal is particularly pertinent to the study of workplace incivility due to its low-intensity and ambiguous nature. Individuals form greater variance in their perceptions the more subtle behavior is (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996; R. Lazarus, 1999), and ultimately, they display greater variance in their outcomes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Although only speculation, incivility may elicit more variance in employee appraisal and outcomes, compared to injustice, due to the more insidious and ambiguous nature of incivility. Third, the few empirical studies of injustice appraisals (Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Spell & Arnold, 2007) do not measure appraisal in manners consistent with the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), despite discussing this model. Rather, they measure global stress (not stress specific to a particular incident of injustice or even injustice generally), or they use measures of injustice as proxies for appraisal, conflating the two constructs. For these reasons, the MMI advances the application of appraisal to workplace interactions in an important way.

Applying to workplace incivility this literature on cognitive appraisal's link to individual well-being, I propose that:

Hypothesis 3: The more a target appraises an uncivil event as harmful, the lower the target's job satisfaction will be.

Hypothesis 4: The more a target appraises an uncivil event as harmful, the lower the target's thriving at work will be.

Hypothesis 5: The more a target appraises an uncivil event as challenging, the higher the target's job satisfaction will be.

Hypothesis 6: The more a target appraises an uncivil event as challenging, the higher the target's thriving at work will be.

Predictor of Cognitive Appraisal: Perceived Perpetrator Goals

Employees likely do not all appraise uncivil incidents in the same manner. But what predicts appraisals of incivility? The Meaning-Making Model of Incivility (MMI) fills a gap in the literature by including targets' perceptions of their perpetrators' goals in predicting their appraisals of uncivil events. Targets' beliefs about *why* perpetrators behaved the way they did should fuel their assessments about the nature of uncivil acts.

When questions of intent and control arise following incivility, causal attribution theory plays a central role. Individuals mentally attribute the events they experience to various causes. Through causal attribution, people make judgments about the origins of their experiences, striving to answer the question, "*Why* did this event occur?" (Heider, 1944; for a review of the theory, see Kelley & Michela, 1980). This process is motivated by ever-present desires to understand one's environment and to experience control (Heider, 1944, 1958).

Attribution theory provides great explanatory power for individuals' meaning-making, yet is understudied in organizational science (Martinko, Harvey, & Dasborough, 2011). Attributions – or perceived causes and perpetrator goals – may be particularly

likely to arise following uncivil events. When events are unpleasant, people engage in greater contemplation of attributions, considering causes of the negative states (Bohner, Bless, Schwarz, & Strack, 1988; Holmes, 2002; Weiner, 1986). This proposition is related to action identification theory, in which people identify different components – or identities – of actions in order to make sense of them (Wegner & Vallacher, 1986). “...[A]ny action can be identified in many ways, ranging from low-level identities that specify how the action is performed to high-level identities that signify why or with what effect the action is performed” (p. 3; Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). Individuals seek to understand actions at the highest, most comprehensive levels, which include identifying the goals or purpose underlying an action (Vallacher & Wegner, 2012). Hence, when making sense of uncivil perpetrator actions, targets will consider the causes – or attributions – of this rude behavior. Schema theory also supports this proposition (Rumelhart, 1980); it states that individuals attempt to understand events by comparing them to their existing schemata (i.e., cognitive knowledge structures). When events do not clearly match people’s predictions for behavior, they may engage in greater contemplation of the experiences – including their causes – in order to interpret and understand them (Bohner et al., 1988; Rousseau, 2001; Weiner, 1986). Over time, this contemplation refines and completes schemas. Thus, by attending to negative incidents, individuals attempt to make sense of them.

Researchers have examined many facets of attribution: locus (i.e., whether the behavior was internal or external to an actor), globality (i.e., whether the behavior affects just this type of event or a diverse range of events), stability (i.e., whether the behavior was temporary or permanent), controllability (i.e., whether one could control his/her

behavior; related to the locus dimension), and intentionality (i.e., whether the behavior was committed intentionally) (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Kent & Martinko, 1995; Weiner, 1980). These attribution dimensions are associated with numerous psychological, emotional, and behavioral consequences. For instance, anger is heightened the more stable an event's cause is perceived to be (Weiner, Graham, & Chandler, 1982). Attributions of blame and irresponsibility following personal offenses increase targets' revenge behavior and decrease their reconciliatory acts (Aquino, Tripp, & Beis, 2001; Martinko, Gundlach, & Douglas, 2002). Further, when targets deem another's behavior unjustifiable, as opposed to warranted, their negative reactions intensify (Jones & Davis, 1965).

I contend that perceived perpetrator goals (or attributions) are important social psychological predictors of targets' appraisals of workplace incivility. In other words, targets' perceived causes of uncivil behavior influence their appraisals of the incidents, which then affect their well-being. For example, if an employee attributes his co-workers' rude behavior to uncontrollable and unintentional factors, he may appraise the behavior as irrelevant and cope by forgetting about the event. His psychological well-being is not harmed, and he proceeds with work as usual. This proposition is consistent with the causal link demonstrated between attribution and emotion; the more responsibility observers attribute to an actor for a transgression (or even for poor performance), the more anger they experience (Struthers, Miller, Boudens, & Briggs, 2001; Weiner, Amirkhan, Folkes, & Verette, 1987). This proposal is also consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) assertion that individuals make appraisals of attributions, suggesting that attribution precedes appraisal.

Yet, little work has empirically investigated the relationship between causal attribution and cognitive appraisal. In fact, it is not unusual for scholars to conflate the two constructs. Attribution and appraisal, though similar in their underlying pursuits of behavioral meaning, are unique psychological processes. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) emphasize their differences, stating that “attribution theory stops short of appraisal”, and appraisal “go[es] beyond mere attributions” (p. 272). Through attribution, individuals evaluate the causes of, or reasons for, events. *Why* did a particular experience occur? Was it due to an inherent quality of mine, the actor’s disposition, and/or random circumstances? Did the actor intend to harm me? Could the actor control the incident’s occurrence? Questions such as these transpire during the attribution process. In contrast, through appraisal, individuals evaluate the *nature* of an experience. Targets contemplate questions such as: Was the experience harmful or irrelevant to me? Was it a learning opportunity from which I could grow? What implications does the event pose for my well-being?

In my empirical testing of the MMI, I focus on two facets of attribution: perceived perpetrator control and intent. These attributions are particularly pertinent to incivility, as “ambiguous intent to harm” is a key – but underexplored – aspect of incivility’s definition. These facets also speak to perceived perpetrator accountability, a key determinant of social justice violations (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001).

Attributions of control and intent pose important implications for individuals’ states of mind and well-being; I first consider control. Targets who deem an actor’s hurtful behavior to have been controllable feel upset and angry (Betancourt & Blair, 1992; Martinko & Zellers, 1998; Weiner et al., 1982). They are more likely to blame the

actor and, subsequently, engage in retaliatory, violent, and counterproductive work behavior (CWB) (Betancourt & Blair, 1992; Martinko et al., 2002; Martinko & Zellers, 1998), as well as to desire little to no future social contact with the person (Weiner et al., 1987). Even organizational demands that traditionally elicit organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) can instead lead to CWB when employees perceive the demands as controllable by coworkers (Spector & Fox, 2010). When these organizational demands are perceived as uncontrollable though, employees should feel sympathy and engage in OCB as expected. Further, perceived control of negative events correlates with health detriments, possibly explained, in part, by increases in endorphins and hindrances to one's immune system (Peterson, 1995). Perceptions of actor control, then, should play a strong role in shaping employees' meaning-making of incivility and their subsequent well-being.

Perceived intent also predicts assessments of and reactions to negative behavior. For instance, perceptions of intent help individuals determine whether behavior constitutes aggression (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Hershcovis (2011) contends that intent should be considered when studying workplace aggression's tie to negative target outcomes, theorizing that it will amplify this link. Indeed, the more individuals perceive negative acts as intentional, the more blame they assign and the more likely they are to engage in retaliation (Kelley & Michela, 1980). Intent, compared to other attribution facets, appears to incite the strongest feelings of anger (Weiner et al., 1987). Perceived intent also affects relationships, creating distance between people and conjuring intense feelings of hurt (Vangelisti & Young, 2000). Targets are less likely to forgive their perpetrators, even following apologies (Struthers, Eaton, Mendoza, Santelli, & Shirvani,

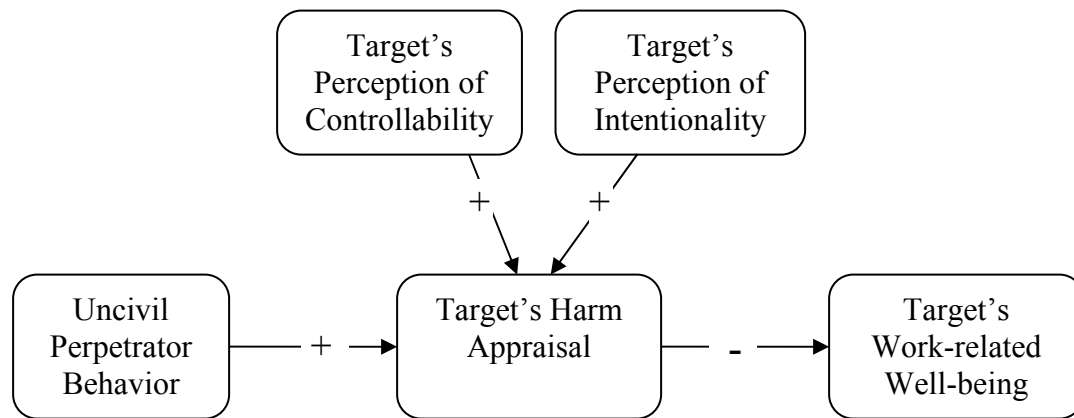
2010; Struthers, Eaton, Santelli, Uchiyama, & Shirvani, 2008). Further, intent may influence targets' expectations for the future, fostering beliefs that perpetrators will behave uncivilly again (Vangelisti & Young, 2000). If coworkers consciously and purposefully, as opposed to unintentionally, violate social norms, they may repeat this behavior. Scholars have suggested that perceived intent is one of the most significant factors affecting victims' perceptions and outcomes of workplace mistreatment, yet this proposition – like attribution theory as a whole within organizational science – has not received the empirical attention it deserves (Herschovis, 2011; Herschovis & Barling, 2010; Miller, 2001). Given this literature, incivility targets who believe their perpetrators possess control or intent in behaving uncivilly should appraise their experiences as more harmful than targets who believe the incivility was uncontrollable or unintentional.

The next set of hypotheses address perceived perpetrator goals and their relationships with cognitive appraisal (depicted in Figure 2):

Hypothesis 7: The more a target attributes an uncivil event to being within the perpetrator's control, the more s/he will appraise the uncivil event as harmful.

Hypothesis 8: The more a target attributes an uncivil event to perpetrator intent to harm, the more s/he will appraise the uncivil event as harmful.

Figure 2.2. Harm Appraisal Model Tested in Dissertation Studies



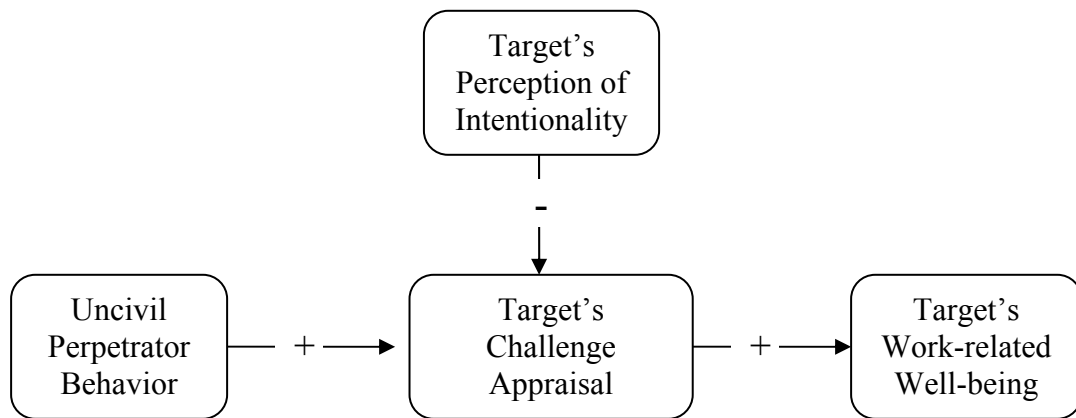
Meanwhile, attributions of low perpetrator control and intent may predict challenge appraisals. When hurtful messages are deemed unintentional, they can be perceived as prosocial and supportive (Vangelisti & Young, 2000) and elicit empathy (Betancourt & Blair, 1992). As noted, when organizational demands are perceived as uncontrollable, employees are apt to engage in OCB (Spector & Fox, 2010). In related work, life insurance salespeople who made “optimistic” attributions for their sales rejections (i.e., believed the failures were external to them, not stable, nor global) exhibited higher sales performance and lower turnover than salespeople who made “pessimistic” attributions (Seligman & Schulman, 1986). Similarly, athletes with “optimistic” attributions following defeats had greater future success via their abilities to psychologically recover (Rettew & Reivich, 1995). This mental recovery may be akin to the development of challenge appraisals of negative experiences which, as tested in the current paper, should be tied to positive outcomes. Therefore, it is fruitful to not only examine the relationship between incivility targets’ attributions of intent and their harm

appraisals but also that between unintentional (more “optimistic”) attributions and challenge appraisals.

The following hypothesis regarding the relationship between perceived intentionality and challenge appraisals is depicted in Figure 3:

Hypothesis 9: The less a target attributes an uncivil event to perpetrator intent to harm, the more s/he will appraise the uncivil event as challenging.

Figure 2.3. Challenge Appraisal Model Tested in Dissertation Studies



Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Targets will report more harm appraisals as they experience more incivility.

Hypothesis 2: Targets will report more challenge appraisals as they experience more incivility.

Hypothesis 3: The more a target appraises an uncivil event as harmful, the lower the target's job satisfaction will be.

