Raising Voice, Risking Retaliation: Events Following Interpersonal Mistreatment in the Workplace

Lilia M. Cortina
University of Michigan

Vicki J. Magley
DePaul University

This study advances the literature on workplace deviance, addressing retaliation victimization in the context of interpersonal mistreatment. Using survey data from 1,167 public-sector employees, the authors investigated experiences of *work retaliation victimization* and *social retaliation victimization* among employees who have vocally resisted interpersonal mistreatment. Regression analyses suggest that different victim voice mechanisms trigger different forms of retaliation, depending on the social positions of the mistreatment victim and instigator. Discriminant function analyses demonstrate lower professional, psychological, and physical well-being among mistreated employees who have been further victimized with retaliation. These analyses also reveal health-related costs associated with victim silence—that is, enduring mistreatment without voicing resistance. Results are interpreted in light of theory on power, emotions, and justice in organizations.

Recent years have seen increasing popular and scholarly interest in the "dark side" of organizational life. Amid a flurry of high-profile corporate scandals, issues of organizational deviance and whistle-blowing are now front and center in the American media. *Interpersonal mistreatment* is a specific, antisocial variety of organizational deviance, involving a situation in which at least one organizational member takes counternormative negative actions—or terminates normative positive actions—against another member (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Giacolone & Greenberg, 1997; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Interpersonal mistreatment can thus range from subtle social slights to general incivility to blatant harassment and violence. Theory and research are emerging on the larger processes in which this form of deviance is embedded, addressing events that precede and follow mistreatment (e.g., Barling, Rogers, & Kelloway, 2001; Cortina, Lonsway, et al., 2002; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Glomb, Steel, & Arvey, 2002; Griffin, O'Leary-Kelly, & Collins, 1998). The present article focuses on the latter—specifically, victims' experiences of voice, retaliation victimization, and impaired well-being following interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace.

Central Concepts

Organizational members can resist interpersonal mistreatment using various active strategies, including *exit* and *voice* (Farrell, 1983; Hirschman, 1970; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988). Exiting an organization as a means of coping with mistreatment would be considered a destructive measure—by definition, it breaks off the relationship with the organization (Farrell, 1983; Rusbult et al., 1988). Exit is clearly a permanent measure taken by a victim when the situation becomes absolutely intolerable. In the present article, we focus on voice strategies that either precede or substitute for exit; employees "use voice" when they vocalize their dissent or dissatisfaction with an organizational practice. Voice "can be graduated, all the way from faint grumbling to violent protest; it implies articulation of one's critical opinions" (Hirschman, 1970, p. 16). Voice functions as a means of active resistance to mistreatment, but it comes from employees who are members of the organization and seek to preserve

that status; in that sense, voice is considered a constructive act (Farrell, 1983; Rusbult et al., 1988).

In some cases, resistance to interpersonal mistreatment may trigger *retaliation victimization*.[1] The law defines retaliation as an employer (or employer's "agent") taking adverse action against an employee for opposing an unlawful employment practice or participating in any investigation, proceeding, or hearing related to such a practice. When the mistreatment qualifies as illegal status-based discrimination (e.g., harassment based on gender, race, national original, etc.), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 applies and specifically prohibits retaliation (Crockett & Gilmere, 1999). Importantly, however, legal statutes do not delineate the outer boundaries of this experiential domain. Employees can "feel" retaliated against in a psychological sense, whenever they perceive a fellow member of the organization taking negative action against them as a direct result of their having opposed an employment practice.

Retaliatory acts can be divided into two categories: work related and social. The former, which we term *work retaliation victimization* (WRV), to date has been the focus of most retaliation research and jurisprudence (e.g., Crockett & Gilmere, 1999; Miceli & Near, 1988). WRV involves adverse work-related actions that are often tangible, formal, and documented in employment records. Examples include discharge, involuntary transfer, demotion, poor performance appraisal, and deprivation of perquisites or overtime opportunities. WRV has the purpose or effect of negatively altering aspects of the target's job, and it typically originates from supervisors, managers, and other employees with authority to make such alterations. For the actions to qualify as retaliation victimization per se, the instigator must intend them or the target must perceive them to be a reprisal for the target's behavior. In sum, we propose the following definition for this construct:

> Work retaliation victimization (WRV) involves adverse work-related actions that have the purpose or effect of negatively altering the target's job and that are intended by the instigator or perceived by the target to be a reprisal for the target's behavior.

A second variant of retaliation entails less tangible social reprisals; we term these actions *social retaliation victimization* (SRV). This refers to antisocial behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, that often go undocumented—for example, harassment, name-calling, ostracism, blame, threats, or the "silent treatment." SRV has the purpose or effect of negatively altering the target's interpersonal relations with other organizational members. It can come from individuals at any level of the organization—peers, superiors, and subordinates. Again, retaliation victimization only covers actions intended by the instigator or perceived by the target to be a reprisal for the target's behavior. We offer the following definition:

> Social retaliation victimization (SRV) involves antisocial behaviors that have the purpose or effect of negatively altering the target's interpersonal relations with other organizational members and that are intended by the instigator or perceived by the target to be a reprisal for the target's behavior.

In the following sections, we detail hypotheses that revolve around a multistage conceptualization of the retaliation victimization process: (a) An employee victimizes a fellow employee; (b) the victim "voices" dissatisfaction with the situation; (c) the victim experiences further victimization in the form of retaliation and (d) suffers negative consequences from this WRV or SRV. In particular, we focus on Steps c and d of this process.[2] Consistent with prior retaliation victimization research (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1992; Near & Miceli, 1996), we examine this process from the perspective of individual victims—attending to their perceptions. This reflects our reliance on a cognitive stress framework, which defines psychological stress as "a relationship between the person and the environment that is *appraised by the person* [italics added] as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 21). This approach necessarily implies a subjective component to experiences and definitions of stressors (such as WRV and SRV) and requires an individual focus.

---

[1] Note that our use of the term *retaliation* is consistent with its use in the well-established whistle-blowing and legal literatures (Crockett & Gilmere, 1999; Miceli & Near, 1985, 1988, 1992; Miceli, Rehg, Near, & Ryan, 1999; Near, Dworkin, & Miceli, 1993; Near & Miceli, 1986). It should not be confused, however, with the more recent concept of organizational retaliation behavior (ORB), which refers to disgruntled employees' acts of revenge (e.g., Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). In part to avoid confusion with ORB, we use the terms social and work retaliation victimization (SRV and WRV).

[2] Research on Steps a and b—employee experiences of interpersonal mistreatment and the strategies they use to cope with it—appears elsewhere (e.g., Cortina, Lonsway, et al., 2002; Cortina et al., 2001; Magley, 2002; Schneider, Swan, & Fitgerald, 1997; Wasti & Cortina, 2002).

Voice and Power

Within organizations, victims can resist interpersonal mistreatment by expressing their discontent to colleagues—*social-support seeking*. They can also communicate their dissatisfaction directly to the instigator of the mistreatment, *confronting* that person about his or her misbehavior. Further, victims may report the situation to organizational authorities—*whistle-blowing*. All of these strategies represent related forms of voice, and all are public behaviors that can alert organizations to internal wrongdoing. However, only the last has received attention in retaliation research. In particular, Miceli and Near have pioneered research efforts to understand whistle-blowers' experiences of retaliation (Miceli & Near, 1985, 1988, 1992; Miceli, Rehg, Near, & Ryan, 1999; Near, Dworkin, & Miceli, 1993; Near & Miceli, 1986).

We contend that, in addition to whistle-blowing, social-support seeking and confronting merit scholarly scrutiny. Victimized employees turn to these latter two voice strategies more commonly than whistle-blowing in their responses to interpersonal mistreatment (e.g., see Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995, for a review of responses to sexual harassment; see Cortina, Lonsway, et al., 2002, for results on coping with incivility). Further, the different types of victim voice expression could all trigger WRV and SRV from the wrongdoer, because of their similar resistance function. That is, confrontation involves clear, direct opposition to the wrongdoer, potentially making the wrongdoer angry, aggressive, and vindictive. Social support seeking can be a more indirect expression of resistance, but it nevertheless exposes wrongdoing and communicates dissatisfaction. Again, this could set off a negative response in the wrongdoer.

Not only the wrongdoer but also peers and other organizational members may react negatively to victims who seek support or—in particular—blow the whistle or confront their wrongdoers. Lepore, Evans, and Schneider (1991) as well as Shinn, Lehman, and Wong (1984) argue that negative social responses are more likely with stressors that involve stigma or interpersonal difficulty, which would certainly include interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace. Theories of emotion (e.g., Cropanzano, Weiss, Suckow, & Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998b; Mastenbroek, 2000) can explain this counterintuitive social reaction, as previously supportive colleagues may fear entanglement in emotion- and conflict-laden exchanges between the victim and wrongdoer. Further, coworkers may manage their affective reactions to the victim's plight by diverting attention away from the situation, reappraising the situation as less threatening, or minimizing or hiding emotions. Such coworker responses could easily appear to victims as coldness, trivialization of a difficult situation, and rejection—that is, SRV—regardless of coworker intentions or motivations. We thus hypothesize the following:

> *Hypothesis 1:* WRV and SRV will increase as victims express voice about interpersonal mistreatment—seeking social support, blowing the whistle, or confronting the wrongdoer. This will be particularly true when victims engage one of the two latter voice mechanisms.

