Understanding indirect/covert aggression within the workplace context: The target’s cognitive process

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Abstract

Indirect/covert aggression is a set of behaviours employed by an individual (the aggressor) intended to create and inflict damage on another individual (the target) undetected (Einarsen, 1999). Indirect/covert aggression is employed within the workplace because displaying overtly aggressive behaviours toward peers, subordinates, and supervisors is generally considered socially unacceptable. Indirect/covert aggressive behaviours typically entail various circuitous behaviours, such as: vexatious rumour mongering, social isolation, and undermining professional competencies (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Neuman & Baron, 1998). Whilst previous research demonstrates that indirect/covert aggression is costly to organisations and individuals who experience it (e.g., absenteeism, employee turnover, and low performance), several issues require exploration to better understand the phenomenon, and before such workplace behaviours can be reduced. The most salient issues are identifying why individuals become the focus of indirect/covert aggression and determining the cognitive scripts (i.e., mental structures of knowledge) and behavioural scripts (i.e., behavioural performances that are applied to a specific situation, see Gioia & Poole, 1984) that they use to respond to these behaviours.

The three research questions that guide my programme of research are: 1) What are individuals’ experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work? 2) To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process? and 3) How do differences in relational scripts explain the various responses and consequences of individuals targeted by indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?

With these questions at the forefront, I attempt to more fully understand the indirect/covert aggression experiences of targets and the cognitive processes that they use to make sense of and deal with these events by examining the role of targets’ indirect/covert
aggression perceptions, the emotions they experience when targeted, how they construct scripts to make sense of the aggression, and the types of scripts used.

There is a dearth of information regarding the types of scripts that a target uses to respond to the indirect/covert aggression that they experience. My program of research uses Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events theory (hereafter AET) as a macro-theoretical framework in conjunction with Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End (hereafter PET) theory as a micro-theoretical framework as way to explore indirect or covert aggression. Schank and Abelson’s (1977) Cognitive Script Theory will also be used to understand the types of scripts (a framework of knowledge that is used to explain how day to day events unfold) targets use when experiencing indirect/covert aggression (an affective event).

To address my research questions, I carried out a mixed methods research programme consisting of three empirical studies (Studies 1a, 1b and 2) with the all-encompassing goal of uncovering the types of scripts targets of indirect/covert aggression use in relation to experiences of indirect/covert aggression. In Study 1a and 1b (Chapter 4 and 5 respectively), using a qualitative methodology, I explored the targets’ experiences of indirect/covert aggression, their responses to those experiences, and their personal constructs (Kelly, 1955) regarding their aggressor. Through Study 1, I sought to answer the research questions, RQ1: What are individuals’ experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work? RQ2: And To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process? Study 1a was designed to understand targets’ experiences of their petty behaved colleagues (i.e., the aggressor) at work and how they dealt with them. Study 1b was designed to identify the personal constructs (the process that individuals use to evaluate the world around them) that target’s had of the aggressor. The aim of Study 1a was to provide insights into the target’s method of processing their aggressor’s behaviour. Employing this method
uncovered the affective events the target experienced, the most intense emotions they felt at the event’s peak, and how the event ended. The sample for Study 1 comprised 29 respondents who were interviewed for approximately 1 hour. Two specific techniques were used in Study 1a and 1b, Repertory Grid (hereafter RepGrid) technique (Kelly, 1955) and critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954). Thematic analysis (Kassarjian, 1977) was used for both Study 1a (Chapter 4) and Study 1b (Chapter 5) and, from these studies, I developed measures for my cross sectional survey administered in Study 2.

Building on my findings from Studies 1a and 1b, I developed a mediating model for Study 2 (Chapter 6) to further examine targets thought process and responses when experiencing indirect/covert aggression. More specifically, the research question guiding Study 2 was How do differences in relational scripts explain the various responses and consequences of individuals targeted by covert aggression within their workplace? Study 2 comprised a two-phase survey that was administered to students (n=143) from an Australian Undergraduate Program conducted within a Business School.

More specifically, I predicted in the model that targets low in emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, and emotional stability would be more likely to report greater use of reactive and passive scripts. Furthermore, I predicted that these effects would be mediated by the target’s perceptions of the indirect/covert aggressor. Contrariwise, this model predicts that targets that are high in emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, and emotional stability will have lower perceptions of indirect/covert aggression and will engage proactive scripts. In this model, I examine the impact of emotional intelligence, emotional regulation and emotional stability in determining the scripts (reactive, proactive and passive) targets use when confronted with indirect/covert aggression. Based on the data collected, targets perceptions of indirect/covert aggression were found to partly mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and the scripts they would formulate. Study 2 (Chapter 6)
demonstrates my theoretical contribution in that the results revealed that targets of indirect/covert aggression, who are higher in emotional intelligence, will engage in the use of proactive scripts.

The discussion chapter (Chapter 7) considers the implications, theoretical and practical contributions, limitations, and future research directions regarding my program of research. The theoretical contributions within this thesis are identifying and examining the different types targets’ scripts using a macro/micro-theoretical approach. I demonstrate how affective Events, Peak-End theory, and script theory help to better understand targets’ experiences and thought process of indirect aggression. The practical contributions of the findings for HR practitioners are also considered. It would be helpful for HR practitioners to better comprehend the target’s cognitive process when they (the target) experiences and reports indirect/covert aggression. As such, the take away message from Studies 1a, 1b, and 2 is for HR practitioners to understand that the target’s experiences of indirect/covert are beyond escalated workplace conflict and that they are targets of intentionally harmful behaviour. Future directions for research include the need to further explore specifically the successful scripts that helped individuals remove themselves from being targets of indirect/covert aggression. Another avenue is to examine what the thought processes are for HR practitioners who initially evaluate grievances of indirect/covert aggression.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)_____________________________
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“Nil desperandum carborundum”
(Dr John Ruff Gwilt – September 1920 – March 2015)

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and scope of this thesis

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce my research programme and to justify why I have chosen the path of researching indirect/covert aggression within the workplace. This research is important, not just for the targets of indirect/covert aggression, but also for the organisations that employ them. In general, workplace aggression costs organisations exorbitant amounts of money due to employee turnover, absenteeism and sick leave. This chapter will be structured first to discuss the relevance of my research programme. Next, I define my focal research construct, indirect/covert aggression, and clarify why I have ‘labelled’ my respondents as targets (as opposed to victims). Then, a discussion on the aims of the research programme will be presented as well as an outline of Study 1a, 1b, and Study 2. I then give a brief introduction of the theoretical underpinnings and contributions of my research programme to demonstrate my contribution to emotions scholarship. Next, as part of earning a philosophiae doctor (PhD) and to clearly articulate my worldview, a precursor of the philosophical underpinnings of my research will be discussed. The practical implications of my research programme will be briefly reviewed, before I summarise what my contribution to theory and practice is to the field of indirect/covert aggression research within the workplace context. Finally, this chapter will contain an overview of the chapters of my thesis.

1.2 Relevance of Research Program

Workplace aggression, and particularly indirect/covert aggression (aggression that is passive and circuitous), is increasingly at the forefront of media attention (Salin, Tenhiälä, Roberge, & Berdahl, 2014). This attention is due to the adverse outcomes experienced by individuals who are targets of workplace aggression (e.g. indirect/covert aggression), and organisations with incidents of workplace aggression reporting high volumes of employee
turnover (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Keashly & Jagatic, 2011; Keashly, Trott, & Maclean, 1994). Recently, such news reports have prompted *A Safe Work Australia* (SWA) to endorse a project *Australian Workplace Barometer* project (AWB; Dollard, Bailey, McLinton, Richards, McInternan, Taylor & Bond, 2012) to examine the different acts of aggression that Australian workers are experiencing and their frequency.

Dollard et al.’s (2012) investigation for *A Safe Work Australia (SWA)* found that aggression within Australian workplaces is substantially higher than in other countries. For the AWB project, Dollard and her colleagues (2012) canvassed 5,743 workers from four states (Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, New South Wales) and the two territories (Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory). Workers were asked whether they had experienced workplace aggression. Nearly 7% of the AWB respondents reported that they had some form of experience with workplace aggression in comparison to the international rates of 1% to 4% (Dollard et al., 2012). In their report, 42% of the male respondents reported being sworn or yelled at within their workplace and more than 20% of the respondents reported some form of humiliation in front of their colleagues (Dollard et al., 2012). The reporting of high incidences of aggression within the workplace shows that this issue warrants investigation. Aggression has been shown to be psychosocially costly to the individuals who experience this phenomenon, their families (the spill over effect of aggression), and to the organisations who employee them (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011). Specifically, Dollard et al. found that workplace aggression costs the organisations in terms of culture, productivity, legal costs, and reputation. For the individual who is targeted by workplace aggression there are costs in their work, physical and emotional wellbeing, and the affective domain of their workplace (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).
Most pertinent to my thesis are research findings regarding indirect/covert aggression. Indirect/covert aggression goes beyond impolite behaviour (e.g., not saying hello to a colleague in the corridor, not holding the door open for another). Indirect/covert aggression is defined as actions taken intentionally to covertly harm a target (Bjorkqvist, 2001; Björkqvist, 1994; Dettinger & Hart, 2007; Kaukiainen et al., 2001; Warren, Richardson, & McQuillin, 2011). The ways in which such behaviour may be manifested include spreading rumours about the target, withholding important information needed by an individual to perform their job function, social isolation (i.e. socially manipulating others to isolate the individual), and negative body language (i.e. dirty looks, “I’m not speaking to you” body language, ignoring the individual’s presence, etc.) (Bjorkqvist, 2001; Björkqvist, 1994; Dettinger & Hart, 2007; Kaukiainen et al., 2001; Warren et al., 2011). A review of the indirect/covert aggression literature suggests that this form of aggression is under-researched, especially at the level of the target’s experience and how they cognitively process the aggression they experience (Salin et al., 2014).

Aggression and emotions researchers acknowledge that indirect/covert aggression is the most problematic of the different types of aggressive behaviours to investigate within workplaces because the covert nature of this behaviour is often not conducive to overt observation (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Dettinger & Hart, 2007). As a result, much of research and theory to date has focussed on identifying the different types of acts that are considered indirectly/covertly aggressive (Salin, 2009). Some of this research has then examined the impact that such behaviour has on the target and specifically negative psychological and emotional outcomes, health outcomes, and low job performance (e.g., Keashley, 2001; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). What is missing in this research is knowledge about the cognitive processes that an individual experiences when they are a target of indirect/covert aggression and how these cognitive processes (i.e., sensemaking, relational scripts, etc.)
manifest themselves through behaviour via the relational scripts that are formulated by the target (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Kaukiainen, 2003). Abelson (1981a) and Wilson and Capitman (1982) define scripts as being a standard sequence of events characterising typical activities for an individual. Behavioural scripts are the process of acting out scripts through a person’s actions. Sims and Lorenzi (1992) define cognitive scripts as being the organisation of knowledge about specific constructs and are categorised based on features and attributes. The theories that will guide this understanding of scripts will be Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End Theory and Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Event Theory and Schank and Abelson’s (1977) Cognitive Script Theory. A further explanation of these theories and an explanation of why the term target vice victim is used in this research programme will be explained later in this chapter. The research questions I have developed to guide my research programme are:

**Research Question 1:** What are an individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process?

**Research Question 3:** How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?

### 1.3 Target versus victim

The term target will be used in this research, rather than victim. Aquino, Douglas, and Martinko (2004a) raise a noteworthy point about the labels that individuals are given who are associated with workplace aggression. They assert that workplace victimisation is from a broad family of constructs that are associated with harmful behaviour within the workplace, such as workplace incivility and workplace mobbing. Aquino et al. (2004) suggest that constructs like victimisation focus on the perpetrator and their aggressive behaviour rather than on the experiences of the target. Thus being a victim, and the term
victimisation, is in reference to someone who is helpless and cannot defend him/herself. For the purpose of this research, therefore, the term target will be used to acknowledge the various strategies that an individual can use in response to aggression in order to minimise it (Aquino et al., 2004). For example, individuals might use strategies to make themselves less vulnerable to aggression, such as ingratiating or social deference as a way to minimise being the focal point of aggression (Aquino et al., 2004). Hence, throughout my thesis, the term target will be used when referring to an individual who is experiencing indirect/covert within their workplace.

The extant research has focussed on the two different types of individual responses to indirect/covert aggression (provocative and submissive). To explain the different types of responses identified within the literature, scholars have argued that provocative responses emerge when an individual ‘brings on’ the aggression to themselves through the manifestations of their behaviour (i.e. nervous, co-dependent, irritating characteristics, etc., cf. Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Einarsen, 1999; Olweus, 1993). Submissive responses have been linked to individuals who have a negative self-image, lacks assertiveness, and are high in introversion (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Olweus, 1978). Aquino and Lamertz (2004) suggest that self-abasement projects a self-effacing identity that invites mistreatment because it is linked with low social position within a peer group. It is my objective in this research programme to examine another type of target response, which is one that is ‘proactive’. That is, a target who effectively and appropriately engages the policies and procedures of the organisation to manage their experience of indirect/covert aggression.

1.4 Defining Indirect/Covert Aggression

Acts of indirect/covert aggression include behaviours perceived to be aggressive behaviour, but vary in intensity, have undetectable intentions, and often appear invisible (Warren et al., 2011). One of its most defining characteristics, invisibility, makes this type of
behaviour distinct from other workplace aggression constructs that are used in the literature (e.g. bullying, incivility, etc.). That is, to have a target explain their experience of indirect/covert aggression is difficult because it is trying to define the ‘undefineable’ because of the opaqueness of the aggressor’s behaviour (Keashly, 2001).

Buss (1961) is the first scholar to put uncivil, invisible acts done by one individual or by a group toward another individual under the label ‘indirect aggression’. He argued that indirect aggression was done “via the negative reactions of other; the victim (sic) gets into trouble at the end of a chain of mediating events and people” (p. 8). Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K., and Lagerspetz, K. (1994) developed the definition of indirect aggression further, by finding that the key to indirect aggression is that the aggressor makes every attempt to disguise their intentions to harm their target, leaving the target to second guess whether or not the harm was intended. Furthermore, Bjorkqvist, K. et al. (1994) describe indirect/covert aggression within the workplace as a two tiered construct involving: rational-appearing aggression and social manipulation.

Rational appearing aggression is a cluster of aggressive behaviours (Bjorkqvist, 2001; Bjorkqvist, K. et al., 1994) that includes: criticising and/or questioning the judgement or decisions of others, or making underhanded comments at the expense of others while disguising it as a joke (Bjorkqvist, K. et al., 1994). Social manipulation is a tactic whereby an individual is subtle in that they use social networks to attack target (i.e. influencing members of a social group to isolate the target). Specifically, the typical behaviour of social manipulation is to socially isolate the targeted individual from collaborative and/or friendship groups (Bjorkqvist, K. et al., 1994). Gardner and Johnson (2001) state that in an effort to further isolate the target, aggressors have a proclivity of not returning emails, telephone calls, voicemails and a memo, which helps in the aggressor’s ultimate goal of making the target leave the organisation. There are other behaviours that encompass social manipulation (a
form of indirect/covert aggression), which include: verbal rejection, negative facial gestures, and slanderous/vexatious rumours (Björkqvist, 1994).

Isolation is another defining feature of indirect aggression and can be psychologically injurious to individuals, because it is a human motivation to belong in order to ‘survive’ (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Buss, 1991; Cacioppo, Hughes, Waite, Hawkley, & Thisted, 2006; Leiter, 2013). Working with others within the contemporary world is advantageous to an individual’s social, economic, and cultural connections, which is why indirect/covert aggression that isolates is harmful to individuals (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Cacioppo et al., 2006; Leiter, 2013). When the motive for belonging within their workplace is unmet, individuals tend to feel anxious and a sense of vulnerability (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leiter, 2013).

1.5 Aims of Research Program

My programme of research is set within the Australian workplace context and aims to address the critical issues that have been overlooked within the field of indirect/covert aggression, which are: (i) looking at the cognitive processing that a target experiences (i.e. the emotions they experience, point of realisation, and the scripts they formulate), (ii) the personal constructs that targets build with regard to their aggressors’ behaviours, and (iii) the behavioural manifestations (reactions) that are a result of being a target of indirect/covert aggression. I propose that there are specific cognitive and affective processes (i.e., negative affect, personal constructs, scripts) that a target experiences.

Specifically, Study 1 is a qualitative study that examines the cognitive processing that the target experiences, the negative affectivity that they experience, the relational scripts that they formulate, and the personal constructs that they have of their aggressor. Study 2 is quantitative study that is a confirmatory study of the target’s emotions, scripts, and behavioural outcomes. Study 2 tests an explanatory model that predicts a target’s use of
scripts when faced with indirect/covert aggression within the workplace that is based on Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Regulation, and Emotional Stability and perceptions.

1.6 Theoretical Underpinnings

1.6.1 Affective Events Theory. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) developed Affective Events Theory around the notion that performance, attitude, and behaviours are influenced by the way individual employees feel at work, which can be affect (emotionally) driven or judgement (cognitively) driven (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In essence, I am proposing in my program of research that a target will feel discrete negative emotions caused by the indirect/covert aggression event (hassle) that is precipitated by their aggressor (or agent). This is an induced negative affective event. That is, indirect/covert aggressive behaviours are negative ‘hassles’ that include behaviours, such as slowness to respond to communication or slowing down work processes, which can, in turn lead to job dissatisfaction and/or negative relational scripts that have the possibility of the target retaliating or taking leaves of absence.

Emotions often arise from ‘affective events’ (Basch & Fisher, 1998; Elfenbein, 2007; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) where the broad term ‘affect’ encompasses emotions and mood (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). There is a fine line between mood and emotion in that individuals are more likely to display positive discrete emotions when they are in a positive mood, and vice versa (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Emotions are short lived and are directed at something or someone, whereas, mood is longer lasting and is not directed at anything or anyone (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As researchers suggest (Basch & Fisher, 1998; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) affect, mood and emotion can either be positive or negative in valence and can vary in level of arousal, from weak to strong (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Positive ‘uplifts’ (e.g., events that make an individual happy or in a positive mood) and negative ‘hassles’ (i.e. indirect/covert aggressive annoyances that
make an individual angry and/or frustrated) are what individuals experience in their work lives (Basch & Fisher, 2000; Basch & Fisher, 1998; Lazarus, 1981; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). The relevance of using Affective Events Theory will help to understand a target’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression

Fisher and Ashkanasy (2000) state that Affective Events Theory offers an explanation of what causes emotions and mood at work and what the consequences of these are emotions for decision making. They suggest that mood and emotions are the mediating mechanisms that impact job attitudes and behaviours. Fisher and Ashkanasy propose it is the discrete events that elicit specific emotions.

1.6.2 Peak-End Theory. My research also draws on Peak-End theory developed by Fredrickson and Kahneman (1993). Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End theory proposes that what individuals remember from their experiences is the peak, that is greatest intensity of the moment or episode, and how it ended. (Fredrickson, 2000) states that, “people’s past and on-going affective experiences guide their decisions about the future” (p. 577). Fredrickson further explains that the affective experiences that individuals have, elicit emotions and mood, such as sadness or anger. In other words, the ending of an episode gives individuals a sense of knowing or confidence in what they feel and believe about situations (Fredrickson, 2000). While the episode is still on-going, what individuals feel and believe is held tentatively. The peak affect is the most intense affective moments for an individual, whether it is positive or negative and helps them make decisions in their present life (Fredrickson, 2000).

I contend that, while employees who are targets of indirect/covert aggression may be able to recover from the effect of a strongly negative event, such as company downsizing or an unwanted job transfer, it is the succession of minor, subtler events that are characteristic of indirect/covert aggression that result in negative consequences (Einarsen, 1999; Glasø, Vie,
Holmdal, & Einarsen, 2011). These subtle events can include a target’s character being
defamed by the aggressor (agent) through rumours spread about him/her or displaying
derisive body language of “do-not-speak-to-me” body language, which, if accumulated over
time, can have a negative impact on the target’s attitudes and behaviours within the workplace
(Aquino & Thau, 2009; Glasø et al., 2011). I propose that Fredrickson and Kahneman’s
Peak-End Theory intertwines with Weiss & Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events Theory in
that the ‘affective’ episodes, are the ‘peaks’ and the ‘ends’ of the affective events. That is, an
individual is most likely to remember the most intense affective moment and how it ends
regardless of whether it is positive or negative. For example, the most intense feeling a target
has during an experience of indirect/covert aggression and how it ended is how the target will
remember the experience and builds scripts from those memories (Fredrickson, 2000;
Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993; Tomkins, 1979).

1.6.3 **Cognitive Script Theory.** Scripts are built on reactions to emotions (Baldwin, 1992). They are recalled from memory, are well rehearsed and guide a person in how they
process their behaviours and thinking. This means that cognitive and behavioural scripts are
based on past experiences of indirect/covert aggression, the cognitive structures representing
expectations, the manner in which their actions will be perceived, and the other individual’s
responses to the scripts (Baldwin, 1992).

The uniqueness of this research programme is that Affective Events theory, Peak-End
theory, and Script theory have not been used in conjunction with one another, specifically
when examining indirect/covert aggression within the workplace. Affective Events theory
(Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) will offer an explanation of how indirect/covert aggression is
an affective event/hassle that elicits discrete negative emotions within a target. As such,
Peak-End theory (Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993) can offer the understanding of the most
intense emotional moment that a target will experience when dealing with the indirect/covert
aggressive event and how the situation of aggression ended for the target, which helped them build a script to deal with their aggressor using Schank and Abelson’s (1977) Script theory.

1.7 Philosophical Underpinnings of Research Program

The philosophical underpinnings of my research program are interpretivist and neo-positivist. In Study 1, I wanted to understand the nature of indirect/covert aggression as a set of behaviours that are used to hurt an individual in order to socially isolate them or ultimately force them to exit their organisation. As a part of this understanding, it was necessary for me to explore the different theories, models, and frameworks in an objective manner that already existed within the realm of aggression research (Creswell, 2013). An epistemological assumption from an interpretivist lens (i.e. how is the reality of indirect/covert aggression known) was necessary as well, in order to build context around the individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression. That is, to develop the many different ideas that are available and focus on the description of participants experiences who have experienced the phenomenon of indirect/covert aggression (Creswell, 2013).

In Study 2, I used the neo-positivist approach where the ontological assumption is dualistic (the research object and subject are separate entities) and that absolute truth cannot be found (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As such, taking the neo-positivist approach challenges the absolute truth of knowledge, as it recognises that we cannot be ‘absolute’ or ‘positive’ about our knowledge (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I use a scientific method that is central to the process of Study 2, which is using a two phase cross-sectional survey comprising construct measures that have been either already validated or were constructed from the data that emerged from Study 1.

1.8 Contributions

My research programme contributes to the current workplace aggression literature in four ways. The first is by formulating a model that suggests the scripts that targets use when
experiencing aggression, specifically indirect/covert aggression. Schank and Abelson’s (1977) script theory is employed to understand how a target uses scripts that lead to effective or ineffective outcomes. The second significant contribution is using Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events theory and Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End theory together with Schank and Abelson’s (1977) Cognitive Script Theory to better understand indirect/covert aggression. The third contribution is to examine the cognitive processing that an individual goes through does when they become aware of being a target of indirect aggression and how they use this process to absolve themselves from being further targeted by their aggressor(s). The fourth contribution that will be made is the development of a scale to access the scripts that targets uses when dealing and/or absolving themselves of indirect/covert aggression. Next, practical implications of my research programme will be outlined. Then, a brief overview of the chapters that comprise this thesis I will be discussed.

1.9 Practical Implications of Research Programme

The purpose of conducting research about the experiences that targets of workplace aggression have is to understand their cognitive processing of those experiences of aggression. This research and future research may help employers provide a safer work environment by guiding employees on how to engage in the behaviours a target needs to display to manage covert / indirect aggression (Hogh, Mikkelsen, & Hansen, 2011). Prevention encompasses employees using less sick leave, absenteeism, minimising the threats on employees’ mental and emotional health, and increasing higher employee productivity.

1.10 Overview of Chapters

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In this first chapter, I discussed what is meant by the construct of indirect/covert aggression, the characteristics that are associated with the phenomenon, and its consequences. I also briefly outlined the theoretical frameworks that I draw upon and considered the practical implications of my program of
research. In Chapter 2, a comprehensive literature review is outlined on the targets, their behaviours and the affectivity that they experience. Chapter 2 also attempts to explain possible affectivity, personality traits.

In Chapter 3, I present the paradigm that I have worked within to have a clear understanding of why I have used the methodology chosen within my program of research. In Chapter 4, I report on Study 1a, which aims to understand the cognitive processes that a target experiences when realising they are a target of indirect/covert aggression. In Study 1a, I also examine the scripts (behavioural manifestations) that these targets build in order to deal with being a target of indirect/covert aggression, by answering Research Question(s): 1) What are an individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work? 2) To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process? and 3) How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?

Chapter 5, Study 1b identifies the personal constructs that targets formulated with regard to their aggressor’s behaviours. These personal constructs were elucidated using the Repertory Grid technique (Duck, 1973; Kelly, 1955) by answering Research Question 2: To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process?.

Chapter 6 presents Study 2. A cross-sectional survey, using pre-validated scales along with new scales developed from the findings of Study 1a and Study 1b is administered. The purpose of Study 2 is to predict the use of different scripts also looking at emotional intelligence, emotional stability, and emotional regulation, by answering Research Question 3: How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine
the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?

Finally, Chapter 7 presents the general discussion and concluding thoughts that can be drawn across studies 1a, 1b, and 2 coupled with the proposed theories that underpinned my research program. This chapter will be organised from the specifics to the general, which will be from the findings to the literature, the theory, and then to practice. There will be a discussion on conflicting explanation of the results and unexpected findings. The limitations and weaknesses of this project will be discussed as well. Lastly, recommendations for future research will be outlined.
Chapter 2 : Literature Review

The incidence of indirect/covert aggression at work is not uncommon. Yet the experience for workers varies between individuals and, to some extent, is dependant upon on individual differences in experiences of emotions and how their emotions are managed (Baldwin, 1992; Buss, 1991; Leiter, 2013; Mayer, 2007). The experience of indirect/covert aggression creates a sense of destabilisation/uncertainty within individuals that has negative consequences for their wellbeing and workplace performance (cf., Baron & Neuman, 1996; Keashly, 2001; Leiter, 2013). In order to better understand how indirect/covert aggression is experienced, and dealt with, by employees in the current chapter I present a review of the literature on workplace aggression, focussing on indirect/covert aggression. A comprehensive review of this literature provides the foundation to better address the first overarching research question of my program of research: What are individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?

I begin this chapter by discussing the different types of aggression that are exhibited within the workplace context. Specifically, I examine the different types of aggression constructs. Next, I discuss the impact aggression at work has on targets. Then, drawing on aggression literature, I consider the possible causes of aggression and more specifically indirect/covert aggression. I specifically look at personality (e.g., emotional stability) and the impact of the target’s emotions when experiencing indirect/covert aggression. Additionally, I give an overview of the theoretical frameworks that are used to guide my programme of research.

2.1 Types of aggressive behaviour experienced in the workplace

Anderson and Bushman (2002) define aggression as “any behavior directed toward another individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm” (p. 28). In addition, the aggressor must judge that the behaviour will damage the target, and that
the target is driven to avoid the behavior (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1993; Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Geen, 2001). Einarsen, Raknes, and Matthiesen (1997) identified three types of aggression that occurs within the workplace, which are: work-related aggression, physical aggression, and person-oriented aggression. Work-related aggression can include behaviours such as: withholding information, being tasked with work below competency level and being given an unmanageable workload. Physical aggression can include a cluster of behaviours such as: shouting, finger pointing, invasion of personal space, and threatening violence. Person-oriented aggression includes being humiliated or ridiculed, spreading gossip, and being ignored or excluded. Person-oriented aggression is within the same family of behaviours as indirect aggression, as the behaviours are low intensity and circuitous. Work-related aggression is similar to the person-oriented aggression, but it also includes the individual’s job role and their competency within it.

As such, Agervold (2007) maintains that it is difficult to define indirect aggression between the behaviours themselves and that of the appraisal of the target. If the aggression were more overt and physical, then it would easy for the targets, the organisation, and the bystanders to distinctly classify the behaviours as aggressive. However, indirect/covert aggression is nonverbal, subtle aggression that is hard to pinpoint as an experience, which makes it difficult to define when reporting such behaviours. Typically, an indirect/covert aggressor is never alone in their aggressive behaviour, as they manipulate others around them to help in their cause of isolating, and/or undermining their target. In short, indirect/covert aggression is often underpinned by socially manipulating others to quietly attack a targeted individual (Bjorkqvist, 2001; Björkqvist, Ekman, & Lagerspetz, 1982; Xie, Cairns, & Cairns, 2002).

A key issue in the field of aggression research is that scholars cannot seem to agree on using specific terminology (Aquino, Douglas, & Martinko, 2004b; Archer & Coyne, 2005;
Einarsen, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003; Hershcovis, 2011; Kent, Troth, & Jordan, 2014) and instead use different terms for aggression types with the same construct definition (Aquino et al., 2004b; Archer & Coyne, 2005; Einarsen et al., 2003; Hershcovis, 2011; Kent, Troth, et al., 2014). These constructs include: rational appearing aggression (Björkqvist, 1994; Björkqvist et al., 1982; Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 2000), social undermining (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), relational aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Crick & Grotpeter, 2005), social aggression (Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Ferguson, & Gariépy, 1989) and indirect/covert aggression (Bjorkqvist, 2001; Kaukiainen et al., 2001).

This section clarifies different categories of aggressive behaviours, ranging from the broadest construct (bullying) through to the most narrow (indirect/covert aggression) by considering them in terms of four dimensions which are: impact, intensity, indirect/direct aggression, and intention (see Kent, Troth, et al., 2014). Table 2.1 clearly illustrates these different types of behaviours and their manifestations. As I noted earlier, there are difficulties in defining what behaviours are classified as aggression, partly due to the perceptions of the target (Agervold, 2007, 2009) and also partly due to the overlapping of constructs that clearly define what are and what are not aggressive behaviours within the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Hershcovis, 2011; Leiter, 2013).

First, impact is the degree or extent to which acts of aggression affects an individual target’s psychosocial well-being (Neuman & Baron, 1997, 1998). The focus of impact is on the target and there are different types of behaviour (e.g., rumour mongering and social undermining) that will have higher impact on the target than other aggressive behaviours (e.g., yelling; swearing) (Kent, Troth, et al., 2014).

The second dimension, intensity, concerns the level of concentrated aggression that is within the behaviour of the aggressor (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Kent et al., 2014). High intensity workplace aggression behaviours are acts that are more overt and forceful,
concentrated and specific (physical and verbal) (e.g., swearing at an individual, pushing and shoving an individual). Kent et al. suggest that low intensity workplace aggressions can be more restrained, softened and skilful (e.g., rumour mongering, discourteous verbal and non verbal behaviours).

The third dimension that Kent et al., suggest is the indirect or direct nature of aggression, which is a dimension that is more about the aggressor’s behaviours. As the label denotes, indirect/covert aggression is more oblique, surreptitious, harder to pinpoint and typically less physically harmful (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Kent et al., 2014; Zapf, 1999). Behaviours that exemplify indirect/covert aggression are dismissive body language and malicious gossiping (Kent, Troth, et al., 2014). By contrast, direct aggression is forthright, unambiguous and can be physical in nature.

Finally, the fourth dimension in Kent et al.’s (2014) taxonomy is intention, or the mindful, premeditated act on the part of the aggressor (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011). Intent to harm is the key that is critical for some work-related aggression concepts. For example, Einarsen et al. (2011), whose research focuses on workplace bullying, argue that workplace aggression is not present if there is no intent to harm an individual. In the case of indirect/covert aggression, it is difficult for the target to know whether the aggressor has the intention to harm or hurt them or not. As such, it makes it more difficult for the target to report indirect covert aggression, as they do not know the intention of the aggressor. There is considerable disparity exists with regard to the issue of intent of bullying behaviours (Einarsen et al., 2011; Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999). It is argued that the role of intent in bullying is associated both to the target’s perception that the negative action was intended in the first place and to the likely detrimental outcome for the target resulting from the aggressor’s behaviour. Einarsen et al. (2011) make a noteworthy point that some aggression scholars (Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K., & Lagerspetz, K. M., 1994), whose approach is

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anchored in aggression theory, deem intent to cause damage on the part of the perpetrator as a key feature of bullying. In short, some consider that where there is no intention to cause injury, there is no bullying (Einarsen et al., 2011). Whereas other aggression scholars (e.g., Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993) note that it is generally impossible to prove the presence of intent (particularly in the case of indirect / covert aggression) and therefore remove intent as being necessary from most definitions of harassment (Einarsen et al., 2011; Hoel et al., 1999).