Hypothesis 4: The more a target appraises an uncivil event as harmful, the lower the target's thriving at work will be.

Hypothesis 5: The more a target appraises an uncivil event as challenging, the higher the target's job satisfaction will be.

Hypothesis 6: The more a target appraises an uncivil event as challenging, the higher the target's thriving at work will be.

Hypothesis 7: The more a target attributes an uncivil event to being within their perpetrators' control, the more s/he will appraise the uncivil event as harmful.

Hypothesis 8: The more a target attributes an uncivil event to their perpetrator's intent to harm, the more s/he will appraise the uncivil event as harmful.

Hypothesis 9: The less a target attributes an uncivil event to their perpetrator's intent to harm, the more s/he will appraise the uncivil event as challenging.

Chapter 3

Overview of Methods

I employed two large-scale surveys of full-time working adults to test the MMI hypotheses. In the first study, 419 women working in Michigan responded to a paper-based survey that contained measures of workplace incivility, cognitive appraisal, perceived perpetrator control and intent, and job satisfaction. I used these data to analyze targets' harm appraisals of incivility as a central link between the occurrence of incivility and job satisfaction. I also examined the predictive value of targets' perceived perpetrator control and intent on their incivility appraisals.

I supplemented Study 1 with a nation-wide survey of 479 working men and women. This online survey contained similar measures as Study 1, in order to cross-validate findings, and also included more detailed measures of perpetrator intent, as well as a new outcome variable: thriving at work. In addition, I expanded on Study 1 by examining whether targets make challenge appraisals for incivility, and if so, how this type of appraisal relates to target outcomes.

STUDY 1: MICHIGAN WOMEN WORK SURVEY

Participants and Procedure

In 2010, I and a team of graduate students, supervised by Dr. Lilia Cortina in the Department of Psychology, launched a study of women's work experiences in Michigan. We recruited participants by contacting several dozen city- and state-based organizations

(e.g., Women's Exchange of Washtenaw, Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce, University of Michigan Human Resources Department). These groups notified their members about our study via emails, meetings, and word of mouth and directed them to our website (www.michiganwomenwork.org). On our website, women could participate in a "snapshot" survey, containing nine to 12 basic questions about their employment (e.g., In what industry do you currently work?) (see Appendix A). At the end of this two to three minute online survey, participants were given the option of participating in a longer, paper-based survey for monetary compensation through the postal mail. If interested, women could provide their names and mailing addresses. Of the 4,549 participants who completed the online "snapshot" survey, 3,600 (79%) agreed to participate in the second, paper-based survey and supplied their addresses.

Our research team jointly accumulated nearly \$20,000 in funding from five grants for this project. Based on this budget, we were able to mail paper surveys and invitation materials (including prepaid and addressed envelopes) to 1,000 participants, oversampling for people of color. One graduate student and I integrated our focal measures into "Form 1" of the paper survey (20-25 minutes in length), which we mailed to 500 participants randomly-selected from the "snapshot" database. (Two other graduates students merged their measures, unrelated to workplace incivility, into "Form 2" and mailed it to 500 different employees from the database.) In each invitation packet, we included a two dollar bill as an initial incentive to increase response rates (Bednar & Westphal, 2006; Dillman, 2000). Striving to preserve anonymity, we included in each packet a prepaid postcard, on which we asked participants to write their names to indicate their completion (see Appendix B). Participants were instructed to mail these postcards

separately from their paper surveys, thereby keeping their survey data anonymous while informing us of their participation so they would receive \$10 compensation checks. One week after the initial survey was mailed, we sent reminder postcards to all participants. Two weeks after distributing the reminder postcard, we mailed replacement packets with the same materials as the initial packet (except the two dollar bill) to participants who had not yet participated (i.e., who had not returned their prepaid postcards). These follow-up methods are consistent with the recommendations of survey experts for increasing response rates (e.g., the “tailored design” method; Dillman, 2000; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2008).

Of the 500 employees to whom we mailed Form 1, 424 responded (84.8% response rate). I excluded five returned surveys from analyses due to invalid completion (e.g., writing about a positive, rather than uncivil incident at work), leaving 419 questionnaires in the dataset.

Within the final dataset, participants’ ages ranged from 22 to 67 years ($M = 42$ years). In descending order of frequency, respondents’ highest levels of completed education were: graduate or professional degree (49.6%; $n = 208$), bachelor’s degree (31.7%; $n = 133$), some college (10.7%; $n = 45$), some graduate education (6.9%; $n = 29$), and a high school degree or less (0.9%; $n = 4$). Fifty four percent ($n = 226$) of respondents identified their race as White, 18% ($n = 76$) identified as African American, 14.6% ($n = 61$) identified as Asian American or Pacific Islander, 3.8% ($n = 15$) identified as Latina, 1.4% ($n = 6$) identified with another race or ethnicity (e.g., American Indian or Alaskan Native), and 0.5% ($n = 2$) of respondents did not provide race information. Almost eight percent ($n = 33$) of participants selected two ethnicities, the most prevalent

of which were Latina and White (28% of multi-racial participants; $n = 9$), Asian American and White (24% of multi-racial participants; $n = 8$), and American Indian and White (18.8% of multi-racial participants; $n = 6$).

Subjects were employed across diverse occupational fields, such as biomedical research, retail, transportation, and accounting. The average length of employment was 12.7 years in one's field ($SD = 9.3$ years) and 9.2 years in one's organization ($SD = 8.2$ years). Participants worked an average of 43.6 hours per week, and 91.4% ($n = 383$) were employed full-time (i.e., 35 hours or more per week).

Measurement

Tables 1 and 2 display summary statistics, reliabilities, and inter-variable correlations for all measures ($N = 419$).

Workplace incivility. To assess the frequency and variety of participants' experiences of workplace incivility, we integrated items from two validated workplace incivility measures: the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS; Cortina et al., 2001) and a cyber-incivility scale (Lim & Teo, 2009) (see Appendix C).

I used the six highest-loading items from the WIS to measure employees' experiences of incivility during the past year. Sample items are *put you down or was condescending to you*, *paid little attention to your statements or showed little interest in your opinion*, and *doubted your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility*. Respondents indicated the frequency with which they experienced each behavior using a five-point scale, from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Previous research has established the content and discriminant validity of the WIS (Cortina et al., 2001). To thoroughly capture participants' experiences of mistreatment, we also incorporated three items from

a cyber-incivility measure (Lim & Teo, 2009). Similar to the WIS, these items assessed respondents' uncivil cyber experiences within the last year (e.g., *not replied to your email at all*), and the same five-point scale was used for consistency. Taken together, all nine workplace incivility items from both the WIS and cyber-incivility measure showed good reliability ($\alpha = .88$).

After completing these measures of incivility, respondents were redirected to a “recent incivility incident” question if they had reported experiencing one or more of the behaviors in the nine incivility items. This write-in question instructed: “Thinking about the experience(s) you just reported [in the incivility measure], which of these experiences occurred most recently? In several sentences, briefly describe ONE of these experiences that occurred most RECENTLY.” We administered this item in order to: (1) gather detailed information (via subsequent survey measures) about a particular uncivil incident and (2) prime participants with the focal experience so that feelings and memories tied to the uncivil encounter were salient. We instructed participants to think about their *most recent* (rather than their *worst*) uncivil experience for two reasons: (1) to minimize memory error so participants' reported evaluations more closely mapped onto their cognitions following the event and (2) to capture greater variability in participants' appraisals of incivility (e.g., as harmful and challenging). If participants were asked to write about their *worst* uncivil incidents during the previous year, their appraisals of these incidents would likely be similar (i.e., stressful and harmful), preventing us from learning about uncivil incidents that employees find challenging. I strove in the “recent incident” question to elicit stories of incivility across a broad range of work contexts, perpetrator characteristics, and severity levels in order to most thoroughly test the MMI.

Cognitive appraisal. Because a validated scale of cognitive appraisal based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping does not exist, I designed one for this study (see Appendix D). Specifically, I developed a measure of harm appraisal by adopting seven of Swan's (1997) 15 Feelings Scale items and supplementing them with: one item developed based on Lazarus and Folkman's publications on appraisal (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), one stress appraisal item from Grandey, Dickter, & Sin (2004), and one item related to offense severity from Bradfield and Aquino (1999). The final measure contained ten items, including *frustrating*, *challenging*, *stressful*, and *hurtful*, which showed high reliability ($\alpha = .92$). Respondents indicated the degree to which they believed each appraisal described their "recent incivility incident" using a 5-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

Perceived perpetrator controllability and intent. I also examined targets' perceptions of their perpetrators' control and intent to harm during their most recent uncivil experiences. Numerous items and methods exist for assessing facets of attribution, but most were developed for experimental research, so they required adaptation to be suitable for a self-report field survey. I adapted one open-ended question and three Likert scale items from three references (see Appendix E). First, participants were asked to briefly write what they believed to be the *one major cause* of the "recent incivility incident". Asking respondents to initially describe their causal attribution before responding to Likert scales is a method consistent with The Attributional Style Questionnaire (Peterson et al., 1982) for preventing creation or alteration of respondents'

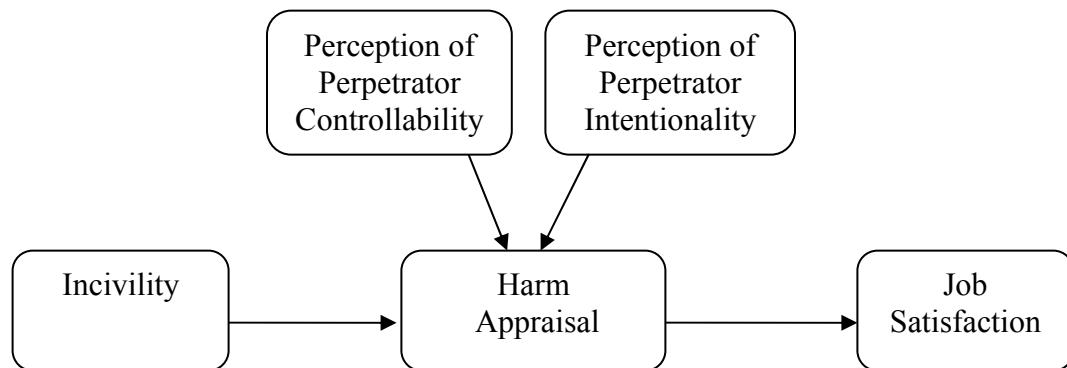
attributions. Attribution experts contend that this method likely most validly captures attribution dimensions (Kent & Martinko, 1995).

Subsequent Likert scales then provided quantification of participants' attributions. Two items from the Occupational Attributional Style Questionnaire (Furnham, Sadka, & Brewin, 1992) were adapted to assess controllability of the perpetrator. One item from The Causal Dimension Scale (Russell, 1982) was used to assess perceived perpetrator intentionality in committing the incivility (*Did the primary person commit the behavior on purpose?*). Participants responded to these three items on 5-point Likert scales, with anchors tailored to each item (e.g., *not at all on purpose* to *completely on purpose*). A reliability coefficient cannot be reported for the intentionality facet, because it was contained one item, a limitation I address in Study 2. A controllability facet was created by averaging the two items from the Occupational Attributional Style Questionnaire, which correlated fairly highly ($r = .64$).

Job satisfaction. To test cognitive appraisal as a mediator of incivility's relationship to employee outcomes, I measured job satisfaction. Specifically, I included the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983) (see Appendix F). Its three items are *All in all, I am satisfied with my job*, *In general, I like working here*, and *In general, I don't like my job* (reverse-coded), which show good reliability ($\alpha = .87$). Participants responded to these items using a seven-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). To minimize response bias, this outcome measure was placed earlier in the survey than measures of workplace incivility, appraisal, and perceived perpetrator goals.

Control variable. Participants' perceptions may be affected by their trait negative affectivity. That is, individuals high in negative affectivity have been shown to provide more pessimistic study responses (Judge & Hulin, 1993; Levin & Stokes, 1989). As such, I controlled for pessimism to ensure that greater reports of workplace incivility, perpetrator intent and control, and more severe cognitive appraisals were not a function of targets' negative dispositions. This trait was assessed using six items (e.g., *If something can go wrong for me, it will; In uncertain times, I usually expect the best* [reverse-scored]) from the Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994) (see Appendix G). Respondents answered each item on a on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale. The measure showed high reliability ($\alpha = .83$).

Figure 3.1. Study 1 Model



STUDY 2: STUDYRESPONSE SURVEY

I cross-validated and extended findings from Study 1 using a sample drawn nationwide, from both women and men. In Study 2, I developed a measure of challenge appraisal and tested a second facet of targets' occupational well-being: thriving at work. In collaboration with another doctoral candidate, I secured \$6,000 in funding through two grants to conduct this second study and applied \$500 of remaining funds from a Study 1 grant.

Participants and Procedure

We recruited adults employed full-time in the United States through StudyResponse, an academic, non-profit service through Syracuse University, dedicated to improving the feasibility of online research. StudyResponse contains a database of 60,000 research volunteers across diverse occupational fields. Online, compared to paper-based, surveys have been shown to provide greater diversity of respondents (e.g., socioeconomic status, age, geographic region, gender) (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004), making StudyResponse a particularly fruitful source for this second data collection. StudyResponse also handles all participant recruitment and compensation, preserving respondent anonymity.

Our survey, designed using Qualtrics software, included similar measures as the Study 1 Form 1 survey and was 20-25 minutes in length. At the beginning of the survey, participants provided the unique identifying code that StudyResponse assigned to them, which we, in turn, relayed to StudyResponse to inform them of participant completion. One week after distributing the initial survey invitation emails, StudyResponse sent participants a reminder email.

Participants whose surveys were both complete and valid received \$10 compensation. We defined a complete survey as one in which subjects responded to at least 90% of the questions presented to them. A valid survey was defined as one in which participants correctly answered at least two of three objective validation questions (e.g., “please select strongly disagree for this item”) interspersed through the survey. We also collected IP addresses in a separate “survey” (not linked to subject data) to prevent fraudulent use of StudyResponse and our survey.