In addition to voice, the social power of the victim and wrongdoer may be crucial variables in the retaliation process. Miceli et al. (1999) alluded to the importance of power by drawing on Black's (1976) sociological theory of justice:

> The theory considers the act of a subordinate blowing the whistle on a supervisor as deviant behavior and a more serious offense in a socially stratified society. According to Black (1976, p. 28), "upward deviance" (that is directed from a person of lower status toward one higher in status) is the most serious kind of deviant behavior; it is most likely to evoke the greatest sanction. (Miceli et al., 1999, p. 147)

Black's (1976) theory of *upward deviance* suggests interactions between power and voice: Vocal resistance in and of itself may depart from workplace norms, but victims may appear especially deviant when speaking out against wrongdoers who considerably "outrank" them in the organization.

More specifically, exposing the misbehavior of a highly placed member of the organizational hierarchy—thus characterizing that person as unlawful, unethical, or inappropriate—questions that hierarchy. The organization's dominant coalition, including the wrongdoer, may therefore retaliate against the victim to correct this challenge to authority (Near et al., 1993). Further, organizational peers who are typically supportive of the victim could respond to the victim's voice expression with distance and rejection—particularly when a powerful wrongdoer is involved—as the peers may fear reprisals for aligning with the less powerful (and thus more deviant) victim. Peers may also retaliate as a means of signaling to the victim that she or he has deviated from behavior prescribed by social-structural norms (Miceli & Near, 1992). This logic leads us to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: WRV and SRV will increase as lower power victims voice against higher power wrongdoers.

Wrongdoing and Related Policies

The object of victims' vocal resistance—the wrongdoing itself—could also influence retaliation victimization. For example, Miceli et al. (Miceli et al., 1999; Near & Miceli, 1986, 1987, 1996) drew on resource dependence theory to posit that more serious wrongdoing triggers more retaliation. Operationalizing wrongdoing seriousness in terms of *frequency*, they reasoned that organizations whose leaders allow or participate in frequent wrongdoing would likely tolerate additional wrongdoing in the form of retaliation. We therefore expect the following:

Hypothesis 3: WRV and SRV will increase with mistreatment frequency.

In addition to frequency, *type* of wrongdoing can be an indicator of seriousness. Forms of interpersonal mistreatment range from inappropriate (e.g., general disregard for workplace norms of respect) to unethical (e.g., sex discrimination that does not meet legal criteria) to illegal (e.g., adverse treatment of protected classes of employees). Exposure of mistreatment that is formally proscribed by organizational policy could make the wrongdoer vulnerable to sanctions imposed by management. In cases when the mistreatment violates law, a judge or jury could find the organization liable for civil rights violation and, consequently, order it to pay monetary damages. Organizational wrongdoers, leaders, and economically vulnerable members may retaliate to prevent such possibilities. We therefore hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 4: WRV and SRV will be more likely in the context of mistreatment that is formally prohibited, compared with mistreatment that is merely perceived as inappropriate.

With respect to formal prohibitions, many American organizations presently have policies that reflect Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—protecting employees from certain forms of mistreatment as well as retaliation victimization for opposing that mistreatment (Crockett & Gilmere, 1999). Miceli et al. (1999) found that organizational policies and procedures have stronger inhibiting influences on retaliation than does the passage of stronger laws. They also documented lower fears of retaliation in organi-

zations that engage in more policy dissemination (Miceli & Near, 1985). Thus, we made the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: WRV and SRV will decrease with greater dissemination of antimistreatment/retaliation policies.

Impact of Retaliation on Individual Victims

We contend that victims endure adverse consequences from both WRV and SRV, for a number of reasons. As noted earlier, we conceptualize retaliation victimization as a workplace stressor that challenges or threatens the victim (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The *type* of stress and outcomes experienced from retaliation may therefore resemble those that accompany interpersonal mistreatment (e.g., incivility, Cortina et al., 2001; sexual harassment, Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; antigay harassment, Waldo, 1999). However, retaliation victims might experience a greater *degree* of stress and negative outcomes than victims of mistreatment alone, with the cumulative effects of multiple stressors intensifying the harm.

Organizational justice theory could further explain negative outcomes of WRV, as the victim might perceive performance criticisms, transfers, lack of promotions or pay raises, and so on—resulting from their lawful resistance to wrongdoing—as procedurally and distributively unjust (e.g., Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Greenberg & Cropanzano, 2001). Perceived injustice could then result in decreased job performance and satisfaction as well as psychological distress in the victim. In fact, perceived injustice may amplify the stress that the victim experiences, with the retaliation adding insult to an already injurious mistreatment situation. Empirical evidence of WRV's negative outcomes remains somewhat sparse, limited to self-reports of performance decrements (Miceli et al., 1999; Near & Miceli, 1987) and anecdotal evidence of lowered self-esteem (Crull, 1982).

Although less tangible than WRV, SRV may also be detrimental to the well-being of employees. K. D. Williams (1997) referred to a particular type of SRV in arguing that *social ostracism* can threaten employees' fundamental needs for belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence, eventually leading to depression, helplessness, low self-efficacy, and anxiety. He further posited that the ambiguity inherent in ostracism exacerbates the stress of the situation. In sum, theories of stress and coping, organiza-

tional justice, and social ostracism support our final hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 6:* WRV and SRV will relate to lower professional, psychological, and physical well-being among victims.

The Present Study

We tested hypotheses among federal court employees—an interesting population from a policy standpoint. The federal court system consists of 12 regional *circuits* that function as traditional, bureaucratic, "tall" organizations in the public sector. In many respects, these courts are quite similar to other governmental workplaces, with the exception of their management of interpersonal mistreatment and retaliation: Ironically, federal circuits are largely exempt from federal civil rights legislation (including Title VII). In lieu of Title VII, the federal courts do have Equal Employment Opportunity policies; however, these local policies provide fewer protections than those available in other workplaces. This less protective policy environment creates a unique context in which to study retaliation; further, it offers an interesting contrast to the U.S. Civil Service, which has been the focus of previous retaliation research (Miceli & Near, 1988; Miceli et al., 1999; Near & Miceli, 1986).

Method

Procedure and Participants

Data were collected by means of pencil-and-paper surveys mailed to all employees ($N = 1,662$), excluding judges, of one of the larger federal court circuits. Using procedures recommended by Dillman (1978) to maximize the return rate, we sent nonresponding employees a postcard and second survey, which eventually yielded a 71% response rate. We obtained usable data from 833 women, 325 men, and 9 individuals who declined to identify their gender.

Participants ranged in age from 21 to 78 years ($M = 40.31$), had worked in this organization for an average of 8½ years, and were nearly all (96%) employed full time. Most of these employees were European American/White (88%), had at least some college if not a college or professional degree (85%), and were married (69%). Their job classifications varied somewhat, with 16% employed as managers, supervisors, or unit heads; 17% as attorneys; 25% as specialists (e.g., budget analysts, systems administrators, automation support specialists); 11% as secretaries; and 31% as administrative support staff (e.g., library technicians, data quality analysts, mail room clerk).

Instrumentation

Several considerations influenced the construction of this survey. First, we used measures with strong psychometric

histories. We also attempted to minimize response biases, placing measures of retaliation "outcomes" prior to the retaliation scales, so that respondents' retaliatory experiences would not bias their descriptions of psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and so on. Table 1 presents summary statistics, coefficient alphas, and intercorrelations for all constructs analyzed in the present study. Except where otherwise noted, response options were patterned after the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969), detailed below. All items were coded such that higher scores reflect greater levels of the underlying construct.

Interpersonal mistreatment. Although interpersonal mistreatment can take many forms in organizations, survey-length restrictions necessitated that we assess only two types: *general incivility* and *sexual harassment*. The Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS; Cortina et al., 2001) measured the frequency of participants' experiences of incivility (e.g., disrespect, rudeness, condescension) from superiors or coworkers. Sample behaviors include "made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you" and "addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately." Cortina and colleagues (Cortina, Lonsway, et al., 2002; Cortina et al., 2001) provided information on this measure's validity and reliability (coefficient $\alpha = .88$ in an independent sample).

All of the participants completed an abbreviated version[3] of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire—Revised (SEQ–R; Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995; Fitzgerald et al., 1988), which assessed the frequency of their encounters with harassing behavior from superiors or coworkers. These behaviors fell into the categories of gender harassment (e.g., "made offensive remarks or jokes about women"), unwanted sexual attention ("made sexually suggestive comments to or about you"), and sexual coercion ("made you afraid that you would be treated poorly if you didn't cooperate sexually"). The SEQ is widely considered to be the most reliable and valid method for assessing sexual harassment (Arvey & Cavanaugh, 1995; Beere, 1990). Fitzgerald et al. (1988) reported SEQ coefficient alphas ranging from .86 to .92 and a test–retest reliability coefficient of .86. Both the WIS and SEQ–R had a 5-year time frame and 5-point response scale (from $0 = never$ to $4 = most\ of\ the\ time$).