According to some aggression scholars (Einarsen et al., 2011; Hoel et al., 1999) this argument raises an additional issue that needs to be taken into account in connection with intent, which is the distinction between instrumental aggression and affective aggression (Einarsen et al., 2011; Hoel et al., 1999). As such it argued that although the bullying behaviour may be mindful and intended, there may be no intent to cause harm on the part of the aggressor (Einarsen et al., 2011). As such the bullying behaviour may be considered key to reaching a certain goal or objective (Einarsen et al., 2011). However, whereas intent may be a contentious item of bullying characterisations, it is equally important to understand that if the target perceives their experience as intentional bullying, then it is important to consider it as intentional behaviour on the part of the aggressor (Einarsen et al., 2011).

Kent, Troth, et al. (2014) also acknowledge the interrelated nature of these dimensions. For instance the indirect (direct) dimension is often contingent upon intensity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) with indirect aggression often being associated with lower, but lasting impact on the target. On the other hand, workplace aggression that is more direct is generally associated with higher target impact and intensity (Baron & Neuman, 1996; Kent et al., 2014; Zapf, 1999). In developing their categories, however, Kent, Troth, et al. (2014) note that researchers have often distinguished between low and high intensity emotional states and the indirect (or direct) nature of the aggressive behaviour that is targeted at an
individual (e.g., Baron & Neuman, 1996; Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994; O’Moore, Seigne, McGuire, Smith, 1998).

2.1.1 Bullying. Einarsen (1999) identifies bullying as a process in which a series of uncivil acts occur between individuals with the intent of one gaining power over the other individual. Bullying fits into the violence category as it inflicts injury or discomfort on another individual and can include physical contact, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, exclusion, or other harmful behaviours (Einarsen, 1999). It is intentional behaviour that is directed at harassing, offending, and/or socially excluding an individual (Einarsen et al., 2003). Bullying behaviour is intentional and can be either high impact and with high intensity (e.g., name calling, making sexual overtures) or low intensity (excluding someone socially/professionally, using them as a scapegoat). In short, bullying is a ‘big tent’ term that has a wide breadth of behaviours that are subsumed under it.

Einarsen (1999) identifies two types of bullying within the workplace: predatory bullying and dispute-related bullying. Individuals who are seen as less than powerful and unlikely to defend themselves are ideal targets for predatory bullying. A predatory bully is also more likely to target individuals who are anxious and introverted (Einarsen, 1999; Glasø, Matthiesen, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2007). Dispute-related bullying is a form of aggression that emerges from conflict (Einarsen, 1999; Glasø et al., 2007). Einarsen (1999) suggests that dispute related bullying is caused by a combination of organizational culture that is lackadaisical in dealing with these types of actions and a hostile social milieu within the organization (Einarsen, 1999).
Table 2.1: Types of negative behaviours in the workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholar</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Associated Behaviours</th>
<th>Underlying Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Einarsen (2000), Hershcovis (2011), Agervold (2007)</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>• Ridicule repeated reminders of your blunders</td>
<td>• High impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Insulting teasing</td>
<td>• High intensity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Slander or rumors about you group activities</td>
<td>• Intentional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Verbal abuse</td>
<td>• Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Devaluation of your work and efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Neglect of your opinions or views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leyman (1996)</td>
<td>Mobbing/ Psychological Terror</td>
<td>• Effects on the victim’s possibilities to communicate adequately (i.e. being silenced, verbal threats, etc.)</td>
<td>• Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Effects on the victim’s possibilities to maintain social contacts (e.g. social isolation)</td>
<td>• Intentional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Effects on the victims’ possibilities to maintain their personal reputation (e.g. gossiping, ridicule, etc.)</td>
<td>• High intensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Effects on the victims’ occupational situation (i.e. given meaningless tasks)</td>
<td>• High impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Effects on the victims’ physical health (i.e. given dangerous work to do)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andersson &amp; Pearson (1999), Hershcovis (2011)</td>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>• An outright violation</td>
<td>• High or low intensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Escalated interpersonal conflict</td>
<td>• High or low impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Day to day civilities of please and thank you are disregarded</td>
<td>• Indirect or Direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Put you down in a condescending way</td>
<td>• Intentional or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you</td>
<td>unintentional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Paid little attention to your statement or showed little interest in your opinion</td>
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<td>• Made unwanted attempts to draw you into discussion of personal matters</td>
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<td>Duffy, Ganster, &amp; Pagon (2002), Hershcovis (2011)</td>
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<td>• Put you down when you questioned work procedures</td>
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<th>Björkqvist, Osterman, &amp; Lagerspetz, 1994</th>
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<td>• Criticism</td>
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<td>• Interrupting, and trying to reduce another person’s opportunities for self-expression</td>
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<td>• Indirect, manipulative tactics used to gain social power (i.e. defaming one’s character when they are not present, controlling a group’s interaction with the target, etc.)</td>
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<td>• Direct social aggression (e.g. verbal rejection, negative facial expressions, negative body gestures, etc.)</td>
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2.1.2 Mobbing/Psychological terror. Mobbing (psychological terror) (Leymann, 1990), a term more commonly used by European researchers, is similar to bullying in that it is direct, intentional behaviour that encroaches on an individual’s rights and dignity, but overlaps with indirect/covert aggression (i.e., social isolation, exclusion, etc.). As shown in Table 2.1, it can occur within an individual or group context with a number of people systematically ‘ganging up’ on an individual (Leymann, 1990). As such, the intent of the encroachment (individually or in a group) is to push the target into a position of defencelessness and to limit their ability to defend themselves. Some direct behaviours (physical isolation) can impact an individual’s ability to effectively communicate within their organization or physically isolate them (e.g., an isolated office space, see Leymann, 1990).

2.1.3 Incivility. Incivility is defined as, “low intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). Being rude, discourteous, or acting without regard for others, in violation of the norms of respect, are examples of incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Andersson and Pearson (1999) justify overlapping incivility with aggression and deviant behaviour in their model by pointing out that there are varying intensities of mistreatment that is associated with incivility. However, they distinguish incivility from violence, as “through the eyes of the instigator, the target, and/or the observers – is ambiguous” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Thus, by contrast, violence is direct and overt. The instigator of incivility can contradict the target’s perception of their (the instigator) behaviour and claim ignorance of the effect (e.g., declaring that it wasn’t meant as an attack) or that the target misinterpreted the incivility (e.g., sorry, didn’t mean to be so brash, I was just trying to communicate in clearer terms) or was being overly sensitive (e.g., “you really
need to grow thicker skin!”). Andersson and Pearson (1999) state that incivility “is not transparent and is subject to varying interpretation” (p. 456).

After reviewing literature from different fields of research, such as aggression, bullying, and workplace incivility, I found that there are different constructs that describe the same uncivil, but ambiguous/indirect behaviours, which are subject to interpretation as to whether or not harm/emotional abuse was intended. I contend, as shown in Table 2.1, that incivility related concepts are very much characterised by their indirect (as opposed to direct) nature. However, in Table 2.1, I demonstrate that incivility should be distinguished from indirect/covert aggression, as it is a term for behaviours that include poor manners (i.e., not holding the door open for someone, not saying hello in the hallway, not saying please and thank you, etc.). When an individual inadvertently omits cordial phrases (e.g. manners) from interpersonal exchanges it can or cannot be construed as aggression. That said, indirect/covert aggression goes beyond the pleasantries of ‘please and thank you’ and/or holding the door open, as it is intentional behaviour to harm another individual. Another facet of incivility that sets it apart from indirect/covert aggression, is the ‘tit for tat’ (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) or norm of reciprocity, when the individual receiving the uncivil behaviour will oblige their transgressor in giving back the same treatment. The norm of reciprocity (or the tit for tat behaviour) is a point at which interpersonal conflict starts and can easily escalate (Leiter & Stright, 2009). Indirect/covert aggression is not regarded as a set of transgressed behaviours or interpersonal conflict, as they are behaviours that have malice of intent with the intended end result being to socially isolate the target.

2.1.4 Social Undermining. According to Duffy et al. (2002) social undermining is never directed at an organization and is always done with intent to harm a particular individual. As shown in Table 2.1, compared to incivility, social undermining is low
intensity, interpersonal behaviour that is intended to damage/hurt an individual’s reputation and relationships. Duffy et al. (2002) suggest that there are three key aspects to social undermining, which are: the perception that the behaviour is intended to hurt/hinder the target, the behaviour is insidious, and the behaviour varies between physical and verbal. Verbal undermining can be direct (e.g., making a derogative comment toward an individual, minimising an individual’s thoughts or ideas) or it can be indirect (e.g., withholding information or failing to defend a colleague). Physical undermining can be indirect, low intensity behaviour that includes slowing the progress of an individual’s work or it can be direct such as outright refusal to provide proper work resources. The negative impact on the target can include emotional alienation (purposely excluding individuals socially within the workplace) or damaging the professional reputation of an individual (giving misleading information about the job) (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). However, Bjorkqvist (2001) states all aggression is social regardless of whether ‘social’ is a part of the construct or not.

2.1.5 Rational Appearing Aggression. As shown in Table 2.1, rational appearing aggression is an intentional form of aggression used as a way to minimise or diminish the worth of an individual in a public setting, such as in a boardroom meeting or an office setting (see Baron & Neuman, 1996; Bjorkqvist, K. et al., 1994). The rational appearing aggressor will tend to make hurtful statements in an open forum, but make their comment appear as though it comes from a position of rationality making this an indirect form of aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005). Rational appearing aggression is a form of direct aggression operating at low intensity which is expressed in a range of ways including criticism, questioning one’s judgement, interrupting, and trying to reduce another person’s opportunities for self-expression (Björkqvist, Osterman, & Lagerspetz, 1994, p. 30), can impact an individual’s sense of dignity, which can elicit feelings of being emotionally abused.
Conversely, a target experiencing indirect/covert aggression will be second guessing themselves when trying to understand if the aggressor’s intentions were maligning (see Keashly, 2001).

**2.1.6 Relational Aggression.** As shown in Table 2.1, Scholars have characterised relational aggression as having a purpose to undermine or damage peer relationships (Crick & Grotpeter, 2005; Dettinger & Hart, 2007). Relational aggression is separate from other aggression constructs, because scholars (Crick & Grotpeter, 2005; Dettinger & Hart, 2007) attribute it as a female construct and it can be direct or indirect. In most cultures, physical aggression from females is not acceptable, particularly when compared to males (Olweus, 1978). In line with cultural norms, females may be more likely to engage in aggressive behaviours of this relational aggression nature. Hence, there is a need to recognise and develop an understanding of different styles of aggression that may be suited to different genders (see Olweus, 1978). Crick and Grotpeter (1995) believe that women use this form of aggression to intentionally restrict any rise in social status of individuals they dislike. Although the original research around relational aggression by Crick and Grotpeter (1995) focuses on childhood and adolescent behaviour, such behaviours do influence the behaviours of adults at work (Olweus, 1978; Vartia, 1996). This form of aggression is low intensity because of the subtle behaviours, but has a high impact in terms of restricting the target’s social network. Stunting an individual’s social network, particularly for women, can have a high impact on their psychosocial well being because they are social by nature (Leiter, 2013).

**2.1.7 Social Aggression.** Galen and Underwood (1997), using Cairns et al. (1989) research, define social aggression as intentional, relationally manipulative behaviour (which can be direct or indirect) over a group of people (e.g., work colleagues, friends, etc) to gain social acceptance or higher social standing within that group. Social aggression is distinct
from bullying due to its focus on the use of indirect, manipulative tactics, whereas bullying is often more focused on direct verbal and physical aggression. Another distinguishing feature of social aggression is the focus on gaining higher social status, and the use of (relationally) manipulative behaviours, such as defaming an individual’s character or directly attempting to control another’s behaviour. Direct social aggression behaviours include verbal rejection, negative facial expressions, and/or body movements. Indirect social aggression behaviours include slanderous rumours and/or social exclusions (see Archer & Coyne, 2005).

Galen and Underwood (1997) argue that social aggression is a distinct type of covert behaviour as it is all encompassing of other forms of indirect aggressive behaviour. Social power and dominance, entails being perceived as having physical attractiveness, high social standing, and social power (Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998). Evaluative behaviour such as talking about another individual in a negative tone when they are not present to demean their morality and/or reputation within the workplace context is intended to negatively impact an individual and is primary to social aggression (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Galen & Underwood, 1997; Parkhurst & Hopmeyer, 1998).

To recap, Bjorkqvist (2001) finds using ‘social’ in a construct label to be problematic as he and his research team have found that all aggression or conflict is social in nature. The manipulative aspect of aggression is social in nature, in that, aggressors will use other members of their group to attack their target. To explain, individuals/aggressors will use deception and/or pressure of one kind or another to erode the target’s resistance, and manipulate the situation so as to effectively limit the target’s social options (Baron, 2003; Bjorkqvist, 2001). However, manipulation can also operate by taking advantage of another's emotions or emotional needs, sometimes first eliciting the emotion in order to capitalize on it (Baron, 2003; Bjorkqvist, 2001). The aggressor can attack the target through other members
of the group by using tactics such as social exclusion and/or the spread of gossip about the
target (Bjorkqvist, 2001; Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992). Closely related to
Galen and Underwood’s (1997) notion of social aggression are the concepts of indirect/covert
aggression.

2.1.8 Indirect/Covert Aggression. Indirect or covert aggression is the main focus
of my programme of research. Scholars (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Hershcovis, 2011; Kent,
Troth, et al., 2014) acknowledge that there are similarities in the different terminology of
indirect and covert aggression and that the research community cannot agree on the terms to
delineate/distinguish between these types of behaviours. Archer and Coyne (2005) establish
that the behaviours that are classified under different constructs (indirect, relational and social
aggression) can be incorporated under a single definition, indirect aggression (see Table 2.1).
Research on indirect aggression proposes that is the most everyday form of aggression among
adults within the workplace context, as it socially intolerable for adults in a workplace setting
to act out physical forms of aggression toward their target (Kent, Troth, et al., 2014). Instead,
adults learn to use more sophisticated means to carry out aggressive behaviours, which is
through subtle aggressive behaviours. Subtle aggressive behaviours include using social
networks (i.e. using a social network to isolate the target) to manipulate a situation in which
they can gain power and control over the target (Björkqvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Back, 1992,
1994; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Björkqvist, Osterman, and Hjelt-Back (1992) divided indirect/covert aggression into
subsets of rational appearing aggression (as mentioned earlier in this chapter) and social
manipulation. Additionally, Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Kaukainen (1992) noted that
when a factor analysis was conducted on all items within the scale that measured aggressive
behaviour that indirect aggression emerged as a clear separate factor, as they were harmful
behaviours that are disguised. Aggression research scholars (e.g. Archer & Coyne, 2005; Bjorkqvist, 2001) acknowledge that there are overlaps in the different terminology of indirect/covert aggression and that within their research community they cannot agree on the terms to describe/distinguish between these types of behaviours. Archer and Coyne (2005) and Bjorkqvist (2001) demonstrate that behaviours categorised under different constructs (indirect, relational and social aggression) can be subsumed under a single definition: indirect aggression. This is a stand-alone construct because all of the behaviours associated with relational, social, and indirect aggression are very similar, although they just have different labels.

Covert aggression is another circuitous form of aggression that Archer and Coyne (2005) relate to specific manipulative behaviours. Although the terminology and specific behaviours are replicated across the categories of indirect aggression, relational aggression and social aggression, the underpinning behaviours are social manipulation and social intelligence. Social manipulation is a tactic that is used by an individual within a group to attack their targeted person through the members of the group. Indirect/covert aggression will be used as the operational term through this programme of research as indirect and covert aggression is used interchangeably within the aggression literature. This interchangeable use exists due to the overlapping of behaviours within the constructs of covert and indirect aggression (please see Table 2.1). However, it is important to make a note about frequency of aggressive behaviours within the workplace.

Coyne, Archer, and Eslea (2006) conducted a study on the different types of aggressive behaviours (i.e., relational, social and indirect/covert aggression) that included gossiping, breaking confidences, socially isolating someone. They reported standards and deviations for behaviours within all three categories; the top three most frequently reported
behaviours were in the indirect category of aggression. The indirect items include “gossiping” which occurred the most frequently ($M = 2.75, \text{SD} = 1.71$); speaking negatively about someone’s appearance was the second most frequently indirect aggressive act ($M = 2.16, \text{SD} = 1.97$), and the spreading of rumours ($M = 2.06, \text{SD} = 1.67$). However, the least frequently reported indirect/covert aggressive behaviour was breaking confidences, which was reported as the most harmful. As such, it is the harmful behaviours of the aggressor (e.g., breaking confidences) that, regardless of the frequency, have a negative impact. That is, how the harmful behaviours impact the target determines whether or not the target deems the behaviour as indirectly/covertly aggressive and not the frequency of the indirect/covert aggressive behaviours. This construct differentiates itself from the aforementioned constructs, because it is not repetition of the behaviours that the target takes notice of, so much as it is the perception of the behaviours and the harm that they bring to the target. Therefore, frequency is not a consideration within the four dimensions, as the focus is on the perceptions that the target had of their experiences of aggression.

### 2.2 Emotions.

Affect is an overarching term for mood and emotion (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Mood is a feeling state that lasts over a longer period and is not directed at a person or object (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). However, emotions differ as they are shorted lived and are directed at a person or object (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Within the context of this research, my focus will be on discrete negative emotions that are elicited from targets as a result of indirect/covert aggression. Negative emotions have strong, longer lasting effect (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Several researchers have identified the importance of unique emotions, such as “happiness, fear, sadness, hostility, guilt, surprise and interest. These are
considered discrete in that they are assumed to be unique experiential states that stem from distinct causes” (Barrett, 1998, p. 581). Discrete negative emotions such as anger and fear are considered salient in the context of this research, as experiential states that a target may experience during an indirect/covert aggression episode.

Weiss and Corpanzano (1996) stated that emotions that are elicited within the workplace are, “discrete reactions precipitated by specific events” (p. 41). Affective events are defined as an incident that incites appraisal of, and emotional reaction to, a fleeting or ongoing job related cause, object or incident (Basch & Fisher, 1998; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As such, anger is considered to be the activating emotion, as it is the most intense emotion, which leads to risk taking behaviour (i.e., being physically aggressive, shouting at an individual, etc.). However, anger can lead to more discrete behaviour such as the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960; Whatley, Webster, Smith, & Rhodes, 1999) or emotional reciprocity (Van Kleef et al., 2008) when an individual experiences indirect/covert aggression. Van Kleef et al. (2008) state that, “Emotional reciprocity refers to the process by which one individual comes to feel the emotions of another, as when one person’s distress arouses distress in another” (p. 1315). In short, an individual’s experience will be based on the norm of reciprocity (i.e. they receive the emotion they send out). For example, if a person confronts a friend or a colleague with anger, it is more than likely anger will be reciprocated in the friend or colleague’s response (see Baldwin, 1992).

Researchers suggest that emotions act as a social guide for individuals (Elfenbein, 2007; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). That is, the emotional responses that individuals experience are associated with the events that they experience. Keltner and Haidt (1999) argue that emotions 1) Inform the individual to respond to situations that surface in a social interaction and 2) Prepare an individual to respond to situations that
surface in social interaction. They also suggest that at a dyadic level, emotional expressions help individuals to understand others’ emotions, beliefs and intentions.

Frijda, Kuipers, and Ter Schure (1989) argue that emotions are only relevant to the event that is experienced when they either harm an individual or favour an individual, which in turn, determines an individual’s responses. Unconsciously, an individual will evaluate the event as harmful or favourable depending on how it impacts their goals, motives, or sensitivities. Individual reactions are hinged on the discrete emotions that the events elicit, such as sadness, anxiety, anger, and shame (Leary & Springer, 2001). Targets often report such negative emotions when describing their experiences of indirect/covert aggression (Keashly, 2001; Kwan, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2014). For example, Lazarus (1991) suggests that sadness is an emotional response to losing someone or something. In the circumstance of indirect/covert aggression, the target has a high propensity to feel social devaluation (e.g., neglect, sadness, anxiety, etc.) within their workplace, which, in turn, constitutes a sense of loss (Atlas & Morier, 1994; Kwan et al., 2014). Cacioppo, Hawkley, Norman, and Berntson (2011) argue that humans need social interaction in order to thrive psychologically and physiologically. They add to this argument by declaring social isolation has detrimental health effects for humans. These detrimental effects are physiological (e.g., cardiovascular disease) and psychological (e.g., depression, diminished learning) (Cacioppo et al., 2011). In the case of indirect/covert aggression, it may be an aggressor’s ultimate goal to socially isolate their target, as they are aware of what the overall detrimental effect that is associated with social isolation, which is the inability to thrive within the workplace (Kaukiainen, 2003). Social isolation is achieved through various mediums which can include defaming their target’s character and/or displaying negative body language toward them (Kaukiainen, 2003).
That is, defaming an individual’s character or expressing negative body language can elicit the discrete negative emotion of sadness (Atlas & Morier, 1994).

Another discrete negative emotion that indirect/covert aggression most likely elicits is anxiety. According to Frijda and Kuipers, and Schlure (1989) anxiety corresponds to an appraisal of negative events that does not have definitive outcomes. Indirect/covert aggression also elicits anxiety and anger in the target due to uncertainty regarding the intention of the aggression being intentional toward the target and the surreptitiousness nature of the act of aggression. Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O’Connor (1987) suggest that the word anger is a core concept with five subcategories, which are: irritation, exasperation, disgust, envy, and torment. Shaver et al., (1987) note that individuals use anger to assert power, and gain control over what has caused their anger. Anger is demonstrated through verbal and/or physical means. For example, an angry target may verbally attack or slam doors or walk away from the source of anger.

A target that is left to feel inadequate in their job role and/or is socially isolated might also feel shame (Djurkovic, Casimir, & Mccormack, 2005; Golparvar & Rafizadeh, 2014; Griffin-Smith & Gross, 2006; Jóhannsdóttir & Ólafsson, 2004). Shame is an emotion that is associated with disappearing or hiding from other’s view in a social context. Shame is not a long lasting emotion (Scherer & Wallbott, 1994) and is more to do with social rejection. In the case of a target of indirect/covert aggression, shame is associated with feeling devalued and socially isolated within his/her workplace (Frijda, 1993). What is more, shame is a response resulting from an act of behaviour that causes social ridicule (Frijda, 1993). In the context of indirect/covert aggression, a target of indirect/covert aggression may feel the shame that is associated with feeling rejected or isolated from his/her peers within his/her workplace (Kaukiainen, 2003).
2.3 Personality traits of the target

It is argued that target’s personality has a link to indirect/covert aggression and can provide acts as an explanation for the target’s perceptions and reactions (Bashir, Hanif, & Nadeem, 2014; Einarsen, 2000). Scholars argue (Bashir et al., 2014; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2001) that the target’s personality may also elicit negative behaviours and reactions in the aggressor, and vice versa. The focus of this research is on emotional stability (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and its influence on indirect/covert aggression perceptions traits. Researchers (Bashir et al., 2014; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Vartia, 1996) have suggested that there is a correlation between exposure to indirect/covert aggression and personality traits, such as low emotional stability and low agreeableness (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Vartia, 1996). O’Moore, Seigne, McGuire, and Smith, (1998) also showed that targets of aggression scored low on dominance and emotional stability, but scored high on the anxiety, sensitivity scales, and apprehension (as cited by Bashir et al. 2014).

Mayer (2007) defines personality as individual pattern of mental processes that arise from intentions, feelings, cognitions, and other major areas of psychological functions. Personality is conveyed through an individual’s social behaviour. Personality has the possibility of influencing reactions the situation individuals find themselves in (Glasø, Vie, Holmdal, & Einarsen, 2010). The Big Five (Costa & McCrae, 1992) captures five dimensions of personality, which are: agreeableness, emotional stability, openness to new experience, extraversion, and conscientiousness.

McCrae and John (1992) argue that the appeal for using the Big Five is threefold: 1) it melds together the variety of personality constructs easing communication between researchers from different orientations; 2) the comprehensiveness enables researchers to
explore possible relationships between personality and other phenomena, and 3) it gives an efficient and global descriptions of personality.

### 2.3.1 Emotional stability of the target

Individuals who score high on the emotional stability display behaviours that are calm, even-tempered, and relaxed. These individuals are able to maintain a semblance of calmness while facing stressful situations. Aquino and Bradfield (2000) found that individuals who have negative views of themselves and their environment, also suffer from oversensitivity, anxiety, and are typically socially withdrawn, are lower in emotional stability. Individuals who have low emotional stability tend not to feel a sense of calmness and security, rather they tend to be on high situational awareness, continually rehearsing scenarios in their mind, and have anxiety constantly hijacking their better social sense (Abelson, 1981; Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Josephs & Tafarodi, 1992) (see discussion in 2.3.3). Glasø et al. (2007) argue that anxiety in combination with low emotional stability may leave targets open to predatory aggression.

I focus specifically on the personality trait of emotional stability in my research as this trait can be clearly and directly linked to increased perceptions of indirect/covert aggression. As mentioned above, emotional stability captures an individual’s ability to be relaxed and stable, or anxious and upset (Glasø, Mathiesen, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2007). Individuals low in emotional stability use self blame in times of conflict and avoid acrimony to deal with difficult situations, are sensitive to threatening triggers, and can exacerbate the situation by being reactive to their aggressor (Costa & McCrae, 1992; O’Brien & DeLongis, 1996). Milam, Spitzmueller, and Penney (2009) also assert that low emotional stability is marked by feelings of nervousness, worrying, and insecurity and experiencing emotions that lead them to being anxious, angry, sad, and guilty. Individuals low in emotional stability are also more likely to have negative feelings, such as upset or anger from certain events (Glasø
et al., 2010) leaving them to perceive events negatively more than others (Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009). Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) argue that individuals are not necessarily aware of their feelings unless an event elicits the emotions. They also argue that the experience of negative emotions will influence how an individual perceives events such as workplace aggression. The same can be said for individuals who are low in emotional stability as they have difficulty in dealing with difficult situations (e.g., indirect/covert aggression) that generate negative emotions (Milam, Spitzmueller, & Penney, 2009). The difficulty is due to the fact that individuals with low emotional stability lack the ability to comport the appropriate emotions when responding to aggressive events such as indirect/covert aggression.

According to Einarsen et al. (2011) the antecedents of indirect/covert aggression warrant an examination of personality and specifically emotional stability. They argue that personality variables may be among the leading causes of why certain individuals become targets of indirect/covert aggression. Einarsen (2000) suggests that the target’s personality is a contributing factor to why they experience indirect aggression within the workplace. According to Zapf and Einarsen (2001) regardless of what the antecedents are that lead to aggression, or more specifically, indirect/covert aggression, there is a cause and effect from the both the aggressors and the target. For example, an individual with an incapacity for awareness can be difficult to integrate into a group, which, in turn can be a hassle for the group when trying to be productive (Zapf & Einarsen, 2001). Hindrance to the groups’ productivity can after time, cause aggressive behaviour toward the individual with low awareness, which may in turn contribute to them to being a target of aggression (Zapf & Einarsen, p. 203).
As noted earlier, Einarsen (1999) argued that specific personality traits of targets may make them susceptible to becoming targets. In support of this, Lind, Glasø, Pallesen, and Einarsen (2009) used the Big Five personality test to confirm that there is a difference in the personalities between targets and non-targets. They canvassed 496 nursing home employees and had a response rate of 48.5%. The respondents were predominantly female and 75% were in nursing roles. Lind et al., (2009) found targets to be higher in conscientiousness and lower in agreeableness. Individuals higher in conscientiousness are typically: organised, self disciplined, hardworking, conventional, moralistic and rule bound. The researchers reasoned these individuals may be targets of aggression because they are seen by their colleagues as, “annoyingly patronising as a result of their rigid and often perfectionist style” (Lind et al., 2009, p. 234; Pervin, Cervone, & Daniel, 2005). Although my focus is on the emotional stability of the target, it noteworthy to mention that Lind et al. (2009) also found that potential targets scored low on agreeableness. In contrast in an earlier study, Coyne, Seigne, and Randall (2000) found that targets were high in agreeableness. Lind, et al., (2009) supported the link they found for targets low in agreeableness, by arguing that they are possibly seen as: cynical, rude, suspicious, uncooperative, ruthless, irritable, and manipulative and having a higher propensity to be involved in conflict (Lind et al., 2009; Pervin et al., 2005).

Milam, Spitzmueller, and Penney (2009) further the connection between workplace aggression and Affective Events Theory by considering whether low emotional stability can predict how an individual interprets events of aggression within the workplace. For example, they draw on Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) argument that individuals with feelings of nervousness, tension, and worry have stronger reactions to negative events than individuals scoring low on negative affectivity. Milam et al. (2009) found that individuals who score low
on emotional stability may have difficulty in dealing with day to day small conflicts because they do not have the ability to exhibit the appropriate emotions when having to interact with others (Milam et al., 2009). The suggestion made by aggression scholars (e.g., Glasø, et al., 2007; Glasø et al., 2001; Olweus, 1978) is that individuals who are not emotionally stable, have an inability to initiate and sustain interpersonal relationships because they are emotionally reactive making them lack emotional balance when dealing with affective events (i.e., indirect/covert aggression). Hence, I will be examining emotional stability and as a variable in Study 2.

2.3.2 Emotional intelligence of the target. Emotional intelligence is a form social cognition that encompasses the perception, analysis, and production of behaviours specific to emotional content (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2001). There are four facets to EI, which are: 1) Perception of emotions; 2) using emotions to guide decision-making; 3) emotional knowledge; and 4) managing emotions (Gignac, Karatamoglou, Wee, & Palacios, 2014; Mayer et al., 2001). The perception of emotions is the ability to accurately read emotions, which includes understanding body language and facial gestures. Next is the ability to use emotions to guide decision making. Emotions help individuals to categorise what is and what is not important to them, (e.g., people, places, events, etc.), which, in turn, helps to prioritise what events warrant focus and attention. Emotional knowledge is a process of being able to accurately label emotions and give meaning to the event that an individual is experiencing. For example, an emotionally intelligent individual can feel negative affectivity (e.g., anger), but also understands the antecedent and triggers for that anger.

Individuals who score high on emotional intelligence tend to have more positive interpersonal relationships because they are agreeable, which taps into altruism, interpersonal trust, and compliance (Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003). Individuals high in emotional
intelligence will have the mental ability to process emotional information, which includes perceptions of situations that elicit emotions. They are also more able to use their emotions to facilitate rational thinking, emotional reasoning, and emotional self-management (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Individuals who are high in emotional intelligence, tend to have a wider circle of friends, which lends them to having a greater likelihood of emotional support (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayer et al., 2008). As a result of having a wider network of support, they reduce their probability of suffering from anxiety and/or depression (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayer et al., 2008).

Individuals with personality traits that include anxiety, aggressive reaction patterns, have the proclivity to create tension and irritation with their co-workers. This may result in them experiencing social isolation/exclusion because they are perceived as being annoying and aggression. An emotionally intelligent individual will have the mental ability to process emotional information within their environment, which includes perceptions of situation that elicit emotions within themselves and within others, and to use their emotions to facilitate rational thinking in order to create social harmony for themselves and for others, when facing an affective event (i.e., indirect/covert aggression), and emotional self-management during the affective event (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayer et al., 2008).

Individuals who are high in emotional intelligence and who have the mental ability to process emotional information are able to deal with their aggressor. This mental ability includes the ability to deal with perceptions of the situation and any indirect aggression that may elicit negative emotions (e.g., anger, fear, sadness). Those with higher EI use their emotions to facilitate rational thinking when needing to defend themselves or are able to engage their organisation in order to manage their aggressor. They are able to use emotional reasoning when dealing with their aggressor and reporting the indirect aggression, because
they have the ability of emotional self-management (Mayer et al., 2008; Quebbeman & Rozell, 2002).

2.3.3 Emotional regulation of the target. One of the concepts that has been closely linked to emotional intelligence is emotional regulation (Lawrence, Troth, Jordan, & Collins, 2011). Emotional regulation is a deliberate attempt to influence which emotions that we have, when we have those emotions, and how the emotions we experience are expressed (Gross, 1998; Gross, 2002; Gross, 2013; Gross & John, 2003; Gross & Levenson, 1997; Gross, Richards, & John, 2006; Jazaieri, Urry, & Gross, 2012). Gross argues that there can be a discrepancy between how individuals feel at the given moment and how they should feel and want to feel (Gross, 2013; Gross & John, 2003).