StudyResponse sent emails to 1,109 employees, inviting them to participate in our study. Of these employees, 479 (43%) provided complete and valid data. Their average age was 42 years ($SD = 11.4$ years), and 60% of respondents were female ($n = 285$). The majority of participants were White (78.3%; $n = 375$); other race/ethnicities in descending frequency were: Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander (7.9%; $n = 38$), Black or African American (5.4%; $n = 26$), Latino (1.9%; $n = 9$); American Indian (1%; $n = 5$); and Middle Eastern (0.8%; $n = 4$). Some respondents reported two race/ethnicities (4.8%; $n = 23$), the most frequent of which were: Latino and White (56.5% of multi-racial respondents; $n = 13$); American Indian and White (21.7% of multi-racial respondents; $n = 5$); Asian American and White or African American (each 8.7% of multi-racial respondents; each $n = 2$). Finally, one respondent was African American and Latino, and one respondent’s race was unable to be coded (“human”).

Respondents’ highest levels of education in decreasing frequencies were: 42% college degree ($n = 200$), 23.1% professional or graduate degree ($n = 110$), 20.8% some college without a degree ($n = 99$), 8.6% high school degree ($n = 41$), 5.0% some graduate education without a degree ($n = 24$), and 0.4% less than a high school degree ($n = 2$).

The average tenure was 13.8 years in one's field (SD = 8.6 years) and 9.8 years in one's current organization (SD = 7.3 years). All participants worked at least 30 hours per week, and 84% of respondents worked 40 or more hours per week.

Measurement

Because part of the purpose of this survey was to replicate Study 1 findings using a broader sample, similar latent constructs as Study 1 were measured: workplace incivility, harm appraisal of a recent uncivil experience, perceived perpetrator intent in committing incivility, and job satisfaction. I again controlled for pessimism to rule out dispositional negativity as an alternative explanation for findings. I expanded on Study 1 by including a measure of challenge appraisal and a new measure of targets' work-related well-being: thriving at work. To minimize response biases, outcome variables appeared prior to the independent variables in the survey. This design method ensured that participants' recollections of uncivil experiences did not skew their reports of their work-related well-being.

Workplace incivility. The same six WIS items and three cyber-incivility items as Study 1 were administered. The measure's stem read "During the PAST YEAR, has anyone associated with your WORK (e.g., supervisors, coworkers, clients/customer, collaborators) done any of the following behaviors, either in person or electronically (e.g., via email)?" Response options ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). These items showed high reliability ($\alpha = .92$).

Like Study 1, respondents then wrote about their most recent incivility experience: "Thinking about the experience(s) you just reported on the last page, which of these experiences occurred most RECENTLY? By "experience", we mean a behavior

or pattern of behaviors that came from the same person(s), even if that behavior occurred over a period of time. In several sentences, briefly describe ONE of these experiences that occurred most RECENTLY.” This specific incident was the reference to which participants answered appraisal and attribution measures.

Cognitive appraisal. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), appraisals of stressful events are not always negative; even life-changing events, such as a cancer diagnosis, can be interpreted in positive ways. The measure of cognitive appraisal of incivility in Study 1 assessed Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) harm appraisal construct, but it is possible that targets of incivility form more positive – challenge – appraisals for their experiences as well. To examine challenge appraisals, I created a measure consisting of five items: *positive, helpful, a learning experience, an opportunity for you to develop, a contribution to your growth* ($\alpha = .88$) (see Appendix H). I developed these items based on Lazarus and Folkman’s publications on appraisal (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and incorporated input from six advanced graduate students and a faculty expert in workplace incivility.

Like Study 1, participants rated their appraisals of their most recent uncivil event about which they had just written. They responded to the stem “How would you describe this recent experience? Rate the extent to which each word describes this experience”, and rated each item on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*).

To measure harm appraisal, I administered eight items from the Study 1 measure of appraisal (see Appendix H). For sake of space, I removed the *disturbing* and *threatening* items, which received the lowest endorsement in a Study 1. The remaining eight items demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = .88$).

Perceived perpetrator intent. The Study 1 measure of perpetrator intent in committing incivility contained one item. To offset this limitation, I included a more detailed measure of intentionality in Study 2 (see Appendix I). The intentionality facet may be particularly influential in affecting targets' appraisals of and reactions to incivility, as substantial research has demonstrated other negative effects of intentional attribution (e.g., anger, emotional distance, less contact with perpetrators, lower likelihood of forgiveness; Betancourt & Blair, 1992; Struthers et al., 2008; Vangelisti & Young, 2000; Weiner et al., 1987; Weiner et al., 1982). Moreover, the workplace incivility literature theorizes extensively about the importance of perceived intent (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Hershcovis, 2011; Pearson et al., 2001). Thus, I included a more complete measure of intentionality in Study 2. Given survey length constraints and the positive relationship between intent and control (see Study 1 results and Weiner, 1985), I did not measure perceived perpetrator control.

Because a validated measure of perceived intentionality did not exist, I developed one. As in Study 1, before responding to a series of quantitative items, participants were asked to write about what they perceived as the cause of the uncivil incident. In Study 2, I slightly edited the instructions for this open-ended item in order to elicit more detail from respondents about the perceived causes: "Thinking about the experience you described, what do you feel was the MAIN CAUSE of the situation? In several sentences, please describe the reason(s) this experience occurred." By gathering more information about participants' perceived causes of their uncivil experiences, I will be able to content-code these open-ended data in the future to measure other facets of attribution.

After answering this open-ended item, participants responded to a nine-item intentionality measure, which contained the stem “Thinking about the cause you just described, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement below”. This measure contained items such as *The primary person committed this behavior on purpose*, *The primary person did not intend for this incident to happen* (reverse-scored), and *The primary person intended to hurt me in some way*. Participants rated each statement on a 5-point scale from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*), and I reverse-scored items where appropriate. This intentionality measure showed good reliability ($\alpha = .84$).

Job satisfaction. Like Survey 1, I measured job satisfaction using the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1983). Participants again responded to these three items on a five-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), and the measure showed high reliability ($\alpha = .91$).

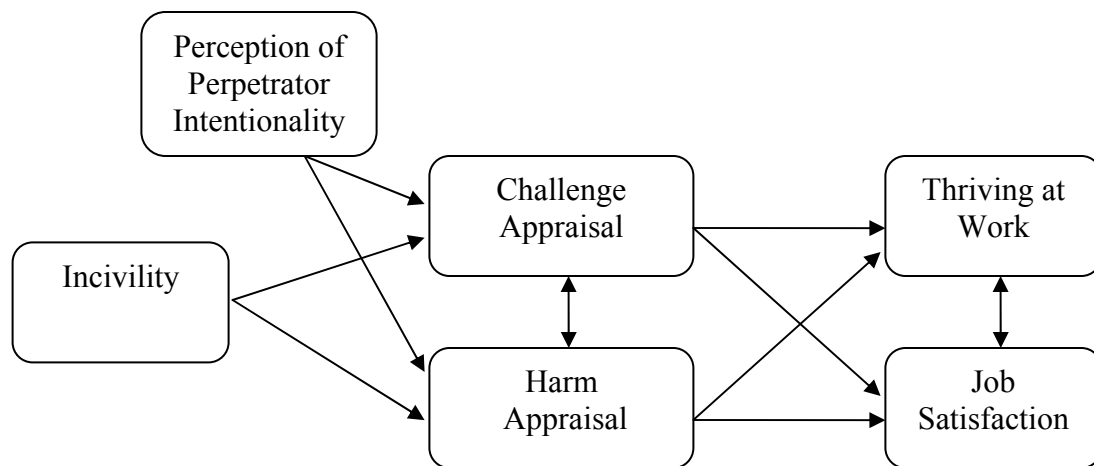
Thriving at work. I included another dependent variable, thriving at work, to further test appraisal as a mediator to incivility outcomes. Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, and Garnett (in press) developed and validated a measure of workplace thriving, conceptualized as a sense of both learning (i.e., improving at one’s work) and vitality (i.e., feeling energized at work) (see Appendix J). The measure contains ten items, five of which load onto the factor “Learning” and the rest of which load onto the factor, “Vitality”. Following the stem “At work...”, respondents rated each item on a seven-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Sample “Learning” items include *I find myself learning often* and *I see myself continually improving*, while sample “Vitality” items include *I feel alive and vital* and *I have energy and spirit*. Both factors

showed high reliability (Thriving – Learning: $\alpha = .91$; Thriving – Vitality $\alpha = .94$).

Porath et al. (in press) provide cross-sample support of this measure’s reliability, validity, and two-factor dimension.

Control variable. Like Study 1, I controlled for pessimism in all analyses to ensure that reports of workplace incivility, perceived intent, and appraisal were not functions of targets’ negative dispositions. Once again, I administered six items from the Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Scheier et al., 1994) on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale, which showed good reliability ($\alpha = .90$).

Figure 3.2. Study 2 Model



Chapter 4

Results

STUDY 1: MICHIGAN WOMEN WORK SURVEY

In all analyses, I controlled for respondent pessimism to account for the possible effects of respondents' trait dispositions on their meaning-making of uncivil encounters.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, including all variables' ranges, means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and inter-variable correlations appear in Tables 1 and 2. Analyses reveal that 88.3% of respondents experienced at least one instance of workplace incivility within the last year. Although most studies of incivility demonstrate high prevalence rates of incivility across diverse fields and organizations, this statistic is higher than most. One possible explanation for this higher frequency is that my measure tapped experiences of both in-person and cyber incivility, rather than only in-person incidents. Of the percentage of respondents targeted with incivility, 22.9% reported that they had experienced only general incivility, not cyber incivility (i.e., they experienced at least one of the six WIS items but none of the three cyber incivility items). A small percentage of respondents (3.1%) reported experiencing only cyber incivility but no incivility in person (i.e., they reported at least one cyber incivility item but no WIS items).

Table 4.1. Study 1 Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | # Items | Mean | SD | Range | |
|-------------------------------|---------|------|------|---------|---------|
| | | | | Minimum | Maximum |
| Job Satisfaction | 3 | 5.61 | 1.24 | 1.00 | 7.00 |
| Workplace Incivility | 9 | 1.79 | .67 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Perceived Perpetrator Control | 2 | 3.79 | 1.13 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Perceived Perpetrator Intent | 1 | 3.24 | 1.42 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Harm Appraisal | 10 | 2.94 | 1.03 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Pessimism | 6 | 2.18 | .67 | 1.00 | 5.00 |

Table 4.2. Study 1 Scale Reliabilities and Inter-variable Correlations

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|----------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| 1. Job Satisfaction | (.87) | | | | | |
| 2. Workplace Incivility | -.33*** | (.88) | | | | |
| 3. Perceived Perpetrator Control | .04 | .29*** | (.64) | | | |
| 4. Perceived Perpetrator Intent | -.11* | .32*** | .33*** | n/a | | |
| 5. Harm Appraisal | -.20*** | .51*** | .29*** | .43*** | (.92) | |
| 6. Pessimism | -.26*** | .15** | -.01 | .07 | .09 | (.83) |

Note: Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) are along the diagonal.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

Another possible explanation for the high prevalence of incivility in this study is that the sample contained all women, many of whom were women of color. According to selective incivility theory and other theories of modern discrimination, discrimination has morphed over time from blatant, explicit behaviors to insidious, subtle acts, partly due to the emergence of legislative reform and organizational policies against workplace biases (Cortina, 2008; Deitch et al., 2003; Dipboye & Halverson, 2004). Despite formal policies, discrimination continues to exist, primarily manifested in ambiguous and low-intensity fashions, which, on the surface, appear non-discriminatory (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002). Yet low-intensity forms of mistreatment, such as workplace incivility, are targeted at women and people of color most frequently, constituting a modern – and repackaged – form of discrimination (Cortina, Kabat Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, in press). The prevalence with which Study 1 participants – again, all women and many women of color – experienced incivility is thus consistent with modern discrimination theories, which may explain the study’s unusually high rate of incivility.

Qualitative Descriptives

As described in the methods section, respondents wrote about their most recent uncivil experiences at work. These open-ended descriptions supplement the quantitative results by bringing life to employees’ experiences. The following quotes demonstrate incivility’s ambiguous, covert nature:

“I greeted this individual in the hallway. The individual physically walked past me without looking at me or verbally acknowledging my greeting.”

“A [customer] questioned my knowledge... and my authority to implement measures.”

“I remember the person...making snippy/condescending comments here and there during a heated group discussion in a staff meeting.”

“When problems or concerns were brought to bosses attention, my thoughts about them were dismissed as not real or valid.”

“A co-worker who is required to give details to me for a semi-annual report is habitually late and often ignores my requests for data.”

These quotes highlight only some of the ways in which incivility is manifested in the workplace. In addition to describing specific uncivil behaviors, respondents often expressed their perceptions about these events' meanings (bolded):

*“[A colleague and I] disagreed about her marketing idea; she responded to my criticism by explaining it again - **as if the only reason I didn't agree was because I didn't understand.**”*

*“When I asked for clarification about an issue at work, **I was made to feel foolish** for ‘not getting’ the situation on my own.”*

*“I have a colleague who sent me a note that she wanted to talk and she said she wanted to maintain the most professional appearance to our directors. **I thought this was condescending because it presumed I did not want to appear professional.**”*

*“Several times I have sent an email to my boss and he completely ignores them. Usually, I have a standing weekly meeting with my boss, so I bring up the issues but **it is frustrating** that he disregards emails that I deem important.”*

These respondents not only described behavior they found uncivil but provided insight into their interpretations of the natures of the situations. As is evident, employees

typically find incivility negative and stressful. In the second study's results, I discuss a second type of incivility appraisal (challenging) that was not assessed in this study.

Participants also described *why* they believed their perpetrators behaved uncivilly. The following quotes exemplify respondent beliefs that perpetrators wielded control and/or intent in behaving rudely:

"The individual was exerting control over something in her life that she felt she could control."