On the basis of the WIS and SEQ, we created two variables to indicate interpersonal mistreatment seriousness. First, we summed responses to the two measures into an overall *mistreatment frequency* score. Second, we created a dichotomous variable to indicate *mistreatment type*, with 0 corresponding to incivility alone (typically a mild form of inappropriate behavior) and 1 referring to incivility paired with sexual harassment (behavior that is often formally proscribed by organizational policy, if not by law).[4]

Respondents who had experienced either form of interpersonal mistreatment within the organization were branched to questions asking about the one mistreatment situation that they identified as having made the greatest impression on them. This "one situation" section included

---

[3] Because of concerns about the total length of the questionnaire, measures such as this were shortened, based on psychometric analyses from previous scale administrations.

[4] Because sexual harassment almost never occurred without concomitant incivility, we could not create a "pure" harassment-only group.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Numbers of Items, Reliabilities, and Intercorrelations

Scale	M	SD	No. of items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Mistreatment frequency	7.27	8.56	22	(.90)								
2. Mistreatment type[a]	0.68	0.47	22	.42	—							
3. Social retaliation victimization	3.58	4.03	7	.47	.03	(.87)						
4. Work retaliation victimization	1.60	2.79	7	.36	−.05	.65	(.85)					
5. Social-support seeking[a]	0.78	0.42	2	.26	.01	.15	.06	—				
6. Confronting[a]	0.46	0.50	2	.30	.03	.19	.22	.28	—			
7. Whistle-blowing[a]	0.41	0.49	3	.23	−.01	.12	.10	.38	.28	—		
8. Victim status[a]	1.90	0.86	1	−.05	.04	−.14	−.18	−.08	−.02	−.09	—	
9. Wrongdoer power	8.59	5.60	8	.33	−.04	.54	.47	.32	.10	.13	−.00	(.90)
10. Policy dissemination	1.93	2.09	6	−.05	−.03	.05	.04	−.09	.03	−.13	−.03	.01
11. Work satisfaction	20.90	6.60	9	−.20	−.01	−.24	−.39	−.08	−.07	−.02	.26	−.12
12. Coworker satisfaction	19.89	5.34	8	−.34	−.08	−.28	−.18	−.09	−.09	−.02	.07	−.18
13. Supervisor satisfaction	20.34	7.47	9	−.41	−.04	−.44	−.35	−.15	−.04	−.01	.07	−.40
14. Pay and benefits satisfaction	18.69	7.22	9	−.17	.01	−.22	−.26	−.01	−.01	.00	.15	−.20
15. Promotional opportunities satisfaction	9.95	6.71	8	−.33	−.09	−.44	−.37	−.13	−.06	−.04	.23	−.27
16. Work withdrawal	4.06	2.88	5	.18	.15	−.02	−.05	−.01	.02	−.05	.15	−.09
17. Job withdrawal	2.35	2.58	4	.32	.08	.39	.41	.13	.05	.08	.02	.29
18. Job stress	12.53	7.70	9	.31	.04	.14	.10	.13	.05	.12	−.01	.26
19. Psychological well-being	8.77	2.05	3	−.17	−.01	−.06	−.12	−.04	.03	−.01	−.01	−.13
20. Psychological distress	13.58	5.73	9	.30	.09	.21	.16	.13	−.02	−.01	−.03	.20
21. Life satisfaction	17.90	3.52	5	−.17	−.00	−.18	−.11	−.02	.08	.02	.17	−.11
22. Health satisfaction	10.67	3.13	7	−.12	.02	−.03	.01	−.08	.01	−.01	.07	−.08
23. Interpersonal justice climate	25.60	8.50	18	−.52	−.09	−.42	−.31	−.20	−.08	−.12	.18	−.34
24. Retaliation criterion[a]	0.43	0.74	1	.43	−.01	.66	.61	.18	.16	.11	.06	.46

Note. Correlations appear below the diagonal, and coefficient alphas (where applicable) are presented in parentheses along the diagonal.

[a] Being either a binary index or single item, Cronbach's alpha does not apply.

questions pertaining to retaliation victimization, voice, and wrongdoer power, detailed below.

Retaliation victimization. Mistreatment victims described whether they had experienced a range of retaliatory behaviors after reporting or resisting the "one situation," using a 3-point response scale (1= *yes*, 2= *not sure*, and 3 = *no*). The items, which fell into the theoretically distinct categories of WRV or SRV, came from the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board surveys (USMSPB; Near & Miceli, 1986) and research by Parmerlee, Near, and Jensen (1982). Given the nature of the response scale, we estimated the underlying factor structure from polychoric correlations via diagonally weighted least squares estimation (with asymptotic variances used as the weights) in LISREL VIII (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). The data supported a two-factor model quite well: $\chi^2(76, N = 223)$ = 97.07, *ns*; root-mean-square error of approximation

(RMSEA) = .036; nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = .99; goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .99; and adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = .98. All items and factor loadings appear in Table 2.

Voice. Items from Fitzgerald's (1990) Coping With Harassment Questionnaire (CHQ) assessed how participants had coped with sexual harassment or incivility. Specifically, victims described whether they had used various behavioral and cognitive strategies to "handle" the one situation. For the present article, we focused only on CHQ items that addressed methods of expressing voice: *social-support seeking* (e.g., "talk with someone for advice and support), *confronting* ("ask the person to leave you alone"), and *whistle-blowing* ("make a formal complaint"). For each voice method, we created a binary index (resulting in a total of three indices). Victims who had used at least one voice strategy in a given category received a 1 for that index; if

10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
(.84)														
.02	(.87)													
.06	.34	(.85)												
.02	.33	.37	(.89)											
.02	.23	.24	.25	(.83)										
−.02	.39	.33	.45	.42	(.84)									
−.02	−.07	−.08	−.05	.05	−.01	(.59)								
−.05	−.44	−.33	−.42	−.29	−.38	.13	(.73)							
−.18	−.13	−.20	−.36	−.23	−.25	.05	.30	(.85)						
.05	.34	.21	.27	.16	.20	−.09	−.26	−.31	(.83)					
−.06	−.26	−.23	−.32	−.14	−.19	.18	.29	.40	−.66	(.91)				
.01	.31	.16	.20	.25	.21	−.05	−.16	−.20	.52	−.45	(.85)			
−.02	.15	.10	.14	.05	.09	−.04	−.03	−.14	.39	−.39	.36	(.76)		
.06	.36	.56	.61	.31	.54	−.07	−.45	−.40	.29	−.34	.21	.17	(.91)	
−.08	−.21	−.14	−.40	−.22	−.34	−.12	.40	.17	−.12	.16	−.17	.04	−.34	—

they had not used any strategy within that category, they received a 0.

Power. To assess victims' and wrongdoers' organizational power, we used indices of the victim's absolute power (i.e., occupational status) as well as the wrongdoer's power in relation to the victim. On the basis of victims' self-reported job positions, we constructed an ordinal variable to indicate *victim occupational status*—more specifically, position in the organizational hierarchy, from lowest to highest levels (1 = *support staff* or *secretary;* 2 = *specialist;* 3 = *attorney, unit head, manager*, or *supervisor*). Our *wrongdoer relative power* measure came from the Perpetrator Power Scale, which gauged victims' perceptions of how much formal authority the wrongdoer had over specific aspects of their jobs—for example, the extent that he or she could affect their "pay raises," "chances of moving up in the company," "performance evaluations," and so on. Two in-

dependent studies using this scale reported reliability coefficients around .85 and correlations with mistreatment measures in theoretically appropriate directions (Cortina, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 2002; Swan, 1997).

Organizational policy. We adapted items from the USMSPB surveys (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981, 1987) to assess for perceived *dissemination of policies*, by means of written or oral channels, prohibiting interpersonal mistreatment in each work unit. Specifically, participants noted whether (0 = *no* or *don't know*, 1 = *yes*) their organizational unit had established such policies, provided information about them to employees, publicized the availability of formal complaint channels, or provided policy-relevant training to employees, unit heads, managers, and supervisors.

Professional well-being. A subset of items from the Job Descriptive Index (JDI; Smith et al., 1969; revised by

Table 2

Social Retaliation Victimization (SRV) and Work Retaliation Victimization (WRV) Items and Factor Loadings

	Factor loading	
Item	SRV	WRV
I was shunned or excluded by others at work.	.92	
I was slighted or ignored by others at work.	.88	
I was gossiped about in an unkind way.	.83	
I was threatened.	.83	
I was criticized for complaining about the situation.	.82	
I was blamed for the situation.	.81	
I was considered a "troublemaker."	.80	
I was given less favorable job duties.		.91
I was unfairly demoted.		.87
I was denied a promotion I deserved.		.85
I was denied an opportunity for training I deserved.		.85
I was given unfair poor job performance appraisals.		.84
I was transferred to a less desirable job.		.82
I was unfairly disciplined.		.77

Roznowski, 1989) measured *satisfaction with five aspects of the job*. Specifically, employees indicated whether lists of descriptors (e.g., "boring," "slow," "praises good work," "easy to get ahead") characterized their work, coworkers, supervisor, pay and benefits, and promotional opportunities. We used standard JDI response options (*no, ?, yes*) and scoring. The JDI is the most widely used measure of job satisfaction, and extensive psychometric evaluation supports its reliability (alphas exceeding .80) and validity (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992; Roznowski, 1989; Smith et al., 1969).