Gross (1998) suggests that individuals process emotion in two ways: antecedent-focussed strategies and response focussed strategies. The antecedent-focussed strategies involve cognitively or behaviourally modifying the cause of the emotion, whereas, response-focussed strategies involve modifying emotional expression (Gross, 1998). Antecedent-focussed strategy involves reappraisal or ‘reframing’ the way an individual feels about the situation, which can, for example, be changing a negative affective moment into a positive affective moment (Gross, 1998; Lawrence et al., 2011). This reframing involves experiencing the emotion and being able to constructively manage the experience of the emotion (Gibson & Callister, 2010; Gross & Feldman Barrett, 2011; Lawrence et al., 2011). This not only helps the individual to reframe the situation and see it in a more positive light, it also helps to reduce the feelings of stress and anxiety (e.g., Gibson & Callister, 2010; Gross, 2002; Gross, 2013). This is considered to provide a buffer between the individual and their negative affective state (e.g., Gibson & Callister, 2010; Gross, 2002; Gross, 2013). In other words, it is the target that is exerting the effort to make the situation less personal and more
about the situation and the aggressor (Gross & Feldman Barrett, 2011). The target may still feel the negative affectivity that is associated with the affective event (i.e., indirect/covert aggression), but may be much shorter lived than for a target who does not regulate their emotional reaction.

The appropriate emotions that individuals are expected to display within organisation can help to restrain their emotions. Any display of emotions outside of the set of expected display of emotions would be a contravention to the social milieu of the organization (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Gibson, 2008; Gibson & Callister, 2010). That said, for the target to ‘fake it’ or have incongruency between the emotions they were feeling as a result of the indirect/covert aggression they were experiencing and the emotions that they were expected to display may be typically short lived (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Gibson, 2008; Gibson & Callister, 2010; Gross & Feldman Barrett, 2011). In short, scholars (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Gibson, 2008; Gibson & Callister, 2010; Glasø et al., 2007; Glasø et al., 2011; Gross & Feldman Barrett, 2011) contend that emotion suppression or response-focus coping is less effective because it does not change the target’s underlying emotions of anger or fear. The targets that suppress their feelings when experiencing indirect aggression reported more health issues, such as irregular sleeping patterns, heightened anxiety, and/or increased substance abuse (Hogh et al., 2011; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007). As a result of indirect/covert aggression, health issues ensue and targets have a higher propensity to burn out and ultimately exit their organization (Hogh et al., 2011; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). Clearly aggression generates emotions in the workplace. In the next section, I discuss emotion theories at work to address the negative emotions that targets experience when enduring indirect/covert aggression within their workplace.
2.4 Emotions Theories at Work

As discussed in Chapter 1, my research is based on three theoretical frameworks: Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), Peak-End Theory (Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993) and Script Theory (Schank & Abelson, 1977). Affective Events Theory is a framework for identifying the outcomes of affective experiences within the workplace (Glasø et al., 2010; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Peak-End Theory will help me to understand the most intense moment that the target remembers of an affective event and how it ended. As such, I use AET and PET to better understand the causes, consequences, and structure of a specific type of affective event (i.e., indirect/covert aggression) for individuals (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). I also utilise Script Theory (Schank & Abelson, 1977) to understand the types of responses that targets formulate to avoid being the centre of indirect/covert aggression. These theories are instrumental in answering Research Question 3: How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?

2.4.1 Affective Events Theory. With regard to events (e.g., indirect/covert aggression) at work, Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) built Affective Events Theory around the notion that performance, attitude, and behaviour are influenced by the way the target feels at work, which occurs moment by moment. A target who is feeling discrete negative emotions caused by the hassles of the indirect/covertly aggressive behaviour on the part of their aggressor (or agent), is experiencing an induced negative affective event. Indirect/covertly aggressive behaviours are negative ‘hassles’ that include behaviours, such as intentional slowness to respond to communication or slowing down work processes, which can, in turn lead to negative responses by the target including affectedly driven decisions.
Emotions have the propensity to be influenced by ‘affective events’ (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Basch & Fisher, 1998; Elfenbein, 2007) where the broad term ‘affect’ encompasses emotions and mood (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). There is a fine line between mood and emotion in that individuals are more likely to display positive discrete emotions when they are in a positive mood, and vice versa (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Positive ‘uplifts’ and negative ‘hassles’ are everyday occurrences that can influence mood and emotion, which in turn affect attitudes, performance, and behaviour (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000).

Fisher and Ashkanasy (2000) state that Affective Events Theory offers an explanation of causes of emotions and mood at work and the consequences of these emotions for employees. They suggest that mood and emotions are the mediating mechanisms that impact job attitudes and behaviours. Fisher and Ashkanasy propose that discrete events elicit specific emotions. Basch and Fisher (1998) observe that events can emerge from: occurrences, objects, and agents. Basch and Fisher use the example of a person who is worried about a business downturn illustrate how and individual appraises an actual or anticipated occurrence. They suggest in this case that the emotional response is worry. Based on this event and the emotional reaction of the individual can make a series of affect driven decisions (Basch & Fisher, 1998). Using the AET framework will aid in answering the research question, *What are an individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?*

### 2.4.2 Peak-End Theory

This research also draws on Peak-End Theory, which was developed, by Fredrickson and Kahneman (1993). These researchers argue that individuals remember events more clearly where there are peaks and eventful ends to a situation. Fredrickson (2000) states that, “people’s past and ongoing affective experiences guide their
decisions about the future” (p. 577). Fredrickson further explains that the affective experiences that individuals have, elicit emotions and mood, such as sadness or anger. Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End Theory is based on what individuals remember from their peak experiences, the greatest intensity of the moment or episode, and how it ended. In other words, the ending of an episode gives individuals a sense of knowing or confidence in what they feel and believe about situations (Fredrickson, 2000).

While the episode is still ongoing, what individuals feel and believe is held tentatively. The peak affect is the most intense affective moment for an individual, whether it is positive or negative and helps them make decisions in their present life (Fredrickson, 2000). While employees who are targets or indirect/covert aggression may be able to recover from the effect of a strongly negative event, such as company downsizing or an unwanted job transfer, it is the succession of minor, subtler events that are characteristic of indirect/covert aggression that result in negative consequences (Einarsen, 1999; Glasø et al., 2007). These subtle events can include a target’s character being defamed by the aggressor (agent) through rumours spread about them or displaying body language of “do-not-speak-to-me” body language, which, if accumulated over time, can have a negative impact on the target’s attitudes and behaviours within the workplace (Glasø et al., 2007; Aquino & Lamertz, 2004).

Fredrickson and Kahneman’s Peak-End Theory intertwines with Weiss & Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events Theory in that the ‘affective’ episodes, are the ‘peaks’ and the ‘ends’ of the affective events. That is, an individual is most likely to remember the most intense affective moment and how it ends regardless of whether it is positive or negative. For example, the most intense feeling a target had during an experience of indirect/covert aggression and how it ended is how the target will remember the experience and the individual will build scripts from those memories (e.g. Fredrickson, 2000; Fredrickson &
Kahneman, 1993; Tomkins, 1978). Therefore, Peak-End Theory will help to understand the following research question 1, *What are an individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?*

Peak-End Theory suggests that most individuals will make sense of an event by drawing on their memories of the most intense moments during that event and how the episode ended. Fredrickson and Kahneman (1993) argue that the peak and the end of a past situation can sometimes skew an individual’s ability to deal with a present situation and then they are not able to evaluate the situation on its own merit. When analysing their data, they argue, “these two moments mattered more in retrospective evaluations than all other moments combined” (Fredrickson, 2000, p. 581). It is important to highlight at this point that to the best of my knowledge the two theories have not been used in tandem before. This is a significant theoretical contribution of my thesis to the indirect/covert aggression literature.

Glasø et al.’s (2011) suggestion of memory and flashbacks works well in conjunction with Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End Theory, as they found that individuals will remember the most intense moments of an event and how it ended, and this formulates their memories. To reiterate, Affective Events Theory speaks specifically to uplifts, hassles, moods and emotions, whereas the Peak-End Theory puts into context the event and cause, giving it a more personal meaning because emotions are associated with the events. As discussed in more detail in the next section, Huesmann (1986), proposes that script theory suggests that individuals are conditioned through learning how to respond to situations. Past experience can give the individual cues in how to respond to a present situation as well. As a result, Peak-End Theory influences a target’s future responses.

**2.4.3 Cognitive Script Theory.** Scripts are defined as a standard sequence of events characterising typical activities for an individual (Abelson, 1981; Wilson & Capitman,
Sims and Lorenzi (1992) define *cognitive scripts* as being the organisation of knowledge about a specific construct and are categorised based on features and attributes whereas *behavioural scripts* are the physical actions within a script.

According to Abelson (1981) for scripts to occur, three conditions must be met. He first suggests that an individual must have a stable cognitive representation for that script; a target must be able to mentally process the actors and the environment in which they are participating to understand the context of the situation. The second condition Abelson suggests is that an event recalling a prior script must be present. In the model for my research, the event prompts the target’s memory of previous experiences of indirect/covert aggression and the target then applies a relevant script from their memory bank. Scripts are held in the memory and create subsets within the memory. The first subset is an episodic memory, where a descriptive ‘picture’ is held of a specific event that the individual experienced (Anderson, 1983, p. 531). Episodic memory is a snapshot of the situation without specific details, ergo, it contains no meaning to the event, but is simply a recording (Anderson, 1983, p. 531). Semantic memory is an involved process with inputs from perception, thought and episodic memory to attribute meaning to events and is, therefore, integrated into the individual’s cognitive structures. As the third condition, the individual must have a script that applies to the situation.

The context can be highly variable and the action of a script depends on the condition of the situation (Abelson, 1981, p. 719). A script contributes to behaviour, as it is a memory schema, then it is transformed into schematic knowledge where episodic knowledge is morphed into semantic memory and aids in developing a generalised script for individuals (Anderson, 1983; Gioia & Manz, 1985). For example, a passive target’s generalised script is reinforced when they assume a submissive role within a group and use self-deprecati
language and behaviour to establish the fact that they feel they are at the bottom of the social order within the group. Once their role at the bottom of the social order is established, their cognitive script is reinforced (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004).

Scripts are built on reactions to emotions (Baldwin, 1992). They are recalled from memory, are well rehearsed and guide a person in how they process their behaviours and thinking. This means that cognitive and behavioural scripts are based on past experiences of indirect/covert aggression, the cognitive structures representing expectations, the manner in which their actions will be perceived, and the other individual’s responses to the scripts (Baldwin, 1992). The script ‘if-then’ is formulated based on the emotion, the event, and the target’s desired outcome for the situation (e.g. Baldwin, 1992). The ‘if’ is the possibility of performing certain behaviours, ‘then’ is the expected result of those behaviours. For example, a target’s script could comprise of “If I make fun of myself (self deprecate), then I will be less likely be targeted by an aggressive, angry person”. Given that scripts are goal driven, other scripts are based on goal achievement (Lichtenstein & Brewer, 1980). For example, “In order to reach this goal, I must do this” which, in the case of being a target of indirect/covert aggression, may be “In order not be targeted by that person, I have to ingratiate myself to them”. Therefore, using Script Theory will help to address research question 2, *To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process?*

In addition to emotion, when an individual makes a connection between goals and action plans, it often prompts scripts from memory, making them highly accessible and generalised for many situations (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Individuals can process present situations from past situations through relational (behavioural and cognitive) scripts. For example, an individual faced with repeated situations of indirect/covert aggression will
subconsciously have generalised scripts available to use in any given moment (Abelson, 1981; Anderson, 1983). That is, if individuals repeatedly find themselves in a situation where they are continually experiencing indirect/covert aggression, their scripts will have become ingrained in their cognitive processing and their response will be automatic, rather than considered (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Demorest, 1995; Tomkins, 1979, 1987).

When experiencing a family of situations, individuals develop cognitive rules when anticipating a scene as a way to deal with the emotions that the situation elicits (Lazarus, 1991). Russell (1991) suggests that the features and attributes of the rules for cognitive scripts are, “what one’s structure of beliefs are concerning what brings each emotion about, what it’s mechanisms are, what to do about it, how to evaluate its occurrence, and so on” (p. 428). The beliefs that elicit emotion and social rules are derived from cultural norms (Menon, 2000). For example, when an individual is to cheer at sporting events or to cry at a funeral (Hochschild, 1979). I contend that the cultural norm for an individual experiencing indirect/covert aggression depends on their organisation’s culture. Individuals may formulate their scripts based on their experience of a past event, the beliefs they hold and emotions that the event is eliciting. As such, they are aware of which emotions are and are not sanctioned within their organisation (Gibson, 1997).

2.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was threefold: 1) To present an overview of the varying definitions found in workplace aggression literature while providing clarity regarding the concepts of indirect aggression, 2) To review the literature to date regarding the factors affecting the behavioural outcomes of the targets, and 3) To provide an overview of the three theories that I am using to frame and better understand indirect aggression (Affective Events
Theory, Peak-End Theory, and Script Theory). In Chapter 3, I discuss my programme of research, with a focus on choice of research paradigm.
Chapter 3: Programme of Study: Research approach and methodology

There is often a ‘disconnect’ between individuals earning a *philosophiae doctor* (PhD) and them having a firm grasp of the philosophical (research) paradigms of the research trade (Grix, 2010). Research paradigms are a reflection of an individual’s worldviews, which are unique to each individual (Grix, 2004; Hughes, 1990). Differences of view regarding the proponents of various paradigms can make researchers vulnerable to criticisms that range from a paradigm being too narrow (e.g. naïve realist or positivist), too messy, or not presenting clear answers to a finding (e.g. naturalist or social constructivist) (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Thus, clarifying and communicating my research paradigm is important when approaching my program of research.

In this chapter I discuss how my program of studies reflect my chosen research paradigm (neo-positivist for Study 1a and Study 2, interpretivist for Study 1b) and represent the most appropriate approach for addressing the overarching Research Question of my thesis which is, *What are individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?* The philosophical positions I have adopted also inform the mixed methods (Neuman, 2006) approach I have implemented. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate my research approach I have adopted to better understand and analyse a workplace social reality, (i.e., indirect aggression within the workplace), as well as the methods I utilised to investigate indirect aggression among individuals within the workplace.

It is critical for a PhD student to have a grasp of philosophical terminology and an awareness of their position as a PhD student on the paradigmatic continuum in order to have a clear and precise thesis (Feldman Barrett, 1998; Van Kleef et al., 2008). Grix (2004) argues that a PhD student learning and reflecting on the specific tools of the research trade
(e.g. epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology) will increase their confidence as a researcher and also their research credibility. To explain, a paradigm consists of four facets, which are: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Grix, 2010; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). Figure 3.1 presents Grix’s (2010) diagram of the process that is necessary when understanding the ‘interrelationship between the building blocks of research’ (p. 66). I will use this as a framework to present my discussion in Chapter 3.

Figure 3.1: The interrelationship between the building block of research (Grix, 2010, p. 66)

According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) a researcher approaching research holistically views all of the choices as an aggregate (i.e. from topic selection to final representation). This holistic approach has helped me to examine my ontological and epistemological perspectives to better understand indirect aggression within the workplace (Grix, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Hence, this chapter serves to provide an explanation for
my choice to straddle the neo-positivist/interpretivist paradigmatic fence.

First I discuss how I view the world from within myself (emic) and externally (etic) from what I observe. As such, it is Qualitative data that helps to uncover my emic views and the quantitative data that uncovers my etic views. (Fetterman, 2008) explains that an emic perspective is the investigator’s view of reality (i.e. the researcher’s world view/ontological position) and is one of the guiding principles of qualitative research. An emic viewpoint is fundamental to understanding how individuals perceive the world around them (Fetterman, 2008). The etic perspective is the external social scientific perspective on reality and is the validity done through logical scientific analysis (i.e. the researchers epistemological approach). As such, the etic view involves creating distance (being objective) from the insider’s (the subject) views in an attempt to explain interaction within a social process (Fetterman, 2008). Second, I discuss my multi-paradigmatic (or intraparadigm, see Guba & Lincoln, 1994) approach to investigating indirect aggression within the workplace context, which is neo-positivism, with elements of interpretivism. Then, I discuss the methodologies of Studies 1 and 2, including a short explanation of grounded theory, which in turn, helps to create the methods I employ to investigate individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression within their workplace. Finally, credibility, validity and reliability when using the mixed methods approach are explored.

3.1 Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology, and Methodology

3.1.1 Ontology. Ontology “the study of being” (Crotty, 1998, p. 10) is focused on “what is” in an existential sense and how reality is structured (Crotty, 1998). Crotty (1998) states that a theoretical perspective “embodies a certain way of understanding of ‘what is’ (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding ‘what it means to know’ (epistemology)” (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). The chosen ontology for my research is ‘minimal realism’. To explain,
the plural form with regard to social science methodologies and theories, ‘realism’ is an ideal platform for mixed-methods research (Miller, 2003; Sayer, 2000). Additionally, realism is seeing things in a pragmatic and factual manner (Miller, 2003). The idea of ‘real’ imparts the notion of truth. However, in social science research, regarding how ‘real’ something is also depends on the researcher’s interpretation of reality.

The term ‘minimal realism’ suggests that researchers cannot entirely skew the social objects with individual interpretation because social objects have a real existence and are ‘things’ that we ‘know’ (Miller, 2003; Sayer, 2000). For example, a positivist looks for patterns, regularities, causes, and consequences in order to explain a social phenomenon when conducting research (Grix, 2010). In the instance of researching aggression at work, a positivist will be inclined to measure the reported behaviours using scales/surveys and then be able to explain the results from the collected data (Samnami, 2012). An interpretivist will look at social phenomenon as something that is dependent on our interpretation, which will affect the outcomes of what it is they are research (Grix, 2010). That is, to an interpretivist, they are not detached from the subject that is being studied. Looking at the same social phenomenon, workplace aggression, an interpretivist will be inclined to have in-depth interviews and during those interviews will see themselves as a part of the process of the interviewee telling their story (Samnami, 2012). The interpretivist will see their part in the story telling as being essential, as it will help them to understand the results from the interview data (Samnami, 2012).

3.1.2 Epistemology. Crotty (1998) states that an epistemology is a form of understanding and an explanation of how we know, what we know. The three types of epistemologies are: objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2010; Neuman, 2006). Objectivism is the view (emic) that “things exist as meaningful entities
independently of consciousness and experience and have truth and meaning residing in them as objects” (Crotty, 1998, p. 5). The objectivist method is the foundation of a purely positivist perspective, utilising survey research and statistical analysis (Crotty, 1998; Grix, 2010; Neuman, 2006). Constructionism (etic), views knowledge as something we gain from our engagement and non-engagement of our realities with our world (Crotty, 1998), thereby constructing meaning. Therefore, meaning is constructed and individuals construct meanings in different ways about the same thing (Crotty, 1998). Subjectivism is created out of nothing (Crotty, 1998), the interplay between object and subject happens because the subject imposes itself on the object (Crotty, 1998). An example of subjectivism, is the artist who creates a piece of artwork and argues that their creation is their method of research. As such, it is not necessary for a subjectivist to write about their research, instead, they write about what they know and how they know by acknowledging their participation within their own research (Candlin, 2000; Feast & Melles, 2010; Prentice, 2000).

As shown in Table 3.1, I have adopted a constructivist (emic) viewpoint, and a mixed methods methodology to explore my research questions. Within this mixed methods approach I have used the interviewing method and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2003). The constructivist approach is ideal for Study 1a and Study 1b because the targets of indirect/covert aggression construct meaning in different ways, even while experiencing the same phenomenon of indirect/covert aggression (cf., Feast & Melles, 2010). However, in Study 1a, I let the data ‘speak for itself” and only use phrases from the respondents interview as units of analysis. In Study 2, I use the neo-positivist approach and use data from Study 1a and b to develop measures for the cross sectional survey, as this will help me to discover the objective truth about indirect/covert aggression within the workplace (cf., Feast & Melles, 2010).
A critical part of my research are the basic beliefs I have in relation to how I see the world. Neo-positivism has a critical realism as opposed to the naive realism that underpins positivism. From the neo-positivist perspective there is factual reality, but it is imperfect and probabilistically tangible (Cook, Campbell, & Day, 1979; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). The notion of realism is that knowledge is ‘out there’, independent of the knower, and accessible to the trained observer (Duberley, Johnson, & Cassell, 2012). However, critical realism claims that reality must be subjected to the widest possible scrutiny in order to guide apprehending reality as much as possible, but in a ‘not so perfect’ fashion (Grix, 2010). I believe reality can be apprehended with scrutiny, but finding out what is ‘real’ must be subjective. However, I do find myself as a researcher, not only wanting to explain, but to understand by using the neo-interpretivist/constructionist approach (Grix, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Samnami, 2012; Suddaby, 2010).

3.1.3 **Axiology.** Axiology is the philosophical nature of ethical behaviour when conducting research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). As such, axiology is about the researcher’s values and beliefs in the way that they construct their methods (i.e. tools used for investigation, anonymity, weighing the risk of harm) of research and the way the methods of research are executed (i.e. maintaining privacy, ensuring no harm comes to the subject of the research, etc.). The facets of axiology are: unbiased (positivism/neo positivism), biased
(constructionism), biased and negotiated (advocacy and participatory) and multiple stances

![Table of ontological and epistemological approaches for research projects](image)

**Figure 3.2: Table of ontological and epistemological approaches for research projects**

(pragmatism) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In post positivist axiology, the researcher uses ‘checks and balances’ to ensure their research is bias free, whereas, an interpretivist axiology acknowledges biases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). An interpretivist’s biases relate to their interpretation, leading to bias within the way they conduct their research. The critical management scholar is biased but negotiates the interpretation with participants. Post-modernist axiology includes both biased and unbiased perspectives (Crotty, 1998).

My morals as a researcher do not lie purely with the interpretivist axiology, in that, I believe the *way* I investigate experiences of indirect/covert aggression is to some extent with
objectivity (e.g. cognitivist). That is, even though in Study 1, I choose to interview people who are willing to share their personal accounts of indirect/covert aggression (within their workplace) and that I do not have a ‘tabula rasa’ (clean slate), I must maintain some semblance of objectivity in order to find answers to my research questions. That is, I demonstrated my objectivity by adhering to my basic beliefs (axiology) of: respecting privacy and assuring anonymity, having an informed consent, and to minimize harm (see Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005; Morgan, 2007).

3.2 The paradigmatic fence

A relativist is an individual who is subjective and sees reality as 1) being individual, 2) intellectually constructed, and 3) projections of thought (Selznick, 1948). A cognitivist believes: morals are entities that are: 1) objective reality outside the observer, 2) facts are prior to an individual’s ideas and his/her source, 3) science is the comparison of idea to reality, and 4) the world of thought is reflection of the material world (Engle, 2008). At the risk of committing paradigmatic sacrilege in that I “tread on the hollowed grounds of positivist versus interpretivist rhetoric with muddy boots” (Weber, 2004), I do find myself sitting on the paradigmatic fence of being biased and unbiased. When conducting interviews for Study 1a and Study 1b, I set out to represent targets’ viewpoints in a fair and equitable manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is important to share the viewpoints in a fair and equitable way, as this is the goal of interpretivist axiology, which is to give a balanced representation of views and raising participants’ awareness. Bias in my research is the result of empathy for interviewees who have suffered and endured indirect/covert aggression within their workplace and my belief that such behaviour is wrong. Due to my biased stance, I feel the need to be based firmly in the interviewee’s experience to understand (respectively) what
the interviewee and I have co-experienced; therefore, seeing them as co-researchers in my study (see Weber, 2004).

Limitations of conducting workplace aggression research (a social phenomenon) within one paradigm include the probability of creating gaps and not answering critical questions, thus the holistic approach to my research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that solely using quantitative procedures for answering critical research questions can strip the finding of context, resulting in altered answers and that the context provided by qualitative data can balance the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Suddaby (2010) similarly argues that organisational research needs to move away from a strictly positivist approach and incorporate an interpretivist perspective. Suddaby’s argument for incorporating an interpretivist paradigm is that it specifically focuses on an individual’s experience within an organisation and maintains the context of the data. Creating a multi-paradigmatic approach can add to workplace aggression literature, by using alternative perspectives and paths to understanding workplace aggression specifically indirect/covert aggression as a phenomenon that exists within organisational life (Clegg, 2010; Samnami, 2012; Suddaby, 2010). Working within a multi-paradigmatic approach to answer critical questions on workplace aggression is superior to a single approach.

Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, and Alberts (2006) argue that it is necessary to understand that a target of workplace aggression experiences a negative emotional process. To comprehend a target’s experience, researchers and organisations must ask critical questions such as, “What goes through a target’s mind when experiencing workplace aggression, especially when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?” and “At what point does a target realise they are a target of indirect/covert aggression?” (see Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). Critical questions of this nature require researchers
to approach research holistically. To date, research on workplace aggression (e.g. bullying, social undermining, relational aggression) has been primarily situated in the positivist paradigm (e.g. survey based) conducted by psychologists and/or management scholars (Hoel & Beale, 2006; Tracy et al., 2006). Thus, this is a gap my program of research is attempting to address.

Taking into account all of the aforementioned researchers’ arguments (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Suddaby, 2010; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006), the approach that I have taken is between the qualitative neo-positivist approach and interpretivism (refer to Figure 3.2 in text). To help illustrate my position, if the different paradigms were to be positioned on a scale (i.e. positivist being left and post modern being right) my choice of paradigmatic approach ‘sits’ centre left, as I wanted to ensure I was able to tell the target’s story with depth and richness (see Figure 3.2)

Figure 3.3: Paradigmatic Fence (Duberley et al., 2012; Grix, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

A neo positivist has a modified objectivist view (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, &
Post positivists are modified objectivists, meaning that even though inquiry exists outside and are independent of our cognition; observations may not be completely accurate. Cook and Campbell (1979) assert that being accurate in our observations is nearly impossible to achieve, which puts post positivism in the realm of critical realism. Interestingly, the interpretivist seeks to strike a balance between social realism and constructivism. Smith (1989) refers to this position as the ‘middle ground’ of methodology (p. 158, see Schwandt, 1994). A neo-positivist rejects being too narrow or too rigid with statistics and not including context of the data, but must disengage from and objectify the experience to avoid being overly subjective. This depth and richness contrasts with the typical functionalist research approach, which focuses on imparting practicable resolutions, leading to a prescription for fixing the aggression within the workplace (Morgan & Burrell, 1979; Samnami, 2012).

3.2.1 Methodology In this section, I discuss the methodology that I have employed in Study 1a, 1b, and 2. First, I present Table 3.1, presents which is a summary of the overall design of my research project. The layout of this table explains what each study entails including the: number of participants, methodology, research aim, and how the data are analysed. Then, I briefly discuss the theory that underpins my Study 1a and 1b and how it folds into my worldview. Next, I discuss the ontological approach that I used in Study 2 and the unit of analysis.

3.2.1.1 Study 1a and Study 1b: Constructionist grounded theory. Grounded theory argues that models and frameworks emerge from the data that is collected and analysed (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). As I have mentioned in Chapter 1, given my research topic, my previous knowledge about indirect/covert aggression and the lack of agreed construct definitions, it is most appropriate to take an exploratory approach and employ a qualitative
methodology, such as constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 1990), for my first study.

Constructivist grounded theory is the most appropriate approach because indirect/covert aggression within the context of the workplace is relatively new and past research leaves room for further exploration. Corbin and Strauss (1990) assert, “Actors are seen as having, though not always utilising, the means of controlling their destinies by the responses to conditions” (p. 5). To explain this assertion, using grounded theory in this research is appropriate, as it is about exploring how individuals choose to control their outcomes (destinies) (e.g. Corbin & Strauss) by the scripted responses they give in situations of indirect/covert aggression. Corbin and Strauss further assert the benefits of grounded theory by stating that it is about uncovering the individual’s relevant conditions and to reveal the individual’s response to the changing conditions and the consequence of their actions.

Grounded theory affords the opportunity to utilise qualitative analysis techniques in Study 1a and Study 1b to answer these research questions (see Strauss & Corbin, 1994) and explore the integral relationship between the target’s and his/her aggressor in the moment of indirect/covert aggression (see Crooks, 2001). To revisit my research questions, they are:

**Research Question 1:** What are an individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process?

**Research Question 3:** How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?

These are critical features of grounded theory that have allowed me to not only examine the integral relationship between the aggressor and target, but also target realisation...
that they are a target of indirect/covert aggression and the scripts they build to manage their aggressor. During the data coding process, it was revealed that scripts help a target ‘stay in the moment’ (or be in a state of mindfulness, see Bishop et al., 2004) with their experience of indirect/covert aggression and/or regulate their emotions in the order to develop strategies to either absolve themselves from the experience of indirect/covert aggression. Using repertory grid (Faccio, Castiglioni, & Bell, 2012; Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004) in Study 1b provided a framework for a target’s preferred behaviours with whom to work with. The moment of realisation that they are targets of indirect/covert aggression places the target into a state of mindfulness. Semi-structured interviews in Study 1a were the most viable method in understanding the target’s experience of social manipulation.

Research interviews are ‘reliable gateways’ for understanding the context of an individual’s values and beliefs that are not captured by survey based research (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2012). Shah and Corley (2006) suggest that there are substantial benefits to using qualitative methods which include: 1) revealing and understanding complex processes, and 2) illustrating the influence of the social context (p. 1824).

3.2.1.2 Study 2: Neo positivism. A neo-positivist recognises that all explanations are imperfect and have fault and that all theory can be reformulated. In short, the post-positivist is critical of the ability to know reality with certainty. While I was conducting my analysis within Study 2, I continually reminded myself that although I am using valid measurements (e.g., NAQ-R, WEIP-S, etc.) that the results of the data are flawed, making it an on-going area of research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
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<td>The researcher acknowledges and addresses implications of their subjectivity</td>
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<td>Research Aims</td>
<td>Understanding the target's experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work using Flanagan's (1954) Critical Incident Technique and Kelly's (1955) RepGrid technique.</td>
<td>Understanding the target's personal constructs of their aggressor and their aggressor's indirect/covert aggressive behaviours using Kelly's (1955) RepGrid technique.</td>
<td>1) Examine the types of behaviour participants reported that they have experienced in the workplace; 2) To confirm the indirect/covert aggression that exists within the workplace; and 3) The behavioural outcomes for the targets who have experienced indirect/covert aggression</td>
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3.3 Conclusion

To summarise this chapter, it is important that researchers continually examine their perspectives on what it is to be objective and subjective. That is, this discussion was critical to have, as I must continually examine my perspectives on what it is to be objective and subjective whilst researching the area of indirect/covert aggression. That is, I must be aware that no one method of research will provide absolute truth about indirect/covert aggression. Indirect/covert aggression is a social phenomenon and has a diverse impact on individuals who experience it. I must be aware that researching and understanding why it happens is an on-going process. Moreover, individuals who experience cannot be completely summarised by measurement scales, statistical significance, or have their story conveyed in only one perspective.
Chapter 4: Study 1a: A qualitative study of targets’ perceptions of indirect workplace aggression and their sensemaking and use of scripts for dealing with indirect aggression.

Study 1 adds to the indirect workplace aggression literature by examining individuals’ thoughts and perceptions related to experiencing indirect/covert aggression within the workplace (i.e., sensemaking process, types of scripts employed, etc.). Little research has examined this phenomenon and an interview methodology enables insight into targets’ experiences (Samnami, 2012; Tracy et al., 2006). Verbal expressions captured in interviews enable the researcher to better understand the values, thoughts, and beliefs held by interviewees (Duriau, Reger, & Pfarrer, 2007). One aim in Study 1a is to identify a target’s own perceptions and experiences of indirect aggression and to determine common themes that reflect indirect aggression workplace experiences within the sample. Themes are grounded in the data and a grounded theory approach allows the researcher to have a notion about a research topic, to conduct semi-structured interviews, and to shape/reshape research questions according to the themes coded within the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Study 1a was designed to address the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What are an individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do indirect/covert aggression experiences impact an individual’s sensemaking process?

**Research Question 3:** How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?

Zoellner and Maercker (2006) argue that after individuals reflect on critical incidents within their personal or working life, they automatically reflect on the reasons for the event as well. After experiencing indirect/covert aggression a target may want to understand why
they are the centre of such aggression (Zoellner & Maercker, 2006). To date, there is a
dearth of information regarding this process of sensemaking in the aggression literature (see
Zabrodska, Ellwood, Zaeemdar, & Mudrak, 2014 for further explanation). The lack of
attention to the perceptual processes undertaken by a target of workplace aggression is a
weakness within the realm of workplace aggression research. Understanding the processes
that targets undergo will give a deeper understanding of how hostile behaviour impacts the
target, helping to create an intervention in the workplace (Zoellner & Maercker, 2006). As
such, Study 1 will enable me to identify the types of questions individuals ask themselves
when trying to make sense of why they are the centre of another individual’s indirect/covert
aggression. Sensemaking is a part of the process an individual undertakes before script
formulation (see Chapter 2).