"I believe she was trying to pull a power play over me."

"This colleague is negative and paranoid."

"Supervisor doesn't trust and micromanages."

"My supervisor is a control freak who is threatened by my skill and intelligence."

Yet other respondents did not believe their perpetrators wielded control or intent in committing uncivil behavior:

"My director is overseeing two departments right now and is sometimes too busy to respond to email."

"He was under work pressure."

"Misunderstanding."

"Miscommunication."

"My superior did not answer my email about schedule in June. It happened once before and it was in his junk mail box. Not his fault."

"Boss is overloaded with email and just overlooked it."

"Someone doubting my judgment simply meant they would have handled it differently, not that I was 'wrong'."

These quotes suggest variability in perceived perpetrator responsibility for incivility. This variance raises the question: How do different attributions influence respondents' harm appraisals? Do targets form stronger harm appraisals when they believe others held intent and control in treating them uncivilly? In the next section, I address this issue and holistically examine the factors exemplified in these quotes.

Structural Equation Model

Using LISREL, I tested the Study 1 model (Figure 4). According to the MMI, a relationship should exist between targets' experiences of workplace incivility, their harm appraisals of the meanings of the uncivil events, and their occupational well-being. Further, targets' perceptions of their perpetrators' goals when behaving incivility should predict their appraisals. Based on Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) recommendations, I first estimated the measurement model of the latent variables to ensure that the measures' psychometric properties and factor loadings were appropriate. I then tested the structural model. For each modeling stage, I evaluated overall fit using both "incremental" and "absolute" fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

To construct the measurement model, items from each variable were randomly allocated across three indicators per latent construct, except for factors assessing meaning-making of perpetrator behavior: controllability (two indicators) and intentionality (one indicator). To identify the model, one factor loading per indicator was fixed to one. Goodness of fit statistics revealed excellent fit: Minimum Fit Function χ^2 (76, $N = 331$) = 119.42, $p < .01$, Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) = .04 (90% CI for RMSEA = .025 to .054), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .99, Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = .97, and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .031.

All completely standardized factor loadings were significant and ranged from .57 to .93 (see Table 3).

Table 4.3. Study 1 Measurement Model Completely Standardized Factor Loadings

| Construct | Indicator Loadings | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Job Satisfaction | .85 | .81 | .89 |
| Workplace Incivility | .85 | .83 | .84 |
| Perceived Perpetrator Control | .82 | .57 | n/a |
| Perceived Perpetrator Intent | 1.00 | n/a | n/a |
| Harm Appraisal | .93 | .83 | .93 |
| Pessimism | .81 | .80 | .87 |

Given the measurement model's strong fit, I then tested the structural model, which also fit the data well: $\chi^2 (80, N = 331) = 157.35, p < .01$, RMSEA = .053 (90% CI for RMSEA = .04 to .065), CFI = .98, NNFI = .97, and SRMR = .072 (see Table 4 for both measurement and structural model goodness of fit statistics). All hypothesized paths were statistically significant, even after controlling for respondent pessimism. Variance accounted for in endogenous variables appears in Table 5, and completely standardized path coefficients appear in Figure 6.

Table 4.4. Goodness of Fit Indices for Study 1 Measurement and Structural Models

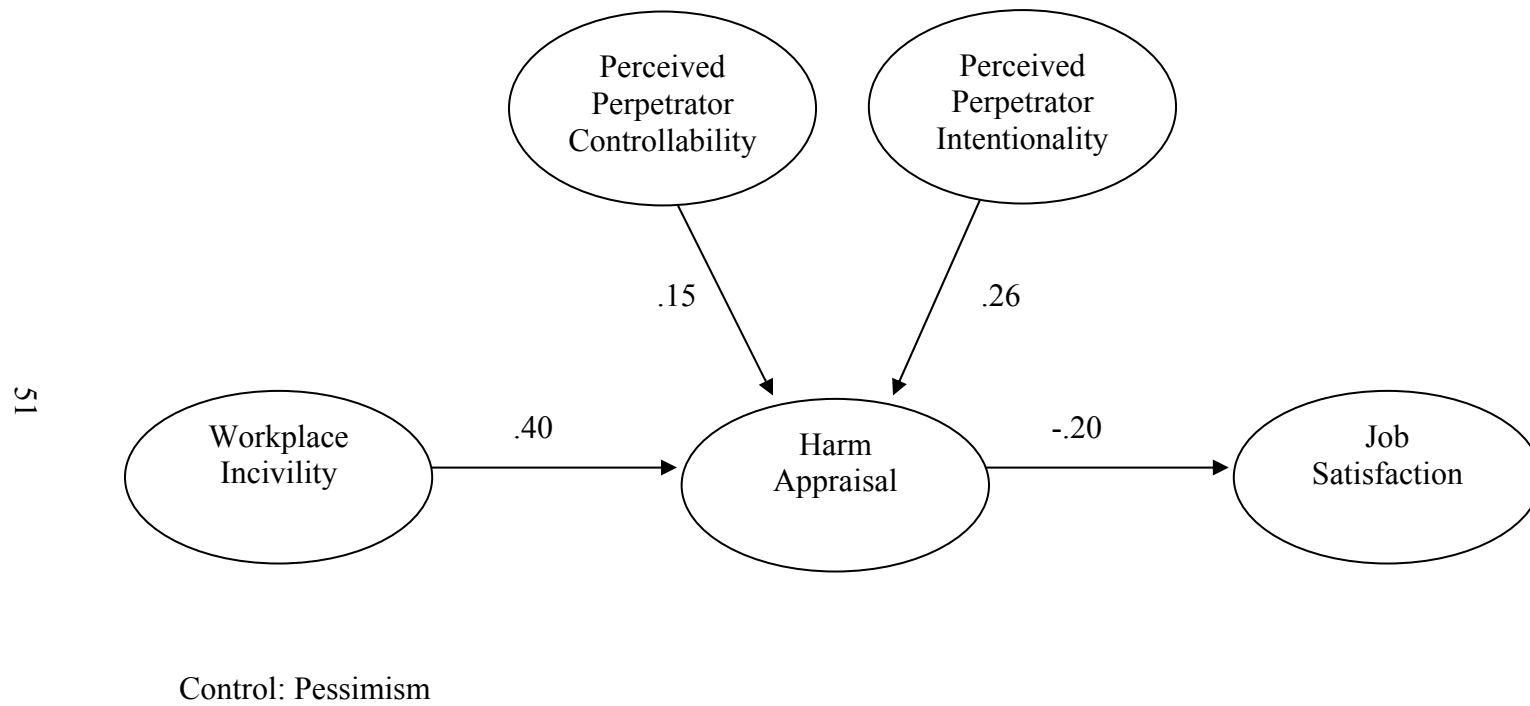
| Model | χ^2 | df | χ^2/df | RMSEA | NFI | NNFI | CFI | SRMR |
|-------------|----------|----|-------------|-------|-----|------|-----|------|
| Measurement | 119.42 | 76 | 1.57 | .040 | .97 | .98 | .99 | .031 |
| Structural | 157.35 | 80 | 1.97 | .053 | .96 | .97 | .98 | .072 |

Note: Using listwise deletion of cases with missing values, the resulting sample size was $N = 331$.

Table 4.5. Study 1 Proportion of Variance Accounted for in each Endogenous Variable

| Structural Model | |
|------------------|-----|
| Job Satisfaction | 4% |
| Harm Appraisal | 39% |

Figure 4.1. Study 1 Structural Model



Supporting Hypothesis 1, workplace incivility positively related to harm appraisal ($\beta = .40$). Perceptions of perpetrator goals related to appraisal, such that the more respondents believed perpetrators had control over their behavior, the more respondents appraised uncivil experiences as harmful ($\beta = .15$). Also, the more respondents believed that their perpetrators intentionally behaved uncivilly, the more they appraised incivility as harmful ($\beta = .26$). As such, Hypotheses 7 and 8 were supported. Subsequently, the more employees assessed their uncivil experiences as harms, the lower their job satisfaction ($\beta = -.20$), supporting Hypothesis 3.

STUDY 2: STUDYRESPONSE SURVEY

As in Study 1, I controlled for respondent pessimism when analyzing Study 2 data in order to rule out trait negative disposition as an alternative explanation for the results.

Descriptive Statistics

All variables' descriptive statistics (ranges, means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and inter-variable correlations) appear in Tables 6 and 7. The majority of respondents (73.7%) reported at least one instance of workplace incivility within the last year. This statistic is consistent with most research studies' incivility frequencies. Of respondents targeted with incivility, 31% experienced only general incivility (i.e., no cyber incivility items), and 7.6% reported only cyber incivility (i.e., no behaviors from the WIS).

Table 4.6. Study 2 Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | # Items | Mean | SD | Range | |
|------------------------------|---------|------|------|---------|---------|
| | | | | Minimum | Maximum |
| Job Satisfaction | 3 | 5.42 | 1.45 | 1.00 | 7.00 |
| Thriving at Work – Learning | 5 | 5.46 | 1.19 | 1.00 | 7.00 |
| Thriving at Work – Thriving | 5 | 5.07 | 1.43 | 1.00 | 7.00 |
| Workplace Incivility | 9 | 1.64 | .75 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Perceived Perpetrator Intent | 9 | 3.23 | .89 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Harm Appraisal | 8 | 2.87 | .97 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Challenge Appraisal | 5 | 1.90 | .95 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Pessimism | 6 | 2.42 | .83 | 1.00 | 5.00 |

Table 4.7. Study 2 Scale Reliabilities and Inter-variable Correlations

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1. Job Satisfaction | (.91) | | | | | | | |
| 2. Thriving - Learning | .67*** | (.91) | | | | | | |
| 3. Thriving - Vitality | .76*** | .79*** | (.94) | | | | | |
| 4. Workplace Incivility | -.39*** | -.22*** | -.29*** | (.92) | | | | |
| 5. Perceived Perpetrator Intent | -.25*** | -.11* | -.16** | .34*** | (.84) | | | |
| 6. Harm Appraisal | -.21*** | -.07 | -.15** | .41*** | .38*** | (.88) | | |
| 7. Challenge Appraisal | .21*** | .26*** | .27*** | .23*** | -.06 | .16** | (.88) | |
| 8. Pessimism | -.48*** | -.47*** | -.59*** | .28*** | .12* | .14* | -.17** | (.89) |

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Note: Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's alphas) are along the diagonal.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

Qualitative Descriptives

Like Study 1, respondents described their most recent uncivil experiences at work. I provide excerpts from these open-ended descriptions to supplement the quantitative results. The following quotes further demonstrate incivility's covert nature and ambiguous intent:

"A few weeks ago, one or two of the construction crew ignored my repeated attempts to explain a particular detail that had to be correct. I got vague assurance that it would be dealt with."

"The supervisor has a bad habit of calling me X even though I always remind him I want to be called by Y."

"A group of people I supervise leave me out of get-togethers outside of work."

"My manager will frequently be sarcastic or jokingly be derogatory to me."

What do these events mean? Are they negative experiences about which one should be concerned? Or are they meaningless accidents? People address these questions by forming appraisals. Without prompting, respondents often supplemented their descriptions of uncivil behavior with their perceptions of these events' underlying meanings (in bold):

"My boss sent me an email that made me feel that he had little or no confidence in my abilities."

"I at times do not get responses to emails, so it feels like I am beating a dead horse when I'm trying to get an update or follow up with someone."

"Not replying to an email memo that required a response. There was a sense that getting back to me simply was not a priority."

The above quotes exemplify negative appraisals, but some respondents appraised incivility in a more positive, challenging manner. That is, they perceived the uncivil encounter as an opportunity to develop, learn, or achieve. For example, (challenge appraisal in bold):

*“We were experiencing a problem that we had never encountered before and were working together to find a solution. I had an idea that one of my co workers disagreed with. He said he did not think my idea would fix the problem. He is a bit arrogant anyway and thought he had a better solution. **He doubted my capabilities which only made me more determined to solve the problem.**”*

Some respondents even recognized the potential for variance between employees in their incivility appraisals; as one participant stated:

“A supervisor spoke to me in a manner that was joking but could be deemed as derogatory to another person. It did not offend me but it could offend someone else.”

Participants also described their perceived causes of uncivil behavior. As in Study 1, some participants believed their perpetrators' behavior was intentional (in bold):

*“When I asked about a promotion, the person **just blew me off** in that they never got back to me to talk about the other position and **really didn't want to deal with me at all.**”*

*“I seem to sometimes have staff that **think they don't need to follow thru with reports and think everything they do is perfect.** They don't welcome any constructive criticism.”*

*“When I email them to come to my office they **intentionally ignore my emails** until I eventually go to their work areas and request a quick meeting.”*

Yet other respondents believed their perpetrators did not intentionally behave uncivilly:

“In regards to dealing with a rude customer or other employees. Just the typical situations that arise from time to time. Things like customers being upset for all sorts of reasons. Some based on the interaction with the company, employees and some just personal venting that has nothing to do with anything. Pretty much the same stuff with other employees. Some just venting from personal issues, bad days, moods, stress and some based on things not going as well as desired. Nothing special.”

This quote demonstrates the hypothesized link between perceived perpetrator goals and appraisal. The respondent perceives customer and coworker incivility as unintended to harm him and typically due to temporary perpetrator factors. As such, he appraises the uncivil encounters as “nothing special” and “just venting”, and he provides a casual, unemotional description of his experiences. In the next section, I once again statistically examine whether perceived intent positively relates to harm appraisals.

Finally, some respondents described direct links between their uncivil experiences and their work-related and psychological outcomes (in bold), supporting the causal link between incivility and target outcomes:

*“Lack of respect and response **caused me to leave my last position** to transfer to the one I have now.”*

*“The supervisor was condescending, mean, hurtful, rude and made derogatory remarks... Needless to say, **that job didn't last very long.**”*

Structural Equation Model

I tested the Study 2 model (Figure 5) using LISREL. This model replicates the Study 1 relationships between target incivility, harm appraisal, and job satisfaction, as well as the predictive relationship between perceived perpetrator intent and harm appraisal. However, this model incorporates challenge appraisal as an additional mediator and thriving at work as a second outcome. Like Study 1, I estimated both the measurement and structural models, evaluating “incremental” and “absolute” fit indices.