Using adapted versions of scales developed by Hanish and Hulin (1990, 1991), we measured both *job withdrawal* and *work withdrawal*. The former instrument asked participants to describe turnover thoughts and intentions (e.g., "how often do you think about QUITTING your job?"). In the latter scale, participants indicated how often they avoided tasks associated with their work roles, for example, "missing meetings" or "being late for work." Responses to both measures fell along a 5-point scale. Hanish and Hulin (1990, 1991) discussed the development and validation of these measures, reporting average coefficient alphas of .70 (job withdrawal) and .60 (work withdrawal) and linking prior job attitudes to subsequent withdrawal.

Finally, participants described levels of general *job stress* through items from the Stress in General scale (Stanton, Balzer, Smith, Parra, & Ironson, 2001). This scale represents a global measure of occupational stress, and Stanton and colleagues provided strong evidence of its reliability and convergent and discriminant validity. Like the JDI, items simply ask respondents if each of a list of adjectives (e.g., "hectic," "tense," "calm") describes their "job in general."

Psychological and physical health. To measure *psychological well-being and distress*, we used items from the Mental Health Index (MHI; Veit & Ware, 1983). The MHI assesses emotional well-being and common psychiatric symptoms of anxiety (feeling "tense or 'high strung'" or "restless, fidgety, or impatient") and depression (feeling "downhearted and blue" or "in low or very low spirits"). Respondents indicated the frequency (from $0 = never$ to $4 = most of the time$) of these feelings in the prior month. This psychometrically sound scale (Brooks et al., 1979) has appeared in various studies of general health and of victimization (Koss, Koss, & Woodruff, 1991).

In addition, Diener and his colleagues' (Diener, 1984; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) widely used Satisfaction With Life Scale assessed participants' agreement with statements about global subjective well-being ("If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing"), using a scale from 1 to 5.[5] According to Diener and colleagues (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1985), these items show high internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$) and temporal reliability (2-month test–retest correlation coefficient = .82), have a unidimensional structure, and correlate appropriately with personality scales.

We assessed *health satisfaction* using a subscale of the Retirement Descriptive Index (Smith et al., 1969), which contains short, descriptive, health-related phrases and adjectives (e.g., "never felt better" and "feel tired all the time"). Respondents indicated whether each phrase described their health. Hanisch and Hulin (1990) reported links between health conditions and health satisfaction, and between health satisfaction and organizational withdrawal—independent of the relation between health conditions and withdrawal behaviors.

Methodological variables. To assess the validity of the retaliation victimization constructs, we measured the perceived *climate of interpersonal justice*, using items from the highly reliable and valid Perception of Fair Interpersonal Treatment Scale (PFIT; Donovan, Drasgow, & Munson, 1998). This measure requested perceptions of global orga-

---

[5] To maintain some degree of consistency across response scales, we modified this scale's original 7-point response format to a 5-point format.

nizational norms for superiors and coworkers treating employees respectfully and justly (e.g., "employees are treated fairly," "coworkers treat each other with respect," and "supervisors threaten to fire employees"). In addition, employees responded to a single *retaliation criterion* item following the WRV and SRV scales, indicating whether "I was retaliated against."

Results

Analyses followed three general stages. We first reviewed descriptive analyses and then evaluated the validity of the two retaliation scales. We then conducted multiple regression analyses to test Hypotheses 1–5, concerning correlates of retaliation. Lastly, we ran a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and discriminant function analyses to test Hypothesis 6, regarding retaliation outcomes.

Descriptive and Psychometric Analyses

Out of 1,167 respondents, 834 described some experience with interpersonal mistreatment in their workplace in the previous 5 years. Of those, 223 expressed voice about the mistreatment, and then described whether SRV or WRV followed. Sixty-seven of these employees (30% of the 223) experienced only SRV, and 80 (36%) described both SRV and WRV; WRV never occurred in isolation. Finally, 76 mistreated employees (34%) reported that they had not encountered either form of retaliation victimization.

To assess the validity of the SRV and WRV scales, we correlated them with Donovan et al.'s (1998) PFIT scale. Because the latter instrument measures perceptions of (or climate for) interpersonally fair treatment in the workplace, it should be significantly *negatively* correlated with experiences of retaliation that are, by definition, perceived to be unfair. As expected, the PFIT significantly correlated –.42 with the SRV scale and –.31 with the WRV ($ps < .01$). Both correlations fell into the moderate range, which is likely a reflection of the fact that the PFIT measures global organizational norms, whereas the SRV and WRV scales assess specific behaviors. The higher correlation with the SRV scale seems logical, given that both the PFIT and SRV instruments tap interpersonal perceptions, unlike the WRV scale, which assesses perceptions of more tangible work-related actions. We also examined the correlation between the two retaliation scales and the retaliation criterion item ("I was retaliated against"). Strong positive correlations emerged: .66 for the SRV scale and .61 for the WRV scale ($ps < .001$). Taken as a whole, these correlation patterns support the construct validity of the two retaliation scales.

Correlates of Retaliation Victimization

We conducted parallel regression analyses to determine whether and how the mistreatment, voice, power, and policy variables relate to the extent of SRV and WRV experienced. These analyses only included employees who had used at least one of the three voice strategies—support-seeking, confronting, or whistle-blowing—in response to their mistreatment ($n = 200$ for the WRV and 201 for the SRV analysis, following listwise deletion). In terms of independent main effect variables, mistreatment factors included both frequency and type; voice involved the three dichotomous voice indices; power variables consisted of victim occupational status and wrongdoer relative power; and perceived policy dissemination comprised the policy variable. Finally, we tested for the victim-relative-to-wrongdoer-power and victim-voice-by-wrongdoer-power interactions implied in Hypothesis 2—specifically, Victim Status × Wrongdoer Power, Victim Support-Seeking × Wrongdoer Power, Victim Confronting × Wrongdoer Power, and Victim Whistle-Blowing × Wrongdoer Power. To minimize problems of multicollinearity, we centered wrongdoer power (the only continuous variable in the interactions) in both its main effect and interaction terms. Standardized beta coefficients and corresponding hypotheses appear in Table 3.

The regression model accounted for a significant 47% of the variance in SRV, $F(12, 187) = 14.57$, $p < .001$. According to the betas in Table 3, victims endured more SRV when they worked in lower status jobs, experienced greater interpersonal mistreatment, and confronted the wrongdoer about this mistreatment. Several significant interactions also emerged, appearing in Figure 1. According to Figure 1a, the lowest status victims mistreated by high-power wrongdoers were most likely to endure SRV. As Figures 1b and 1c display, SRV also increased considerably when victims talked to colleagues about mistreatment from powerful wrongdoers and when victims confronted powerful wrongdoers.

The regression model explained a significant 42% of the variance in WRV, $F(12, 188) = 11.54$, $p < .001$. Victim confronting, victim occupational status, and mistreatment frequency again emerged as significant main effects, as did wrongdoer power (see Table 3). Two interactions also reached significance: Victim Status × Wrongdoer Power and Victim Con-

Table 3
Standardized Beta Weights and Hypotheses Corresponding to Regressions

Predictor	SRV ($n = 200$)	WRV ($n = 201$)	Corresponding hypothesis (H)
Main effect terms			
Victim support-seeking	.07	−.08	H_1
Victim confronting	.12*	.14*	H_1
Victim whistle-blowing	−.04	.01	H_1
Victim occupational status	−.12*	−.19***	H_2
Wrongdoer relative power	.39	.58*	H_2
Mistreatment frequency	.34***	.24***	H_3
Mistreatment type	−.07	−.08	H_4
Policy dissemination	−.07	−.11†	H_5
Interaction terms			
Victim Status × Wrongdoer Power	−.34*	−.55***	H_2
Victim Support-Seeking × Wrongdoer Power	.35*	.05	H_2
Victim Confronting × Wrongdoer Power	.21*	.29**	H_2
Victim Whistle-Blowing × Wrongdoer Power	.18	.10	H_2

Note. SRV = social retaliation victimization; WRV = work retaliation victimization.
† $p < .10$.   * $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

fronting × Wrongdoer Power. Specifically, Figures 2a and 2b illustrate that WRV generally increased with higher power wrongdoers, but this effect was again most pronounced for the lowest status victims and victims who confronted wrongdoers. Finally, we also noted a trend such that less dissemination of antimistreatment policies related to more WRV; although this effect fell just short of conventional cutoffs for statistical significance ($p < .07$), we chose to highlight the trend owing to its applied value.[6]

Retaliation Victimization and Well-Being

To examine relations between retaliation and victim well-being, we began with an omnibus MANCOVA. This test included all 12 outcome measures as dependent variables, and retaliation history (three levels: none vs. SRV vs. SRV with WRV) was the independent variable. To ensure that any negative effects of retaliation could not be attributed to mistreatment seriousness, we added mistreatment frequency as a covariate. Once again, the analysis included only those employees who had used at least one of the three voice strategies in response to their mistreatment ($n = 200$ following listwise deletion). After covarying mistreatment frequency (Wilks' $\Lambda = .84$), $F(12, 185) = 2.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$, this analysis revealed a multivariate main effect of retaliation type (Wilks' $\Lambda = .74$), $F(24, 370) = 2.53$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$.