First, I discuss the methodology employed for this study. Then I present the results of
the interviews and the respective themes derived from the data to illustrate the experiences of
a target of indirect/covert aggression. In terms of Research Question 1, *What are individuals’
experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?* the target’s perceptions of the aggressor’s
indirect/covert aggressive behaviours will be presented. I will then present illustrative
examples regarding why and how they became a target of indirect/covert aggression, to
address Research Question 2, *To what extent do experiences of indirect/covert aggression
impact an individual’s sensemaking process?* Finally, in terms of Research Question 3, *How
does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types
of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within
their workplace?* I will examine the scripts targets build as strategies and the consequences
of those strategies.
4.1 Methods

4.1.1 Sample  The sample comprised of 29 adults with work experience ranging between 2 years to 41 years. The minimum sample size to achieve theoretical saturation, data saturation, and fit within the concepts/categories is 20-35 individuals (e.g. grounded theory, see Charmaz, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994; Saunders, 2012). My sample consisted of 17 female respondents and 12 male respondents from industries including: Education (Secondary/Higher Education Teaching), Administration Support Roles, Service Industries (Hairstylist), Human Service Industries (Nursing), and Technical Services (Research, Information Technology).

4.1.2 Data collection procedure.  Interviewee/respondents were recruited via purposive sampling, a form of snowball sampling, and included referrals by other interviewees. That is, I used the referrals approach when interviewing subjects. I asked some interviewees to refer me to other people who fit my study requirements, then followed up with these new people. Purposive sampling is a non-judgemental and selective approach that results in trustworthy though non-generalisable findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A short questionnaire (Appendix 1) was conducted to ensure participants met the following specific inclusion criteria: the individual must have experienced subtle but indirect/covert aggressive behaviour within their workplace, must have experienced it during working hours (working activity), and the aggressor must have been a peer, subordinate, or superior within the same organisation. The word ‘petty behaviour’ was chosen to capture indirect/covert aggression because it is well understood by a layperson. Thus, my sample was recruited on the basis of having personal experiences of indirect/covert aggression (or indirect/covert aggressive behaviour), which aligns in part with Bryman, Becker, and Sempik (2008) and Patton’s (2008) definition of criterion based sampling.
After making contact to explain the criteria of my research, an interview was arranged via email or text message. When a face-to-face interview could not be conducted, the interview was conducted via Skype or speakerphone from my home to preserve the participant’s privacy. As one purpose for the interview was to capture the target’s experience of scripts they formulated to deal with their aggressor, the interview began with the target being asked to tell their story about dealing with pettily behaved colleagues within their workplace. The respondent was able to narrate their most critical indirect/covert aggression experiences while I listened unobtrusively. This critical incident technique (Kandola, 2012) was developed to “use specific examples relevant to the topic that the participant is directly involved in or observes first hand” (Kandola, 2012, p. 268). Kandola stresses that the incident must be critical and that four key steps are involved in describing the incident: 1) Background to the incident (e.g. when and where) 2) What exactly happened in the situation and why it was so critical 3) The feelings of different people and the actions taken, and 4) The outcomes. The critical incident technique allows the researcher to capture the target’s behaviour, the target’s perceptions of the incident, and why the incident occurred. It was felt Peak-End Theory (Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993), whereby the target shares the most peak moments of the indirect/covert aggression experience and the intense emotions they felt in that given moment, is facilitated by the critical incident technique (Kandola, 2012). After the target completed their narrative, I conducted a semi-structured interview to understand the scripts that a target of indirect/covert aggression cognitively formulates and uses.

Semi-structured interviews are made up of questions that are specific to topics the researcher wants to cover (Bryman, 2008). However, the interviewee (or target) is afforded latitude in terms of how they choose to answer the questions (Bryman, 2008). Questions do not rigidly follow the interview guide, but rather create flexibility for both researcher and
interviewee (Bryman, 2008). The interviewer needs to be attuned to the interviewee to understand the interviewee’s message and use critical probing questions if the interviewee becomes uncomfortable (Bryman, 2008; Kandola, 2012). I was able to ask probing questions within the interviews whilst being sensitive to the interviewee’s affective state as they told their story (Bryman, 2008). When this situation occurred, I waited for a break in the narrative, restated the interviewee’s response, then redirected them with the necessary probe question (Wengraf, 2001).

To better understand the nature of the relationships the target had within their workplace in terms of indirect/covert aggression, I also used the Repertory Grid (Kelly, 1955) technique to elucidate the personal constructs respondents formulated to explain or make sense of their indirect/covert aggression experiences. This helped to draw out the constructs that respondents used in order to engage in sensemaking. Kandola (2012) notes that individuals examine their perceptions of events and people based on schemas they hold. These schemas (or constructs) are personal and are specific to the individual who describes them (Kandola, 2012). The data collected via Repertory Grid will be presented and analysed in Study 1b (Chapter 5) with a focus on further addressing RQs 2 and 3.

The semi-structured interviews were between 20 and 45 minutes in duration. All interviews were digitally recorded. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and interviewees’ pauses and intonations were noted (Wengraf, 2001). I randomly chose four of the 29 transcripts to double review for transcribing accuracy as recommended by Wengraf (2001).

**4.2 Data analysis**

Transcribing the interviews afforded me the opportunity to familiarise myself with each transcript and a thorough read-through of each transcription was conducted. After
transcription, I read the interviews and noted the most salient attributes of each interview. After I read the interviews, I manually coded seven interviews.

Though manual coding can be messy and can feel like “chasing scraps of paper” around on a desk or floor (Kenealy, 2012; Waitzkin, 1993), I chose 4 female interviews and 3 male interviews to ensure the coding process was comprehensive. I then used NVivo 10 to organise and code the interview responses into themes. Sinkovics and Alfodi (2012) argue that NVivo helps in the operational management and formalisation of research. Substantive coding (or open coding, see Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was the first step in analysing data. Glaser (1998) suggests that this is a start of theory development, which is a part of the bigger goal to generate categories and their properties (Kenealy, 2102). In keeping with the underpinnings of grounded theory (Strauss, 1978), I ensured that I coded anything and everything that may ‘fit’ in such a manner as to generate the maximum number of codes.

4.2.1 Coding scheme. According to Anderson (1983), a hybrid approach to thematic analysis is driven inductively and deductively. Boyatzis (1998) refers to thematic analysis as ‘codable’ textual data (i.e., transcribed interviews). A researcher must meet 4 criteria for textual data to be considered ‘codable’: 1) recognise patterns in the data 2) think in terms of systems and concepts 3) having tacit knowledge or in-depth background knowledge and 4) possess relevant information (p. 7-8). As such, Baldwin (1992) explains inductive analysis as searching for patterns based on facts whereas deductive analysis is based on a priori of knowledge (e.g. research or theory). Study 1a generates results deductively and inductively. I commenced coding as per Glaser’s (2008) suggestion of ‘coding anything and everything’. The inductive portion of my analysis consisted of further open coding in addition to axial and selective coding.
Before qualitative data (e.g. verbatim transcribed interviews) can be coded, a researcher must address the issue of content analysis and the unit of analysis to determine what is codable within the interview. Downe-Wamboldt (1992) stipulates that a unit of analysis comprises of “words, sentence, phrases, paragraphs or whole text such interview, diaries or books” (p. 315). Though concerns regarding the ‘size’ (or quantity) of text that was deemed appropriate to code arose, it was agreed that the quantity of text must be sizeable enough to not lose the context. When coding data I, as the researcher, had to be cognizant of the context or environment that produced the data. Downe-Wamboldt argues that describing the phenomena of interest for a particular purpose is more important than the quantity of material when coding. Down-Wamboldt furthers her argument by stating that when analysing context, the researcher must use a particular framework or lens to analyse data; “what you see in the dark depends on where you choose to focus the light” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Ultimately, the unit of analysis chosen for Study 1a was the response phrases given during the interview process (Waitzkin, 1993).

After considering unit of analysis issues, I began coding the data into themes (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Guest et al., 2006). It is critical to be concise and specific when defining the codes and themes (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Guest et al., 2006; Kaukiainen, 2003) as ambiguity creates problems when coding, especially when attempting to obtain some form of inter-rater reliability with a second coder (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Guest et al., 2006).

To begin data analyses, I used open coding to condense qualitative data into preliminary analytic codes (Neuman, 2006). Open coding analysis resulted in creating child nodes of: the aggressor, the target, and miscellaneous. The deductive aspect of Study 1a consisted of organising the open codes to ‘fit’ under the NVivo 10 research questions’ parent node. In axial coding of qualitative data, the researcher organises the codes, links them, and
uncovers the key analytical categories (Neuman, 2006). Axial coding helps the researcher identify related codes (categories and properties of the target and the aggressor). In the final stage of selective coding, the researcher examines previous codes to “identify and select data that will support the conceptual coding categories there were developed” (Neuman, 2006, p. 464). In this process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, Kenealy (2012) suggests that researchers ask themselves a series of critical questions: What is this data set a study of? What category does this incident indicate? What is actually going on in the data? What are the main concerns being faced by the participants? And what accounts are there of resolving these concerns? (p. 413). When analysing, collecting, and coding qualitative data, regularly asking these questions of oneself allows the researcher to remain sensitive and transcendent (refer to Appendix 2: Example of Codes).

Data saturation (or theoretical saturation) occurs when no new data is surfacing and the data collected becomes redundant. Since Glaser and Strauss (1967), other researchers have developed their own definitions of saturation. Morse (1995) refers to data saturation as ‘data adequacy’, whereas Mead (n.d.) suggests saturation is met when the researcher becomes bored as they’ve heard it all in previous interviews (see Meadows & Morse, 2001, p. 193). Morse (1995) outlines 5 principles of data saturation: 1) A cohesive sample results in saturation sooner than a generalisable sample (too much variation) 2) Theoretical sampling is used 3) Sample all variations within the data until each ‘negative case’ perspective is saturated 4) Saturated data is rich, full, and complete as it does not leave ‘gaps’ and 5) The more complete the saturation, the easier it will be to develop a comprehensive theoretical model (p. 149).

With these five principles in mind, the ramifications of not achieving saturation are: impeded research quality, difficult theory development, and invalidity. The point of
saturation was reached when no new child nodes were being created (as per Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and I could answer my research questions. For example, 11 themes were generated from coding the first 14 interviews while only 3 new themes were generated when coding the following 13 interviews; the 3 themes emerged as subthemes to a theme identified during the coding of the first 14 interviews.

Inter-rater reliability was carried out in line with Boyatzis (1998) prescribed steps, the first of which is agreement on the code names and definitions. The coding names were modified slightly due to semantic differences between coders. A dual coder method was employed to ensure reliability, adequate consistency, and interpretation of the themes between the primary and secondary coders; each coded four interviews.

4.3 Research question findings

4.3.1 Research Question 1: What are individuals’ experiences of indirect/covert aggression in the workplace? There are critical features of grounded theory that has allowed for me to not only examine the integral relationship between the aggressor and target, but also the target entering into a state of mindfulness. This mindfulness began when they realised that they are a target of indirect/covert aggression and contribute to the scripts they build to manage their aggressor. During the data coding process, it was revealed that scripts help a target ‘stay in the moment’, or be in a state of mindfulness, (see Bishop et al., 2004) with their experience of indirect/covert aggression and regulate their emotions in the order to develop strategies to either absolve him/her from the experience of indirect/covert aggression. Using repertory grid, I developed provided a framework for understanding a target’s preferred personalities for co-workers. The moment of realisation that they are targets of indirect/covert aggression places the target into a state of mindfulness. Semi-structured
interviews were the most viable method in understanding the target’s experience of indirect/covert aggression.

First, I present the themes that emerged regarding the aggressors as observed/experienced amongst the interview respondents. The behaviours that were the most obvious in this coding were: Destabilisation, Destructive Communication and Social Isolation. As a sub-theme of destructive communication, I will report the targets’ experiences of negative body language demonstrated by their aggressors when communicating with them.

4.3.1.1 Destabilisation. As shown in Table 4.1, the most common theme of indirect/covert aggressive behaviour reported by all respondents were acts of destabilisation. Destabilisation occurs when the aggressor weakens the target’s professional and social credibility. The creation of this weakness includes sometimes preventing the target from optimally performing their job or being able to cope within their job role/social milieu within their workplace (Keashly, 2001). Examples of the types of the destabilising behaviours used by aggressors included: disrupting workflow (i.e. deleting data, distracting the target’s subordinates), deliberately giving wrong information (i.e. information for booking accommodations or travel abroad), and/or changing the goal posts (e.g. constantly changing one’s mind, unrealistic deadlines, removal of responsibility without consultation, overload of responsibilities). These acts of destabilisation include behaviours meant to undermine and erode the targets’ confidence and professional reputation/credibility. One respondent provided the following example of destabilisation by her supervisor,

I would advise, like, what I was up to, leave all the important information about that particular issue, and I’d go to lunch and then I’d come back and she would actually have removed all my comments that I’ve added to… for the day, so I would then have to turn around and re-enter them all. (Jenny, Information Systems, 28 years)

This respondent also recalled another incident, which was intended to be destabilising,
She actually unplugged my phone three times … I’d be trying to make phone calls and of course … it just wasn’t connected. (Jenny, Information Systems, 28 years)

Another respondent recalled her colleague pre-emptively completing her primary job responsibilities by offering to do them as a favour. This behaviour was perceived as an intention to get her into trouble with her supervisor

for example, in the mornings I'm meant to get papers for the executives to read, and then they'd go and offer to get them. But I know they'd tell my boss that I didn't get them, so they're trying to get me in trouble. (Olena, Hospital Administration, 5 years).

Another respondent spoke about not being given instructions by her colleague on how to make certain travel arrangements for the senior executive for whom she worked directly, instead, the female colleague completed the task,

…she just said to me “Oh, give it to me, I’ll do it”, you know, “You’re not capable of doing it”… (Anne, Administrative Support, 35 years)

After the female colleague took over the task, she reported this to respondent’s supervisor that the respondent could not perform the function of arranging international travel for him, …she went and told my boss that I couldn’t do it…(Anne, Administrative Support, 35 years).

Another respondent, Jacquie (executive assistant, 30+ years), had experienced the same kind of destabilising behaviour by the same female colleague in the same work environment, but in a different time frame.

This person hadn't told me that this is part of the process and he (the direct supervisor of the target) goes with the process. And when she (the aggressor) realized that she needed a signature for something, she’d call me and said to me, "Who is the delegate?" And I said, "Oh, no, I'm so sorry I haven't got one. I don't know who the delegate is. There isn't one. He hasn't delegated someone." (When the aggressor knew that Jacquie needed to have delegate for a signing authority).
Table 4.1: Different experiences of indirect/covert aggression reported by targets

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<th>Colleague</th>
<th>Subordinate</th>
<th>Superior</th>
<th>Female Aggressor</th>
<th>Male Aggressor</th>
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Katy (executive assistant, 30+ years) spoke of her female supervisor changing responsibilities on a whim. Katy explained a scenario in which the female supervisor brought in ‘extra help’ to an area of her staffing responsibilities and initially instructed Katy that this new staff member was not her concern and that she would be directly reporting to the female supervisor.

You do not need to have anything to do with this lady. She reports to me, she works with me. I need you to manage everything else…

After the aggressor stated this, Katy’s aggressor went back on her decision of whom the extra help would report to. The aggressor went back on her decision and instructed Katy that she would be responsible for this particular new staff member after being initially instructed that this new help was not her concern. This sudden responsibility came after the new ‘help’ made a number of errors and Katy’s aggressor did not want to deal with these errors. To illustrate,

So, you need to fix this. I’m going to hold you personally responsible…

The last two quotes also show how the aggressor moved from indirect/covert aggression to direct aggression when they seemed to be losing control.

Liam (hairdresser, 13 years) spoke about his access to his hair salon’s client list being restricted without him being aware.

…uhm the excuse that was given to me when my password wasn’t working was that the computer was going through an update but it lasted for a month until I threaten to leave and then everything went back to normal again…

Tom (executive administrator, 21 years, male) recalled a similar experience when he spoke about having been removed from a board by his female aggressor, because she,

… didn’t like what I would suggest in the meeting…she would cut me off and everything…
Jobe (marketing, 16 years) spoke about having been moved around so much so that he didn’t have a defined role and his responsibilities lessened,

…she took over basically today. So I went in to go and see her about the project I’m working on at the moment. And she turned the whole meeting into, "You understand why we have to put you with your back facing the door." And then went on to explain how I always talk to people too much and that I engage too much with people…

Mike (administrative support role, 30+ years, male) recalls a specific moment when his female superior would demand certain work processes to be completed for his role and not provide specific instructions.

I was asked to fill in a spreadsheet with virtually no instructions and one of the columns was how many students did I have booked in for appointments…

When Mike was unaware of the processes in his administrative support role for students, he stated that his female aggressor accused him of not doing his job and put him on a performance review. Mike perceived this as an act to instil insecurity about his abilities to do his job and being under constant scrutiny. To illustrate,

…so after (Mike) filling in obviously the wrong figure and then (the spreadsheet) came back and then that (the wrong figure) was used as a performance management discretion to actually place me on probation…

In a panel interview (as part of his performance management), Mike said that his aggressor tried to make him look inadequate by being the only person out of 24 who did not understand the instructions.

…there's been very, very strong worded emails to the fact that apparently I was the only person out of 24 who didn’t understand that which had my students copied into…

4.3.1.2 Destructive communication. Destructive communication reflects poor quality communication, such as: a) communicating only through email (i.e., restricting face to face communication), b) showing a lack of respect in the delivery of communication to the target
(e.g., sarcasm, short, quipped speech, snide, comments, etc.), c) engaging in double entendre (i.e., saying something that has double meaning with malicious intent), d) and refusal to engage in conversation with the target (i.e., not saying good morning or asking how the target is, ignoring the target through negative body language, etc.). Instances in which the aggressor and target have limited interaction (i.e. face to face conversation/avoidance, no email exchange, no voice to voice communication via the telephone or otherwise) are considered non-communication instances. For example,

She is really friendly to everyone else, but to me, she doesn't smile, she doesn't say hi, she doesn't say bye. Olena (secretarial, 5 years).

In terms of showing a lack of respect in the delivery of communication to the target (e.g., sarcasm, short, quipped speech, yelling, snide, comments, etc.), Jobe (marketing, 16 years) recalls a snide comment that his aggressor made:

Well let me put it this way, if I was to put your name up, work-obsessed would not be one of the characteristics that I'd attach to your name

In terms of double entendre (i.e., saying something that has double meaning with malicious intent), Jane (human resources, 30+ years) said that she would find there were double meanings and found herself having

reflection on…what people were actually saying rather than what I actually told them, what were they saying at the time…

Brenda recalls a colleague refusing to engage in conversation with her (i.e., not saying good morning or asking how the target is, ignoring the target through negative body language, etc.),

So no good mornings, no prompts for outside of normal working life or "How's your day?" or "How was your weekend?" or anything like that. It was very much only "I will talk to you when I have to talk to you" rather than actually anything outside of that. Brenda (systems intelligence, 13 years)
Negative body language is a commonly reported subtheme of destructive communication. It reflects behaviours that convey low-grade (undetectable) social disapproval, and/or social hostility (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Neuman & Baron, 1998). Negative body language includes eye rolling, no eye contact, taking deep, exaggerated breaths that indicated disapproval, obvious staring, dismissive body language, or “I’m not speaking to you body language” (Björkqvist, Osterman, & Hjelt-Back, 1994; Neuman & Baron, 1998).

Katy noted the subtle negative body gesture that her female supervisor was making whenever she was trying to explain an issue or give input in a staff meeting,

Quite often, it was very subtle with me and a lot of the time, she would just sit and stare and stare and stare as I was speaking, or cock her head on one side and I’d say “Sorry, XXX, did you want to say something?” (the aggressor would respond) “No, I’m just observing. I’ll talk to you about that later.”

Katy (executive assistant, 30+ years).

Well, I got to the point where, you know, to my face. If we weren't on the phone, she would never have huffed and hung up. But to my face she was always quite stony-faced but receptive. Jacquie (executive assistant, 30+ years).

Jacquie (executive assistant, 30+ years) noted other negative body language displayed by her aggressor,

...(the aggressor)...asked me for this documentation, and I had said that it was with the XXXX. And with that has turned around, walked on the heels, walked back into his office...

Tom (executive administrator, 21 years) recalls his female aggressor would not make eye contact with him during their one on one meetings,

...She would not look me in the eye a lot of the time.

4.3.1.3 Social isolation. Social isolation is typically the aggressor’s ultimate end goal after the target endures a series of negative acts (i.e., negative body language, removing
responsibilities, etc.) (Björkqvist, K et al., 1992; Björkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crothers, Lipinski, & Minuto, 2009; Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988). It was a commonly reported theme and, being that it is the ultimate and final stage of aggression toward the target, warrants it being a stand-alone theme. It seemed to occur in the final stages of aggression that a target would experience. In circumstances of social isolation, the aggressor ultimately excludes the target from any social interaction between them, but also excludes them from social interaction throughout the entire workplace.

...she would ask everyone out for a coffee for morning tea and not advise me because I was in the back of the office and then all of a sudden, there was no one, including our receptionist, at our work. All the phones would be ringing and I would have the assumption “Okay, everyone’s gone on morning tea break.” (Jenny, information systems, 28 years)

Well, she’s been the person who is ignoring me. Sarah (marketing director, 18 years)

...all of a sudden, XXX stopped talking to me and XXXX stopped talking to me, and I started getting no invitations to anywhere, like the socializing outside of school just stopped, or outside of work I should say just stopped. And they were very isolating. (Shazza, teacher, 12 years)

Walter (retail, 41 years) recalls his recent experience with his female manager,

...send off an email to someone and they would answer it and you know they’ve received it because you sent off emails to the same address beforehand either that or you just get totally ignored...ignored!

It is evident from the interview data presented above that, when describing their experiences of indirect aggression, targets also engage in a process of ‘sensemaking.’ That is, they attempt to understand how and why they were being targeted for indirect/covert aggression. I examine this issue in the next section, and this address Research Question 2.

4.3.2 Research Question 2: To what extent do experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process? The respondents indicated that they had often tried to understand why they were targets of indirect/covert aggression within
the workplace. It emerged from the interview transcripts that a fundamental question asked by respondents was, “why me?”

4.3.3 Realisation. Many respondents spoke of an initial moment of ‘Realisation’ in which they became aware that the behaviours they had experienced from their aggressor were enacted with negative intent towards them. The interviews indicated that the targets had a moment of realisation (i.e., when the ‘penny dropped’ that they were being targeted). In this moment they understood clearly and distinctly that an individual was exhibiting aggressive behaviour towards them. This is the main feature of indirect/covert aggression whereby identifying the behaviours are like trying to ‘nail jello to a wall’ because the behaviours are so nebulous. In line with Peak-Ends Theory (Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993) the targets tended to reflect on the most intense moments of their experiences of indirect/covert aggression and how the experience ended. That is, when the targets were telling their story in the interview, they would start their story with the most critical incident and how it ended by using ‘hot’ emotions (i.e., using words such as ‘pissed off’, ‘angry’, ‘hurt’, shocked, see Appendix 3 for illustrative examples).

Literature on the topic of realisation, an everyday occurrence for individuals, is surprisingly limited. The Oxford Dictionary defines realisation as: “coming to understand something clearly and distinctly in a moment of experiencing an event in an individual’s life” (Realisation, 2014). From the interviews, it seemed that an individual realises they are a target of indirect aggression when they have a moment of clarity regarding the interplay between themself and their aggressor. The moment of clarity seems to occur when the target realises that the aggressor’s intent is sinister and designed to undermine the target’s psychosocial welfare. For example, Jenny experienced repeated patterns of indirect/covert
aggressive behaviour by her aggressor and realised she was a target of workplace aggression after the fourth experience,

But after probably about the fourth thing she did to me, I’m like “Okay, this is a personal vendetta against me.” Jenny (Information Systems, 28 years).

Whereas Jane (Human Resources, 30 + years) ‘got the hint’ when trying to apply for a job,

I think it was the fact that when I applied to that job and it was apparently clear to me my aspiration was not welcome…

Similar to Jane, it became apparent to Craig (Researcher, 9 years) that he was a target when,

Being Cc’d in the email was the event that made me realize that it was happening…because prior to that I didn’t know that it was, so it was just kind of like a wake up call to me…

In line with Peak-End theory (Fredrickson, 2000; Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993), the interviewees appeared to remember the most intense affective moments that they felt in the indirect/covert aggression situation, which is in line with the aggression being an affective event (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As shown above (see Jane) the interview data reveals a target may also need to experience the acts more than once before realising they are a focal point for indirect/covert aggression and the realisation may stem from the target ‘feeling’ the impact of the aggressor’s behaviour. For example, Cara (Administrative, 17 years) recalled her emotions at the time that she was experiencing aggression by her colleague,

> Anger was the first and most dominant emotion and, yes, disappointment and betrayal by my superior for not exercising appropriate policy and being sensitive to my feelings about being accused or unfoundedly accused (see Appendix 3 for more illustrative examples).

During the moment of realisation, feelings were often described by the interviewees/targets such as “I feel frustrated they did that to me”, “I feel angry because they have done me a personal injustice”, or “I feel so hurt that they would say/do that to me” (see Fitness, 2000). The emotions used to describe the physical feeling a target may be
experiencing could be considered as triggers or as indicators that the target realises the aggressor’s ill will and that a negative dynamic exists between the parties. This is in line with Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) Affective Events theory, where the indirect/covert aggressive annoyances within an individual’s day can elicit discrete negative emotions. In this case, the indirect/covert aggressive annoyances are the indirect/covert aggressive behaviours that a target experiences, which in turn, elicit discrete negative emotions (see Appendix 3 for an illustrative example).

All respondents interviewed realised they were targets of workplace aggression regardless of whether the aggression was repetitive acts or varied and subtle acts. The targets’ realisations were individual and unique. Each target had their own respective realisation of indirect/covert aggression being directed at them which included having feelings of suspicion, experiencing repetitive aggressive behaviours, and being cognizant of the aggressor’s subtle aggressive behaviour (e.g. negative body language).

Many of the interviewees then discussed how, after the realisation that they were targets of indirect aggression, they tried to ‘make sense’ of why they were targets (i.e., a sensemaking process). That is, they tried to understand the aggressor’s motivations for engaging in the behaviours. For some interviewees, the sensemaking process included self-reflection.

4.3.4 Sensemaking. According to Maitlis, Vogus, and Lawrence (2013) a novel or unexpected event can leads an individual to have an emotional reaction. In this case, the event is indirect/covert aggression. The emotional reaction then signals to the individual a need to develop an understanding of the situation (Maitlis et al., 2013). Zabrodska et al. (2014) argue that sensemaking begins “during the first occasions of hostile interactions” (p. 4). As such, the critical point of sensemaking is to understand how an individual processes
incomplete information related to particular events/situations of their reality as they move through their life. Sensemaking is a method by which descriptions of individuals’ experiences are elicited and analysed within context of their reality (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010). After the initial realisation of indirect/covert aggression, it becomes an exercise for the individual to find patterns within their experiences of indirect/covert aggression as a way to fill in missing information. As outlined by Mike:

…Well, I was just wondering why me? What have I done?

An individual fills these gaps with different types of critical questions, such as, ‘why’, ‘how’, or ‘what’ in an individual’s context of time (past, present, and/or future), valence (good, bad, neutral), and entity (self, other, process, or objects) (Maitlis et al., 2013). These questions aid an individual in making sense of their world by examining how they think, perceive, and understand a situation. Marie (travel agent, 30+ years) went through the process of asking herself the following critical questions pertinent to sensemaking,

I guess the questions were why? Why was she treating me so badly? What had I done to want her to move me to a different spot or to do more work? What was her justification for wanting to do it even after I explained it wouldn't work? Marie (travel agent, 30+ years)

Scholars argue that sensemaking is focussed on how individuals make sense of situations of ambiguity and the reality they interpret (Weick, 1995; Zabrodska et al., 2014). For example, Marie concluded that she was targeted because of her aggressor being jealous,

I do believe it was jealousy. I had a better relationship with the clients than she did and she'd been there a lot longer than I had. My performance exceeded everybody else's commission-wise. My turnover was $3 million a year whereas everybody else's was only one. I think a lot of it was jealousy. I've gotten far better with her board of directors knowing what she did. People were coming to me as troubleshooter rather than going to the manager, to her.

Reflection accounts for the context of time, as the process of sensemaking is about events an individual experienced in the past (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995).
Reflecting on past events, whether it was recent past or ancient history, is a part of the process of sensemaking (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995). For example Kay (Administration, 7 years) was very clear in explaining the way in which she cognitively processed the indirect/covert aggression she experienced:

I didn’t understand why she was attacking me the way she was and…my brain tends to replay things over and over again until I come to some kind of an understanding of what was actually going on…

In Kay’s attempt to make sense of why she was a target of aggression, she attributed it to the aggressor having a controlling nature,

I think it’s because she is such a control freak…

When the interviewees were asked if they had discussions with themselves regarding their experiences of indirect/covert workplace aggression, a majority of the respondents said that they do so to understand why or how they became a target of indirect/covert aggressive behaviour. For example Jenny (information systems, 28 years) stated that she would wonder what she had done to have her aggressor to be so upset with her,

I’m thinking “Well, what have I done? What have I done to make her feel upset with me?” thinking maybe I’d done something wrong.

Dan’s (executive assistant, 17 years) sensemaking contained a series of why and what questions,

…it was just a pile of questions asking why are you doing this what’s…uhm…what sort of outcome are you looking for? Uh, why have you started acting this way? What could we do to change it?

When Scott (teacher, 19 years) was asked why he thought he was the target of aggression, he attributed it to his inexperience making him vulnerable,

I was much more inexperienced in the workplace…I really didn’t understand staff room politics and all that kind of thing so I was probably more vulnerable…
Walter (retail, 41 years) said that he was at a loss as to why he was a target,

I didn’t understand why she was attacking me the way she was and…

This lack of understanding made Walter want to try to make sense of the reason he was being attacked, he concluded that the aggressor displayed hubris and was poorly suited to the job,

I think just an arrogant person personally…a wrong person in the wrong job.

Some respondents would verbalise their sensemaking with their spouse, friends, family members or colleagues. Christiaan (researcher, 41 years) stated that the way he tried to make sense of his aggressor’s behaviour was different because he discussed the events he experienced with his circle of friends,

No, not really in my head. I’ll be honest, not really in my head. I suspect I’m unusual in that sense. I’d discuss it with my friends. My friends got a blow-by-blow account of the latest happenings. I felt that was extremely helpful to me.

In the end, Christiaan attributed his aggressor’s behaviours to a number of factors that ranged from jealousy to envy to insecurity,

I assume I was targeted by (a) she felt possibly a little bit resentful of me – I was a XXXX; she was a XXXX. She was not nearly as good at stats as she kept on saying she was. She probably feared getting found out, even though I kept giving her reassurances that I knew nothing about it. She probably realised I knew more than I was letting on. So there was that, and I do believe it was the affair comment of XXXX that – because XXXX was also clearly targeted at almost the identical moment. So it was something – XXXX was no threat to her. She wasn’t even an honour student, you know. So clearly it wasn’t – I think it was the affair thing.

As shown in the next section (addressing RQ 3), the sensemaking of the targets would often help them to formulate scripts or strategies for dealing with his or her aggression.
4.3.5 Research Question 3: How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace? As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, exploring the various types of scripts that targets formulate and use as strategies to deal with their aggressor is one of Study 1a’s goals. Scripts are knowledge structures that fit certain, frequently encountered, situations (Gioia & Poole, 1984) and schemas that aid in understanding behaviours (within oneself and in others) and experienced events. In Chapter 2, I stated that relational scripts comprise three types: Cognitive, behavioural, and emotion scripts. Cognitive scripts are about thoughts and rationalisations stemming from an individual’s various day to day experiences and events (see Fitness, 2000). An emotional script expresses an individual’s emotions such feelings of joy, sadness, and/or anger. Behavioural scripts are about patterns of behaviours that are specific to an individual’s social context (Abelson, 1981). In the case of the Study 1a participants, it appears that script building (e.g. cognitive, emotion, or behavioural) was part and parcel of managing their aggressor as a way to alleviate the negative emotions they were experiencing and to create distance between themselves and their aggressors. As I will demonstrate below, the most common types of scripts that emerged from my Study 1a interviews were i) avoiding the aggressor, ii) if-then scripts, and iii) polite, appeasing scripts. These scripts were centred on strategies as methods of managing the relationship between target and aggressor.

The interview data then suggested that some of the interviewees became conscious of their behaviours and their actions. In the context of an individual experiencing indirect/covert aggression, being conscious of the aggressor creates a space for the target to be careful and conscious of the target’s interactions with their aggressors. It was apparent in
the interview data that the target being conscious of their aggressor helps subdue the mental process that contributes to a target’s emotional suffering and maladjusted behaviour. The conscious and cautious response helps the target recreate scripts when dealing with their aggressor. The scripts that targets formulate seemed integral to their problem solving technique and the conscious awareness that the target is the focus of indirect/covert aggression.

like going over the scripts in my head of what I should say to her, how I would say it, what I would say exactly, that sort of thing…I think you have to be careful of how you worded something towards her because she'd pick up on something and kind of rip it apart, actually pick up on the phrasing of a sentence and dive into like, "Why did you say that? What did you mean by that?" (Jody, travel agent, 3 years)

In the case of targets of indirect/covert aggression within this study, once the targets had thought through their process of realisation and sensemaking, they tended to move into a state of being conscious of what they would and would not say to their aggressor or around their aggressor.