For the measurement model, I randomly allocated items across three indicators per latent construct, except for challenge appraisal (items randomly divided between two indicators). One factor loading per indicator was fixed to one in order to identify the model. Error terms for harm and challenge appraisals were allowed to correlate, as were error terms for job satisfaction and thriving at work. Goodness of fit statistics revealed very good fit: Minimum Fit Function χ^2 (149, $N = 350$) = 379.89, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .07 (90% CI for RMSEA = .062 to .078), CFI = .97, NNFI = .97, and SRMR = .049. All completely standardized factor loadings were significant and ranged from .80 to .99 (see Table 8).

Table 4.8. Study 2 Measurement Model Completely Standardized Factor Loadings

| Construct | Indicator Loadings | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-----|-----|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Job Satisfaction | .92 | .87 | .85 |
| Thriving at Work | .89 | .99 | .87 |
| Workplace Incivility | .86 | .93 | .89 |
| Perceived Perpetrator Intent | .82 | .85 | .84 |
| Harm Appraisal | .80 | .86 | .92 |
| Challenge Appraisal | .96 | .87 | n/a |
| Pessimism | .81 | .82 | .94 |

Given the measurement model's good fit, I then tested the structural model, which also fit the data well: $\chi^2(155, N = 350) = 517.63, p < .01$, RMSEA = .081 (90% CI for RMSEA = .073 to .089), CFI = .96, NNFI = .95, and SRMR = .13 (see Table 9 for measurement and structural model goodness of fit statistics). All hypothesized paths were statistically significant, even after controlling for respondent pessimism. Variance accounted for in endogenous variables appears in Table 10, and completely standardized path coefficients appear in Figure 7.

Table 4.9. Goodness of Fit Indices for Study 2 Measurement and Structural Models

| Model | χ^2 | df | χ^2/df | RMSEA | NFI | NNFI | CFI | SRMR |
|-------------|----------|-----|-------------|-------|-----|------|-----|------|
| Measurement | 379.89 | 149 | 2.55 | .070 | .96 | .97 | .97 | .049 |
| Structural | 517.63 | 155 | 3.34 | .081 | .94 | .95 | .96 | .13 |

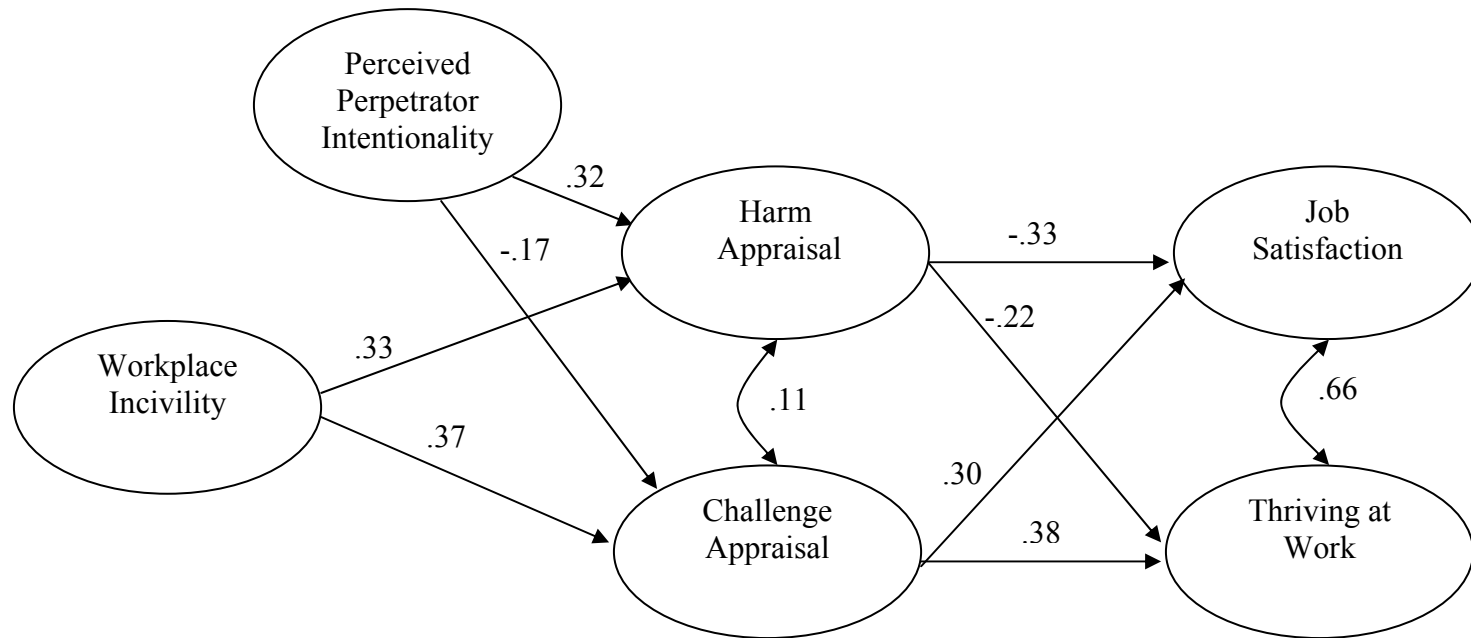
Note: Using listwise deletion of cases with missing values, the resulting sample size was $N = 350$.

Table 4.10. Study 2 Proportion of Variance Accounted for in each Endogenous Variable

| Structural Model | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Job Satisfaction | 17% |
| Thriving at Work | 17% |
| Harm Appraisal | 30% |
| Challenge Appraisal | 16% |

Figure 4.2. Study 2 Structural Model

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Control: Pessimism

Hypothesis 1 was again supported, such that workplace incivility positively related to harm appraisal ($\beta = .33$). Participants also engaged in challenge appraisals ($\beta = .37$) of workplace incivility, supporting Hypothesis 2. In other words, targets assessed their uncivil experiences both negatively *and* positively. Supporting Hypotheses 8 and 9, respondents were more likely to appraise incivility as harmful ($\beta = .32$) and less likely to form challenge appraisals ($\beta = -.17$) when they believed the incivility had been committed intentionally. Harm appraisals were related to lower job satisfaction ($\beta = -.33$), as well as lower thriving at work ($\beta = -.22$), supporting Hypotheses 3 and 4. Interestingly, when targets appraised incivility in challenging ways, they demonstrated greater job satisfaction ($\beta = .30$) and thriving at work ($\beta = .38$), supporting Hypotheses 5 and 6. This result supports the notion that targets' meaning-making of incivility is a strong determinant of their outcomes.

Summary of Results

The two empirical studies outlined above unearth pathways between targets' experiences of workplace incivility and their work-related outcomes. Consistent with stress and coping literature (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the more employees assess incivility as harmful, the lower their job satisfaction and thriving at work. Employees are likely to form harm appraisals when they believe their perpetrators intended to harm them and/or wielded control over their rude behavior. Study 2 builds on recent theories that stressors at work can also be perceived in a more positive light: as challenging. When employees appraise uncivil encounters as challenges (i.e., opportunities for growth), they experience greater job satisfaction and thriving at work. Challenge appraisals are more

likely to arise when targets believe their perpetrators did not intend to violate social norms. I supplemented these quantitative findings with employee quotes, further demonstrating diversity in target meaning-making.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Incivility can become a chronic feature of work environments, detracting from the health and wellness of individuals, teams, and whole organizations. Yet theoretical understandings of how this low-intensity behavior with ambiguous intent is able to undermine employees remain underexplored. The need for a comprehensive model of incivility's underlying mechanisms is amplified by scholars' concerns that this discourteous workplace treatment is on the rise (Pearson et al., 2000; Pearson et al., 2001). As such, I developed the Meaning-Making Model of Incivility (MMI), which presents three key contributions via two empirical studies.

First, the model highlights cognitive appraisal as an intervening mechanism in the relationship between targets' experiences of incivility and their occupational well-being. Cognitive appraisal is rooted in fundamental psychological theory stating that individuals make sense of their environments by assessing the natures, or meanings, of their experiences (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). I hypothesized that the stronger employees appraise uncivil incidents as harmful, the lower their job satisfaction – a prediction that was supported. In Study 1, each employee described her/his most recent uncivil experience at work; a subsequent measure assessed participants' harm appraisals of these incidents. Greater incivility related to greater harm appraisals, which then linked to lower job satisfaction. Study 2 replicated these results and extended them by

demonstrating that harm appraisals of incivility also related to decreased thriving at work. Thus, when employees perceive low-intensity norm violations (i.e., incivility) as harmful, they are less likely to thrive and feel satisfied in their jobs. Both studies captured trait pessimism, which was covaried in all analyses, excluding the possibility that results are simply a function of participants' negative dispositions.

Participants' open-ended descriptions of their most recent incivility experiences further supported these results. Without prompting, respondents typically laced their descriptions of uncivil behavior with their appraisals of it, often indicating that they found the incivility to be negative or stressful; for instance, "*Not replying to an email memo that required a response. **There was a sense that getting back to me simply was not a priority***" (bold indicating a negative appraisal).

Although causality cannot be confirmed between harm appraisals and outcomes, qualitative data support the hypothesized direction: "*Lack of respect and response **caused me to leave my last position to transfer to the one I have now***" (bold indicating causality). Numerous recounts of dissatisfaction and turnover, such as this one, reflect the theoretically-supported link between appraisal and well-being.

Several processes may explain the relationship between harm appraisal and negative target outcomes. First, negative appraisals influence target consideration (i.e., secondary appraisal) and execution of coping processes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Specifically, harm or threat appraisals utilize more cognitive resources, which not only pressures targets to quickly engage in coping but also prevents devotion of maximum cognitive effort toward effective coping (Koeske & Koeske, 1993). As such, incivility targets who form harm appraisals may hastily execute coping behavior that cannot

optimally resolve their experience of mistreatment, thereby undermining their well-being and happiness at work. As discussed in Future Directions, a next step is to capture employees' perceptions and adoptions of various coping methods following harm appraisals, the results of which may provide even more explanatory power in predicting employee job satisfaction and thriving. A second process that could explain harm appraisal's relationship with negative outcomes is physical reactions. Negative appraisals trigger the release of stress hormones that increase heart rate, sweat production, and blood pressure (Ennis et al., 2001; Tomaka et al., 1997). Such physiological responses might contribute to the lack of job satisfaction and thriving in employees who form harm appraisals.

Increasingly, scholars are discovering that people can – and often do – appraise negative stressors as challenges – opportunities to develop and learn. Drawing from this literature, the current project's second novel contribution is the counterintuitive possibility of challenge appraisals of incivility. Parallel to people's positive appraisals while caring for their partners with AIDS (Stein et al., 1997) and after receiving life-threatening medical diagnoses (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), this proposal bridges the “dark side” of interpersonal treatment with the Positive Organizational Scholarship movement. Perhaps some employees appraise uncivil encounters as occasions to grow and improve – whether occupationally or psychologically. Yet, limited work has applied challenge appraisal to the organizational literature, and none has applied it to employees' perceptions of mistreatment.

Indeed, in Study 2, I demonstrated that challenge appraisals of incivility are not unusual. While some employees incorporated harm appraisals into their written

descriptions of their most recent uncivil incidents, others embraced challenge appraisals: “*He doubted my capabilities which only made me more determined to solve the problem*”. This participant appraised a rude coworker’s comments as a chance to grow, investing more time and effort into solving a problem. Note that individuals can form multiple appraisals; the presence of challenge appraisals does not exclude the possibility of harm appraisals too.

I further found in Study 2 that employees who assessed uncivil encounters as challenges displayed better outcomes, including thriving and job satisfaction. These outcomes demonstrate that targets’ personal well-being can improve under uncivil conditions, consistent with research on positive outcomes following life crises (Schaefer and Moos, 1992). Moreover, harm and challenge appraisals accounted for 17% of the variance in both job satisfaction and thriving at work – a notable increase from Study 1, in which harm appraisal alone accounted for four percent of job satisfaction variance. These sizeable explained variances in Study 2 held, even when removing the correlation between job satisfaction and thriving latent factors. Thus, challenge appraisals appear to be as (or more) predictive of target outcomes as harm appraisals. These percentages of variance explained are also noteworthy given that many factors predict constructs such as job satisfaction. Combined with Study 1’s investigation of harm appraisals, these results support the notion that targets’ meaning-making (via cognitive appraisals) of incivility are strong determinants of their outcomes.

The relationship between challenge appraisals and employee outcomes could again be explained by targets’ secondary appraisal and coping. Challenge appraisals boost motivation, self-control, and self-efficacy, and are associated with goal-directed

and problem-focused coping (Aldwin & Sutton, 1998; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000a; Kuiper et al., 1995; Tedeschi et al., 1998). An employee who adopts these self-attitudes and coping behaviors may be happier and more capable at work (for more about these ideas, see Practical Implications below). Challenge appraisals may also foster positive outcomes by preventing stress-induced somatic responses (e.g., cortisol increases) or by alleviating pre-existing physical conditions (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2003; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Employees who feel better physically should also feel better psychologically at work.

In addition to appraisal as a meaning-making mechanism for targets of incivility, perceptions of perpetrators' goals in enacting incivility are also key. In this third contribution of the current project, I hypothesized that targets' beliefs about *why* perpetrators behaved rudely would predict the types of appraisals they form. Rooted in attribution theory, individuals assess multiple facets of the causes of behavior, including locus, stability, globality, intentionality, and controllability. I examined the roles of perceived intent and control due to their centrality in workplace incivility's definition ("ambiguous intent"; Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and their proposed importance in delineating different forms of mistreatment (Hershcovis, 2011). Evaluating the causes of transgressions allows targets to better understand their environments, which I predicted would assist them in determining the meanings (i.e., appraisals) of their experiences.