Given the generality of the omnibus test and the complexity inherent in the voice/retaliation process,

we conducted follow-up analyses that (a) distinguish among victims based on not only retaliation but also voice and (b) examine professional versus health outcomes separately. Specifically, we divided respondents into groups based on their mistreatment, voice, and retaliation histories (see below) and then conducted multiple-group discriminant function analyses. A *discriminant function* represents a linear combination of discriminating variables—in this case, outcomes—weighted in such a way that maximizes the between-group differences. Average discriminant scores ("centroids") can be computed for each group. We can then plot and compare the group centroids to determine how each group fares relative to other groups, based on this multivariate collection of outcomes (for more details about this methodological approach, see Klecka, 1980).

To create the groups for discriminant analysis, we first divided mistreated respondents according to whether they had experienced (a) no retaliation, (b) SRV only, or (c) both SRV and WRV. We also identified respondents who had experienced (d) mis-

_____

[6] With two supplementary regression analyses, we tested whether indirect, "proxy" indicators of victim power would account for significant variance in retaliation victimization. Specifically, we added a second block of variables to both regression equations, including victim gender, ethnicity, age, education, and tenure in the organization. The addition of these variables did not lead to significant increases in R^2 in either SRV, change $F(5, 159) = 0.87$, *ns*, or WRV, change $F(5, 160) = 1.25$, *ns*.
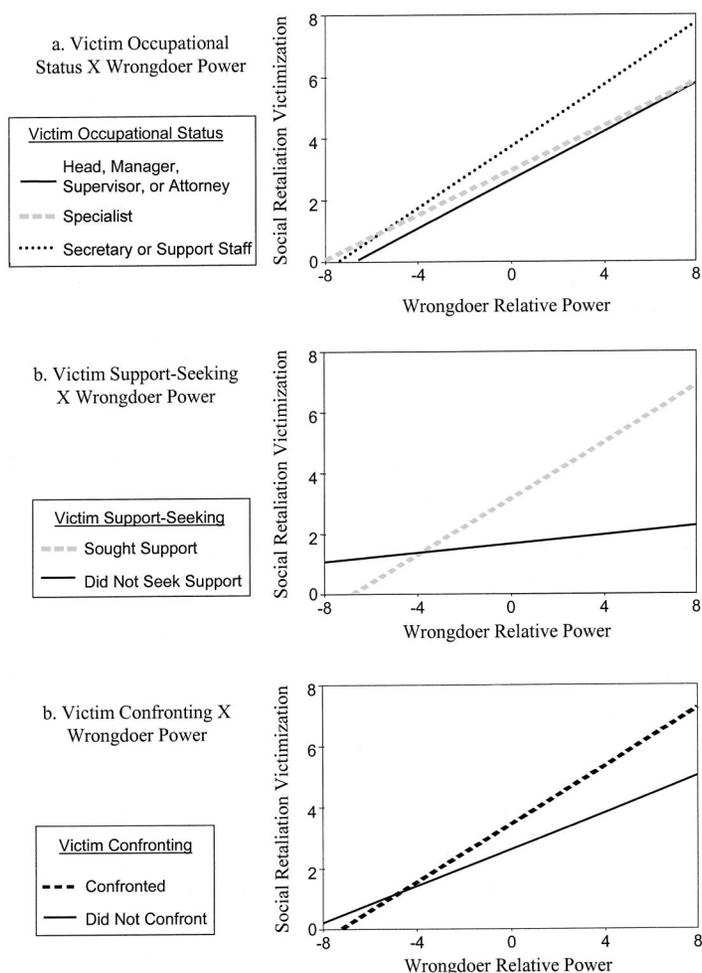
Figure 1. Interactive effects of wrongdoer power on social retaliation victimization.

treatment without subsequent use of voice strategies; thus, they did not experience retaliation. Further, we separated respondents within each of these four groups into higher and lower mistreatment frequencies, based on median splits—in effect, controlling for mistreatment seriousness. Finally, we drew a random sample of 100 respondents who had experienced *no* mistreatment whatsoever, creating a similarly sized "control group" of sorts. In sum, we based discriminant function analyses on nine groups of respondents; group cell sizes appear in Table 4.

Professional well-being. When considering job-related measures, we found one significant discriminant function (Wilks' $\Lambda = .54$), $\chi^2(64, N = 353) = 212.79$, $p < .001$, accounting for 76% of the be-

tween-group variance. To interpret the substantive meaning of the function, we examined the structure coefficients (i.e., correlations between each of the measures and the function); these appear in Table 5. According to these coefficients, the function is defined positively by supervisor and promotion satisfaction and negatively by job stress and withdrawal, suggesting a continuum of professional well-being.

Figure 3 displays the group centroids (i.e., each group's mean score on the linear combination of outcomes). Consistent with literally all extant research on outcomes of workplace mistreatment (e.g., Cortina, Lonsway, et al., 2002; Cortina et al., 2001; Schneider et al., 1997), victims of higher frequency mistreatment described worse job-related states than
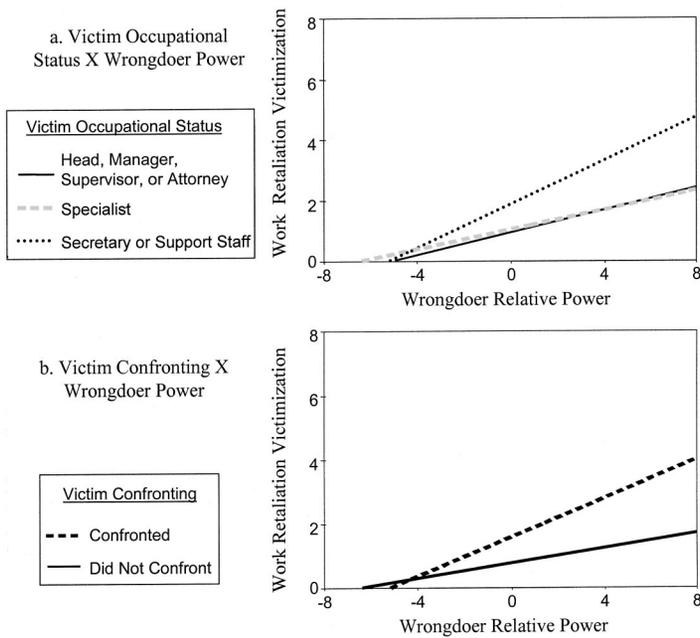
Figure 2. Interactive effects of wrongdoer power on work retaliation victimization.

did their less-mistreated counterparts. Further, within mistreatment frequency groups, jobs became increasingly negative with additional types of retaliation. That is, the mistreated "no retaliation" groups were more positive about their jobs than were those who experienced SRV alone; victims who endured both SRV and WRV described the most job dissatisfaction, job stress, and organizational withdrawal. However, victims who voiced *without* encountering subsequent retaliation were more positive about their jobs than were victims who remained silent. These patterns were consistent within both levels of mistreatment frequency.

Psychological and physical health. We used a parallel strategy to examine associations between retaliation victimization and psychological/physical health. The discriminant function analysis yielded one significant function (Wilks' $\Lambda = .85$), $\chi^2(32, N = 394) = 64.89$, $p < .001$, which accounted for 71% of the between-group variance. According to the structure coefficients in Table 5, health satisfaction and psychological distress define the positive and negative poles, respectively, of this continuum of psychological and physical well-being.

Figure 4 depicts the group centroids for this analysis. Similar to professional well-being findings and

consistent across all of the voice/retaliation groups, victims of frequent mistreatment described worse health conditions than less-mistreated victims. In fact, at lower mistreatment frequencies, the "voice without retaliation" group was literally indistinguishable from the SRV group, neither of which differed substantially from the "SRV and WRV" group.

At higher frequencies of mistreatment, individuals who expressed voice but escaped retaliation responded most positively about their psychological and physical health. Among the retaliation victims, the two forms (SRV and WRV) functioned nearly identically in relating to health difficulties. Perhaps the most striking feature of this last analysis was the health impairment reported by the "mistreatment, no voice" group. Specifically, highly mistreated victims who did not voice described the worst psychological and physical health.

Discussion

The present study advances the literature on workplace deviance, focusing on retaliation victimization in the context of interpersonal mistreatment. We review major findings below and interpret them in light

Table 4
Numbers of Respondents Falling Within Classification Scheme Used in Discriminant Function Analyses

	Frequency of mistreatment		
Group	None	Lower	Higher
Professional well-being analysis			
No voice (thus, no retaliation victimization)	75	60	16
Voice without retaliation victimization		45	25
Voice + SRV		23	36
Voice + SRV and WRV		19	54
Psychological/physical health analysis			
No voice (thus, no retaliation victimization)	94	65	18
Voice without retaliation victimization		49	25
Voice + SRV		24	40
Voice + SRV and WRV		21	58

Note. Due to listwise deletion based on outcome measures, cell sizes differed between the two discriminant function analyses. SRV = social retaliation victimization; WRV = work retaliation victimization.

of theory on power, emotions, and justice in organizations.

Forms of Retaliation Victimization

The psychometric properties of our retaliation measure, consisting of two coherent factors that differentially correlated with other constructs, suggested that workplace retaliation consists of (at least) two related but distinguishable types of victimization. WRV, although infrequent, has received the most attention in prior research. In our large and represen-

tative sample, employees more commonly encountered SRV after resisting interpersonal mistreatment. Given that SRV involves altered interpersonal relations with coworkers, who are members of victims' *daily* social environments, its higher frequency is perhaps not surprising. Further, the law remains quite blurry on when SRV crosses into illegal territory, so the absence of clear legal repercussions may reduce organizational vigilance about such behavior. In sum, SRV in organizations differs from WRV in its substance, prevalence, legality, and relations to other constructs in the nomological net—clearly deserving further study.