I guess I'm a lot more cautious when I deal with her…Olena (Medical Administration, 5 years)

So I became more cautious in my working relationship with her and certainly more withdrawn in sharing personal data. It was strictly a business relationship from that point on. Cara (Administrative, 17 years)

I knew that the discussion would eventually happen that I could approach it in a kind of rational order or fashion you know I was approaching it you know with a calmness and clarity rather than coming from an angry place or I would probably just you know say unhelpful things and make everything worse…Craig (researcher, 9 years).

Christiaan (researcher, 41 years) said that he had to, “put his toe in the water” with his female aggressor each day to gauge her mood. He was mindful of his emotions toward her and able to put the situation with his aggressor into a broader context to deal with her on a
day-to-day basis. Christiaan was mindful that he and his aggressor were not supervised properly and believed it to be a contributing factor to her behaviour; he stated,

…it made me feel – confirm that there’s a systemic problem with my supervisory team really.

Mike became conscious of the aggressor and not the position that the aggressor held. This shift helped him in his future dealings with his aggressor,

It made me appreciate that in this particular academic environment one needs to be more conscious of the people they are working with as opposed to the positions.

This is demonstrative of Langer’s (1972) argument that individuals tend to shift from having mindless behavioural scripts to a conscious awareness followed by a complete awareness of available information. Shifting from unconscious behavioural scripts (following a cognitive framework with little or no thought) for completing daily work processes to a state of mindfulness helped Marie (travel agent, 30+ years) deal with her aggressor. Marie was cognizant of her aggressor’s ill will and, as a survival strategy, made note at all times where her aggressor was within the office. Marie displayed closed off body language specifically toward to her aggressor while remaining open to the rest of the staff and her clients.

Jody (travel agent, 3 years) used strategic scripts around her feelings of resentfulness toward her aggressor. Jody was aware that she felt negative emotions toward her aggressor and had to be in a constant state of consciousness when having to interact with her aggressor. Jody and the other respondents strategically built new scripts, thus reinforcing Langer’s idea that, when in the state of mindfulness, individuals are more methodical in their performance and regulate their behaviour by regulating their emotional state. Building mindful, strategic scripts that a target uses to deal with their aggressor is the next stage of a target’s mental
process. Next, I will address the construction of scripts and their consequences to further answer Research Question 3.

**4.3.5.1 Avoidance script as a strategy.** The interviewees discussed avoidant behavioural scripts that included psychological withdrawal, emotional withdrawal, or physical withdrawal. The interviews showed that some of the targets that had psychologically withdrawn from their aggressor after having gone through the sense making process. These targets resolved that they are not responsible for the aggressor’s behaviour (i.e. “it’s their problem not mine!”) and decided to not invest in the aggressor, which is an example of a cognitive script (see Salin et al., 2014 for further examples). Emotional withdrawal is when the target no longer has the want or need to emotionally invest (e.g., be angry, upset, hurt, etc.) in seeking the aggressor’s approval, which is an example of an emotion scripts.

> Afterwards is when the emotions kicked in, but at that time it was kind of just focusing on getting out of the situation (Jody, travel agent, 3 years).

> …there was no emotion, it didn't give me butterflies…I was probably a little more standoffish and a less willing to comply and less cooperative (Gina, research assistant, 2 years).

An example of avoidant behaviour script is a target making a conscious choice and effort to physically withdrawal in order to avoid the aggressor’s physical presence. These avoidant behaviours help an individual focus their emotional resources on the situation at hand (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001).

For Study 1a respondents, avoidance was a way to manage the aggressor. For some respondents, avoidance became a daily script built into the target’s daily routine, to the point that it seemed to become a part of their schematic framework within their organisation.
In the case of psychological avoidant behaviours, Christiaan (researcher, 41 years) described how he withdrew from his female aggressor by simply ignoring her despite the close proximity forced upon them by the small office they shared.

…I got to the stage where I would barely say hello when I came into the room, even after a weekend or something like that. So I didn’t – it was a disengage strategy. I practiced really heavy disengagement…

Jody (travel agent, 3 years) went through the same psychological withdrawal with her female aggressor. Jody’s withdrawal script was built into her cognitive framework and helped her disengage completely,

I didn't want to have any interactions with her so I stayed away from her. I didn't acknowledge her or anything like that. I just kind of pretend that she didn't exist.

Jody stated that she was more guarded and cautious with her aggressor as a consequence of her avoidant behaviour,

Basically, I just put a wall up. I didn't want to really deal with her, try not to deal with her, very little when I deal with her, and if I really had to, resentful, something that was extreme, something that I really need to talk to her about.

Scott (teacher, 19 years) built his avoidance script similar to Jody and Christiaan, but then built his emotional disengagement script afterward to lessen the impact on his emotions,

…strategies are just a bit more like avoidance number 1 and emotionally disengaged…

Marie’s feelings of emotional disengagement were so strong that she did not want to be in her aggressor’s physical presence and, as a consequence, Marie would position herself in a manner that would minimise the chances of having to look at her female aggressor,

Yeah, I did, I behaved to the point that I probably ignored her as much as she ignored me. And when we had staff meetings and things, I would sit in the position that I didn't have to look at her.

Because she could not resolve the situation with her aggressor, Marie ultimately left her job,
To the point that I never wanted to speak with her. The day I left, when I actually resigned and she turned around and said to me, "Oh, you'll come back." And I just turned around and said, "No, I won't," and I've not spoken to her since that day at work at that office.

4.3.5.2 If-then scripts. Baldwin (1992) suggests that our cognitive, behavioural, and emotion scripts reflect our procedural scripts. These procedural scripts act as guides for the recipient’s expected behaviour (e.g. if I shout at this person, they will shout back at me). The if-then contingencies are based on the individuals in the interaction and the expectation of emotional expression (Fehr & Harasymchuck, 2005). Fehr and Harasymchuck (2005) explain the if-then script is based on repeated past interactions and dependent upon the reaction of the recipient. For example, a target directly confronting their aggressor may lead to an escalation of dissension (see Fehr & Harasymchuck, 2005).

Katy (executive assistant, 30+ years) said she based her scripts on her past history with her aggressor. For example,

…if I really tell her exactly how I’m feeling then this will be irretrievable … I do not believe that I would have any backing from XXXX.

Similarly, Jody said she formulated her if-then script as a way to manage her aggressor, on the contingency that her aggressor would ask her work process questions,

I’d actually plan it before I even went to work for the day so I’d say “Well, if this happens, I will say to her ‘Please refer to’”, you know, and give her an item.

Jody stated that she would continually review her if-then scripts even though it did not seem to improve her situation. Tom used his if-then script as an emotional resolve based on his history of interaction with his aggressor,

…if I'm always upbeat and happy, it will rub off on them. But there were times when it was hard to do…
Whereas Jobe (marketing, 16 years) said that he was preparing himself for when he returned to work knowing he would have to explain his absence to his aggressor (who was also his colleague), he formulated an if-then script to make his aggressor “back off” and leave him alone,

…because I have taken 4 days off work, I would say to myself, "If she says to me why have you taken that 4 days off? You know that I was going to give you this task to do.", then I would say, "Well actually my doctor told me I had to take that 4 days off because I had stomach etchings, which had been investigated. And they ran all these tests and everything, they're making sure that, they're just ticking all the boxes. And I had to go through all that testing because I have had stomach ulcers before.” And then, I was thinking that might make her back off because she might realize that she was treading on dangerous territory, and that if she's stressing me out, it might have repercussions.

Walter (retail, 41 years) used an if-then script that involved keeping busy with small jobs around the shop to ‘look busy’ as a way of making his aggressor leave him alone.

…if you have to talk to them you have other means to busy yourself in a store that may be cleaning product arranging pamphlets or even sweeping the floor all those things…

4.3.5.3 Polite and appeasing scripts. The polite and appeasing scripts discussed by interviewees in Study 1a appeared to be employed as a method of emotional regulation (see Dan-Glauser & Gross, 2013; Salin et al., 2014). Emotional regulation consisted of the target using response focussed strategies (modifying emotional expression) in the presence of their aggressor to not show that they (the target) were feeling vulnerable, even though they may not be feeling negative emotions, such as smiling, laughing, saying hello when passing them. In short, the targets used this method to create internal emotional resolve to avoid indulging their aggressor. For example, the target would not retaliate with outward aggression, even when experiencing negative affectivity such as anger, frustration, or sadness, etc.
Jobe described his surface acting as emotionally painful. Regardless of how rude he believed his aggressor to be, he comported himself in a professional manner by being friendly and having a jovial outward appearance. To illustrate,

Well, one of the things that I do is I smile, because if you smile at them, they think you're really happy and so they don't realize that they have an impact...So I always smile, I'm always 100% polite to them, and I'm not aggressive. I don't say anything that's going to give them an opportunity to get aggressive towards me.

One of Christiaan’s (researcher, 41 years) two strategies was to approach his aggressor in placating manner,

I mean I developed a single strategy with her. I mean to be fair, two strategies; placating and silence.

Olena (hospital administration, 5 years) was explicit that she did not want to appear to be as bad as her aggressor and would, therefore, deal with her aggressor politely and in an appeasing way.

...I say hi to her. Because I don't want to be as low as she is. I don't want to stoop to being a cow. I don't think that's the right thing to do to anyone. You don't need to be rude to people. So I treat her as I would everyone else.

Walter used the inclusive approach as a polite and appeasing script to lessen the aggressive behaviour he had been experiencing. His polite and appeasing script was to make everyone in his workplace feel a sense of inclusion. For example, he would offer baked goods to everyone as opposed to offering the baked good to certain selected people (i.e. excluding his aggressor as a form retaliation), as he felt it demonstrated that he did not instigate his aggressor’s behaviour.

...Nnnnormally if I just if I am going to interact with someone and I don’t like them I will be nice I won’t be nasty...even after work I’ve been to theirs for a barbeque or something like that I was nice and just treated her like I would treat anyone else in how I would want to be treated myself...that probably sounds weird and wonderful but that’s how I do it...if I don’t like you I will
still be nice to you because I think being nice is going to achieve more than bad…

Whilst the polite and appeasing script does not appear to improve the situation for targets of this study, not allowing the aggressor to have the emotional satisfaction of impacting their target was, immediately and tangibly, emotionally gratifying to the target.

4.4 Discussion, Implications, and Concluding Comments

This qualitative interview study was conducted to understand the experiences of employees targeted by indirect aggression within the workplace and explore the scripts they use when experiencing aggression, the factors that influence those scripts, and the processes targets experienced (e.g. cognitive, emotions, and behaviour). In terms of Research Question 1, the interviews revealed that individual indirect/covert aggression experiences started with acts of destabilisation. This is where it is the aggressor’s intent to weaken their target by creating doubt and insecurity. Respondents also experience destructive communication and social isolation, which is an ultimate injury for the target. However, the amount of doubt and insecurity varied from target to target depending on the types of acts that the target experienced ranging from the aggressor undermining the target’s professional job knowledge to unplugging the target’s phone from the wall. These acts of indirect/covert aggression can be related back to Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) Affective Event theory, where hassles are the indirect/covert aggressive events that occur for individuals within organisational life and elicit discrete negative emotions (e.g., anger, fear, sadness, etc.). In addition, there is evidence to support using Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End theory to understand this phenomenon. The target reported the most intense moments and feelings, which are associated with indirect/covert aggression, which is an affective event. This was
drawn out using the critical incident interview technique (CIT), during which the target recalled the peak experience and the intensity of their emotion in that concentrated moment.

While using the CIT, the target would automatically go the middle of their story, which was the most intense, peak moment or their experience of indirect/covert aggression. Following their explanation of the most intense, peak moment the target would explain how their experience ended. The way in which the experiences ended would determine how emotive they would be. For example, in the case of Tom, (executive administrator, 21 years), he was happy with how his story ended, because his aggressor was exposed and punished for their indirect/covert aggressive behaviours. Tom did not use profane language to describe his aggressor, whereas, Jenny (information systems, 28 years) did. Jenny’s aggressor forced her to leave the organisation, leaving Jenny to feel like a personal injustice had been done to her. Jenny’s description of her ending was intense and descriptive that primarily filled with profane language that included intense emotions and labels, such as ‘pissed off’ and ‘bitch’.

For Research Question 2, the results showed targets underwent a process of realisation and sensemaking whereby they determined that they were targets of indirect/covert aggression. This relates to the target’s behaviours and their cognitive process that underpins their responses to the aggressor. Sensemaking theory has been used in various settings including understanding rules, meanings, and symbols within organisations (Morgan, 1986) or making something sensible (i.e., understanding culture) within organisations (Weick, 1995). In this case, sensemaking was applied to explain how targets made sense of their role in their experiences of indirect/covert aggression. This contributes to theory building in the area of better understanding indirect/covert aggression. Regarding Research Question 3, the targets in Study 1a tended to use one of the types of scripts. These were
avoidance, appeasing, and procedural ‘if-then’ scripts (e.g., if I avoid this person, then I will not have to deal with them).

In using Affective Events Theory as a theoretical framework, I have explicated what happened between the indirect covert events and subsequent scripted responses by the targets. Focussing on the role of emotions and personality helped in this explanation. It has been noted about Affective Event Theory by scholars (Glasø et al., 2011; Weiss & Beal, 2005) that empirical examination (i.e., indirect/covert aggression within the workplace) of the basic assumptions put forward in the model is rare. Therefore, using Affective Events Theory within the context of indirect/covert aggression and understanding the negative emotional impact that it has on targets, is a theoretical and empirical contribution to the indirect/covert aggression field of research.

As a result of using Affective Event Theory, I was able to explain the mental process (which include emotions) and the scripted responses as behavioural outcomes. This makes a noteworthy contribution to the indirect/covert aggression field of research. I also achieved this by extending Abelson (1981) script theory from mundane scripts in everyday life events (e.g. the classic restaurant scripts) to individuals targeted by indirect aggression within their workplace. That is, I have demonstrated that individuals employ scripts as strategies to help resolve (in some form) the aggression they experience. Schank and Abelson’s (1977) Cognitive Script Theory helps to understand how knowledge structures unfold for the target when experiencing indirect/covert aggression. Furthermore, Cognitive Script Theory demonstrates how targets create mental structures in order for them to organise their understanding of how the sequence of events unfold when experiencing indirect/covert aggression. That is, targets will use scripts to help them characterise and anticipate the sequence of behaviours that the aggressor uses, particularly when they are repeated
occurrences. This helps guide the targets’ expectations and behaviours during indirect/covert aggressive events. The recurrence of indirect/covert aggression creates an internalised ‘template’ of the anticipated sequence of indirect/covert aggressive acts into the future. The template that the target creates includes the individuals involved and the environment where the indirect/covert aggression happens. What Study 1a has not addressed is the personal constructs that targets formulate to understand their aggressor. In the next chapter, I address this issue by using the RepGrid Technique.
In this study my aim to identify the personal construct that targets have of their aggressor and the aggressor’s behaviour toward them. I use Kelly’s Personal Construct Theory (PCT) (Bannister & Fransella, 1986; Kelly, 1955) to identify the personal constructs targets form about their aggressor when experiencing indirect aggression. Personal constructs are mental representations of how an individual observes their environment. I use the Repertory Grid technique aims at cultivating more specific constructs (and categories) relating to indirect/covert aggression from the respondents used in Study 1a. This technique is effective because of the respondents are speaking specifically about their aggressor’s characteristics as opposed to speaking about their experiences of indirect/covert aggression (Honess, 1985; Tracy et al., 2006).

The RepGrid technique (Carver, Sutton, & Scheier, 2000; Kelly, 1955) is utilised in Study 1b to access the personal constructs (qualitative) of participants and later to determine how these constructs ‘hang’ together (quantitative approach) in Study 2 (Chapter 7). Thus, this chapter is grounded in the qualitative approach (Fransella et al., 2004) in an attempt to better understand how the target mentally represents their indirect/covert aggressor, the relationship between targets’ perceptions, the affective event, and negative affective responses. This study addresses Research Question 1 and 2, which are:

**Research Question 1:** What are individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?

**Research Question 2:** To what extent do experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process?

This study is linked to Study 1a, as it gives insight to the types of constructs that targets formulate about their aggressor and directly draws on the experience they have
involving indirect/covert aggressive behaviours (established in Study 1a). Identifying the constructs that the targets formulate helps to understand the affectivity that targets attach to these constructs (e.g., anger, fear, etc.) and the different types of scripts that they may formulate to deal with their aggressor. Study 1b contributes to the workplace aggression literature by providing a better understanding of the relationship between a target’s perceptions of the aggressor, the affective event, and negative affective responses.

Guided by Research Questions 1 and 2, respondents were asked to describe their own personal constructs (i.e., how individuals make sense of and interpret the events around them) by describing the least and most petty behaved person with whom they work. Respondents were asked the following question by answering, “what is it about the most/least petty behaved person that makes it difficult or easy to work with?” This question elicits what the target’s idea is of what indirect/covert behaviour is and what it is not within the workplace context (for other examples of this technique, see Faccio et al., 2012; Huang, Wright, Chiu, & Wang, 2008). By requiring the target to compare and contrast the least and most petty behaved individual, the RepGrid technique encourages the target to be clear in what they believe to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in their workplace experiences.

In this chapter, I first explain PCT (Kelly, 1955) and how it is used to uncover a target’s perspective of the perpetrators of indirect/covert aggression. Second, I describe the methodology (e.g. the aim, study design, sample, procedure, and method of analysis) of this study and outline how it adds to the existent research on workplace aggression. Third, the results will be presented illustrating the binary constructs of what the target deems to be good and bad behaviour within the workplace by identifying the least and most indirect/covert aggressive behaved colleague within their workplace. Finally, I discuss the findings in terms of the existing literature on indirect aggression. Additionally, this chapter will consider the

5.1 Personal Construct Theory and Indirect aggression

Kelly (1955) developed the theory ‘Personal Construct Psychology’ based on his belief that individuals continuously strive to make sense of their world and their existence within it. Individuals build constructions (theories) of themselves and of their reality as a part of their sensemaking process (see Zabrodska et al., 2014 for further explanation). Kelly argues that reality is fluid and the events that occur in individuals’ lives maintain that fluidity. Hence, individuals continually confirm or disconfirm the constructs they develop within their pre-existing constructs. Kelly’s (1955) personal construct theory and RepGrid technique enables my respondents (drawn from Study 1a) to describe their aggressors using an interpretivist lens. Personal Construct Theory refers to an individual construing and making sense of events that happen to them (i.e., acts of indirect aggression) and the feelings that they have toward them (i.e., how the target feels about experiencing indirect/covert aggression). Using this theory will help to answer Research Questions 1 and 2, in that: 1) the target will identify the positive and negative attributes of the least and most indirect/covert aggressive individual 2) how this impacts the target’s understanding of the negative events (e.g., indirect/covert aggression) that they experience within their workplace. Using an Affective Events framework will help to ‘hang’ the appraisal or construct on the event (e.g., indirect/covert aggression) that has elicited negative emotions within the target.

Typically, workplace aggression research is grounded in a positivist or neo-positivist framework, where aggression scholars will use questionnaires to quantify respondents’ answers of their experiences of indirect/covert aggression (Samnani, 2012). Other techniques can be useful. For instance, Tracy et al. (2006) used grounded metaphoric analysis of focus groups, interviews, and drawings to examine the metaphors targets associate with the pain
and suffering they endured during their experience of indirect aggression. Tracy et al. were able to uncover the metaphors (e.g., as a narcissistic dictator “you literally have a Hitler running around down there”, or as evil/demonic, “Jekyll and Hyde”, p. 159) from 10 in-depth interviews and two focus groups of participants who self-identified as targets. They explored the different types of metaphors that a target uses in order to explain their emotional distress when experiencing aggression at work. The technique of eliciting metaphors captured the emotions of what the target was feeling at the time of experiencing indirect/covert aggression.

For my study, I chose to use Personal Construct theory to capture the target’s emotions that are attached to the least and most indirect/covert aggressive behaved individuals at work. A limitation of Tracy et al.’s study was that the metaphors the respondents produced did not necessarily frame their experiences, nor describe their aggressor’s behaviour. The RepGrid techniques allow targets to frame their experiences and their aggressor into a context that is relevant to them. This enables them to make sense of their world when indirect/covert aggression is happening to them, the target can process the aggressive acts that they experienced by expressing their own personal constructs of the most indirect/covert aggressive person that they worked with. This refers back Research Question 2: To what extent do experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact an individual’s sensemaking process?

5.2 Using Repertory Grid to identify personal constructs of targets

Repertory grid is used to identify both elements (things or people) and constructs (thoughts and/or beliefs). The term ‘construct’ should not be confused with the psychology scholar’s notion of construct (term and definition). According to Kelly (1955), when using RepGrid, the term ‘construct’ is operationalised to demonstrate when two or more things (in this case the perceptions of the least and most petty behaved individuals) are simultaneously alike and different from one or more other things. The RepGrid technique was devised to
elicit the constructs people build within their day-to-day realities. This technique explores, and then validates (or deepens) data that has been collected via other research methods (Tan & Hunter, 2002). Respondents are asked to think about two or three elements, which can be of things, about places, or about people (Tan & Hunter, 2002). If the elements are three, then they are referred to as triads and if the elements are two, then they are referred to as dyads.

The respondents in Study 1b were asked to think of the least and most indirect/covert aggressive colleagues that they work with, so in this case, there were a dyad of elements (Kelly, 1955; Tan & Hunter, 2002). To build up the constructs under the elements, the respondents are then required to come up with their own unique descriptions to suit the elements (least and most indirect aggressive colleagues). As such, the respondents were asked to think about what the differences were between working with the least and most indirect/covert aggressive behaved individuals. This focuses respondents on thinking about the personal meaning of the specific elements that they have chosen. After all of the data is collected, it is aggregated into one document, in order to look for themes. Once themes are identified then categories can be formulated and then the constructs can be assigned accordingly. In order for these constructs and categories to be valid, confirming them is a necessary next step in the process of conducting RepGrid (e.g., exploratory factor analysis, see Pike & Ryan, 2004). Doing an exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach’s alpha gives validity and reliability to the constructs and categories making this part of the analysis shift from a qualitative approach to a quantitative approach (Gammelgaard & Flint, 2012).

5.3 Method

5.3.1 Sample. The sample for Study 1b was drawn from the 29 participants of Study 1a. However, only 26 of the respondents (targets) from Study 1a were able to participate in the repertory grid exercise during the interview. My sample consisted of 16 female respondents and 10 male respondents from industries including: Education
(Secondary/Higher Education Teaching), Administration Support Roles, Service Industries (Hair stylist), Human Service Industries (Nursing), and Technological Services (Research, Information Technology).

5.4 Procedure

The RepGrid technique was embedded in the middle of the interview questions when targets were asked to identify their experiences of indirect aggression within their workplace (as identified in Study 1a). As discussed in Chapter 4, the interviews started with the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954) to identify the different behaviours the targets experienced. After the CIT respondents (targets) were asked to recall/name six people with whom they worked while experiencing indirect aggression and then to use pseudonyms (for anonymity) when verbally recalling them.

Understanding the construct category and how targets develop binary constructs for the people who they find least petty behaved and the most petty behaved forces a point of explanation (see Faccio et al., 2012 for further examples on the RepGrid technique). Respondents were asked “what is it about the most indirect/covert aggressive behaved person that makes it difficult or easy to work?” and “what is it about the least indirect/covert aggressive behaved person that makes it difficult or easy to work?” These particular questions forced respondents to consider their relationships with the least and most petty behaved person within their workplace and helped them to create the binary constructs. The binary constructs allowed the researcher to understand what the respondents deem indirect aggression as opposed to amiable behaviour (Tan & Hunter, 2002).

The qualitative RepGrid technique was employed and the respondents were asked to determine the elements by listing six people (aggressors and non-aggressors) with whom they worked with when experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace. The least and most aggressive people (the element) were assigned characteristics and the type of
workplace interactions they had with the target were outlined. Using the dyadic method (Tan & Hunter, 2002), to distinguish between the two elements, the respondents (targets) were asked to think about the six people they identified (including the aggressor) and to rank them from 1-6 (with 6 being the person or the aggressor exhibiting the pettiest behaviour). Once the target ranked the six people with whom they worked, they were asked, “What was it about this person (referring to the aggressor ranked 6) that made them difficult or easy to work with?” The target was then asked the same question about the least indirect/covert aggressive behaviour person (ranked 1 on the scale). This elicitation method helped develop constructs that I outline in Table 5.1, which illustrates a dichotomous relationship between the two elements.

I used layperson’s terms of ‘most petty behaved’ and ‘least petty behaved’. Using layperson’s terms helped respondents (targets) clearly understand the questions in terms of specific behaviours of indirect aggression (Arksey & Knight, 1999). According to the Oxford dictionary, petty is defined as, “of little importance, trivial: unduly concerned with trivial matters, especially in a small minded, spiteful way” ("Petty," 2012). Similarly, indirect/covert aggression is a circuitous ill-intended behaviour where the aggressor uses undetectable methods to attack the target (Bjorkqvist, K. et al., 1994; Kaukiainen, 2003; Kaukiainen et al., 2001). The key words within the definition of petty (e.g. small minded, spiteful) were easier for the target to relate to, as they were markers for what the respondents (targets) were being asked to recall of their aggressor. The respondents (targets) were asked to ‘rank’ from left to right the person displaying the least petty behaved and the person displaying most petty behaved (being the aggressor) of the six people they recalled. The respondents (targets) did not include themselves in the ranking, as it was an exercise to understand what they believed to be indirect aggressive behaviour. Having described these behaviours, the respondents (targets) created (independent of help from the researcher)
bipolar constructs for specific behaviours that were deemed as amiable workplace behaviours and petty behaviours (see Table 5.1 for the raw bipolar constructs). The bipolar constructs naturally manifested on their own using this technique.

5.5 Analysis and Results

Bannister and Mair (1968) outline two approaches to analysing grid matrices. One approach is to examine the structure of the data (structure analysis) and the other focuses on the content (construct analysis). For content analysis, the researcher selects categories into which constructs fit and then assigns the constructs to those categories (Stewart & Stewart, 1981; Tan & Hunter, 2002). Honess (1985) argues that both types of analysis are equally important in grid data. I have chosen to use content analysis Study 1b as this technique better helps to answer Research Question 2. Specifically, I chose content analysis because the themes suggest themselves within the RegGrid data (see Honess, 1985). Also, individuals tend to have several constructs about issues they are very familiar with (see Honess, 1985). This method helped me to examine the relationship among the elements and among the constructs, as well as between elements and constructs (Tan & Hunter, 2002). The relationship among the elements (the least and most petty behaved colleague) and the constructs, helped give insight into the target’s sensemaking process.

5.5.1 Content analysis. All respondents who participated in the RepGrid exercise reported that the person displaying the least petty behaviour within their workplace was a colleague. Seventeen of the 26 (65%) respondents (targets) reported that the person displaying the pettiest behaviours within their workplace was a superior. Nine (35%) respondents (targets) reported the individual with the pettiest behaviour to be a colleague.

Twenty-six out of 26 (100%) respondents (targets) identified the most petty behaved person as their aggressor. Relying on the free verbal description of the behaviour between the two elements that the target experienced, I have noted the relationships between the
different respondents (targets) and the aggressors varied in the hierarchal relationships. The categories I have formulated and outlined below are bipolar in nature (given the RepGrid exercise of least and most petty behaved) and are as follows: 1) Open versus closed; 2) Participatory versus controlling; 3) Direct versus indirect communication; and 4) Calm versus temperamental (see Table 5.1). These more specific categories, which compliments the data collected in Study 1a, because the respondents are speaking specifically about their aggressor’s characteristics as opposed to speaking about their experiences of indirect/covert aggression.

5.6 The bipolar constructs.

The bipolar construct of ‘open versus closed’ is associated with the adjectives respondents (targets) have formulated from their own personal construct to best explain the differences between the least and most petty (indirect/covert aggressive) behaved individuals within their workplace (see Table 5.1 for illustration). For openness, the adjectives include: warm, friendly, approachable, and ‘go with the flow’. The ‘closed’ construct includes the adjectives: distant, cold, stand-offish, and aloof. The second category is participatory versus controlling. The adjectives categorised under participatory are: democratic, generous, helpful, and team player. The bipolar category of controlling to participatory is associated with the adjectives: autocratic, micromanaging, and manipulative.

The third category is direct communication versus indirect communication. Direct communication is: assertive, polite, authentic, honest, responsible, and the communicator holds themselves accountable for their behaviour. Conversely, indirect communication is associated with: avoidance, using others as conduits for communication, and disingenuous communication. The fourth and final category is calm versus temperamental. The construct of calm is related to: consistency, stability, and mood predictability. The counterpoint to calm is temperamental which is associated with: inconsistency, unpredictability, and
instability. See Table 5.1 for a list of all the categories, associated adjectives and each adjective’s definition.

The sub-constructs that are found in Table 5.1 are the ones that the participants formulated on their own to describe the least to the pettiest behaved individual within their workplace. All of the sub-constructs were subsumed under the overarching constructs (open vs. closed; participatory vs. controlling; direct vs. indirect communication; calm vs. temperamental).

5.6.1 **The least petty (indirectly/covertly aggressive) individual.** In this section, I present in detail the common constructs that targets have for the individuals in their workplace who they believe are least petty behaved (i.e., do not engage in indirect/covert aggression). As the respondents spoke about the least petty behaved, the constructs were coming out as characteristics of a collegial colleague (e.g., open, calm, helpful, etc.).

5.6.1.1 **Openness.** This category is used to describe an individual who is outgoing and consistently warm and friendly; they are “open” to other people. The respondents used their own personal construct to describe different traits (friendly, respectful, etc.) and states (positive, happy, cheery, etc.). To illustrate, Scott (Teacher, 19 years) reported that his colleague who was least petty behaved was “consistent in their behaviour, positive, friendly...”, Liam (Hairdresser, 13 years) described his least petty behaved colleague as “just overall friendly, happy, cheery...” and Jobe (Marketing, 16 years) reported his least petty behaved colleague was respectful to everybody, “on the same level or below her”.

5.6.1.2 **Participatory.** The participatory dimension includes democratic individuals who seek balance in situations by creating positive reciprocity; they are team builders, diligent in their work ethic, and productive within the workplace. For example, Walter (Retail, 41 years) reported his colleague sought situational balance by being “able to see what is going” and was able to balance their relationships within the workplace. Jenny (ICT, 18
years) reported her colleague “was basically there to work” while Jacquie (Executive Assistant, 30+ years) said that her colleague had, “similar work ethics and values” to hers (Jacquie self reported that she is a diligent worker during the interview). Olena (Administration, 5 years) reported her least petty colleague was a team player “you felt like … you could go and ask if it was in their particular area” and created positive reciprocity within the workplace because “you can ask her anything and she will always be able to help you…she is just happy to help you”.

5.6.1.3 Direct communication. This category describes a direct, open communicator who is: assertive, authentic, polite, honest, responsible, and accountable. To describe a direct, open communication, an individual must be authentic. Authentic individuals are humble and honest with themselves and others; Bjorn (Researcher, 41 years) reported his colleague as, “just so prepared to accept their own foibles and faults” when communicating with others. Assertiveness is also associated with direct communication. Dan (Executive assistant, 17 years) reported that his least petty behaved colleague was “quite up front”, similar to Jenny’s assessment of her colleague as “if he had an issue with you, he’d actually come and see you in a really polite way and say ‘Look, I didn’t appreciate this…did you realise you upset me?’”

5.6.1.1 Calm. Calm individuals are consistent in their emotions, stable when facing a crisis, and do not show evidence of irrational thinking and beliefs. Katy (Executive assistant, over 30 years) reported that her least petty behaved colleague “would say how she felt if she felt uncomfortable and was open to be able to talk honestly in the settings in a calm manner” which is associated with the adjective ‘secure’. Jobe (Marketing, 16 years) reported that his least petty behaved colleague was “very stable…what you see is what you get…very predictable” which is aligned with: even-tempered, calm and not impulsive.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Warm</td>
<td>Showing enthusiasm, attention, or kindness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Kind and pleasant.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approachable</td>
<td>Easy to talk to, accessible, reachable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>Distant</td>
<td>Not paying attention.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cold</td>
<td>Lacking affection and warmth, unemotional. Aggressor ignoring the target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stand ofish</td>
<td>Distant and cold in manner, unfriendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aloof</td>
<td>Not friendly or forthcoming; cool and distant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Favouring or characterised by social equality, egalitarian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>Giving of time, of self, and of resources to colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Providing assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team player</td>
<td>Readily working with other colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Not taking account of other people’s wishes or opinion, domineering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Micromanaging</td>
<td>Control every part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manipulative</td>
<td>Exercising unscrupulous control or influence over a person or situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct communication</td>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Having or showing a confident and forceful personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>Relating to or denoting an emotionally appropriate, significant, purposive, and responsible mode of human life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Free of deceit, truthful, and sincere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Required or expected to justify actions on decisions; responsible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Communication</td>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>Keep away from or stop oneself from doing something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicating through others</td>
<td>A person or organisation that acts as a channel for the transmission of something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inauthentic</td>
<td>Lacking sincerity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fake</td>
<td>Not genuine, imitation or counterfeit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>Acting or done in the same way over time, especially so as to be fair or accurate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Sane and sensible, not easily upset or disturbed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mood Predictability</td>
<td>Always behaving or occurring in the way expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperamental</td>
<td>Inconsistent</td>
<td>Not staying the same throughout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unpredictable</td>
<td>Not able to be predicted; changeable.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brenda (Business intelligence, 13 years) reported her least petty behaved colleague to be “always particularly polite and engaging”, which is related to the adjectives comfortable, even-tempered, and objective.