In Study 1, when employees believed that their perpetrators wielded control over their uncivil behavior, these targets appraised incivility as more harmful. That is, targets assessed disrespectful interactions as harmful when they believed their perpetrators had power over their behavior, yet appraised these same interactions as less bothersome when

they believed their perpetrators could not control the incidents (e.g., not returning emails due to negligence versus illness). Respondents provided written descriptions of what they saw as the main cause of their uncivil experiences. These qualitative data displayed variance in perceptions, ranging from beliefs that perpetrators wielded little to great control. For example, one respondent stated that her supervisor's continual questioning of her professional judgment was due to the supervisor's poor management, a cause she deemed controllable. Hypothetically, another respondent could have believed the supervisor's management style was dispositional and not within that supervisor's control. Or, one could have stated that corporate executives had instructed supervisors to manage in this style, mitigating personal control. A continuous scale of perceived control exists, and targets' locations on that scale relate to their appraisals of incivility.

Target perceptions of perpetrator intent also influenced their appraisals of incivility. In both empirical studies, greater perceived intent predicted greater harm appraisals, as hypothesized. Incivility is cognitively registered as harmful if it was committed intentionally, but is less bothersome if it was done accidentally or non-maliciously. Like perceived control, participants' written descriptions of the causes of their recent uncivil incidents reflected great variance in perceived perpetrator intent to commit incivility. Target comments ranged from "*Boss is overloaded with email and just overlooked it*" (unintentional) to "*I believe she was trying to pull a power play over me*" (intentional). These results are consistent with literature demonstrating mistreatment targets' lower anger and desire for revenge following unintentional attributions (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Weiner et al., 1987).

Comparing control and intent perceptions, Study 1 results demonstrate that intent loads more strongly onto harm appraisal than does control. Perceived intent thus appears to be a better predictor of harm appraisal than perceived control. This finding supports scholars' propositions that intentionality may be an important construct in the relationship between many forms of mistreatment and employee well-being (Hershcovis, 2011; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). That is, perceived intent is a driver of mistreatment's harm.

A possible explanation for perceived intent's greater predictive effect than control is that it may capture perceived perpetrator goals more precisely. Perpetrators can wield control over their uncivil behavior with or without intending to be rude, though it is more difficult to illustrate cases in which perpetrators intend to behave uncivilly but do not possess control over their behavior. In other words, if targets believe control exists, intent can greatly vary, but if they believe intent exists, control must also typically exist. For instance, if a coworker fails to return emails, the target may believe the coworker has control over this behavior and the priorities he sets (excluding the case of illness above). However, the target can deem the coworker's behavior to be intentional (e.g., he has little respect for others, he doesn't care about me) or not (e.g., he is just busy). Yet if the target perceives this behavior as intentional, it must also be controllable. As such, when two targets believe incivility was controllable, their perceived intent can contain variance; yet when these targets both believe incivility was intentional, perceived control likely has little variance. This lower variance of control within perceptions of intent allows intent to better predict target appraisals.

In Study 2, perceived perpetrator intent predicted targets' formations of challenge appraisals too. Targets were more likely to psychologically code incivility as a learning or growth opportunity when they believed their perpetrators did not intend to behave rudely. This finding builds on the few empirical studies demonstrating that hurtful but unintentional messages can be perceived positively (e.g., Vangelisti & Young, 2000). When targets believe a rude encounter was unintentional, they can appraise the incident as not only harmful, but also beneficial. This discovery poses many implications for occupational well-being, which are discussed in "Practical Implications" below.

Overall, the current project's third contribution demonstrates that targets' appraisals – or perceived natures – of low-intensity deviant behavior depend on their perceived causes of and perpetrator goals in enacting incivility. While scholars have integrated either attribution or appraisal theories into their discussions of transgressions, to my knowledge, no one has yet integrated both psychosocial theories into a coherent model of interpersonal mistreatment's impact on victims. Considering both theories is important, because this incorporation more fully unpacks target meaning-making of workplace incivility. Understanding when targets are likely to form harm or challenge appraisals informs the development of practical interventions. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) alluded to the differences between appraisal and attribution, predicting that attributions informed appraisals, yet scholars have not tested these propositions. Rather, as noted earlier, scholars often conflate these cognitive processes, which risks muddling empirical findings and interpretations. By clarifying the differences between appraisal, attribution, and their relationship, this work suggests future directions for research into these constructs.

A final note is warranted regarding employees' reported incivility frequencies. In Study 1, 88% of participants reported experiencing incivility within the past year. Although large percentages (e.g., 70%) of employees typically report having been targeted with incivility, this Study 1 statistic is higher than most. One explanation for this amplified finding is that the sample was comprised of all women and a relatively high percentage (42%) of women of color. According to selective incivility theory, workplace incivility may serve as a modern, covert form of discrimination (Cortina, 2008). Women and people of color are more likely to be targeted with incivility than men and whites, respectively (Cortina et al., in press), possibly explaining the high rates of incivility in Study 1. This high rate of incivility seen in Study 1 might also be attributable to the study's administration in Michigan, which, at the time of survey completion, had one of the worst economies in the nation, including some of the highest unemployment and layoff rates and a large drop in per capita income (Scorsone & Zin, 2010; United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010, 2012). Factors such as these, which can increase job-related threat, have been shown to foster anger and aggression in organizations (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Glomb, 2002), offering another possible explanation for this sample's higher prevalence of workplace incivility. In contrast, Study 2 – a sample of men and women across the U.S. – demonstrated a more typical rate of workplace incivility (74%). Thus, researchers should be cognizant of factors such as gender, race, region, and economy when assessing workplace incivility rates.

Although the MMI could be applied to other forms of workplace mistreatment, the theory fits workplace incivility particularly well due to the low-level and ambiguous nature of this behavior. The more ambiguous and subtle a behavior, the more subject it is

to interpretative variation between employees (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996; R. Lazarus, 1999). Different appraisals subsequently lead to diverse outcomes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Higher-intensity mistreatment (e.g., violence) is apt to be interpreted similarly across employees, because the behavior is less ambiguous and more blatant. Even when egregious deviant behavior leads to differential target outcomes, I propose that these differences are due primarily to targets' adoption of unique coping mechanisms, rather than to significant variance in their interpretations of the behavior. Incivility, on the other hand, may lead to diverse outcomes due initially to differences in targets' appraisals and attributions of the interactions and subsequently due to their adoption of diverse coping strategies.

Methodological Strengths and Limitations

Like all research, this work possesses methodological strengths and weaknesses, which I consider here.

The constructs in Studies 1 and 2 are self-report, leading to possible common method bias (i.e., systematic measurement error affecting the shared variance between measures). Researchers often cite such bias for causing overestimation of the relationships between measures (i.e., Type I error). However, it is important to note that this bias may also lead to *underestimation* of the relationships of interest (i.e., Type II error) (Chan, 2009; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Moreover, Chan (2009) argues that the concern over monomethod biases may be exaggerated: "Inflation of the observed correlation is a possibility and not a necessity" (p. 12). Indeed, such effects decline significantly when surveys are administered in naturalistic settings and

when the respondent has little at stake (e.g., providing anonymous responses) (Chan, 2009). Both of these conditions existed during Study 1 and 2 data collections.

Bearing such limitations in mind, I decided that self-report measures nonetheless remained the ideal means of measurement of the MMI. In particular, subjective self-report is essential for capturing target cognition, a notion supported by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) who state that self-report “is the primary source of data about stress, appraisal, emotion, and coping and carries the brunt of the task of assessing the relevant variables” (p. 327). They acknowledge that method variance is a “perennial problem” (p. 327) when studying stress appraisal, yet contend that self-report is the most appropriate research design for addressing their theory, ultimately producing more measurement benefit than harm. Lazarus (1999) reiterates these points in his later work, stating “Self-report is often viewed too negatively by psychologists as a flawed source of information about personal meanings, but the negative opinion is not fully justified...” (p. 84).

Given the necessity of self-report in the current study, I implemented a number of procedural remedies to reduce method bias. Wherever possible, I used measures with well-established reliability and convergent and discriminant validity (e.g., workplace incivility, job satisfaction). Second, both surveys were completely anonymous, reducing participants’ implicit social desirability and response consistency concerns. Third, the measures in each survey were temporally and psychologically separated from one another. Specifically, a series of measures unrelated to the model partitioned the presentation order of dependent variables from workplace incivility, creating time separation. Section headings were also used to reduce respondents’ perceived relationships between measures. Such temporal and psychological separations served to

decrease the salience and relevance of participants' initial responses to their later responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Finally, in Study 2, sets of measures were counterbalanced in their presentation order.

I also statistically addressed potential common method bias by controlling for the effects of a directly measured latent methods factor: pessimism (Podsakoff et al., 2003). That is, I modeled pessimism as a latent construct and partialled out its effects in all models. A major advantage of this approach is that it estimates the method factor's measurement error.

I carefully considered the costs and benefits of using self-report data to test the MMI and ultimately concluded that measurement of target employees' appraisals and perceived perpetrator goals were most validly assessed in this manner. However, my next step in this line of research will be to incorporate multi-source data in my analyses of Study 2. That is, I have collected coworker ratings of the work behavior of 160 Study 2 participants. Preliminary analyses suggest that these participants' (self-reported) incivility, job satisfaction, and thriving correlate significantly with their coworker-reported organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and performance. These relationships with third party-reported outcomes cannot be attributed to monomethod bias, further bolstering my findings. I plan to develop these results further in this and future research on the MMI.

Another limitation is that operationalizations of workplace incivility via the most common measures (e.g., the WIS; Cortina et al., 2001) typically contain harm appraisal terms, such as "condescending" and "rude". Thus, measurement does not adequately disentangle the occurrence of uncivil behavior from targets' cognitive appraisals of it.

While it may not be possible to completely differentiate these constructs, given that incivility inherently contains both objective (one's behavior) and subjective (perceived norm violations) features, future research could better separate incivility from appraisal through a series of methodological steps: (1) assess whether employees have experienced certain behaviors that possess *potential* for uncivil interpretations, but minimize the integration of appraisals within measurement items for these behaviors (e.g., a coworker did not reply to your email); these behaviors could be adapted from existing measures or even developed by surveying employees across diverse occupations about the behaviors they most commonly consider to be norm violations, (2) inquire whether employees believe each behavior constitutes a violation of respect within their organizational settings, (3) measure appraisals of each behavior using constructs like those in the present study. The first two steps measure the presence of workplace incivility, capturing subjects' reports of behaviors that both they and general society deem to be violations of organizational norms of respect. These processes improve incivility operationalization by excluding experiences that are unique to specific subjects (i.e., step 1 limits analysis to behaviors that the average employee might perceive as uncivil, excluding rare or subject-specific experiences), and by confirming that subjects do indeed identify these behaviors as uncivil (i.e., step 2 excludes behaviors that subjects do *not* consider norm violations). The third step then captures subject appraisals of these uncivil work behaviors.

Despite outward similarities between the present operationalizations of incivility and harm appraisal, the measures do not contain prohibitive overlap, as evidenced by the significant relationship between incivility and *challenge* appraisals. That is, employees' reports of incivility were not always characterized by significant harm appraisals. Rather,

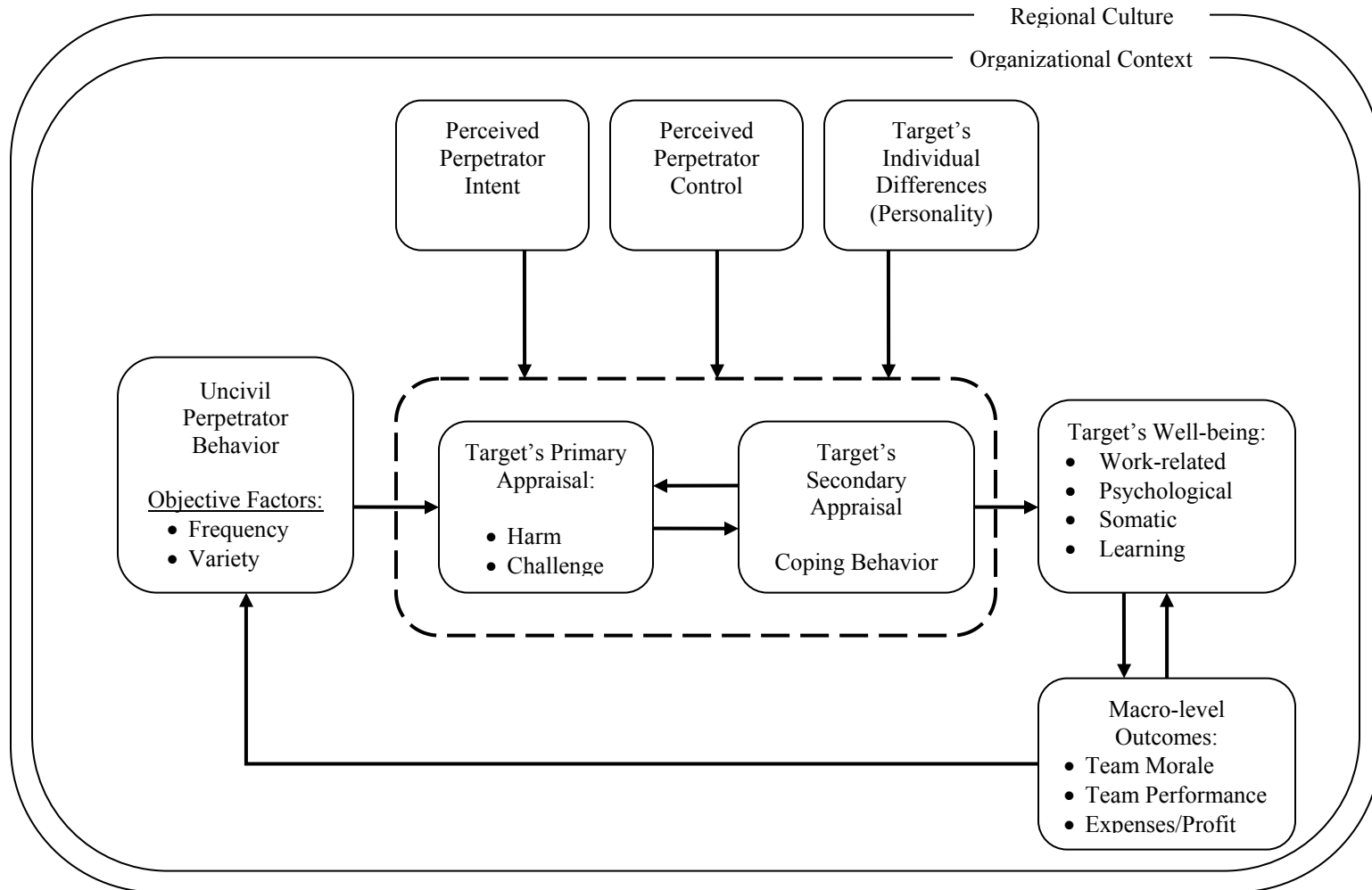
employees' appraisals of incivility varied from very harmful to not at all harmful and from very challenging to not at all challenging.