Correlates of Retaliation Victimization

Victim voice. With the exception of a confronting effect, we found few direct relations between victim voice and retaliation victimization, largely failing to support Hypothesis 1. Results instead favored the Voice × Power interaction suggested in Hypothesis 2. Specifically, compared with silent victims, those who voiced against their wrongdoers either directly or indirectly (to colleagues) generally experienced more SRV—particularly when dealing with powerful wrongdoers. The effect was most pronounced for social-support seeking. Perhaps when victims turned to colleagues for support, advice, or help with mistreatment coming from powerful wrongdoers, relationships cooled with at least some colleagues. However, another interpretation is that, as victims of mistreatment from powerful wrongdoers experienced more SRV, the victims coped by seeking support from colleagues. It is clear that longitudinal
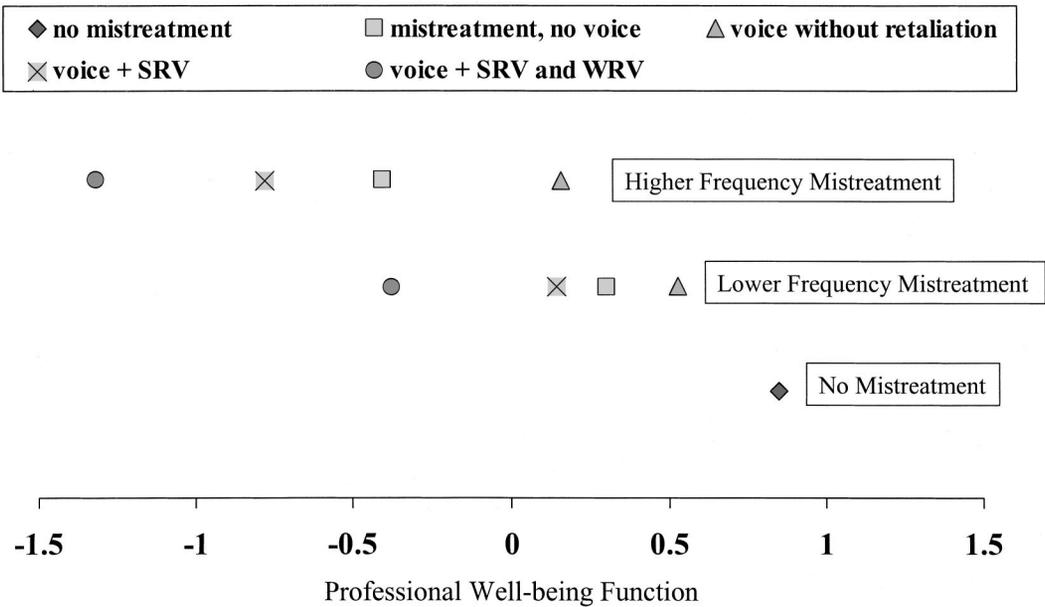
Table 5
Structure Coefficients (i.e., Correlations Between Each of the Measures and the Function) for Both Discriminant Function Analyses

Measure	r
Professional well-being function	
Supervisor satisfaction	.803
Promotion opportunity satisfaction	.702
Coworker satisfaction	.436
Work satisfaction	.430
Pay and benefit satisfaction	.268
Work withdrawal	−.147
Job stress	−.456
Job withdrawal	−.654
Psychological and physical health function	
Health satisfaction	.501
Psychological well-being	.413
Life satisfaction	.402
Psychological distress	−.927

Figure 3. Group centroids for the job-related (professional well-being) discriminant function analysis. The vertical dimension is for display purposes only, to separate the different levels of mistreatment; only one function was significant. SRV = social retaliation victimization; WRV = work retaliation victimization.

research is needed to clarify the outcomes of support-seeking in the context of mistreatment and retaliation.

Relations between voice and WRV were less pervasive, possibly due to the relative infrequency of work-related reprisals. WRV increased only as a function of confrontation, particularly when powerful wrongdoers were involved. By contrast, victim support-seeking efforts showed no association with WRV. A possible explanation is that this voice mechanism largely involved peers and colleagues who were able to ostracize the victim (SRV) but who lacked the organizational power necessary to alter formal aspects of the victim's job (WRV).

To our surprise, victim whistle-blowing also showed no relation to WRV. The modest influence of policies could partly explain this. That is, organizational units that disseminated antimistreatment policies tended to have less WRV (limited support for Hypothesis 5). These policies may include Title VII language that expressly protects whistle-blowers, counteracting any increased retaliation risk for these particular victims. Alternatively, at the other extreme, perhaps whistle-blowers tended to exit the organization—either "voluntarily" due to frequent mistreat-

ment or retaliation, or involuntarily, which is perhaps the most severe form of WRV. However, given that we only surveyed current employees, we can only speculate how employee exit might factor into the retaliation victimization process.

Power. Social-organizational power proved central to retaliation processes. First, we found modest associations between the occupational status of the victim and both SRV and WRV; lower status employees experienced more retaliation victimization. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, wrongdoers' power relative to victims' also related to retaliation, with greater SRV and WRV experienced by lower status victims voicing against higher power wrongdoers. Black's (1976) theory of upward deviance can explain this finding: The greater the power disparity between wrongdoer and victim, the more that the victim's resistance deviates from behavior prescribed by his or her social position; thus, organizational members sanction the insurgent victim. Near and Miceli (1987) elaborated on this idea, suggesting that organizations use retaliation to maintain social control over dissidents and restore group norms. In addition, *retaliation fear* might motivate colleagues to
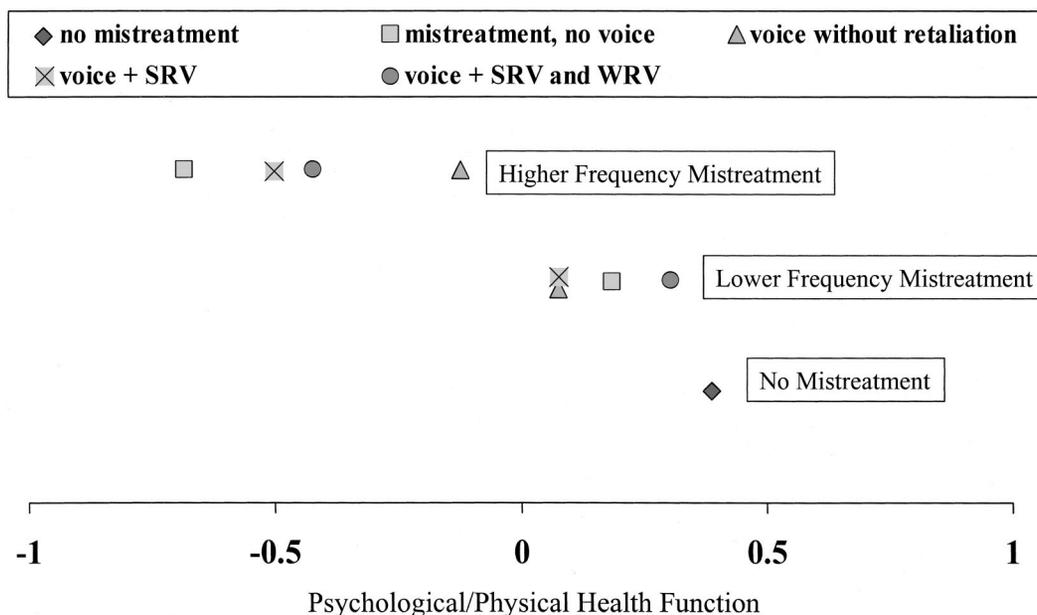
◆ no mistreatment   ☐ mistreatment, no voice   △ voice without retaliation
✕ voice + SRV   ● voice + SRV and WRV

☐   ✕ ●   △   Higher Frequency Mistreatment

✕ ☐ ●   Lower Frequency Mistreatment

◆   No Mistreatment

-1   -0.5   0   0.5   1

Psychological/Physical Health Function

Figure 4. Group centroids for the health-related (psychological/physical health) discriminant function analysis. The vertical dimension is for display purposes only, to separate the different levels of mistreatment; only one function was significant. SRV = social retaliation victimization; WRV = work retaliation victimization.

instigate SRV. That is, the more deviant the victim's behavior, the more that colleagues may distance themselves from that victim—worried about being punished themselves for supporting an employee who challenges authority.

Mistreatment. Confirming Hypothesis 3, mistreatment frequency related to both SRV and WRV—indeed, being one of the stronger correlates. One explanation lies in organizational climates and leadership: Climates pervaded by mistreatment and leaders who model or tolerate mistreatment could foster additional misconduct in the form of retaliation. However, to our surprise, *type* of interpersonal mistreatment had no bearing on retaliation, contrary to Hypothesis 4. Neither SRV nor WRV varied if the original mistreatment involved incivility alone versus incivility paired with sexual harassment.[7] In most workplaces, only the latter behavior might violate organizational policy and law. Of course, in the unique federal court context, any of these forms of mistreatment are technically legal, despite local policies prohibiting them; this could explain why mistreatment type had no impact on retaliation. Another possibility is that restricted range on the type variable

made it difficult to detect significant relations to other variables. That is, less than 1% of participants had experienced the most egregious form of mistreatment assessed in our survey: sexual coercion. Further, the survey did not inquire into more violent, assaultive forms of interpersonal mistreatment. Retaliation in the context of more serious varieties of mistreatment will be an important topic for future research.