5.6.2 The most petty (indirectly/covertly aggressive) individual. In this section, I present the constructs that targets have for the individuals who they believe are most petty behaved (i.e., engage in indirect/covert aggression) to illustrate exactly what indirect/covert aggression is from the perspective of the target.

5.6.2.1 Closed. The closed category was formed after the personal constructs of the respondents described the most petty (indirect/covert aggressive behaved) as cold, standoffish, unapproachable and aloof. Dan (Executive assistant, 17 years) described the most petty behaved individual as lacking interaction with him, which he interpreted as being unapproachable. When Sarah (Marketing, 18 years) was asked what made the most petty behaved person difficult or easy to work with, her first construct was, “She’s been the one ignoring me” which qualifies her aggressor as cold and standoffish. Jacquie (Executive assistant, 30+ years) reported the most petty behaved person had no time to answer her questions, which is considered to be aloof. As such, Jacquie reported that the individual was ‘stand-offish’ because of the differences between their approach to her and to others in the workplace; Jacquie reported the most petty behaved person was nice, helpful, and friendly with others in the workplace, but cold and distant when dealing with her.

5.6.2.2 Controlling. Controlling refers to an individual being autocratic, micromanaging, and manipulative. Liam (Hairdresser, 13 years) stated that the most petty behaved individual (his aggressor) needed to be in control of everything and felt the aggressor was business-like and liked things to be very organised due to, “the fact that they are control freaks”. Jenny (ICT, 28 years) reported the most indirect/covert aggressive behaved person (her aggressor) undermined, “everything I (Jenny) did” and would “just
remove all of the work I’d (Jenny) done and make sure she removed it so clearly that there would be no way to, like, get the information back”. Anne (Travel agent, 30+ years) described the most indirect/covert aggressive behaved individual’s (her aggressor, superior) insecurity, “would listen to everything that went on in the office” (to know if they were losing control over their staff. These behaviours are indicative of an individual who is insecure with their position within the company or with their staff.

5.6.2.3 Indirect communication. This was created when the respondents were describing the most petty behaved person within their workplace to: being avoidant, using others as a conduit to communicate with the target, being inauthentic/dishonest, unable to communicate clearly, and being intolerant and fake. Both Bjorn (Researcher, 41 years) and Brenda reported that their aggressor was unable to communicate clearly. Scott (Teacher, 19 years) also described the most petty behaved person within his workplace (his aggressor) as uncommunicative. Dan (Executive assistant, 17 years) provides an example of an aggressor/superior requiring communication through a conduit, “If I wanted to have one of my ideas listened to, I had to actually put them through another person”. Walter (Retail, 41 years) had a similar construct of his aggressor (his superior) when he stated that his aggressor was forcing him to reject a torn dollar notes from customers. Sarah (Marketing, 18 years) reported that the pettiest behaved person (her aggressor who was also her colleague) was, “quite narrow minded on the area of expertise” and that her aggressor was “very intolerant” and would become quietly vindictive if challenged on her (the aggressor) ideas.

5.6.2.4 Temperamental. Respondents consistently reported states and traits of their most petty behaved person as: inconsistent, unpredictable in their mood or emotions, and coming across as being unstable (or not being in touch with reality). Adjectives used to describe these individuals include: impatient, insecure, nervous, and emotional. In the case of impatience, Jody (Travel agent, 7 years) reported her aggressor “never any patience” and
demonstrated the lack of patience with responses that were “impatience nonstop”. With regard to the adjective ‘temperamental’, Kay (Administration, 7 years) reported that the most indirect/covert aggressive behaved individual (her aggressor) was manipulative and would, “be nice to you one minute and then nasty the next”. Kay’s experience is similar to Katy’s (Executive assistant, 30+ years) experiences of her aggressor “being bitchy”. Jacquie (Executive assistant, 30+ years) reported that the most petty behaved individual within her workplace (her aggressor, colleague) was unpredictable in their behaviour and had “unpredictability of their capacity to engage in that catty behaviour or bitchy behaviour”.

5.7 Discussion

This chapter has explored the relatively novel method of RepGrid (Kelly, 1955) as a way of understanding and confirming the targets’ personal constructs of their aggressor (who uses indirect/covert aggression). Through this technique, I also increased understanding of what a target deems acceptable and unacceptable in terms of behaviours within the workplace (Pike & Ryan, 2004) regarding indirect/covert aggression. As noted in the introduction for this chapter the behaviours of ‘petty’ is similar to the behaviours that are outlined for indirect/covert aggression. The results suggested four interpretable dimensions in which the behaviour and personality associated with indirect/covert aggressors can be contrasted based on the targets’ reported subjective emotional experiences of indirect workplace aggression within the workplace context (cf., Pike & Ryan, 2004). This builds whereas, Study 1a that focussed specifically on the experiences that individuals had of indirect/covert aggression.

When doing the RepGrid exercise, participants recalled six individuals. The least petty behaved individual tended to have an open, warm, and friendly approach. These traits are linked to Costa and McCrae’s (1992) agreeableness trait, which encompasses: nurturance, altruism, and emotional support. Juxtaposing this would be an individual who is low in agreeableness, which is characterised as being cynical, rude, suspicious, uncooperative,
ruthless, irritable, and manipulative (Lind et al., 2009; Pervin et al., 2005) all of which can create ‘hassles’ (Lazarus, 1981; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) for individual (or target) who have to engage with such people. The least indirect/covert aggressive behaved individuals were described as being at work to perform their job and nothing else (see Jenny and Jacquie’s comments in Table 5.1 on the least petty behaved individual within their workplace). Some respondents (targets) reported the least indirect/covert aggressive individual was perceptive and aware of the dynamics between the target and the aggressor without being too involved. This openness seems to overlap with the friendly and cheerful disposition respondents reportedly perceived in the least petty behaved individual and considered it a preferable characteristic. This corresponds with Costa and McCrae’s openness to experience trait, where individuals have the inherent ability to scan their environment due to their curious nature and inviting approach to life. Erdelez (1997) suggests that individuals with this personality trait were more prone to accidental information encountering, which is how the least indirect/covert aggressive behave colleague was described as (i.e., being an accidental observer of the aggression that the target was experiencing).

The easiest category to populate was ‘calm’ because respondents (targets) were able to build multiple personal constructs in terms of the least petty behaved individual’s predictability, mood/emotion consistency, and self-regulation of behaviours (see Katy’s comment in Table 5.1 under calm). Similarly, Costa and McCrae’s (1992) description of emotional stability is an individual who needs strong stimuli to be provoked, as they are generally resistant to negative affective events (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). That is their cognitive appraisal of the affective event buffers them from the strong emotions as experienced by an individual who is low in emotional stability. In contrast, low emotionally...
stable personality traits were used to describe the most petty behaved individual. This will be explored in Study 2 in more detail.

The aim of this chapter was to better understand the personal constructs that targets form of an indirect aggressor in the workplace. Using Corbin and Strauss (2008) Grounded Theory afforded me the opportunity to interpret the themes and categories constructed throughout this chapter. A noteworthy point to make about the use of term ‘petty’ to describe indirect/covert aggressive behaviours was that it was an easy layperson term to use when conducting interviews. The term ‘indirect/covert aggressive’ required no in-depth explanation, as the interviewees interpreted the term automatically (i.e., associating specific behaviours to the term ‘indirect/covert aggressive’) and were able to respond to questions without difficulty.

These main findings have at least two theoretical implications. The first theoretical implication is extending the aggression literature by reporting respondents’ perceptions of their aggressors’ characteristics by better defining what indirect aggression means to a target (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Aquino & Thau, 2009). Using the RepGrid technique aides the target to tease apart their emotional experiences from their appraisal of the affective event. Specifically, this study has made room for the target to be able to recall what their emotional appraisal was of their aggressor (Salin et al., 2014; Tracy et al., 2006). The second theoretical contribution this study makes is that there is a relationship between the targets’ appraisal of their aggressor and what their emotional reaction was to their aggressor. RepGrid allowed exploration of indirect aggression by providing the researcher with an understanding of the target’s personal constructs.

Using RepGrid I was able to report the target’s reality in relation to experiences of indirect/covert aggressive behaviour. Keashly (2001) stated that it was difficult for targets to express their experiences of indirect/covert aggression, because the circuitous nature of
indirect aggression makes it hard to define when reporting it. Acts of indirect/covert aggression are hard to define because the behaviours are not concrete nor are they easily measured, as it comes down to a matter of perception as to whether or not the behaviours are ill intended. This is what makes experiencing indirect/covert aggression a very subjective, personal experience as it can different from one individual to the next. Using RepGrid, this study has afforded the target the opportunity to be able to define the behaviours of their aggressor by reporting their own personal construct of the pettiest behaved individual that they worked with (i.e., their aggressor). The restrictive parameters on indirect/covert aggression, defined by functionalist research as dependent on the frequency of the aggressive acts and the display of certain behaviours, add an extra level of difficulty for targets and organisations to identify workplace aggression. Without the perception of aggression, there is no aggression.

Research to date leaves the impact of context unexplored because current research is centred on: frequency, antecedents, and definitions (Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). More research, using different research paradigms (i.e. an interpretivist lens), will provide a better understanding of a target’s experience when reporting indirect/covert aggressive acts. Targets who report indirect/covert aggressive acts will not be as easily discounted because their reality will have more of a voice thereby explaining the behaviours that the indirect/covert aggressor presents to managers and organisations. The shift will help organisations investigate insidious behaviours and manage them equitably because they (managers and organisations) will see all levels of behaviours as opposed to only the behaviours that the indirect/covert aggressor presents. The next chapter (Chapter 6) will present Study 2. The findings from RepGrid displayed in Table 5.1 were included in a cross sectional survey measures in Study 2 to see how these constructs related to scripts.
5.8 Practical Implications

The findings within this study will help HR professionals understand the target’s thought processes and their proclivity to define their aggressors’ behaviours through personal constructs. HR practitioners would benefit by adopting the RepGrid method when investigating reports of indirect/covert aggression (i.e., understanding who is the least and who is the most difficult to work with and why) to better understand the target’s perceptions of the reported aggression.

Nevertheless, it is important that organisations be proactive in training line managers to address a target’s reporting of indirect/covert aggression and to ameliorate the untoward relationship between the target and their aggressor. Prevention strategies need to be in place for managers to counter workplace aggression within their organisation. Workshops and/or information sessions should be held regularly with required attendance.
Chapter 6 : Study 2: The impact of emotional intelligence, emotion regulation and emotional stability on target responses to indirect/covert aggression and the mediating role of perceptions

The purpose of Study 2 is to further examine the various target responses to indirect/covert aggression within workplaces. This is achieved by building on my findings from Study 1a and 1b to formulate and quantitatively evaluate a theoretical model to predict a target’s ways of dealing with indirect/covert aggression in the workplace and their choice of scripts associated with their experiences. Thus, my model shown in Figure 6.1 is derived from my review of the literature (see Chapter 2) as well as the results of Study 1a (Chapter 4) and 1b (Chapter 5). In essence, Figure 6.1 shows a framework that provides an overview of the expected relationships between a target’s emotional intelligence, emotional stability, and the reported use of emotional regulation strategies, perceptions of indirect/covert aggression, and their use of passive, reactive or proactive scripts in response to indirect/covert aggression.

To date, little research has investigated the relational scripts that targets develop (see Chapters 2 and 4) and the relationship of these scripts to other variables.

Study 2 extends on a small body of research that has been done thus far (e.g., Keashly, 2001; Salin et al., 2014; Tracy et al., 2006). For example, Keashly (2001), using a qualitative approach, conducted a general exploration of target responses to the emotional abuse that they were experiencing within their workplace. Tracy et al. (2006) explored the different types of metaphors that a target uses in order to explain their emotional distress when experiencing aggression at work. In a more recent study, Salin et al. (2014) looked at how targets’ actual responses differ from their ideal responses to their aggressor. In contrast, my study examines specific responses that targets have when responding to indirect/covert aggressive behaviours within the workplace context. Additionally, this study underscores the
important role of a target’s emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability in determining their responses. As such, this study will address Research Question 3, which is:

**How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?**

This research is important as it not only adds to the current literature on indirect/covert aggression, but it also builds on previous research showing how the different characteristics of targets, for example, being low in emotional stability, anxious, and easily agitated, contributes to an individual experiencing indirect aggression (provocative target, see Glasø et al., 2007). In addition to identifying and examining the experiences of those targets who experience indirect/covert aggression, Study 2 also investigates those targets who are able to deal constructively (i.e., engage proactive scripts) with indirect/covert aggression. This is particularly important to explore and understand from the HR perspective (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011), as I propose that proactive scripts are likely to be the most functional scripts for HR practitioners to promote within their organisations. It is also useful for HR practitioners to understand and acknowledge targets’ cognitive processes while experiencing indirect/covert aggression, and the antecedent circumstances, and the emotional pain that indirect/covert aggression can have on targets’ psychosocial wellbeing through training programs and staffing procedures (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

As discussed earlier (Chapters 1 and 2), much of the theorising on indirect/covert aggression, within the social psychological tradition (e.g. Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Buss, 1961), the organisational behaviour literature (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Barling, 1996),
and workplace affectivity (Aquino, 2000; Glasø et al., 2011) has been focussed on understanding how an individual becomes a target of indirect/covert aggression.

**Figure 6.1:** Proposed model of the relationship between Emotional Stability, Emotional Intelligence, and Emotional Regulation, perceptions and relational scripts during experiences of indirect/covert aggression

I contend that it is equally important to examine targets’ scripts while they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression and determine what factors lead to them to using effective (proactive scripts) or less effective (reactive or passive scripts) responses (see Chapter 4). Research to date has not looked specifically at the types of scripts that targets develop when they are experiencing acts of indirect/covert aggression (cf., Salin et al., 2014).
Understanding and acknowledging the different types of scripts that targets develop might better help individuals ameliorate the effects of indirect/covert aggression.

6.1 Overview

In this section, I will give the background to the expected relationships that are indicated in Figure 6.1. In this model, the central argument being put forward is that targets of indirect aggression with higher emotional stability and emotional intelligence and who are more likely to use cognitive reappraisal (and less suppression) to regulate their emotions will have greater capacity to use proactive scripts (i.e. relational scripts that more likely lead to positive behaviours). In contrast, targets of indirect aggression with lower emotional stability and emotional intelligence and who are less likely to use cognitive reappraisal (and more suppression) to regulate their emotions will be more likely to use relational scripts that lead to negative behaviours and outcomes (i.e., reactive or passive scripts) (O’Brien & Delongis, 1996). This chapter will unfold in three parts, i) I develop hypotheses that support my model; ii) I outline a research study to test my model; and iii) I examine the data from my study and discuss the implications of the findings.

6.1.1 Operationalising the term ‘target’
The indirect vs. supportive conditions in the surveys were not designed to capture whether or not the respondent was a target of indirect/covert aggression. Rather, the scenarios were designed so that it would measure the respondents’ perceptions of indirect/covert aggression. The indirect/covert aggressive scenario captured the subtle, but yet undermining behaviours (i.e., derisive body language), whereas, the supportive colleague scenario captured a collaborative, team-focused colleague (i.e., giving constructive feedback).

### 6.3 Scripted responses to indirect/covert aggression

As shown in Figure 6.1, the phenomenon that I am attempting to better understand and explain is target responses to indirect/covert aggression. A target’s initial response to their aggression is the most important one, as it sets the tone for how the dynamics between the aggressor and target will unfold. As such, the target’s initial responses are important to understand, because it is the first occurrences and reactions that will set the tone for any relationship within the context of indirect/covert aggression, let alone daily interactions within the workplace (Leiter, 2013). In essence, based on my findings outlined in Chapter 4, I propose that the potential scripted responses of the targets of indirect/covert aggression can be categorised into three different types: Proactive, Reactive and Passive. A proactive response addresses the aggression in an assertive manner. Reactive responses generally respond to acts of aggression with a similar or greater level of aggression. Passive responses include avoidance and accommodation when confronted by aggression.

My framework for proposing these types of responses is based on my research findings in Study 1 and a review of the literature. For instance, (Olweus, 1978) proposed two types of responses to bullying/aggression: submissive and provocative. Submissive responses would include not responding to the aggression out of fear of repercussions by the
aggressor, ignoring the aggressive acts in hope they will dissipate, and/or avoidant behaviour (i.e., not being in the same place at the same time as the aggressor). Conversely, provocative responses to aggression are more austere and reactive (defensive). In my research, the submissive response is incorporated within my passive category and the provocative target conforms to my reactive category. I contend that the term ‘provocative’ is not accurate as it carries connotations of individuals encouraging indirect/covert aggression through various types of behaviours (i.e., being constantly anxious). Within my framework, I propose that a third type of response is also available to targets and I categorise this as a proactive response. I will explain these types of target responses in detail below.

6.3.1 Scripted passive responses. Scripted passive responses align with Olweus (1978) profile of what he refers to as a ‘victim’. The characteristics of a passive response are: avoidance, unwillingness to defend oneself, a tendency to shy away from situations, suppression of feelings and poor social skills (Zapf, 1999). Poor social skills can include: using non-persuasive language, being consistently apologetic, and using closed (non-verbal) communication (e.g. Zapf, 1999). Referring back to Baldwin’s (1992) suggestion that individuals build scripts around rules and expectations, it is conceivable that a passive response could use an ‘if-then’ rule to enable avoidance. For example, as illustrated in Study 1a, an ‘if-then’ script for a passive response would be “If I avoid that person, then they will leave me alone”. Another example of an ‘if-then’ script that typifies a passive response is, “if I make fun of myself, I will reduce the chances of being attacked” which may generate the desired effect of reducing the likelihood of being a target of indirect/covert aggression Zapf (1999).

This type of behavioural script is self-perpetuating, because it is in the memory schema of the passive target (Ajzen, 2011; Ouellette & Wood, 1998). It is important to note
that these scripts are well rehearsed and emerge from past events in which the target was similarly submissive following an indirect/covert aggression event. Thus, passive targets are more likely to automatically access those particular scripts in the present in order to avoid being the target of indirect/covert aggression (see Ajzen, 2011).

### 6.3.2 Scripted reactive responses.

A reactive response aligns with Olweus (1978) description of a provocative victim and results in a response that includes an over-reactive or emotionally dysregulated pattern of behaviour. Emotional dysregulation affects an individual’s ability to regulate their emotions to the point that they cross the threshold of social impropriety (see Baldwin, 1992; Geddes & Callister, 2007; Glasø et al., 2011; Pierce, 1995). Olweus’s (1978) term ‘provocative’ victim has similar behaviours to the reactive responses within this study. Individuals who use this type of response are perceived as being aggressive and are prone to respond inappropriately and threateningly to other individuals (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Buss, 1961). What is more, a reactive response might be viewed as reciprocating aggression (in the form of indirect/covert aggression and direct aggression, see Jenny, 28 years, ICT in Chapter 4) that is likely to exacerbate the situation unless they change their script (Kring & Bachorowski, 1999). For example, using the ‘if-then’ rule, a reactive response could be one of ‘If I respond with anger, they will stop being aggressive with me’ (e.g. Pierce, 1995; Baldwin, 1992). The individual using a reactive response is not necessarily seeking social dominance or control, but is attempting to alienate their aggressor by retaliating (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). Reactive responses are more likely to result in antagonistic, egocentric and highly competitive scripts (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & John, 1992).

### 6.3.3 Scripted proactive responses.

A proactive response involves a measured and appropriate assertive script designed to overcome aggression. These individuals possess an
effective communication style and seek to collaborate on solution finding when in interpersonal conflict within their workplace (see Jordan & Troth, 2004). An example of an if-then script for a proactive response to indirect/covert aggression would be “if my colleague continues to tell false stories about me, then I will report their behaviour to my direct supervisor”. These individuals are more likely to present a positive demeanour (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Keashly, 2001; Milam et al., 2009; Watson & Clark, 1984). That is, they tend to have positive events occur in their life and tend to be socially attractive to others around them (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Keashly, 2001; Milam et al., 2009; Watson & Clark, 1984). Such individuals are more likely to have feelings of being ‘alert’ enthusiastic’ and ‘active’ (see Glasø et al., 2011; Milam et al., 2009; Watson & Clark, 1984) and are less likely to be ‘reactive’ to stressful situations (Glasø et al, 2011; Keashly, 2001; Milam et al., 2009).

6.4 The role of Perceptions of Indirect/covert Aggression

Stewart-Williams (2002) argues that social cognition (programeing, stowing, recovery, and managing of information in a social context) acts as an invaluable tool when investigating the perception and interpretation of aggression. Additionally, Stewart-Williams (2002) notes that in ambiguous situations, like indirect/covert aggression, where an individual has very little information as to why they are targets of aggression, individuals will interpret events in a manner that is consistent with their schemas. For example, when a target is unexpectedly experiencing social isolation by their aggressor, their schema from their past experience of social isolation will be activated and they will deal with the aggression in the same way that they have in the past. Stewart-Williams suggests that the net effect of these processes results in setting up expectations, which leads individuals to see what they anticipate to see, even when the events may not be happening.
According to Pomerantz (2003), perception is the complicated sequence of cognitive processes by which individuals receive information from their senses and then organise and interpret them. I contend that if the target perceives that they are experiencing indirect aggression (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Bowling & Beehr, 2006) they will develop scripts from memory to determine how they will behave when provoked (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 37). That is, if the target has past experiences of indirect/covert aggression, they will more than likely have habitual scripts that do not require a lot in terms of cognition (e.g. indirect/covert aggression, see Hoel et al., 1999). To illustrate, the scripts could include the ‘if-then’ (procedural) script or the ‘in-order-to’ (hierarchal) script (see Chapter 2 for further explanation). These scripts are goal driven and the target’s use of them will depend on the context of the situation, the target’s perceptions, and what the target’s desired outcome for the situation is (Abelson, 1981; Aquino & Lamertz, 2004). Thus, I assert that the target’s perceptions of indirect/covert aggression will contribute to their choice of scripts.

The target’s reaction to indirect/covert aggression is determined by the meaning they give to the situation (see Baldwin, 1992; Lichtenstein & Brewer, 1980 an in Chapter 2 for in depth discussion). I contend that targets formulate their scripts as a result of the meaning they extract from the situation (Rentsch, 1990) and their emotional reactions are elicited from the peak or the most intense moment when experiencing indirect/covert aggression (Carlson & Carlson, 1984; Huesmann, 1986). The meaning that the target gives influences their behaviour and attitudes coupled with their interpretation of their aggressor (Fredrickson, 2000; Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993). This draws on Stewart-William’s (2002) assertion that these processes create expectations, which have an impact on an individual’s perceptions, which result in strengthening their expectations of certain behaviours of their aggressor. Therefore, perception has a significant role in determining script behaviour (i.e., “I have
thought about going to speak to her and saying ‘What’s going on here, because this is ridiculous?’” Sarah, marketing, 18 years).

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, and reflected in Figure 6.1, a key aim of Study 2 is to examine whether individual differences such as Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Regulation and Emotional Stability explain, at least in part, whether targets are more or less likely to adopt passive, reactive or proactive scripts in response to indirect/covert aggression. Also, I contend that perceptions of indirect aggression mediate the proposed relationships between these emotions constructs and the scripts targets use during indirect/covert aggression. In the next section, I outline the role of Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Regulation, Emotional Stability and the possible mediating role of perceptions.

6.5 Individual differences

6.5.1 Emotional intelligence, perceptions, and responses to indirect/covert aggression. As per Figure 6.1, I propose that emotional intelligence will predict the type of scripts that a target will use when managing their aggressor. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are four facets to emotional intelligence, which are: 1) Perception of emotions; 2) using emotions to guide decision-making; 3) emotional knowledge; and 4) managing emotions (Gignac et al., 2014; Mayer et al., 2001). The perception of emotions is the ability to accurately read emotions, which includes understanding body language and facial gestures. Next is the ability to use emotions to guide decision making. Emotions help individuals to categorise what is and what is not important to them, (e.g., people, places, events, etc.), which, in turn, helps to prioritise what events warrant focus and attention. Emotional knowledge is a process of being able to accurately label emotions and give meaning to the event that an individual is experiencing. For example, I propose that an emotionally intelligent individual can feel negative affectivity (e.g., anger), but also understands the
antecedents and triggers for that anger. In relation to my study, an emotionally intelligent target who is experiencing indirect/covert aggression could feel discrete negative emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, etc.) and be more able to accurately assess the process that resulted in the aggressor’s behaviours (i.e., an affective event) and be able to formulate an appropriate response to their aggressor without having the event escalate any further. Lastly, the ability to manage emotions is the central tenet to emotional intelligence (Jordan & Lawrence, 2009; Jordan & Troth, 2004; Mayer et al., 2001). That is, I propose that an individual who is not only able to gauge their emotions, but regulate their emotions and their responses in the moments of experiencing negative affectivity, such as indirect/covert aggression will be more successful in managing that aggression (Jordan & Lawrence, 2009; Jordan & Troth, 2004; Mayer et al., 2001).

An emotionally intelligent individual has the ability to perceive emotions within themselves and has the ability to gauge emotions within others. As such, an emotionally intelligent individual can guide their emotions and the emotions of another to achieve optimum performance within a task or a goal using their scripts (Jordan & Lawrence, 2009; Jordan & Troth, 2004; Mayer et al., 2001). Lastly, an emotionally intelligent individual has the ability to manage their own emotions when experiencing a negative affective event (i.e., being the target of indirect/covert aggression) and is more likely to understand the negative affective event for what it is, and therefore, be able to understand their emotional reaction to the event (cf., Carroll, 1993; Côté, Miners, & Moon, 2006). That is, their perceptions of the affective event (indirect/covert aggression) will be external to them, in that, they will not take the aggression personally and will be able to build a script to successfully respond to the aggressor’s behaviour. Therefore, my first Hypotheses is:
Hypothesis 1a: Individuals who have higher levels of emotional intelligence will perceive less indirect/covert aggression.

Hypothesis 1b: Individuals who have higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to develop proactive rather than reactive or passive scripts.

6.5.2 Emotional regulation and responses to indirect/covert aggression and perceptions. I contend that emotional regulation is another predictor for the types of scripts that a target will formulate when managing their aggressor. Emotional regulation refers to the efforts individuals make to influence which emotions they have within situations, when they have them, how these emotions are experienced and expressed within situations (Gross et al., 2006). Emotional regulation is a two-tiered construct consisting of cognitive reappraisal and emotion suppression (Gross, 1998; Gross et al., 2006).

Cognitive reappraisal (also known as an antecedent-focussed strategy) involves an individual being able to consciously modify the way that they perceive a negative situation and to reframe it into a positive one (Gross, 1998; Gross et al., 2006). Consciously modifying or ‘reframing’ a negative situation helps to reduce stress and anxiety and lends individuals to having healthier social relationships (Gross, 2013; Gross & Levenson, 1997).

I contend that a target with the ability to cognitively reappraise will have a higher likelihood of engaging in proactive scripts in the circumstance of experiencing indirect/covert aggression (see Dan-Glauser & Gross, 2013; Gross, 2002). As noted earlier, a proactive script enables individuals to address the antecedents of the affective event (e.g., indirect/covert aggression) that is causing them harm or stress. For example, cognitive reappraisal may be used to develop proactive scripts centred on a target engaging a company policy to address their aggressor, reporting the indirect/covert aggression to a line supervisor/human resource practitioner, or it may assist the individual to address the indirect/covert aggressive behaviour directly with the aggressor. In this instance, emotional
regulation helps the target to programme, store, recover, and manage the information during and after experiencing indirect/covert aggression.

Gross (1998; 2002) explains that suppression involves attempts to restrain emotionally expressive behaviour but does not decrease the emotion experience nor the physiological responses (Gross, 1998; Niven, Sprigg, & Armitage, 2012). That is, an individual who uses emotion suppression will not be successful in decreasing their emotional experience and their physiological responses, because of the laborious effort of inhibiting their emotion-expressive behaviour (Gross, 1998; Gross, 2002). Individuals who engage in emotion suppression will experience a higher likelihood of health problems that include depression and social anxiety, which, in turn, creates difficulty with social situations. Emotions scholars suggest that individuals who use emotion suppression will more susceptible to disorders such as anxiety disorder, and mood disorders (Gross, 2013; Jazaieri et al., 2012). Additionally, individuals who suffer from social anxiety disorder may have distorted self-beliefs (e.g., that they are not worthy of friendships/companionship) and may have difficulties using cognitive reappraisal to down-regulate their discrete negative emotions (Gross, 2013; Moscovitch, Orr, Rowa, Reimer, & Antony, 2009; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997). I expect that targets using emotion suppression will have a higher likelihood of having scripted reactive or passive responses to their aggressor.

It is important to note that Niven, Sprigg, and Armitage (2012) argue that individuals who successfully respond to aggressive interactions will use reappraisal to buffer their emotions and help to protect themselves from the negative consequences of aggression, whereas they argue suppression to simply minimises their emotional response. Therefore, my hypotheses are:
Hypothesis 2a: Individuals who have a better ability to regulate emotions (use cognitive reappraisal) will perceive less indirect/covert aggression.

Hypothesis 2b: Individuals who have a better ability to regulate emotions (use cognitive reappraisal) are more like to develop proactive rather than reactive or passive scripts.

6.5.3 Emotional stability and responses to indirect/covert aggression and perceptions. I contend that emotional stability, as a personality trait, contributes to the choice of scripts that a target may use when managing their aggressor. As such, Mayer (2005) defines personality as an individual’s pattern of cognitive processes arising from motives, feelings, thoughts, and other major areas of cognition. Personality is expressed through a pattern of social behaviours. Therefore, personality has the possibility to influence behaviours of the individual, which, in turn, determines how they manage social situations (John & Gross, 2004). The Big Five (Cost & McCrae, 1992) (Glasø et al., 2011) captures five dimensions of personality, which are: agreeableness (e.g., altruism, nurturance, caring, etc.), neuroticism (i.e., more apt to experience negative emotions, always feeling anxious), openness (i.e., openness to new ideas, cultural interests, creativity, etc.), extraversion (e.g., adventurous, assertive, frank, etc.), and conscientiousness (i.e., goal oriented, competent, dutiful, responsible, etc.). McCrae & John (1992) argue that the appeal for using the Big Five is threefold: 1) it melds together the variety of personality constructs easing communication between researchers from different orientations; 2) it enables researchers to comprehensively examine possible relationships between personality and other phenomena, and 3) it gives an efficient and global description of personality. The focus for my research is on the antithesis of neuroticism, emotional stability (Costa & McCrae, 1992) as I contend that it has an influence on responses to indirect/covert aggression perceptions and directs the use of scripts.
I focus specifically on the personality trait of emotional stability in my research as this trait can be clearly and directly linked to increased perceptions of aggression (Judge & Bono, 2001, pp. 80-81). Individuals with low levels of emotional stability react more easily and are bothered by stimuli within their environment. They are also more likely to become anxious, upset, and temperamental (Aquino & Bommer, 2003; Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Glasø et al., 2007). Emotional stability captures an individual’s ability to be relaxed and stable, or alternatively to be anxious and upset (Howard & Howard, 1995). Individuals low in emotional stability use self-blame in times of conflict and avoid acrimony to deal with difficult situations, are sensitive to threatening triggers, and can exacerbate a situation by being reactive to their aggressor (Costa & McCrae, 1992; O’Brien & Delongis, 1996). Glasø et al. (2007) also assert that low emotional stability is marked by feelings of nervousness, worrying, insecurity and experiencing emotions that lead individuals to being anxious, angry, sad, and guilty. Individuals low in emotional stability are also more likely to have negative feelings, such as upset or negativity from certain events (Milam et al., 2009) leaving them to perceive events negatively (Glasø et al., 2011).