Future Directions and Expanding the MMI

The MMI advances our understanding of employees' varied reactions to and outcomes following incivility by incorporating fundamental psychological theories into the literature on workplace incivility – a highly social phenomenon. Yet other important concepts could be included. For example, how might *learning theory* enrich the model? Because incivility is often prevalent and insidious, how might it serve as a form of operant conditioning, causing employees to implicitly associate rudeness with certain job positions (e.g., managers) or coworker characteristics (e.g., based on age, sex)? *Emotion* is apt to play a role in the MMI, but where and how? Emotion has been proposed as a precursor to justice evaluations (Sinclair & Mark, 1991), an antecedent to causal attribution (Bohner et al., 1988), an outcome of cognitive appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and attribution (Martinko et al., 2002; Weiner, 1977; Weiner et al., 1982), as well as an overarching model for appraisal (R. Lazarus, 1993b). Future research could determine the most significant role of emotion in the MMI.

A number of other facets are important for fully elucidating the MMI. These concepts provide rich ideas for future research on the factors critical in targets' meaning-making of incivility. Below, I briefly theorize about the roles of four additional constructs (secondary appraisal, target personality, macro-level outcomes, and context) and pictorially represent an expanded version of the MMI (see Figure 8).

Figure 5.1. Expanded Theoretical Meaning-Making Model of Incivility (MMI)



Secondary appraisal. In addition to primary appraisal discussed earlier, secondary appraisal involves evaluations of what should and can be done to cope with a stressor (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Targets evaluate the likelihood that their proposed coping behavior will lead to their desired outcome (termed the outcome expectancy), as well as their likelihood that they can successfully execute proposed coping behavior (termed the efficacy expectancy) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Thus, coping behavior is enacted when secondary appraisal expectancies are high. When they are low, targets continue to evaluate coping methods until one strategy is deemed to meet one's outcome and efficacy expectancies (R. Lazarus, 1993a).

Despite their titles, primary and secondary appraisals do not necessarily occur sequentially (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Primary appraisals often drive secondary appraisals, yet perceived ease and success of coping can also affect targets' assessments of an event's nature. Cognitive appraisal is best understood as an interaction between primary and secondary appraisal, both of which shape targets' understandings of everyday events.

Subsequently, appraisals influence coping behavior. As Lazarus (1993b) stated, "[P]ersonal meanings are the most important aspects of psychological stress with which the person must cope, and they direct the choice of coping strategy" (p. 244). Examining coping is beyond the scope of this project, but much research has addressed the effectiveness of various coping strategies, which could be integrated into the MMI. In particular, reappraisal, which changes the relational meaning of an experience, has the potential to alleviate negative outcomes, so greater research on this type of coping, specifically in response to incivility, is warranted.

Personality. Discrepancies exist in people's appraisals of the same stressful events; consideration of targets' personality traits may explain significant variance in their meaning-making of incivility. Historically, researchers have studied individual differences from either dispositional (i.e., trait) or process (i.e., situational) approaches, rarely considering the roles of both (Mischel & Shoda, 1998). This divergence between disciplines (i.e., personality psychology's focus on human disposition and social psychology's focus on contextual factors) hinders our understanding of human cognition and functioning. By considering both perspectives - the person in context - we can more reliably predict individual behavior and well-being. Therefore, in addition to discussing attribution (a situationally-varying contextual factor) as a predictor of incivility appraisal, it is important to discuss the role of targets' stable personality traits.

Investigating the roles of targets' traits in their mistreatment can sometimes be risky, insinuating a "blame the victim" message (e.g., if neurotic employees are more likely to be targeted with incivility, does that render perpetrator behavior justifiable?) (Herschovis & Barling, 2007). As such, I discuss targets' personality traits as influencing their *perceptions* of mistreatment, rather than as causing their mistreatment. Effects of targets' personalities on their perceptions is a fruitful avenue of study, because it provides insight into how incivility is differentially experienced by and affects employees. This approach is comparable to research on personality traits that foster thriving following life-changing events such as disability or rape (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Tennen & Affleck, 1998).

Increasing research has investigated the role of target personality in workplace victimization. This work has shown that employees higher in aggressiveness report

greater direct and indirect victimization, and individuals with greater negative affectivity perceive greater direct (but not indirect) victimization (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000).

Employees low in self-determination also report greater victimization (Aquino, Grover, Bradfield, & Allen, 1999).

However, a significant limitation of this literature is that it often does not define whether traits precede (i.e., influence one's likelihood of being victimized) or follow (i.e., influence one's meaning-making) mistreatment. Some research has addressed this limitation by examining the influence of individual factors in respondents' *appraisals* of mistreatment. For example, Ohbuchi and colleagues (2006) showed that gender affects appraisals of interpersonal norms. Cortina and Magley (2009) found that neither target job status, nor status relative to one's perpetrator, predict appraisal of workplace incivility. Wright and Fitzgerald (2007) reported that women's self-esteem and feminist attitudes affect their sexual harassment appraisals.

This line of work has not yet examined the role of personality traits in targets' incivility appraisals, providing a promising topic of investigation. For example, target agreeableness, a trait associated with higher quality relationships and positive affect (McCrae & Costa, 1991), may foster challenge appraisals of incivility. Meanwhile, conscientiousness could cultivate incivility harm appraisals, given that conscientious individuals may perceive work events that threaten their goals or accomplishments negatively (García, Paetzold, & Colella, 2006).

Macro-level outcomes. Another topic pertinent to the MMI that should be investigated is macro-level (e.g., team, organization) outcomes. A handful of studies suggest that mistreatment's effects are not isolated to individuals; higher-order groups are

impaired as well. Uncivil experiences increase employee deviance, theft, and counterproductive work behavior, subsequently reducing company revenue (Penny & Spector, 2005). Morale and commitment decline, decreasing productivity and innovation, which then invite employee turnover, increasing selection and training costs (Cortina, 2008; Lim et al., 2008; Porath & Erez, 2007). Incivility may also spread among coworkers, damaging overall climate (Andersson and Pearson, 1999).

Although the relationship between incivility and organizational decline has been discussed in previous work, the mechanisms underlying this relationship have not been clearly disentangled. Previous models have displayed organizational decline as a proximal outcome of incivility (Pearson et al., 2001) but have not addressed its relationship with employees' individual outcomes. The MMI proposes that higher-order outcomes are a direct result of individuals' incivility outcomes (e.g., job dissatisfaction, counterproductive work behavior).

After workgroups or companies are affected by incivility, two reciprocal loops with individuals' outcomes may develop. In the first, proximal, loop, employees' outcomes change in severity or breadth as a direct result of their impact on the team. If an individual's personal outcomes take a mounting toll on a team, the person's well-being may decline or even improve, based on resulting changes at the higher level. As such, higher-order incivility outcomes will reciprocally and directly affect individuals' outcomes. A second, distal, reciprocal process in the MMI highlights organization or team impact on the occurrence of future uncivil behavior. Poor organizational climate or workgroup dissatisfaction should increase incivility's prevalence, while clear company policies, with consistent enforcement, could prevent incivility. Through this feedback

loop, I propose that organizations' outcomes following incivility will affect the frequency and variety of future incivility, thereby distally affecting individuals' well-being.

Context. The MMI's mechanisms do not occur in a vacuum, but rather, take place within dynamic systems. Context provides an overarching boundary within which the model operates, continually influencing its unfolding. Contextual factors – which I separate into organizational context and regional culture – influence employees' appraisals and attributions.

Organizational context factors include company and workgroup size, organizational structure, climate, and workgroup composition. Little research has examined how organizational contexts influence victims' *appraisals* of interpersonal mistreatment, though somewhat related work exists. For example, workplace aggression rises following pay freezes, changes in management, reengineering, budget cuts, and increases in diversity and performance monitoring (Baron & Neuman, 1996).

Organizational climate moderates the relationship between targets' justice perceptions and job attitudes (Mayer, Nishii, Schneider, & Goldstein, 2007), as well as targets' responses to victimization (Aquino, Douglas, & Martinko, 2004). Greater voice (i.e., jobs in which employees can express their opinions and concerns) weakens the negative relationship between threat appraisals and job satisfaction (Sinclair et al., 2002). And organizational structure and job control moderate the relationship between perceptions of injustice and negative outcomes such as anxiety (Spell & Arnold, 2007).

Organizational context also influences targets' attributions. When observers believe an actor behaved in an unbecoming manner due to organizational pressure, they are more likely to attribute his behavior to external factors and relieve him of blame

(Jones & Davis, 1965). Yet other organizational features, including authoritarian management style, numerous and precise rules, adverse physical conditions, and inflexible policies, may reinforce aggressive climates and attributions of controllability (Martinko & Zellers, 1998). Little work has discussed, much less empirically examined, the role of organizational context in targets' attributions of mistreatment, but this is a ripe area for future research.

Adopting a broader lens, regional culture also influences individuals' appraisals of norm violations. Regional culture most often describes national norms but can include state, city, or other geographic customs. Collectivism emphasizes smooth interpersonal relations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), so when relations are not harmonious (as in incivility), targets should make more harm appraisals. Indeed, people in collectivist cultures assess interpersonal norm violations as more egregious than formal, rule-based violations (Ohbuchi et al., 2006), suggesting that regional culture affects expectations for appropriate behavior. Cultural norms trickle down to affect perceived accountability within organizations (Gelfand, Lim, & Raver, 2004; Gelfand, Nishii, & Raver, 2006). That is, societal culture influences organizations' norms and policies, as well as employees' psychological states and anticipated repercussions following incivility. Thus, employees in "tight" cultures (i.e., strong, clear societal norms and sanctioning) might appraise workplace incivility as harmful, while employees in cultures where norms are fluid and loosely regulated may exhibit greater appraisal variance and/or tolerance for incivility. However, recent work suggests that interpersonal work relations may not greatly differ cross-culturally due to globalization and a decreasing transmission of

cultural norms into organizations (Lim & Lee, 2011). Clearly, more cross-cultural work on incivility is needed.

Overall, the Meaning-Making Model of Incivility occurs within the bounds of targets' contexts and involves multiple variables not yet tested, including secondary appraisal, personality, and organizational-level outcomes. These constructs suggest many promising directions for future empirical research.

In addition to expanding the MMI, a final fruitful research avenue is exploring appraisals underlying other forms of mistreatment. As mentioned, appraisal is especially relevant to incivility due to its low-intensity, ambiguous nature. Future studies could confirm that egregious forms of mistreatment contain less variance in appraisal (i.e., are consistently appraised as severe and intentional). This work could determine whether variance in coping rather than in appraisal drives outcomes of overt mistreatment. Answering these questions would help differentiate the numerous interpersonal deviance constructs that have emerged in the workplace literature.

Practical Implications

The MMI benefits organizations, because it outlines the process through which incivility affects employee well-being, as well as macro-level (e.g., team, organization) outcomes. By understanding these pathways, organizations can enact steps to prevent negative outcomes, rather than retrospectively addressing them. Here, I describe methods organizations can adopt.

Given incivility's undermining of target well-being in the MMI, it is important to first consider prevention of incivility. Organizations should critically evaluate their overarching norms, cultures, policies, and structures (O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew,

1996). Are organization-level variables contributing to the occurrence of incivility or compounding employee-level outcomes following uncivil encounters, as outlined in the MMI? Organizational leaders have control in setting precedents for the nature of interpersonal interactions at work, so evaluating and changing organization-level practices is a key starting point for organizations to address incivility. Companies can also participate in a program, CREW, which has been shown to successfully increase workgroup civility and respect (Osatuke, Moore, Ward, Dyrenforth, & Belton, 2009). I emphasize organizational-level interventions first, because addressing the occurrence of incivility is preferable to “fixing the victim” (Beehr, 1998). However, there are many individual-level strategies that can prevent targets’ negative perceptions and outcomes, to which I now turn.

Drawing from impression management research, all employees should be informed about the power of communication (Schat & Kelloway, 2003). When one’s behavior is unclear, employees rely on subconscious and easy-to-process information (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). Though seemingly elementary, courses on communication can reduce the use of inferences by educating employees about problems with vague communication, alerting them to their own conversational styles, habits, and gestures, and teaching them strategies for communicating their thoughts effectively (Pearson et al., 2000; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Learning these skills and when to execute them may then proactively and positively alter employees’ impressions of one another and the causes of their behavior (Keashly & Neuman, 2008). For instance, training can equip incivility targets with skills to solicit more information from their perpetrators about their goals and states of mind, reducing ambiguity and potentially preventing attributions of

intent, control, and responsibility. Learning to gather more information is important, because ambiguity about the cause of misbehavior facilitates assumptions that the actor was responsible for the violation (Weiner et al., 1987). Some participants from the current project's studies even expressed awareness of the need for improved communication, making statements such as, "We really need a communications course and conflict resolution in the workplace." Indeed, two-way communication programs between employees and managers have been shown to reduce employee strain and uncertainty and increase employee job satisfaction and commitment following corporate mergers (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). Even when alleged perpetrators do possess control or intent in behaving uncivilly, their learning to apologize, accept responsibility, and take steps to alleviate the problem can significantly reduce targets' negative cognitions and retaliatory behavior (Martinko & Kelley, 1998).