Retaliation Victimization and Well-Being

Experiences of retaliation victimization related to victims' health and well-being in clear and theoretically meaningful patterns, largely supporting Hypothesis 6. Controlling for mistreatment frequency and comparing with a nonmistreated "control group,"

---

[7] We also reran all analyses, recoding type into the following categories: general incivility only (*n* = 60); gender harassment, with and without incivility (*n* = 47); and unwanted sexual attention, with and without incivility, gender harassment, or sexual coercion (*n* = 116). Results did not change, with type having no significant effect on either form of retaliation.

victims' professional well-being became increasingly negative as they endured more retaliation. Even experiences of SRV alone, without WRV, related to job dissatisfaction, job stress, and organizational withdrawal. These victim outcomes can translate into financial harm for organizations, which must absorb the costs of performance declines, absenteeism, turnover, and—in more extreme cases—law suits alleging a hostile workplace or wrongful termination.

Results regarding the *psychological and physical* health of retaliation victims were somewhat surprising. Voice and retaliation had little impact on the health of less-mistreated employees. By contrast, among highly mistreated employees, vocal victims suffered when they experienced *any* type of retaliation. That is, employees with extensive histories of mistreatment accompanied by retaliation described greater sadness and anxiety; fewer feelings of tranquility, happiness, and life satisfaction; and more somatic complaints. The marked difference between low- and high-frequency mistreatment groups suggests that high levels of prior mistreatment must be present before retaliation triggers psychological and physical distress in victims.

Of particular interest, *restraining* from speaking out against frequent mistreatment was associated with the most psychological and physical harm. Although unexpected, this finding is highly consistent with research documenting that self-silencing, emotional suppression, and repressive personality and coping styles involve labor that takes a toll on the body—disrupting emotional regulation and exacerbating psychosomatic processes. The result can be rumination, depression, memory impairment, reactivity to stress-related cues, poorer immune response, and disease progression. Conversely, disclosing the thoughts and emotions associated with a stressful event has various benefits for the individual: greater sense of control; less effortful processing; and the ability to see structure, logic, and meaning in a formerly chaotic and overwhelming event. This can enhance adaptive coping, reduce rumination, and yield closure—resulting in improved immune function, psychosomatic and subjective well-being, and fewer medical visits or absentee days (Brewin, Dalgleish, & Stephen, 1996; Esterling, L'Abate, Murray, & Pennebaker, 1999; Gross, 1998a; Gross & Levenson, 1997; Hochschild, 1983; Milligan & Waller, 2000; Pennebaker, 1993, 1997; Richards & Gross, 1999; Wegner, Shortt, Blake, & Page, 1990; Weinberger, Schwartz, & Davison, 1979). In short, health risks may accompany silence in the face of injustice.

An alternative interpretation of this silence–health relation bears mention. Because our data were entirely correlational and cross-sectional, we cannot determine definitively whether victims' failure to voice preceded their health impairment or vice versa. The latter is certainly possible, with unhappy or sick employees lacking assertiveness, self-esteem, energy, or other resources necessary to vocally resist interpersonal mistreatment. Again, more longitudinal work is in order to disentangle these complex relationships.

Limitations and Future Directions

Like any research, this study is not without its limitations. Recall that federal court organizations are unique in their exemption from Title VII. One might also wonder whether court employees are unique in having a heightened sensitivity to incivility, owing to a recent movement to combat uncivil conduct in modern legal practice (e.g., Burger, 1971; Committee on Civility of the Seventh Federal Judicial Circuit, 1991; Cortina, Lonsway, et al., 2002). However, this movement has primarily focused on the behavior of attorneys, who composed only 17% of our employee sample. Generally speaking, this federal court circuit is quite similar to many other large organizations in the public sector, being bureaucratic, hierarchical, and horizontally and vertically sex segregated. We believe that our findings would generalize to similar organizations, and future studies should determine whether they apply in other contexts as well.

As noted earlier, the cross-sectional and correlational nature of our data limits causal and temporal inferences. Also—due to the single-source, self-report nature of the data—common method variance or response set could potentially explain some significant relationships. We attempted to minimize such biases by measuring "outcomes" independent of and prior to assessing mistreatment and retaliation. Further, the diversity of correlations among variables—including near-zero correlations—argues against a monomethod-bias explanation of findings.

A final limitation lies in the perceptual nature of our variables. We cannot know for sure whether negative performance evaluations, changes in job assignments, promotion denials, and so on emerged as a function of managers' retaliatory intentions or if they were simply a response to victims' poor performance. Similarly, social slights may have been driven by peers' distraction or oversight, rather than desire to ostracize the victim. Nevertheless, regardless of manager and peer intentions, victims perceived these behaviors as retaliatory, and it is pre-

cisely this subjective experience of stress that was the focus of the present article.

This study suggests a number of interesting avenues for future research, some of which are noted earlier. In particular, there is more work to be done on organizational interventions surrounding retaliation. Our data suggest that mere dissemination of policies has little impact on the extent to which retaliation occurs, underscoring the need for more vigorous management efforts. The workplace mistreatment literature highlights various actions for preventing abuse and intervening when it occurs (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002; Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Rayner & Hoel, 1997; J. H. Williams, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1999). For example, Pearson et al. (2000) asserted that, to manage incivility, organizational leaders should establish clear expectations for—and model—appropriate interpersonal behavior; new employees should receive education about these expectations; employees at all levels should have interpersonal skills training; and instigators should be swiftly, justly, and consistently sanctioned. These practices could also present highly effective methods for managing retaliation.

Conclusion

Rather than framing interpersonal mistreatment in organizations as a private problem for individuals to resolve, we should hold organizations responsible for managing misbehavior within. Nevertheless, in the unfortunate event that interpersonal abuse does arise, victimized employees face a Catch-22 dilemma. Speaking out about the mistreatment could trigger social isolation, professional devaluation, and perhaps even demotion—particularly if the mistreatment came from powerful others. Alternatively, victims could endure the injustice in silence, but then their psychosomatic health may suffer. Thus, the responsibility should be on organizational leaders, not employee victims, to take corrective action. Vocal resistance to mistreatment should be the right of all employees, and organizations should empower them to exercise this right and raise their voices without retribution.

References

Andersson, L. M., & Pearson, C. M. (1999). Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review, 24,* 452–471.

Arvey, R. D., & Cavanaugh, M. A. (1995). Using surveys to assess the prevalence of sexual harassment: Some methodological problems. *Journal of Social Issues, 51,* 39–52.

Barling, J., Rogers, G. A., & Kelloway, E. K. (2001). Behind closed doors: In-home workers' experience of sexual harassment and workplace violence. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 6,* 255–269.

Beere, C. (1990). *Gender roles: A handbook of tests and measures.* New York: Greenwood Press.

Bergman, M., Langhout, R. D., Palmieri, P., Cortina, L. M., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (2002). The (un)reasonableness of reporting: Antecedents and consequences of reporting sexual harassment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87,* 230–242.

Black, D. C. (1976). *The behavior of law.* New York: Academic Press.

Brewin, C. R., Dalgleish, T., & Stephen, J. (1996). A dual representation theory of posttraumatic stress disorder. *Psychological Review, 103,* 670–686.

Brooks, R. H., Ware, J. E., Davies-Avery, A., Stewart, A. L., Donald, C. A., Rogers, W. H., et al. (1979). Overview of adult health status measures fielded in Rand's Health Insurance Study. *Medical Care, 17*(Suppl.), 1–131.

Burger, W. (1971). The necessity for civility. 52 *F.R.D.* 211.

Colquitt, J. A., Conlon, D. E., Wesson, M. J., Porter, C., & Ng, K. Y. (2001). Justice at the millennium: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of organizational justice research. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86,* 425–445.

Committee on Civility of the Seventh Federal Judicial Circuit. (1991). Interim report of the Committee on Civility of the Seventh Federal Judicial Circuit. 143 *F.R.D.* 371.

Cortina, L. M., Fitzgerald, L. F., & Drasgow, F. (2002). Contextualizing Latina experiences of sexual harassment: Preliminary tests of a structural model. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 24,* 295–311.

Cortina, L. M., Lonsway, K. A., Magley, V. J., Freeman, L. V., Hunter, M., Collinsworth, L. L., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (2002). What's gender got to do with it? Incivility in the federal courts. *Law and Social Inquiry, 27,* 235–270.

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

Cranny, C. J., Smith, P. C., & Stone, E. F. (1992). *How people feel about their jobs and how it affects their performance.* New York: Free Press.

Crockett, R. W., & Gilmere, J. A. (1999). Retaliation: Agency theory and gaps in the law. *Public Personnel Management, 28,* 39–49.