Milam et al. (2009) argue that individuals with low emotional stability are not necessarily aware of their feelings unless an event elicits the emotions. They also argue that the experience of negative emotions will influence how an individual perceives events such as workplace aggression (i.e., individuals with low emotional stability will be more affronted by innocuous, benign, throw away comments). In line with this research, I propose that individuals who are low in emotional stability will have greater difficulty in dealing with negative emotions that are generated from aggressive situations (Milam et al., 2009). The difficulty is due to the fact that individuals with low emotional stability lack the ability to comport the appropriate emotions when responding to aggressive events such as
indirect/covert aggression. Therefore, the Hypotheses are:

**Hypothesis 3a:** Individuals who have higher levels of emotional stability will perceive less indirect/covert aggression.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Individuals who have higher levels of emotional stability will be more likely to develop proactive rather than reactive or passive scripts.

6.6 Scripted responses to indirect/covert aggression

6.6.1 The mediating role of perceptions on the relationship between individual differences and passive scripts. As shown in Figure 6.1, I contend that the role of perceptions in the event of indirect/covert aggression gives a better understanding why Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Regulation, and Emotional Stability are linked to passive scripts. An individual who uses passive responses to manage their aggression is typically an individual who lacks confidence and is, by nature, timid and anxious (Egan & Perry, 1998; Olweus, 1978). There is research evidence to suggest that individuals using this method of response have less ability to articulate their feelings in a coherent manner, and have less emotional stability to defend themselves while experiencing aggression (Egan & Perry, 1998; Jordan & Troth, 2004). Targets who have lower emotional intelligence (i.e., they do not have an awareness of their emotions nor the ability to read others emotions and/or social cues) will more likely have passive scripted responses.

I argue that an individual who develops passive scripts will typically have lower emotional intelligence and emotional stability and be less likely to defend themselves in moments of acrimony and engage in expressive suppression (i.e., hold back their feelings of anger). This, in turn, leads to a greater use passive scripts (Gross & Levenson, 1993; Gyurak, Gross, & Etkin, 2011). The use of passive scripts can contribute to the target experiencing more aggression (Aquino & Bradfield, 2000; Egan & Perry, 1998). Therefore, my Hypotheses are:
**Hypothesis 4a:** Individuals low in emotional intelligence will have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of passive scripts.

**Hypothesis 4b:** Individuals low in the ability to regulate emotions will have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of passive scripts.

**Hypothesis 4c:** Individuals low in emotional stability will have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of passive scripts.

6.6.2 The mediating role of perceptions on the relationship between individual differences and reactive scripts. Individuals who are low in emotional stability tend to have dysfunctional thought processes and perceptions, which contribute to engaging in disproportionate amounts of time ruminating over situations out of their control and a tendency to be reactive when facing stressful situations (Colbert, Colbert, Mount, Harter, & Witt, 2004; Lind et al., 2009). For example, a target with low emotional stability will have a proclivity to ruminating over the indirect/covert aggression they experience within their workplace. What is more, targets with low emotional stability will have a tendency to negatively react (i.e., norm of reciprocity, yell, ‘lose’ their ‘cool’, etc.). Individuals who use reactive scripted responses have difficulty in allowing the emotion to run its course. A target that uses reactive scripts will under-regulate their intense negative affectivity. That is, a reactive target will use the norm of reciprocity (do the same to their aggressor as was done to them) or possibly have a caustic (verbally or physically attack) reaction when responding to their aggressor (Gratz & Tull, 2010). Similarly, individuals who are low in emotional intelligence (viz. regulate own emotions) would have a caustic response toward their aggressor because they have the difficulty in allowing the negative emotion run its course (Peláez-Fernández, Extremera, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2014). Therefore, the Hypotheses are:

**Hypothesis 5a:** Individuals low in emotional intelligence will have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of reactive scripts.
Hypothesis 5b: Individuals low in the ability to regulate emotions will have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of reactive scripts.

Hypothesis 5c: Individuals low in emotional stability will have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of reactive scripts.

6.6.3 The mediating role of perceptions on the relationship between individual differences and proactive scripts. Individuals high in emotional stability manage to have a strong sense of themselves and tend to not allow negative perceptions of others affect them (Costa & McCrae, 1992). As such, they are less likely to ruminate over situations that they have no control over and are more likely to be thoughtful in the way that they manage stressful situations (Colbert et al., 2004; Lind et al., 2009). Typically, they have an internal compass (i.e., a healthy self-esteem) that they rely on for evaluation of their worth as opposed to an external compass (i.e., measuring themselves by what others’ evaluations are of them) (see Colbert et al., 2004; Lind et al., 2009). I argue that the proactive target is more able to engage in emotional regulation (cognitive reappraisal, lower suppression), by allowing their emotions to run their course and then be thoughtful in their course of action when dealing with their aggressor (e.g., Gratz & Tull, 2010). I also contend that they are high in emotional intelligence, in that they are aware of their own emotions and are able to manage their own emotions in an indirect/covert aggression situation, as well. Therefore, the Hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 6a: Individuals high in emotional intelligence will have lower perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of proactive scripts.

Hypothesis 6b: Individuals high in the ability to regulate emotions will have lower perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of proactive scripts.

Hypothesis 6c: Individuals high in emotional stability will have lower perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of proactive scripts.
In summary, in my model I argue that the way a target responds to indirect/covert aggression will be partly determined by their emotional stability, emotion regulation ability, and emotional intelligence skills. I argue that these proposed relationships are mediated by the target’s perceptions of indirect/covert aggression. In the next section I outline the study I developed to test these relationships.

### General Method

#### 6.7 Method Overview

Study 2 comprises of a general cross sectional survey, which was administered in Time 1 and an experimental survey administered in Time 2. The data was drawn from Undergraduate and Graduate business students. It is a noteworthy point to make that Time 2 consists of new scale development (Cognitive Script Scale, Perceptions of Indirect Aggression – Personal Constructs, and Manipulation Check) that was drawn from Studies 1a and 1b and had two different conditions (Covert Aggressive Colleague Scenario and Supportive Colleague Scenario). First, I introduce the characteristics of the sample that has been used in this study.

#### 6.7.1 Sample

In Study 2, I wanted the testing conditions to be standardised and uniform for all participants. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students completed the surveys. The use of an experimental design with students was my preferred approach in order to be confident that any relationships I found were due to the manipulations I created (i.e., indirect/covert vs. supportive colleague) and not any other extraneous variable that might be more likely in a workplace sample. Additionally, this method of administering a split administration survey (Time 1 and Time 2 questionnaires) and a manipulation task are less accepted across a working population. The student sample increased the chances of having repeat participants from Time 1 to Time 2.
The subjects within Study 2 were recruited via the course convenors. Some course convenors invited me into their classrooms to introduce my study, brief, and debrief the participants. This process resulted in success in having respondents complete both Time 1 and Time 2 surveys. In other courses, I was not able to follow this process based on the course convenors directions and as a result, I did not have as high of a response rate. In total, I handed out 1082 questionnaires (e.g., 582 questionnaires for Time 1 and 500 for Time 2). The number of respondents at Time 1 was 234 and at Time 2 were 176. Of the total, 146 respondents could be matched across Time 1 and Time 2. This gave a matched response rate of 13.4%. Participants comprised business students from an Australian Undergraduate and Graduate students. The number of respondents at Time 1 was 234 and at Time 2 were 176. Of the total responses, 146 respondents could be matched across Time 1 and Time 2. Participants’ ages ranged from 17 - 53, with a mean age of 20.48 years (SD=5.8 years) in the sample. In the matched sample, 90.7% were full time students and 8.7% part time students (0.6% not reported). This study sample was comprised of 58% Australian, 26% multiple ethnicities (more than one ethnicity), 8.6% were Chinese, 5% were Korean, 1% were New Zealand, 1% English, 1% American, and 1% Aboriginal. Time 1 and 2 surveys did not capture the samples’ current working status. The Time 1 survey did not capture if the subject declared themselves as direct targets of indirect/covert aggression only if they had or had not experienced behaviours of indirect/covert aggression. To ensure I maximised the power available in my analysis, all 146 matching respondents were included in my analysis.

6.8 Procedure

Data were collected using a cross sectional surveying methodology with a split administration (see Appendix 3 & 4) with an experiment included at Time 2. Split administration is a better design for cross sectional research because it increases the quality
of responses and reduces common method bias (Raghunathan & Grizzle, 1995). Long questionnaires tend to have high non-response rates so for Study 2, I considered it optimal to split the questionnaire into Time 1 and Time 2 (Adigüzel & Wedel, 2008; Raghunathan & Grizzle, 1995). Participants were randomly allocated to 1 of 2 conditions (Indirect/Covert Scenario vs. Supportive Scenario) in the experiment in the Time 2 data collection. There was approximately a one-week time gap between the administration of surveys 1 and 2. Before completing the Time 1 survey, participants were requested to create a unique identifier that was only known to them to ensure anonymity and to match the surveys from Time 1 and Time 2. The respondents showed consent to participate in the study by filling out a survey and returning it. Approval for the research was obtained from the University Ethics Committee. Copies of the approval letters from the University Ethics Committee can be seen in Appendices 3 and 4.

6.9 Time 1 measures

Before the survey was administered, in line with my ethics approval, the respondents were given an information sheet that outlined the research and why it is an important area of investigation. The Time 1 survey (see Appendix 3) contained the following scales: Workgroup Emotional Intelligence Profile - Short (Jordan & Lawrence, 2009), the Emotional Regulation scale (Gross & John, 2003), the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), the Positive Affectivity Negative Affectivity Survey (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), and the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009).

6.9.1 The Work Group Emotional Intelligence Profile (WEIP-S). The WEIP-S is a 16-item self-report measure intended to gauge emotional intelligence of individuals in team settings. This particular Emotional Intelligence measure was chosen for the following
reasons: a) the experimental scenarios were presented in a team setting b) it is an established, valid, and reliable scale, and c) it is a quick and easy scale to use (Jordan & Lawrence, 2009). The WEIP-S captures four broad self-reported emotional intelligence skills, which are manifested in work teams (Jordan & Lawrence, 2009), which are: 1) Awareness of own emotions (Cronbach’s alpha .85), 2) Management of own emotions (Cronbach’s alpha .77), 3) Awareness of others’ emotions (Cronbach’s alpha .81), and 4) Management of others’ emotions (Cronbach’s alpha .81) (Jordan & Lawrence, 2009). The four categories have four items each and the measure employs a seven-point reference format ranging from 1 (strong disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The items encourage reflection on one's own behaviour and typical items include "I am aware of my own feelings when working in a team" and "I am able to describe accurately the way others in the team are feeling."

6.9.2 The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ). The ERQ (Gross & John, 2003) evaluates individual differences in the two major types of emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. The ERQ is a ten-item scale that measures what individuals feel ‘inside’ and how they regulate their emotions in stressful situations. Cronbach’s alpha for cognitive reappraisal is .81 and expressive suppression is .73. Examples of the items included in the ERQ were: ‘When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I am thinking about’, ‘When I’m faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm’, ‘I control my emotions by not expressing them’. Respondents are asked to rate how they were feeling with regards to these statements from 1 = never to 7 = always.

6.9.3 The Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised. Einarsen et al.’s, (2009) Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) was used as a second measure of perceptions of indirect/direct aggression within the workplace. The NAQ-R is a neutrally worded scale
that consists of 22 items. Three types of workplace aggression are assessed: 1) person
centred aggression (e.g. aggression toward the individual), 2) physical aggression (e.g.
physically intimidating bullying), and 3) work centred aggression (e.g., aggression toward the
individual via their job performance). For the purposes of Study 2, only the work centred
aggression scale was used, as it captures indirect/covert aggression at work, such as, “Being
ordered to do work below your level of competence” and “Being ignored, excluded, or being
sent to Coventry”. Although often used as a measure of overt bullying, Einarsen, Hoel, and
Notelaers (2009) state that the NAQ-r taps into both direct and indirect aspects of aggression.
Glasø et al (2009) point out that the NAQ-r scale contains items that refer to specific
indirect/covert aggressive behaviours, such as social isolation and slander in the
subcategories of work-related aggression and person-centred aggression. Respondents were
asked to circle the number that best corresponded with their perception reading the scenarios
on a seven point scale from 1=never, to 7=always. In Study 2, the NAQ-r was used as the last
scale of the cross-sectional survey. A decision was made to alter the response scale from a 5
point Likert scale to a 7 point Likert scale to increase scale sensitivity (Diefenbach,
Weinstein, & O’reilly, 1993). This, the data from a 7-point scale increases regression
analysis effect sizes over a 5-point scale (Russell & Bobko, 1992).The work centred
aggression comprises seven items with a Cronbach’s alpha of .85.

6.9.4 The Ten Item Personality Inventory Scale (TIPI). This scale was used to
determine whether emotional stability predicted reactive, proactive, or passive responses in
the event of indirect/covert aggression. The TIPI (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann Jr, 2003) is a
condensed, ten-item measure of the Costa and McRae’s (1992) Big Five personality
dimensions with Cronbach’s Alpha for each dimension as follows: Openness .62,
Conscientiousness .66, Extroversion .77, Agreeableness .71, and Emotional Stability .70
(Gosling et al., 2003). The TIPI was used in my cross sectional survey as a validated short measure of personality.

6.10 Time 2 Experiment

Respondents were given one of two scenarios to consider, an indirect/covert or a supportive scenario (as described below). They were then asked to complete a survey to assess their potential scripted responses to the scenario they had read. The scales administered comprised of the: 1) the Perceptions of Indirect/Covert Aggression (self-developed, drawn from Study 1b); and 2) the Cognitive Scripts Scale (self-developed, drawn from Study 1a) to assess the types of responses that an individual will have to an indirect/covert aggressive colleague as opposed to a supportive colleague.

6.10.1 Indirect/Covert Aggression Scenarios. Wason and Cox (1996) define scenarios as stories that outline a proposed situation that obliges an individual to make a judgement and act upon it in experimental studies. Whereas, Alexander and Becker (1978) define vignettes as short portrayals of an individual or social setting that contain specific situations to what are thought to be the most important factors in the decision-making or judgement-making process of respondents. The definitions of vignette and scenario are much the same, therefore, the term scenario will be used throughout this study (Wason, Polonsky, & Hyman, 2002). The two scenarios in Study 2 were based on the behaviours that the respondents described in Study 1a and 1b as their experiences of indirect/covert aggression. The supportive colleague scenario was formulated from the literature review that was conducted in Chapter 2 and from Study 1a and is as follows:

You have recently been transferred to a new team comprising four other team members. The team has been created to work collaboratively on a marketing project. You show your enthusiasm by showing up to team meetings, being on time, being well prepared and motivated to offer new ideas. You are very professional in your manners, dress, and attitude. There is one member of your team who is very attentive
whenever you speak and appears to be actively listening whenever you are speaking. When you are at your desk chatting to colleagues/friends you find out that this team member is enthusiastic about you joining the team and praises your professional competency. At a meeting, while you are speaking, you notice the same team member write something in their notebook and pass it to the person sitting next to them. After the meeting, the same person tells you that they have written feedback about your meeting presentation that he/she would like to give you suggesting some changes to the things you have proposed. Later this person advises you they changed some of your work to improve it.

The covertly aggressive colleague scenario was formulated as follows:

You have recently been transferred to a new team comprising four other team members. The team has been created to work collaboratively on a marketing project. You show your enthusiasm by showing up to team meetings, being on time, being well prepared and motivated to offer new ideas. You are very professional in your manners, dress, and attitude. However, one teammate constantly rolls their eyes at you whenever you speak and pretends not to hear you whenever you are speaking. When you are at your desk chatting to colleagues/friends you find out that this team member has been gossiping about you and questioning your professional competency to be on the team. At a meeting, you notice the same team member write something in their notebook and pass it to the person sitting next to them while you are speaking. After the meeting, the same person tells you that they have written feedback about your meeting presentation that he/she would like to give you suggesting some changes to the things you have proposed. Later you find out that this person has changed some of your work without telling you.

A manipulation check was done to see if the respondents were able to distinguish between the scenarios and this is further described in subsection 6.11 of this chapter.

6.10.2 Perceptions of indirect aggression-personal construct (RepGrid, new scale development). The items in the perception of indirect/covert aggression (personal construct) measure assess the respondent’s perceptions of aggression to situations and were drawn from the personal constructs derived from Study 1b. In this case, we asked the participant to consider the scenarios (either Supportive or Covert Aggression Scenario). To recapitulate the RepGrid technique in Study 1b, respondents were asked to think of the least and most indirect/covert aggressive colleague with whom they work. They were then required to come
up with their own descriptions to describe the behaviours of the most and least indirect aggressive colleague in their workplace. After all of the data were aggregated into one document, themes were identified and categories/constructs were created. These constructs were used to develop a 22-item survey measure with a rating scale of 1-7 in the current study to assess perceptions of indirect/covert aggression.

The 22 RepGrid items were subjected to an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The items were assessed for suitability for factor analysis (Thompson & Daniel, 1996). First, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .86, which is above the recommended value of .60. Second, the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant (1180.71, p < .01) suggesting the items were adequate for factor analysis (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Finally, the diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix were all above .5, supporting the inclusion of each item in the factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

I used Principal Axis Factoring to determine the factor extraction (Gorsuch, 1983). Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) and oblique rotation were used because the primary purpose was to uncover the structure underlying of variables in the RepGrid survey (Gorsuch, 1983). The initial analysis based on Eigen values showed that the first factor explained 49% of the variance, the second factor 14%, and a third factor 5.5% of the variance. Examination of the prima facie validity of this initial solution suggested a three-factor solution was not valid. Subsequently, a two-factor solution was tested. The first factor explained 63% of the variance. The two-factor solution has prima facie validity and an examination of the scree plot supported two-factor solution each containing 11 items. During numerous steps, none of the items were eliminated because they supplied a simple factor structure and met a minimum criterion of having a primary factor loading of .4 or above.
The two factors that emerged were a) Positive Behaviour and b) Indirect/covert Aggression - Personal Constructs. Examples of the Positive Behaviour subscale are ‘is approachable when I need help’ and ‘is a team player’. The indirect aggression - personal constructs comprised of items such as ‘is callous toward me’ and ‘will not provide help’. Cronbach’s alpha for the positive behaviours is .97 and for indirect aggression – personal construct is .92. Given the focus of my research is on indirect/covert aggression, in Table 6.1 I provide the factor loadings for the Indirect/covert aggression – personal construct only.

Table 6.1: Items, factor loadings among sub-factor loadings of the RepGrid Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>RepGrid Item</th>
<th>Item wording</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indirect/covert Aggression –</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Is aloof with me</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal constructs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Prefers to work as an individual</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RepGrid)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Is closed off at work</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Is emotionally reactive</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Will not accept responsibility</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Is fake</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>He/she does not like teamwork</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Will not provide help</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Is rude</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Is controlling of others</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Is callous toward me</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.10.3 Cognitive Script Scale (new scale development). The items in this new scale are intended to assess a respondents’ preferred response to acts of indirect aggression. The scale asked the respondents to indicate what they would do in a specific indirect aggression situation and their response was measured with 18 items developed as result of the findings in Study 1a. The scenario used in this research was the Supportive or Indirect/Covert Aggression Scenarios described above. Sample items from this measure include, “If I inform my teammate that their behaviour is unacceptable, then they would stop”
(Proactive script) “If I yell at my teammate, then they will leave me alone” (Reactive script), and “If I do nothing to stop my teammate, this will ‘keep the peace’” (Passive script). The measure used a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always).

Initially, the 18 Cognitive Script items was subjected to a factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .62, which is above the recommended value of .6. Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant (36.8, p < .01) and indicated the items were suitable for factor analysis (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Principal Axis Factoring and oblique rotation were used to examine the factor structure of the Cognitive Script scale (Gorsuch, 1983; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). As Table 6.2 shows, the proactive responses were based on the following three items: If I approach my manager/supervisor and ask them to speak to my teammate about their behaviour, then things will get better; If I mention the company policy on appropriate behaviours in the workplace, then it would stop my teammate; If I inform my teammate that their behaviour is unacceptable, then they would stop. The Cronbach alpha for the Proactive script was .57. The reactive response script was based on 2 items which were: If I respond the same way to my teammate, then I would feel better; If I ‘lose it’ by getting really angry at my teammate, then they would stop. The Reactive script items for the Covert Aggression scenario had an alpha of .69. There were 3 items for the passive responses, which were: If I say nothing, then things will improve; If I steer clear of my teammate, then they would leave me alone; If I don’t say anything, then my teammate will leave me alone. The Passive script in the Covert Aggression scenario the alpha was .73. With the Cronbach Alphas scores ranging from fair to good, these three factors are acceptable to use in my further analysis through correlation and hierarchical linear regression (George & Mallery, 2003).
A manipulation check is designed to reveal if participants in a study are able to distinguish between two scenarios (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009). In short, a manipulation check examines whether the instructions provided and the scenario outlined is able to be interpreted by the participants (Oppenheimer et al., 2009). As such, a manipulation check comprises a set of unique questions that are different from the rest of the questions within the survey. In Time 2, I used the, Future Outcomes scale (self developed) to see if the respondents were picking up differences in the two different scenario conditions. The 5-item manipulation check consisted of the following statements: I would recommend this teammate to other colleagues; If I had the opportunity to work with this person again I would; I would avoid this teammate in future interactions (reversed); I would be happy to continue working with this team member; I would speak positively of the team member to others in the future. The manipulation check scale had a Cronbach’s Alpha of .70 for all five items.

An ANOVA test was conducted between the two conditions (covert aggressive scenario and supportive colleague scenario) using Future Outcomes as a dependent variable. This was to ensure that the respondents were reading the scenarios differently from one another. As predicted, there was a significant difference of $F = (1, 138) = 23.02, p = < .05, \eta^2 = .143$. This significant mean difference shows that participants in the supportive colleague condition were more likely to want to pursue a future working relationship with the team members in the scenario than those shown in the covert scenario.
Table 6.2: Items, factor loading and correlation among sub-factors of the Cognitive Script Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Item Wording</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>If I inform my teammate that their behaviour is unacceptable, then they would stop.</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>If I approach my manager/supervisor and ask them to ‘speak to’ my teammate about their behaviour, then I things will get better.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>If I mention the company policy on appropriate behaviours in the workplace, then it would stop my teammate.</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive Response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>If I respond in the same way to my teammate, then I would feel better.</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>If I ‘lose it’ by getting really angry at my teammate, then they would stop.</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.77</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>If I steer clear of my teammate, then they would leave me alone.</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>If I do nothing to stop my teammate, then it will ‘keep the peace’.</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>If I pay no attention to my teammate, then she would leave me alone.</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Response</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>If I don’t say anything, then my teammate will leave me alone.</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>If I say nothing, then things will improve.</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
6.12 Control Variables.

State emotions were used as control variables for this study because previous research indicates that state emotions co-vary with emotional intelligence, emotional regulation and emotional stability (e.g., Jordan & Lawrence, 2009). To measure state emotions, Watson et al.’s (1988) Positive Affectivity, Negative Affectivity Scale (PANAS) was used. The PANAS contains 20 items with 10 items measuring positive state and 10 items assessing negative state. Respondents are asked to rate how they were feeling right now with regards to these mood states (1 = “not at all” to 5 = “extremely”). Typical items in the Negative Affect scale include “irritable” “afraid” or “distressed” and for Positive affect “enthusiastic” or “inspired”. Watson et al. (1988) report reliability statistics for the PANAS as a Cronbach alpha of .87 for positive affect and a Cronbach alpha of .85 for negative affect.

Results

Prior to analysis, I implemented standard processes for cleaning data including a 10 percent check of data entry, missing item analysis, checking for skewness and kurtosis, and checking for outliers. I performed two statistical analyses in order to test my hypotheses. First, I conducted a correlation analysis of the focal variables of interest (e.g., emotional intelligence, scripts, perceptions of aggression, etc.). I conducted a separate correlation analysis for the two conditions: the covert aggressive scenario and the supportive colleague scenario. Then, I conducted a series of hierarchical regressions with agreement of either proactive scripts, reactive scripts or passive scripts as the dependent variables.

Regression analyses were employed for several reasons. First, regressions allow the prediction of a multiple set of inter-related variables to be assessed without inflating Type 1 errors, which is the incorrect rejection of a true null hypothesis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Researchers also recommend regression analysis when testing mediation models (Baron &
Tables 6.3 present the descriptive statistics and correlations for the indirect/covert condition. Table 6.3 (the indirect/covert condition) reveals there was a positive correlation between individuals who have the ability to manage their own emotions and perceptions of indirect aggression (work related aggression) \( (r = .44, p< .01) \). This does not support Hypothesis 1a as the correlation shows individuals who have higher levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to perceive indirect/covert aggression.

Table 6.3 also shows a significant relationship exists between individuals who have the ability to manage others’ emotions and positive affectivity \( (r = .24, p< .05) \). That is, higher positive affectivity is associated with higher management of other emotions. A negative correlation was also found between cognitive reappraisal and negative affectivity \( (r = -.38, p< .01) \). Individuals who are more likely to experience negative affect will be less likely to cognitively reappraise. A significant positive relationship was found between negative affectivity and perceptions of indirect/covert aggression (work related aggression) \( (r = .38, p< .01) \). This relationship indicates that the higher the tendency to experience negative emotions the higher the perception of aggression that an individual is likely to have regarding Indirect/Covert Aggression Scenario. There is also a negative relationship between negative affectivity and awareness of one’s own emotions and \( (r = -.21, p < .05) \). That is, individuals with higher levels of negative affectivity reported lower levels of the ability to reflect on their emotions.

Table 6.3 (the covert aggression condition) also shows a negative correlation exists between individuals who perceive indirect aggression (personal construct of aggression measure) and proactive scripts \( (r = -.30, p< .05) \). The relationship partially supports Hypothesis 6, and shows individuals with lower perceptions of indirect aggressive acts will
more likely endorse engaging in proactive scripts in the indirect/covert aggression scenario. Table 6.3 also shows that there is a significant relationship between the ability to be aware of one’s own emotions and proactive scripts \((r = .24, < .05)\). That is, individuals who are more likely to have the ability to be aware of their own emotions are more likely to indicate that they would use proactive scripts, which is in partial support of Hypothesis 6 in the Indirect/Covert Aggression Scenario.

Table 6.3 shows also a significant correlation relationship exists between indirect aggression (work related aggression) and reactive scripts \((r = .40, p < .01)\). That is, individuals who perceive higher levels of aggression are more likely to endorse using reactive scripts, which is in partial support of Hypothesis 5.

For the supportive condition, in Table 6.4, there is a significant correlation between emotional stability and the ability to recognise others’ feelings (awareness of others’ emotions) \((r = .29, p > .01)\). That is, individuals with higher emotional stability were more likely to be higher in emotional intelligence (awareness of own emotions). Table 6.5 also shows that individuals who have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression will more likely engage in the use of reactive scripts \((r = .30, p > .05)\) in a supportive/collegial scenario partially supporting Hypothesis 5. Likewise, individuals who have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression reported greater endorsement of the use of passive scripts \((r = .37, p > .01)\). Table 6.5 presents the regression analyses I conducted to test Hypotheses 4a, 5a and 6a respectively. For all regressions, positive and negative affectivity were entered on the first step as control variables; awareness of own emotions was entered on the second step as the independent variable and perceptions of indirect aggression perceptions (work centred) was entered on the third step as the mediator. The constructs of Emotional Stability and
Table 6.3: Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for indirect/covert aggressive scenario

|                          | Mean | SD  | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9     | 10    | 11    | 12    | 13    | 14    |
|--------------------------|------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 Positive affectivity   | 4.93 | 1.03| (.87) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 2 Negative affectivity   | 2.78 | 0.95| 0.09  | (.85) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 3 Proactive scripts      | 3.78 | 1.01| 0.18  | 0.09  | (.57) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 4 Reactive scripts       | 2.74 | 1.05| 0.17  | 0.12  | 0.40**| (.69) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 5 Passive scripts        | 2.63 | 1.04| 0.19  | -0.13 | 0.04  | 0.45**| (.73) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 6 Emotional stability    | 4.35 | 0.87| 0.06  | 0.06  | -0.11 | -0.18 | -0.08 | (.76) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 7 Cognitive reappraisal  | 4.64 | 1.00| 0.18  | -0.38*| -0.11 | -0.07 | -0.06 | -0.02 | (0.81) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 8 Emotion suppression     | 4.04 | 1.38| 0.00  | 0.13  | -0.03 | 0.04  | -0.01 | -0.05 | 0.08  | (.73) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 9 Indirect aggression - work related aggression (NAQ-R) | 2.22 | 1.05| 0.07  | 0.38**| -0.04 | 0.40**| 0.15  | 0.04  | 0.12  | 0.12  | (.85) |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 10 Indirect aggression - personal construct (RepGrid) | 4.05 | 1.23| -0.14 | 0.13  | -0.30**| -0.21 | -0.22*| -0.12 | 0.04  | -0.23*| -0.04 | (.92) |       |       |       |       |       |
| 11 Awareness of own emotions | 4.89 | 1.03| 0.19  | -0.21*| 0.24* | 0.21  | -0.02 | 0.06  | 0.12  | .28** | -0.1 | -0.159| (.85) |       |       |       |       |
| 12 Management of own emotions | 5.64 | 0.86| 0.02  | -0.18 | -0.02 | -0.20 | -0.18 | 0.06  | -0.01 | 0.02  | .44** | 0.002 | 0.18  | (.77) |       |       |       |
| 13 Awareness of others' emotions | 5.12 | 0.94| 0.18  | -0.11 | 0.17  | -0.02 | -0.03 | -0.07 | 0.11  | 0.05  | 0.09  | 0.008 | 0.43**| 0.33**| (.81) |       |       |
| 14 Management of others' emotions | 5.32 | 0.98| 0.24* | -0.18 | 0.03  | 0.06  | -0.08 | 0.07  | -0.03 | 0.05  | 0.01  | 0.061 | 0.50**| .029**| 0.59**| (.81) |       |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Emotional Regulation were not analysed further as they did not show significant correlations with use of scripts in Table 6.3.

To recap, I predicted that individuals with lower levels of emotional intelligence would more likely endorse the use of passive (Hypothesis 4a) or reactive (Hypothesis 5a) scripts in the indirect aggression scenario and that this would be partly explained by their higher perceptions of indirect aggression. I also predicted that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence would more likely endorse the use of proactive scripts (Hypothesis 6a) and that this would be partly explained by their lower perceptions of indirect aggression.

The first regression in Table 6.5 employed the use of passive scripts as the dependent variable (Hypothesis 4a). The entry of positive affectivity and negative affectivity on the first step did not account for significant variance in the use of passive scripts, $\Delta F = (2, 83) = 1.29$. Entry of awareness of own emotions at the second step also failed to significantly predict the use of passive scripts $\Delta F = (3, 82) = 2.48$. Entry of perceptions of indirect aggression at the third step also failed to reach significance, $\Delta F (4, 81) = 1.80$. Thus, overall, no support was found for Hypothesis 4a. The second regression in Table 6.5 employed the use of reactive scripts as the dependent variable (Hypothesis 5a). The entry of positive affectivity and negative affectivity on the first step accounted for 6% of variance and trended towards significance, $\Delta F = (2, 82) = 2.69$, $p = .08$. An examination of the beta weights shows that individuals with higher positive affectivity more highly endorsed the use of reactive scripts. Entry of awareness of own emotions in step two did not account for a significant amount of variance in reactive scripts $\Delta F = (3,81) p = .10$, however, the entry of perceptions of indirect aggression – work related bullying on the third step did account for significant variance in the use of reactive scripts, $\Delta F (4, 80) = 13.32$, $p = < .00$. An examination of the beta weights in Table 6.5 shows that higher perceptions of indirect aggression predicted greater endorsement.
Table 6.4: Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Supportive Colleague Scenario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Positive affectivity</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Negative affectivity</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.08</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Proactive scripts</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Reactive scripts</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Passive scripts</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.66**</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Emotional stability</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Cognitive reappraisal</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Emotion suppression</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Indirect aggression - work related aggression</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.30*</td>
<td>0.37**</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Indirect aggression - personal construct</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Awareness of own emotions</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>-0.30*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.47**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Management of own emotions</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.39**</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Awareness of others' emotions</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.45**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.37**</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Management of others' emotions</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
of reactive scripts. Thus, overall, while positive affectivity and perceptions of indirect aggression were positively and directly related to reactive scripts, awareness of own emotions was not related to reactive scripts nor was awareness of own emotions mediated by indirect aggression perceptions (Hypothesis 5a).