In addition to preventing detrimental attributions, communication training could transform targets' harm appraisals into challenges. As demonstrated in the MMI, attributions predict appraisals, so by decreasing attributions of intent and control, communication education should, by default, decrease harm appraisals and increase challenge appraisals. This prediction is consistent with work showing that receipt of uncontrollable and unintentional explanations for transgressions can ward off observers' anger (Weiner et al., 1987; Weiner et al., 1982). Clear communication may also directly promote challenge appraisals by helping targets identify when coworkers are trying to help them develop.

Organizations can also address incivility targets' attributions and appraisals retrospectively via informal counseling and employee assistance programs (EAP). These

programs can incorporate a number of evidence-based strategies. For instance, targets can learn to reflect upon their attributions and appraisals and to consider new information about perpetrator behavior (e.g., he was having a bad day, she is facing problems at home) (Martinko & Kelley, 1998). Dissecting their reasoning can help targets develop healthier appraisals and, ultimately, better outcomes.

In industries with high incivility (e.g., nursing, corrections), employees can be equipped with strategies for re-framing negative experiences in a constructive manner. In particular, the framework underlying cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT; Beck, 1975, 1999; Dobson & Dozois, 2001; Ellis, 1975, 2001; A. Lazarus, 1971; Rachman, 1997) is pertinent to the relationship between appraisal and psychological well-being. CBT states that people can positively shape their behavior and attitudes by reframing their thoughts. Individuals learn to reappraise stressful events so as to maintain self-esteem and worth, while learning from their psychological errors and behavioral mistakes (Burns, 1990). By re-conceptualizing events constructively, as well as engaging in benefit finding and reminding, one can avoid detrimental outcomes such as depression, low self-esteem, and anger-driven behavior (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2003). CBT highlights the strong link between human cognition and well-being.

Researchers have acknowledged that clinical approaches such as CBT are directly applicable to employees' experiences of workplace mistreatment (Greenberg, 2004). Employees can be educated about the negative impact of rumination and certain types of coping, as well as be taught strategies for reframing negative experiences. Under circumstances of prevalent incivility (e.g., nurses dealing with irritable patients, consultants working with rude clients), CBT would teach employees effective coping

methods that could alleviate burnout or depression. Humor can also be incorporated in CBT, which results in greater challenge appraisals, benefit-finding from stressful events, personal control, and positive physical effects (Bloom, 1998; Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger, 1995).

Several specific types of training exist that incorporate the fundamentals of CBT. Cognitive-affective stress management training (Smith & Ascough, 1985) entails group sessions in which participants learn about the links between their cognitions and well-being, and subsequently support one another in their efforts to manage stress. More recently, scholars developed a computerized task that positively modifies cognitive appraisals (Lang, Moulds, & Holmes, 2009). Participants who underwent this cognitive modification task reported more positive appraisals and less cognitive intrusion following exposure to scenes of bullying, effects that persisted in subsequent evaluations. Another form of training is stress inoculation, in which people learn to manage mild to difficult stressors through graduated phases (Tedeschi et al., 1998). Stress inoculation has been successfully applied to stressful work contexts.

Finally, organizations can provide social support for incivility targets, helping them learn to cope with and address personal mistreatment (Keashly & Harvey, 2006). In fact, organizational support may be more effective than emotion- or internally-focused forms of coping in response to some types of mistreatment (Richman, Rospenda, Flaherty, & Freels, 2001). According to Schat and Kelloway (2003), organizations can provide instrumental (direct coworker assistance) or informational (training, education) support, which buffer targets from numerous adverse effects.

A word of caution is warranted regarding these practical suggestions to mitigate harm appraisals and promote challenge appraisals: Lazarus and Folkman (1984) clearly state that certain appraisals “are not in and of themselves appropriate or inappropriate, effective or ineffective” (p. 185). Rather, the value of an appraisal depends on the specific situation and context. As such, I do not advocate that harm appraisals of incivility should *always* be nullified and challenge appraisals *always* encouraged. The present studies demonstrate that harm appraisals of incivility are often detrimental and challenge appraisals are typically beneficial, but the particular individuals, contexts, and outcomes involved should be considered.

Conclusion

Employees’ perceptions of interpersonal mistreatment are shaped by their meaning-making of themselves, their co-workers, and their environments (Briner et al., 2004). While significant work has demonstrated the detrimental micro- and macro-level consequences of interpersonal workplace transgressions, less attention has been paid to social-psychological mechanisms intervening in this relationship. In the proposed Meaning-Making Model of Incivility (MMI), I draw from classic theories of stress and coping and social psychology to illustrate the integral roles of appraisal and attribution in targets’ understandings of uncivil interactions. Results from two empirical studies show that some targets appraise uncivil events as harmful (i.e., as posing harm or threat of future harm). These targets also report lower job satisfaction and thriving at work. Yet, other targets form challenge appraisals following uncivil encounters; they report the experiences as opportunities for growth and learning. These participants display higher job satisfaction and thriving at work. Finally, I uncover an important predictor of targets’

incivility appraisals: perceived perpetrator goals. Individuals who believe their perpetrators wielded control and/or intended to harm them via incivility made more harm and less challenging appraisals for the events. This finding, rooted in attribution theory, demonstrates that beliefs about the nature of an event are driven by perceived causes of the event. Finally, I supplement this empirical work with a theoretical discussion of three additional constructs in the model: individual differences, macro-level outcomes, and context. The MMI advances our understanding of the impact of workplace incivility by incorporating fundamental psychosocial theories to illuminate targets' meaning-making of this insidious form of mistreatment.

Appendices

Appendix A

Study 1 “Snapshot” Survey

2010 MICHIGAN WOMEN WORK “SNAPSHOT” SURVEY

Please answer the following questions. Remember that your information is confidential, and you may skip any question you choose.

1. Please indicate your gender: [open-ended]

2. How many hours do you work per week?

[open-ended, except for one response option - “Not currently employed” – that redirects participants to the end of the survey]

3. Where are you currently employed?

Ingham County

Jackson County

Lenawee County

Livingston County

Macomb County

Monroe County

Oakland County

Washtenaw County

Wayne County

Other _____

4. How long have you worked at your present organization?

Less than 1 year

1 year or more

5. Approximately how many people are employed at your organization?

1

2-5

6-10

11-25

26-50

51-100

101 – 200

201 or more

Completely unsure

6. What industry do you currently work in?

Accounting

Banking

Biotechnology

Construction

Education

Engineering

Government

Healthcare

Human Resources

Legal

Marketing

Manufacturing

Restaurant/Food Service

Retail

Software Development

Technology (Web Development)

Other Business to Business Services

Other (please specify): _____

7. What do you see as the biggest challenge facing working women?

[open-ended]

8. How would you describe your ethnicity? (check all that apply)

Please note that these categories are U.S. Census Bureau breakdowns.

American Indian and Alaskan Native

Asian

Black or African American

Caucasian/ White

Hispanic/Latina

Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander

Other _____

9. Do you hold any of the following leadership positions at your job?

(check all that apply)

Owner (you personally own over 50% of controlling interest in your company)

Senior Executive

Executive

Manager

Supervisor

Other _____

None of the above

For Business Owners Only (redirected based on Question 9)

10. How many years have you owned your business?

[open-ended]

11. What is your company's annual revenue?

Under \$100,000

\$100,000-\$250,000

\$250,001-\$500,000

\$500,001 or more

Don't know

12. What do you anticipate will be your biggest business challenge this year?

[open-ended]

Thank you for completing our survey. Your information is important for understanding the status of working women in Michigan. Findings from this “snapsnot” survey will be available on the Michigan Women Work website starting Fall 2010.

We are conducting an additional study of the unique rewards and challenges Michigan women face at work. This survey will help identify aspects of women’s work life that need greater attention, ultimately influencing positive change.

Participants of the additional survey will receive \$10 and a Michigan Women Work summary report.

As part of the Michigan Women Work initiative, would you be interested in completing a survey by mail?

Yes

No (If selected, thank participate and redirect to end of study.)

If Yes:

A subsample of women will be selected to receive this paper-based survey, which will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete and is completely anonymous. If you are selected, where would you like to receive the survey? Please provide a name and mailing address:

Prefix (Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr.): _____

Name: _____

Title (optional): _____

Company Name (optional): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Email Address (optional): _____

This information will be kept completely confidential. Your name and address will not be attached to your survey responses. We will not sell or use your address for any other purposes. Thank you!

End Note to All Participants:

Thank you for completing the Michigan Women Work “snapshot” survey!

Appendix B

Study 1 Postcard Indicating Paper Survey Completion

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

In order to indicate that you completed the survey (and to avoid receiving reminder letters), please mail this postcard separately from your survey. Please note that this postcard confirming your participation will not be linked to your survey responses.

Name (as it appears on the survey envelope)

In return for your completed survey, we will mail you \$10.

Results will be available on the Michigan Women Work website, beginning Fall 2010!

Check here if you would like to receive a summary report of these results in the mail.

Except where noted, all measures in subsequent appendices are rated on 5-point Likert scales, with higher numbers indicating greater levels of the underlying construct.

Appendix C

Workplace Incivility

(Workplace Incivility Scale; WIS; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001)

(Cyber-incivility measure; Lim & Teo, 2009)

During the PAST YEAR, has anyone associated with your WORK (e.g., supervisors, coworkers, clients/customers, collaborators at other companies) done any of the following behaviors, *either in person or electronically (e.g., email)*?

- a) Put you down or been condescending to you
- b) Paid little attention to your statement or showed little interest in your
- c) opinion
- d) Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you
- e) Addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately
- f) Ignored or excluded you from professional camaraderie
- g) Doubted your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility
- h) Sent you emails using a rude and discourteous tone
- i) Used ALL CAPS to shout at you through email
- j) Not replied to your email at all

Recent Workplace Incivility Experience

Now we want to ask you in more detail about one of your experiences.

Thinking about the experience(s) you just reported in Question 1 above, which of these experiences occurred most RECENTLY? (If you only circled 1s in the Never columns, please skip to Question X on page X). By “experience”, we mean a behavior or pattern of behaviors that came from the same person(s), even if the behavior happened over a period of time.

In several sentences, briefly describe **ONE** of these experiences that occurred most **RECENTLY**:

[open-ended text box]

Appendix D

Cognitive Appraisal - Harm

(Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Grandey, Dickter, & Sin, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984;
Swan, 1997)

How would you describe this recent experience? Rate the extent to which each word describes the experience.

To what degree was this situation:

- a) Offensive
- b) Annoying
- c) Embarrassing
- d) Frustrating
- e) Disturbing
- f) Threatening
- g) Challenging
- h) Stressful
- i) Hurtful
- j) Serious

Appendix E

Perceived Perpetrator Control and Intent to Harm

(Furnham, Sadka, & Brewin, 1992; Peterson et al., 1982; Russell, 1982)

Thinking about the experience you described, briefly write what you feel was the *one major cause* of the situation:

[open-ended text box]

Thinking about the cause you wrote in the previous question, please circle one number for each of the following questions.

a) Was the cause due to something about the primary person who engaged in the behavior you described in Question 1?

Not at all due to the primary person 1 2 3 4 5 Totally due to the primary person

b) Was the cause controllable by the primary person involved?

Not at all controllable by the primary person 1 2 3 4 5 Totally controllable by the primary person

c) Did the primary person commit the behavior on purpose?

Not at all on purpose 1 2 3 4 5 Completely on purpose

Appendix F

Job Satisfaction

(MI Organizational Assessment Questionnaire; Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh,
1983)

Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements about
your job.

- a) All in all, I am satisfied with my job.
- b) In general, I like working here.
- c) In general, I don't like my job.

Appendix G

Pessimism

(Scheier & Carver, 1985; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

- a) In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.
- b) If something can go wrong for me, it will.
- c) I'm always optimistic about my future.
- d) I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
- e) I rarely count on good things happening to me.
- f) Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad.

Appendix H

Cognitive Appraisals - Harm and Challenge

How would you describe this recent experience? Rate the extent to which each word describes the experience. To what degree was this incident:

Harm Appraisal:

- a) Offensive
- b) Annoying
- c) Embarrassing
- d) Frustrating
- e) Challenging
- f) Stressful
- g) Hurtful
- h) Serious

Challenge Appraisal:

- a) Positive
- b) Helpful
- c) A Learning Experience
- d) An Opportunity for you to Develop
- e) A Contribution to your Growth

Appendix I

Perceived Perpetrator Intent to Harm

Thinking about the experience you described, what do you feel was the MAIN CAUSE of the situation? In several sentences, please describe the reason(s) this experience occurred.

[open-ended text box]

Thinking about the cause you just described, please rate the extent to which you agree with each statement below.

- a) The primary person committed this behavior on purpose.
- b) This incident was accidental.
- c) The primary person did not intend for this incident to happen.
- d) The primary person intended to hurt me in some way.
- e) The primary person was unaware of the implications of his/her behavior.
- f) The primary person was intentionally being rude.
- g) The primary person planned this behavior.
- h) The primary person behaved this way because he/she was in a bad mood.
- i) The primary person used this behavior to get something he/she wanted.
- j) The primary person behaved this way because he/she was trying to be helpful.

Appendix J

Thriving at Work

(Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, in press)

Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*)

At work...

Learning facet:

- a) I find myself learning often.
- b) I continue to learn more and more as time goes by.
- c) I see myself continually improving.
- d) I am not learning,
- e) I have developed a lot as a person.

Vitality facet:

- a) I feel alive and vital.
- b) I have energy and spirit.
- c) I don't feel very energetic.
- d) I feel alert and awake.
- e) I am looking forward to each new day.

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