Cropanzano, R., Weiss, H. M., Suckow, K. J., & Grandey, A. A. (2000). Doing justice to workplace emotion. In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. E. J. Hartel, & W. J. Zerbe (Eds.), *Emotions in the workplace: Research, theory, and practice* (pp. 49–62). Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Crull, P. (1982). Stress effects of sexual harassment on the job: Implications for counseling. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 52,* 539–545.

Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin, 95,* 542–575.

Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S.

(1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49,* 71–75.

Dillman, D. A. (1978). *Mail and telephone surveys: The total design method.* New York: Wiley-Interscience.

Donovan, M. A., Drasgow, F., & Munson, L. J. (1998). The Perceptions of Fair Interpersonal Treatment Scale: Development and validation of a measure of interpersonal treatment in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83,* 683–692.

Esterling, B. A., L'Abate, L., Murray, E. J., & Pennebaker, J. W. (1999). Empirical foundations for writing in prevention and psychotherapy: Mental and physical health outcomes. *Clinical Psychology Review, 19,* 79–96.

Farrell, D. (1983). Exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect as responses to job dissatisfaction: A multidimensional scaling study. *Academy of Management Journal, 26,* 596–607.

Fitzgerald, L. F. (1990, March). *Assessing strategies for coping with sexual harassment: A theoretical/empirical approach.* Paper presented at the meeting of the Association for Women in Psychology, Tempe, AZ.

Fitzgerald, L. F., Drasgow, F., Hulin, C. L., Gelfand, M. J., & Magley, V. J. (1997). The antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment in organizations: A test of an integrated model. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 82,* 578–589.

Fitzgerald, L. F., Gelfand, M. J., & Drasgow, F. (1995). Measuring sexual harassment: Theoretical and psychometric advances. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 17,* 425–427.

Fitzgerald, L. F., Shullman, S. L., Bailey, N., Richards, M., Swecker, J., Gold, A., et al. (1988). The incidence and dimensions of sexual harassment in academia and the workplace. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 32,* 152–175.

Fitzgerald, L. F., Swan, S., & Fischer, K. (1995). Why didn't she just report him?: The psychological and legal implications of women's strategies for responding to sexual harassment. *Journal of Social Issues, 51,* 117–138.

Giacalone, R. A., & Greenberg, J. (1997). *Antisocial behavior in organizations.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Glomb, T. M., Steel, P. D. G., & Arvey, R. D. (2002). Office sneers, snipes, and stab wounds: Antecedents, consequence, and implications of workplace violence and aggression. In R. G. Lord, R. J. Klimoski, & R. Kanfer (Eds.), *Emotions in the workplace: Understanding the structure and role of emotions in organizational behavior* (pp. 227–259). New York: Wiley.

Greenberg, J., & Cropanzano, R. (2001). *Advances in organization justice.* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Griffin, R. W., O'Leary-Kelly, A., & Collins, J. M. (1998). *Dysfunctional behavior in organizations: Violent and deviant behaviors.* Stamford, CT: JAI Press.

Gross, J. (1998a). Antecedent- and response-focused emotion regulation: Divergent consequences for experience, expression, and physiology. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74,* 224–237.

Gross, J. (1998b). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology, 2,* 271–299.

Gross, J. J., & Levenson, R. W. (1997). Hiding feelings: The acute effects of inhibiting negative and positive emotions. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 106,* 95–103.

Hanisch, K. A., & Hulin, C. L. (1990). Job attitudes and organizational withdrawal: An examination of retirement and other voluntary withdrawal behaviors. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 37,* 60–78.

Hanisch, K. A., & Hulin, C. L. (1991). General attitudes and organizational withdrawal: An evaluation of a causal model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 39,* 110–128.

Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (1993). *New features in LISREL 8.* Chicago: Scientific Software.

Klecka, W. R. (1980). *Discriminant analysis.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Koss, M. P., Koss, P., & Woodruff, W. J. (1991). Deleterious effects of criminal victimization on women's health and medical utilization. *Archives of Internal Medicine, 151,* 342–357.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping.* New York: Springer.

Lepore, S. J., Evans, G. W., & Schneider, M. L. (1991). Dynamic role of social support in the link between chronic stress and psychological distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61,* 899–909.

Magley, V. J. (2002). Coping with sexual harassment: Reconceptualizing women's resistance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83,* 930–946.

Mastenbroek, W. (2000). Organizational behavior as emotion management. In N. M. Ashkanasy, C. E. J. Hartel, & W. J. Zerbe (Eds.), *Emotions in the workplace: Research, theory, and practice* (pp. 19–35). Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Miceli, M. P., & Near, J. P. (1985). Characteristics of organizational climate and perceived wrongdoing associated with whistle-blowing decisions. *Personnel Psychology, 38,* 525–544.

Miceli, M. P., & Near, J. P. (1988). Individual and situational correlates of whistle-blowing. *Personnel Psychology, 41,* 267–281.

Miceli, M. P., & Near, J. P. (1992). *Blowing the whistle: The organizational and legal implications for companies and employees.* New York: Lexington Books.

Miceli, M. P., Rehg, M., Near, J. P., & Ryan, K. C. (1999). Can laws protect whistle-blowers? Results of a naturally occurring field experiment. *Work and Occupations, 26,* 129–151.

Milligan, R. J., & Waller, G. (2000). Anger and bulimic psychopathology among nonclinical women. *International Journal of Eating Disorders, 28,* 446–450.

Near, J. P., Dworkin, T. M., & Miceli, M. P. (1993). Explaining the whistle-blowing process: Suggestions from power theory and justice theory. *Organizations Science, 4,* 393–411.

Near, J. P., & Miceli, M. P. (1986). Retaliation against whistle blowers: Predictors and effects. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 71,* 137–145.

Near, J. P., & Miceli, M. P. (1987). Whistle-blowers in organizations: Dissidents or reformers? *Organizational Behavior, 9,* 321–368.

Near, J. P., & Miceli, M. P. (1996). Whistle-blowing: Myth and reality. *Journal of Management, 22,* 507–526.

Parmerlee, M. A., Near, J. P., & Jensen, T. C. (1982). Correlates of whistle-blowers' perceptions of organizational retaliation. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 27,* 17–34.

Pearson, C. M., Andersson, L. M., & Porath, C. L. (2000). Assessing and attacking workplace incivility. *Organizational Dynamics, 29,* 123–137.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1993). Putting stress into words: Health, linguistic, and therapeutic implication. *Behaviour Research and Theory, 31,* 539–548.

Pennebaker, J. W. (1997). *Opening up: The healing power of expressing emotions* (Rev. ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Rayner, C., & Hoel, H. (1997). A summary review of literature relating to workplace bullying. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 7,* 181–191.

Richards, J. M., & Gross, J. J. (1999). Composure at any cost? The cognitive consequences of emotion suppression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25,* 1033–1044.

Robinson, S. L., & Bennett, R. J. (1995). A typology of deviant workplace behaviors: A multidimensional scaling study. *Academy of Management Journal, 38,* 555–572.

Roznowski, M. (1989). An examination of the measurement properties of the Job Descriptive Index with experimental items. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 74,* 805–814.

Rusbult, C. E., Farrell, D., Rogers, G., & Mainous, A. G. (1988). Impact of exchange variables on exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect: An integrative model of responses to declining job satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal, 31,* 599–627.

Schneider, K. T., Swan, S., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1997). Job-related and psychological effects of sexual harassment in the workplace: Empirical evidence from two organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 82,* 401–415

Shinn, M., Lehmann, S., & Wong, N. W. (1984). Social interaction and social support. *Journal of Social Issues, 40,* 55–76.

Skarlicki, D. P., & Folger, R. (1997). Retaliation in the workplace: The roles of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 82,* 434–443.

Smith, P. C., Kendall, L., & Hulin, C. L. (1969). *The measurement of satisfaction in work and retirement.* Chicago: Rand McNally.

Stanton, J. M., Balzer, W. K., Smith, P. C., Parra, L. F., & Ironson, G. (2001). A general measure of work stress: The Stress in General scale. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 61,* 866–888.

Swan, S. (1997). *Explaining the job-related and psychological consequences of sexual harassment in the workplace: A contextual model.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board. (1981). *Sexual harassment of federal workers: Is it a problem?* Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board. (1987). *Sexual harassment of federal workers: An update.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Veit, C. T., & Ware, J. E., Jr. (1983). The structure of psychological distress and well-being in general populations. *Journal of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, 51,* 730–742.

Waldo, C. R. (1999). Working in a majority context: A structural model of heterosexism as minority stress in the workplace. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 46,* 218–232.

Wasti, S. A., & Cortina, L. M. (2002). Coping in context: Sociocultural determinants of responses to sexual harassment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83,* 394–405.

Wegner, D. M., Shortt, J. W., Blake, A. W., & Page, M. S. (1990). The suppression of exciting thoughts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58,* 409–418.

Weinberger, D., Schwartz, G. E., & Davidson, R. J. (1979). Low-anxious, high-anxious, and repressive coping styles: Psychometric patterns and behavioral and physiological responses to stress. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 88,* 369–380.

Williams, J. H., Fitzgerald, L. F., & Drasgow, F. (1999). The effects of organizational practices on sexual harassment and individual outcomes in the military. *Military Psychology, 11,* 303–328.

Williams, K. D. (1997). Social ostracism. In Kowalski (Ed.), *Aversive interpersonal behaviors* (pp. 133–170). New York: Plenum Press.