Finally, the third regression in Table 6.5 employed the use of proactive scripts as the dependent variable (Hypothesis 6a). The entry of positive affectivity and negative affectivity on the first step did not account for significant variance in the use of proactive scripts, $\Delta F = (2, 83) = 2.00$. The inclusion of awareness of own emotions in step 2 did account for a significant amount of variance, $\Delta F = (3, 82) = 4.45$, $p = < .05$ in the use of proactive scripts. An examination of the beta weights in Table 6.5 shows that individuals who are more aware of their own emotions are more likely to endorse the use of proactive scripts in an indirect aggression scenario. At the third step, entry of perceptions of indirect aggression – work related aggression did not add to the prediction of use of proactive scripts, $\Delta F (4, 81) = 0.39$, although awareness of own emotions did remain as a significant and positive predictor. Thus, overall, while management of own emotions did directly predict the use of proactive scripts (Hypothesis 1b), this relationship was not mediated by perceptions of indirect aggression (Hypothesis 6a). Table 6.6 presents the regression analyses I conducted to test Hypotheses 4a, 5a and 6a respectively using the Personal Construct measure of perceptions of indirect aggression that was developed based on my finding from Study 1b. For all regressions, positive and negative affectivity was entered on the first step as control variable, awareness of own was entered on the second step as the independent variable and perceptions of indirect aggression perceptions (personal constructs) was entered on the third step as the mediator measure.
Table 6.5: Hierarchical regression results for awareness of own emotions and perceived work related aggression on endorsement of reactive, proactive, and passive script for the indirect/covert aggression scenario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Passive Script (H4a)</th>
<th>Reactive Script (H5a)</th>
<th>Proactive Scripts (H6a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>( \Delta R^2 )</td>
<td>( \Delta F )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of own emotions</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of own emotions</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Aggression - Work related bullying</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 89; \( p < .10 \), \( p < .05 \), \( p < .01 \)
More specifically, I predicted that individuals with lower levels of emotional intelligence would more likely endorse the use of passive (Hypothesis 4a) or reactive (Hypothesis 5a) scripts in the indirect aggression scenario and that this would be partly explained by their higher perceptions of indirect aggression. I also predicted that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence would more likely endorse the use of proactive scripts (Hypothesis 6a) and that this would be partly explained by their lower perceptions of indirect aggression.

The first regression in Table 6.6 employed the use of passive scripts as the dependent variable (Hypothesis 4a). The entry of positive affectivity and negative affectivity on the first step did not account for significant variance in the use of passive scripts, $\Delta F = (2, 85) = 1.90$, entry of awareness of own emotions at the second step also failed to significantly predict the use of passive scripts $\Delta F = (3, 84) = 1.62$. Entry of perceptions of indirect aggression (personal constructs) at the third step also failed to reach significance, $\Delta F (4, 83) = 2.37$, thus, overall, no support was found for Hypothesis 4a. The second regression in Table 6.6 employed the use of reactive scripts as the dependent variable (Hypothesis 5a). The entry of positive affectivity and negative affectivity on the first step was not significant $\Delta F = (2, 84) = 2.27$, entry of awareness of own emotions in Step Two did not account for a significant amount of variance in reactive scripts $\Delta F = (3, 83) = .42$. Furthermore, the entry of perceptions of indirect aggression (personal constructs) on the third step did not account for significant variance in the use of reactive scripts, $\Delta F (4, 82) = 2.41$, thus, overall, awareness of own emotions was not related to reactive scripts nor was awareness of own emotions mediated by indirect aggression perceptions using the personal construct measure (Hypothesis 5a).

Finally, the third regression in Table 6.6 employed the use of proactive scripts
Table 6.6: Hierarchical regression results for awareness of own emotions and perceived work related aggression (personal construct) and the endorsement of reactive, proactive and passive scripts for the Indirect/Covert Aggression Scenario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Passive Script (H4a)</th>
<th>Reactive Script (H5a)</th>
<th>Proactive Script (H6a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>ΔF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>ΔF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>ΔF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of own emotions</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
<td>ΔF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Affect</td>
<td>.20+</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of own emotions</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Aggression - Personal Constructs</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.28**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 89; .p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01
as the dependent variable (Hypothesis 6a). The entry of positive affectivity and negative affectivity on the first step did not account for significant variance in the use of proactive scripts, $\Delta F = (2, 85) = 1.54$. However, the inclusion of awareness of own emotions in step 2 did account for a significant amount of variance, $\Delta F = (3,84) = 5.24, p < .05$ in the use of proactive scripts. An examination of the beta weights in Table 6.6 shows that individuals who are more aware of their own emotions are more likely to endorse the use of proactive scripts in an indirect aggression scenario. At the third step, entry of perceptions of indirect aggression (personal construct) did add to the prediction of use of proactive scripts, $\Delta F (4, 83) = 7.10, p < .01$ and awareness of own emotions did remain as a significant and positive predictor. Thus, overall, awareness of own emotions directly predicted the use of proactive scripts (Hypothesis 1b), and this relationship was mediated by perceptions of indirect aggression (Hypothesis 6a).

**Discussion**

To restate, the purpose of Study 2 was to further examine the various target responses to indirect/covert aggression within the workplace. Some support was found for Hypothesis 6a, in that individuals who are high in the ability to be aware of their emotions will have lower perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of proactive scripts. This was largely supported by the regression analysis, showing proactive scripts and awareness of own emotions predicted use of proactive scripts that were mediated by perceptions of aggression (for the personal construct measure). To restate, scripts are built on reactions to emotions, which are recalled from memory (Abelson, 1981). Scripts are well rehearsed and guide an individual in how they process their behaviour and thinking. A proactive target will use pre-emptive scripts (e.g., report their aggressor’s behaviours) when they experience indirect/covert aggression. Furthermore, individuals who are higher in
emotional intelligence (awareness of own emotions) will have lower perceptions of indirect/covert aggression that will result in higher use of proactive scripts.

No support was found for Hypothesis 4a in that individuals who are low in emotional intelligence would have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of passive scripts. No support was found for Hypothesis 5a either in that individuals low in emotional intelligence would have higher perceptions of indirect/covert aggression resulting in higher use of reactive scripts. However, there were significant correlations between indirect/covert aggression (personal constructs) and reactive scripts.

The perception that individuals who have higher levels of emotional intelligence will perceive less indirect/covert aggression was (Hypothesis 1a) was partially supported with the significant correlations found between the variables management of own emotions and indirect – work related constructs (perceptions of indirect/covert aggression). Also, individuals who have higher awareness levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to endorse proactive scripts (Hypothesis 1b). Individuals who have higher emotional intelligence will typically have higher tendencies for pro-social behaviours and successful interpersonal relationships (Lopes et al., 2003).

There are two possible (practical) reasons for my hypotheses not being supported, which are: 1) measurement issues, and 2) the significant number of English as Second Language (ESL) respondents. To recap, the Cognitive Script scale was developed from the findings in Study 1a. Specifically, within the Cognitive Script scale, the wording of the items could be problematic, as some of the items contain colloquial/idiomatic words and statements. It is contended that if a measurement item goes beyond the direct translation (i.e., using idioms, colloquial speech, etc.), the instrument may not function at its optimum capacity (Price & Oshima, 1998; Su & Parham, 2002). In short, using idiomatic speech (e.g., items used to assess reactive and passive scripts such as ‘lose it’, ‘steer clear’) might be
problematic for some individuals who may not understand the context of the idioms (Price & Oshima, 1998; Su & Parham, 2002). Another possible explanation for the lack of support of my hypotheses, are the comprehension of emotions for the ESL respondents. This could be an issue for the PANAS and Emotional Stability measures in particular. That is there may be a gap the exists between ESL’s emotional understanding and ESL comprehension of emotional state language (see Ornaghi & Grazzani, 2013 for more information on emotion state language and ESL).

The main contribution of this study was an empirical examination of the mediating mechanism of perceptions of indirect/covert aggression on the relational scripts that a target builds and engages in. In essence, the results only partially support the propositions that emotional intelligence affects a target’s perceptions of indirect/covert aggression and how they dealt with the aggressor. I propose an explanation for why individuals with higher EI are more likely to engage in proactive scripts is that they have lower perceptions of indirect/covert aggression than the counterparts.

The results partially indicate the importance of the target having the ability to manage their emotions or be aware of their own emotions when trying to resolve the perceived relationship that they have with their aggressor. Theoretical frameworks propose the link between proactive scripts (i.e., using company policies, making supervisors aware, etc.) coupled with the ability to regulate emotions can lead to a better quality outcome between the target and their aggressor (Aquino, 2000; Einarsen et al., 2003). The results from this study demonstrate a link between specific aspects of emotional intelligence and the types of scripts that a target engages in. However, contrary to expectation, no links were found with emotional regulation and use of scripts.

A possible explanation for the lack of linkage between cognitive reappraisal and proactive scripts is that cognitive reappraisal is an adjusting antecedent focussed strategy that
affects the early perceptive stages of emotional activity, whereby the initial interpretation of a
given situation is re-evaluated (Gross & John, 2003; Ioannidis & Siegling, 2015). In short,
Gross and John’s (2003) ERQ is a questionnaire that is context based and needs to be applied
to a situation, in order to capture authentic antecedent focussed strategies (Gross & John,
2003; Ioannidis & Siegling, 2015). The ERQ was administered in Time 1, (the first set of
questionnaires without the Covert Aggressive and Supportive Colleague scenario), which
would have helped to build context for the respondent in order for them to report the
emotional reappraisal strategies that they would use when experiencing indirect/covert
aggression (Ioannidis & Siegling, 2015).

The findings within this study demonstrate the importance of using multiple
methodologies (i.e., cross-sectional surveys, scenarios, and conditions 1 & 2) as opposed to
using only a singular indirect/covert aggression as a single component. Using a scenario
based, multi-scale questionnaire afforded me the opportunity to build context around the
impact of positive scripts as opposed to negative ones. A singular measure of negative
act/aggressive behaviour within the workplace would not have captured the context, which
would not have provided this level of insight of how emotional intelligence influences a
targets ability to build proactive scripts.

6.13 Future research directions

I will address the limitations of the Study 2 (and Study 1) in Chapter 7. In this section
I focus on future research directions. In future research, my model could be used to examine
what perceptions emerge during actual indirect aggression situations and by asking
respondents to identify additional variables such as whether the aggressor was male or female,
the age of the aggressor, and the aggressor’s job status. This would give an understanding if
the aggressive work behaviours were influenced by other variables. This would be helpful in
understanding why individuals resort to such behaviours. Research to date has focussed on
aggression and an individual’s perception and the impact that aggression has on the target (Keashly, 2001; Salin et al., 2014; Tracy et al., 2006). While existing research (as previously mentioned in Chapter 2) has shown that aggressors, for a myriad of reasons (i.e., shame, guilt, or negative stigma for admitting to bad behaviour), do not self-disclose that they are predators within their workplace, this may be even more evident in examining covert aggression. As a result, a study on a target’s emotional intelligence would be useful, as it may provide further clues regarding being a target of aggression. That is, gaining insight into whether or not a target has the emotional awareness of their colleagues’ thoughts and feelings and the impact of the target’s behaviour has on individual in and around them within their workplace (Salin et al., 2014).

One salient limitation that that can be addressed in future research is curtailing the use of a student sample that it is not representative of the general working population. The limited work experience and young age of the respondents (mean=20.48) and the overall experience of the participants may impact on the answers a student may give. The experimental design that I used, however, can also be replicated with a working population (i.e., employed individuals). By shifting this research into a business setting and collaborating with individuals who believe they are targets of aggression within their workplace, my research could be extended to consider various other types of scripts a target builds and the emotions that are attached to those scripts.

Einarsen (2000) suggests that power differentiation is a key element to workplace aggression, in that a situation of aggression is more likely to happen between a superior and subordinate, than it would be individuals at the same level of power. Aggression scholars (Bassman, 1992; Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen et al., 2011; Keashly, 2001; Tepper, 2000) suggests lower power-position employees (i.e., entry level employees, women, subordinates, etc.) are more likely to experience aggression because they are limited in resources because
they are in a more vulnerable position (e.g., economic dependency), which decreases the likelihood of them responding to their aggressor out of fear of repercussion (i.e., job loss, reduction of hours or benefits, etc.). The role of emotional intelligence plays a factor in the how and if the target responds to their aggressor. I looked at the role of passive scripts being associated with individuals who are low in emotional intelligence. However, further exploration is needed in the way of individuals who are low power-positions but possess a healthy level of emotional intelligence (Sheehan, 1999) and are acutely aware of the power differentiation between them and their aggressor (Bassman, 1992; Einarsen, 2000; Einarsen et al., 2011; Keashly, 2001; Tepper, 2000). That is, in a low power position, the target with high emotional intelligence is astute enough to know that is a risky chance in responding to their aggressor because responding may escalate the aggressor’s behaviours (Keashly, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Again this was a scoping decision that was made in early stages of developing my research, however, I acknowledge that power differentiation plays a factor in how a target with high EI may respond to their aggressor and needs further exploration in future research.

Future research should consider: 1) further developing the cognitive script scale that was developed in Study 1 and used in Study 2 (e.g., including using passive scripts due to power differentiation), 2) conduct a focus group of human resource practitioners to investigate their role and actions when approached with an allegation of indirect/covert to identify scripts used by HR practitioners, 3) using the same research where the target is a full time employee and the aggressor is a manager.

6.14 Practical Implications

There are a number of implications that have emerged from this study. The essential point is the importance of perceptions and what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour
within the workplace (Rayner & Keashly, 2005). It is up to the leaders within organisations
to set the social milieu within their organisations (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Leiter & Stright,
2009; Rayner & Keashly, 2005). Fostering a polite and engaging workforce that practices
inclusivity is one suggested starting point (Leiter & Stright, 2009). Another salient point to
make is to understand the intention behind the behaviour of the aggressor (Andersson &
Pearson, 1999; Culpeper, 2011). Understanding could come from querying the aggressor and
asking what their intentions are behind their behaviour. Nonetheless, it is up to the leadership
within an organisation to set the tone for creating a civil workplace by modelling civil
behaviour in the workplace (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Leiter & Stright, 2009; Rayner &
Keashly, 2005). Similarly, in terms of dealing with perception, a training programme that
encompasses the use of the ‘Experience Cube’ could be developed as a part of an employee
induction programme centred around civility and respect within the workplace (Bartlett &
Bartlett, 2011; Leiter, 2013) regardless of their level of EI (see Figure 6.2). Similarly, in
terms of dealing with these perceptions, a training programme that encompasses the use of
the ‘Experience Cube’ could be developed as a part of an employee induction programme
centred around civility and respect within the workplace (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011; Leiter,
2013) regardless of their level of EI (see Figure 6.2).

In this training programme, Experience Cube outlines a four-step process that
includes understanding what proactive scripts look like and the benefits of engaging in the
use of this type of script. That is, making the ‘Experience Cube’ as a part of an individual’s
induction training is a preventative and proactive measure on the part of the HR practitioner,
which may help individuals negotiate the relationships within their organisation (Bushe &
O’Malley, 2013). To illustrate, in Step 1, the ‘Experience Cube’ affords individuals to
verbalise their observations of indirect/covert aggressive (intentional or unintentional)
behaviours they experience from their colleagues. In the next step, (Step 2) encourages
individuals to identify a reason why they believe the behaviours transpired as a part of their sensemaking process (Bushe & O’Malley, 2013). The most important step (Step 3) within the ‘Experience Cube’ allows the individual to address their feelings about the indirect/covert aggressive behaviours and the impact that it has on them (Bushe & O’Malley, 2013). Lastly, the ‘Experience Cube’ affords the individual to make a request of what they want and need from their colleagues in future interactions (Bushe & O’Malley, 2013).
**Figure 6.2: An adaptation of Bushe and O'Malley's (2013) Experience Cube**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>OBSERVATION:</strong></th>
<th><strong>THINK:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I observe (or I have noticed) that you (are, do, say) when (state the occasion)</td>
<td>I think you were __________ because of __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(It is key in this step to observe the behaviour and not the individual)</td>
<td>(Give an explanation or a reason about the behaviour without judgment. It is necessary to state observable objective data. It is important to be clear, concise, and direct. Make statements about the objective data, rather than asking questions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>WANT:</strong></th>
<th><strong>FEELING:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I want in future interactions with you to</td>
<td>I feel that when you do __________ I am left with the feeling of __________.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>NEED:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I need in future from our interactions is:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Chapter Aims

Over the past three decades indirect/covert aggression has garnered attention among academics and practitioners (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). Scholars continually state that the consequences of such experiences may be both psychologically and physically incapacitating for the targets of that type of aggression (Balducci, Alfano, & Fraccaroli, 2009; Glasø, Nielsen, Einarsen, Haugland, & Matthiesen, 2009; Glasø & Notelaers, 2012; Hogh et al., 2011; Rodríguez-Muñoz, Baillien, De Witte, Moreno-Jiménez, & Pastor, 2009). Indirect/covert aggression may also be taxing on relationships (i.e., private and social) and has been associated with increased organizational costs such as turnover (Glasø & Notelaers, 2012; Rayner, 1997), absenteeism (Glasø & Notelaers, 2012; Kivimäki, Elovainio, & Vahtera, 2000), and diminished organizational commitment and output (Einarsen et al., 2011; Glasø & Notelaers, 2012). Accordingly, aggression can be costly for the target, the organization, and for society as a whole (Glasø & Notalaers, 2012). The focus of this research to date, however, has been on the target’s perceptions of the organisation and aggressor’s behaviours, while the target’s cognitive processes have been disregarded (Salin et al., 2014).

The aim of my research was to provide an insight as to how the target processes their experience of indirect/covert aggression and to explore their behavioural responses to such acts. This chapter is devoted to encapsulating the key findings of my three studies, coupled with an emphasis on the theoretical contributions that these findings make to the field of research in indirect/covert aggression. First, I outline my program of research and place this in the context of the extant research in the field. Next, key findings will be reviewed across
my studies and the theoretical and practical contributions will be discussed. Then, the limitations will be detailed, followed by a discussion of future research directions.

7.2 Overview of the Research

As discussed in Chapter 1, little research has been conducted on how a target responds to or manages their experiences of indirect/covert aggression (Keashly, 2001; Salin et al., 2014; Tracy et al., 2006). Understanding how targets make sense of, and respond to, indirect aggression is important and has broad implications for a range of outcomes including: job satisfaction, organisational commitment and the psychological and physical health of the target (Salin et al., 2014). Until recently, the preferred method to address and manage indirect aggression in the workplace has been to treat it as a matter of escalated conflict and/or personality differences, as opposed to treating it as a personal attack with the intention to harm (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2011).

My program of research was designed to extend understanding in this area by examining the experiences of targets subjected to indirect aggression at work in detail. Specifically, in response to calls for additional research in this area (Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & Dubois, 1997; Salin et al., 2014), my aim was to identify the targets’ scripts and cognitive processes for managing their aggressor. I was also interested in investigating the role of individual difference variables (Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Regulation and Emotional Stability) in predicting how targets respond to indirect aggression (Study 2). My program of research contributes to theory building in this area by linking Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), Script Theory (Abelson & Schank, 1977) and Peak-End Theory (Fredrickson & Kahneman’s, 1993) to assist our understanding of the thoughts and behaviours of targets of indirect aggression.
7.3 Program of Research

Prior research has focussed on identifying the types of behaviours that comprise indirect/covert aggression, the intensity and impact of indirect/covert aggression and organisational responses to the reporting of indirect/covert aggression. My program of research was designed to move past a focus on the behaviours of the aggressor (e.g., Barclay & Aquino, 2011; Pinto, 2014) to examine the targets’ thought processes, the cognitive scripts they develop to respond to indirect aggression and the influence of EI, ER and ES on this process.

I used a mixed methods approach to address my three research questions as researchers have proposed that this approach can provide stronger evidence for a conclusion through convergence and corroboration of findings (Creswell, 2011; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Moreover, using qualitative and quantitative research together produces more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice (Creswell, 2011; Johnson et al., 2007). Using a mixed methods approach, I carried out three empirical studies to investigate the process involved in a target’s experience of indirect/covert aggression. These studies were directly linked to my central research questions as follows: Study 1a, RQ 1) *What are individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?* and RQ 2) *To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact on an individual’s sensemaking process?*; In Study 1b I examined the personal constructs that the target formulated of their aggressor using the Repetory Grid Technique (Kelly, 1955) which also addressed RQ 1) *What are individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?* and RQ 2) *To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact on an individual’s sensemaking process?*; and finally, in Study 3, I developed and tested a theoretical framework to answer RQ 3) *How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation,
and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace?

Study 1a involved a sample of 29 employees who identified themselves as targets of indirect/covert aggression in the workplace. Using Flanagan’s (1954) critical incident technique, I conducted semi-structured interviews and was able to build context around these respondents’ experiences of indirect/covert aggression by asking the four critical questions of: who, what, why and when. Moving to Study 1b, I used Kelly’s (1955) RepGrid technique to understand the personal constructs targets’ developed around their aggressor. During analysis, I used Kasserjian’s (1977) thematic analysis technique to answer RQ 2: To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact on an individual’s sensemaking process? The outcome from Study 1b was a table of bipolar constructs built using the RepGrid technique which assisted in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews to explore the meanings behind respondents’ personal constructs (RQ 2).

The bipolar constructs that emerged from Study 1b were carried through to Study 2, a quantitative study in which I developed two measures that can contribute to understanding a target’s perceptions of indirect aggression. In Study 2, I used an experimental design, which involved two conditions (supportive colleague condition and covert aggressive colleague condition). The aim of Study 2 was to answer RQ 3: How does emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability determine the types of scripts that an individual has when they are experiencing indirect/covert aggression within their workplace? To answer this question I developed a model that outlines the cognitive process used by a target when managing incidents of indirect/covert aggression and then tested that model. In the model, I proposed that the independent variables of Emotional Intelligence, Emotion
Regulation, and Emotional Stability predicted the types of scripts that a target might use. Additionally, I proposed a mediating variable of perceptions of indirect / covert aggression.

7.4 Brief Review of the Key Findings

In this section, I discuss four major findings or contributions that emerged across my three studies of the target’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression. These three contributions include (i) providing a better understanding regarding a target’s responses to indirect / covert aggression, by delineating the difference in the types of responses (viz. proactive scripts), (ii) highlighting the central role of emotions in experiences of indirect / covert aggression and sensemaking that the target experiences when dealing with indirect/covert aggression, (iii) identifying the importance of sensemaking and perception to the experiences of indirect/covert aggression.

7.4.1 Delineating the different types of responses to indirect/covert aggression.

With regard to the different responses targets had to indirect/covert aggression (proactive, reactive, passive), the common primary goal was to lessen their experience of indirect/covert aggression. Different targets, however, approached this basic goal in different ways. Based on my data collected in Study 1a and Study 1b and the measure I developed in Study 2, I suggest that targets are able to respond with one of three scripts: a proactive script, a reactive script, or a passive script.

Proactive targets were those who chose to use a problem-focus coping type strategy (Gross & John, 2003) and directly address the problem of indirect aggression (Study 1a). These individuals seemed to have healthy self-esteem (Study 1a). They also tended to cope with their ordeal of indirect/covert aggression in a positive way (Study 2). Proactive targets were able to report the aggressor to an appropriate authority (e.g., supervisor, human resources, etc.) within their organisation without the fear of failure (Study 1a). That is, even
though they may have feared failure, they knew that it would not lessen their value as individuals.

Lastly, contrary to their counterparts (reactive and passive targets), proactive targets tended to not see themselves as victims in life or of their situation (e.g., Study 1b). They chose to see the aggression they experienced as being about the aggressor’s own personal issues and tended to feel confident in their assessment (Study 1a). Proactive responses were linked to higher levels of emotional stability (Study 2) which has been linked to adaptive behaviours (i.e., attempting a new task, being able to deal with difficult situations, accept responsibility when in the wrong, etc., see Dettinger & Hart, 2007; Harvey & Keashly, 2003; Judge & Bono, 2001). In short, targets that used proactive responses were more confident when managing their experiences of indirect/covert aggression.

Proactive targets showed a measure of antecedent focus coping (e.g., cognitive reappraisal in Study 2) and research has linked this to the ability to thwart the aggressor’s indirect/covert aggressive behaviours by engaging the formal processes within their organisation (Dettinger & Hart, 2007; Harvey & Keashly, 2003; Judge & Bono, 2001).

Reactive targets, on the other hand, showed a proclivity to reacting to the perceived aggression (Study 1a) these targets did not take the time to accurately evaluate the outcome of using an emotionally reactive script to deal with their aggressor. Only after using emotionally reactive scripts did they realise that they were reciprocating the abuse, which in turn ‘upped the ante’ for the aggressor’s behaviour. For example, in Study 1a I noted the story of Jenny (ICT, 28 years) who was reactive after experiencing indirect/covert aggression for an extended period of time (8 months),

… I got bitchy. Basically, I’d be, like, “Oh, that’s right. We’re not adults in here anymore. We’re all teenagers” and I would actually call her on what she was doing and I wouldn’t let her get away with it. But I found that that escalated it…
Central to my arguments around reactive scripts is my discussion of Shaver’s Taxonomy of Emotions (e.g., anger, fear, joy, surprise, and sadness) in Chapters 2 and 4. Based on my findings in Study 1a the most salient of emotions that was the aftereffect for these types of reactive scripts was regret, which is a subset emotion of sadness (Salin et al., 2014; Shaver et al., 1987). Kahneman (2011) describes regret as both an emotion and punishment individuals administer to themselves because they should have known better and desire to correct the mistake. Kahneman further explains that intense regret is what an individual experiences when they can reflect on what they should have done, rather than what they did do. Reactive targets often reflect back on what they did and report that they wished they had done something else (see Study 1 and Salin et. al., 2014).

In Study 2, reactive scripts were linked to a higher level of awareness of own emotions. This may have manifested in the individual being particularly sensitive to indirect or covert aggressive acts (see Study 1a). However, while I predicted targets who are typically reactive, would have low emotional stability and give into the temptation of ‘playing’ the aggressor’s game (Aquino et al., 2004a; Aquino & Thau, 2009; Glasø et al., 2007), I found no such relationships to emerge in Study 2.

Finally, I proposed that some individuals would develop passive scripts to deal with the covert / indirect aggression. Based on the findings of Study 2, people who develop passive scripts clearly perceive their aggressors in a negative light. This also emerged in Study 1a where a number of respondents referred to their aggressor in a very pejorative way. Based on my research in Study 1a and Study 1b individuals who used passive scripts appeared to experience the most lasting effects from covert aggression including leaving their jobs and experiencing prolonged trauma as a result of their experience (Study 1a). Clearly, it
was an emotional experience for these individuals and this brings me to my next theme, the role of emotions in covert / indirect aggression.

7.4.2 The importance of emotion during indirect/covert aggression. In developing my program of research a recurring theme was the central role of emotion in the target’s experience of indirect / covert aggression. I noted in particular that one major framework I adopted in Chapter 4 (Study 1a) when collecting my interview data was Peak-End Theory (Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993). Using this theory I was able to demonstrate the importance of experiences of negative affect (e.g., anger, fear, sadness, etc.) that was created when dealing with indirect/covert aggression (i.e., an aversive stimulus). Negative affect determines how a target remembers the most intense moment (the peak of the event) and result of the indirect aggression and this was evident in Study 1a. The significant role of negative affect was also demonstrated in Study 2 where it was strongly linked to perceptions of the individual being aggressive.

The peak moment of the affective event of indirect/covert aggression provided insight to the target’s experienced negative affectivity. Respondents used adjectives, such as ‘pissed off’, ‘disappointed’, ‘frustrated’, etc. to explain how they felt at the crescendo of the experienced aggression (Study 1a). As such, it was affect driven responses, which shape work attitudes and cognitive driven behaviours (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). This supports the inclusion of Affective Events Theory as one of the theoretical frameworks I used throughout my thesis. Throughout the three studies, it was evident that self-control and cognitive effort were present when the target was dealing with the aggressor as a form of taxing mental work (see Kahneman, 2011). For example, in Study 1a, respondents often reported having to be constantly aware of their emotions and building ‘if-then’ scripts (Baldwin, 1992) to cope with day to day interactions with their aggressor. To restate from
Chapter 2, the ‘if’ is the possibility of performing certain indirect/covert aggressive behaviours, ‘then’ is the expected result of those behaviours (Baldwin, 1992). Respondents who succumbed to the temptation of reacting to the aggressor realised that it exacerbated the aggression experience rather than alleviating it.

Affective events (e.g., indirect/covert aggression) that happen within the workplace are typically an overwhelming hassle for the target because their emotions are more intense when they feel they have been affronted. The peaks of the events reported by reactive targets were associated with intense affectivity—such as ‘pissed off’—and labelling their aggressors (e.g., weird, bitch, nasty, etc.). The reactive target’s ending to their story was typically that they left their workplace with a grand exit (i.e., Marie stating that she planned her exit with a specific reactive script declaring to her aggressor that she would never return, see Study 1a). This is in line with the AET framework in that emotional reactions act more as a proximal predictor for work attitudes than does personality (Glasø et al., 2011). Salin et al. (2014) suggest that regretful targets typically have the scripts of “I wish I would have…” rather than feeling confident in the way that they did manage their aggressor.

Certainly, one of the clear issues is that often across the studies the respondent made sense of the situation by reflecting on the emotions they experienced. This brings me to the final major theme to emerge from my program of research, the central role of sensemaking in this process.

7.4.3 The importance of sensemaking and perceptions to experiences of indirect/covert aggression. A noteworthy finding and contribution across my program of research was my contribution to the understanding of a target’s cognitive processing when experiencing indirect/covert aggression. In Study 1a, individuals explained a process in which they would engage upon realising or becoming aware that they were a target of
indirect/covert aggression. Regardless of the frequency of aggression, if individuals perceived themselves to be the target of indirect/covert aggression, it triggered a response (Study 2). My data in Study 1a suggested that after realising that they were the target of indirect/covert aggression, respondents would engage in sensemaking (Zabrodska et al., 2014) and ask themselves how they became targets of indirect/covert aggression trying to understand why their aggressor was targeting them (Zabrodska et al., 2014). Though sensemaking was an on-going process, the target would become more aware of their own movements in relation to their aggressor in an attempt to avoid exacerbating their experiences of aggression (Study 1a). Being aware of their behaviours ultimately led to the target building scripts (responses) toward their aggressor, hence, the delineation between the different types of targets/scripts (e.g., reactive, passive, and proactive). This theme cut across all three studies.

I note that researchers observe that combining evaluation and meaning with the individual’s cognitive process will determine the individual’s future behaviours (see Anderson & Huesmann, 2003; Harvey & Keashly, 2003; Maitlis et al., 2013; Zabrodska et al., 2014). Cognitive processes include sensemaking, the process by which individuals try to understand unexpected and confusing situations such as indirect/covert aggression (see Maitlis et al., 2013; Salin et al., 2014; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005).

When the event produces aversive stimulation for the individual and is combined with other situational cues, it can prime a network of cognitive structures that influence the individual’s evaluation/realisation (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003). For example, an individual’s evaluation (or realisation) will shape the meaning of their emotion and how they regulate that emotion when responding to their aggressor or experiencing aversive stimuli (e.g., Jordan & Sheehan, 2000; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Zabrodska et al., 2014).
Realisation of being a target of indirect/covert aggression can occur after experiencing harmful behaviours (aversive stimuli) (e.g., Jordan & Sheehan, 2000; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Zabrodska et al., 2014). An examination of the themes that emerged from Study 1a lends further support to this research. Similarly, in Study 2, increased perceptions of indirect / covert aggression fuelled both positive and negative affect in the expected directions, and was also linked to both proactive and reactive scripts in the expected direction.

Again linking back to Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events Theory, when an event has an aversive effect, the evaluation and meaning an individual attributes to the event can influence their behaviour. In Study 2, one of the four facts of emotional intelligence—management of own emotions—has a strong correlation to perceptions of aggression, which backs the notion that how individuals perceive an event will determine the type of attribute they will associate with it (e.g., Keashly, 2001; Sheehan & Jordan, 2003). Similarly in Study 1a, those that could control their emotions seemed to be able to manage indirect / covert aggression more productively.

7.5 Practical Contributions

Managers will benefit from understanding that indirect/covert aggression is more than an interpersonal conflict or a personality clash. Indirect/covert aggression goes beyond uncivil behaviours; the aggressor’s intent is to harm the target and to negatively impact the target without being detected by colleagues. Based on the findings of my thesis, employees react in specific ways to acts of indirect / covert aggression and managers need to be aware of this.

Salin (2009) stated that organisations have the tendency to respond to reports of aggression in a mollifying process and regard them as personality clashes or interpersonal conflict. Indirect/covert aggression is done with the intent to harm; whereas conflict is a
reciprocal process where different parties have disagreements over issues of work processes, tasks, or responsibilities (Keashly & Nowell, 2011). Responding to complaints of aggression within the workplace is regarded as an organisational responsibility, where the manager is responsible for adjusting or modifying the aggressor’s behaviour and the target’s response. Addressing the target’s concerns can be done through formal or informal processes. Informal process options range from simple conflict resolution mechanisms to third party interventions when the behaviours have not escalated to the point of being unable to engage both the target and/or aggressor. This becomes much more difficult if the aggression has become destructive or when the target is continually on sick leave or refuses to engage in a conciliatory forum (see Hubert, 2003; Salin, 2009). Formal process might involve a grievance committee that consists of an internal or external review panel and the legitimacy of the complaint is adjudicated. The key issue that emerges from my thesis is that acts of indirect aggression can be too subtle to be identified in a formal process. Managers need to be aware of this and to ensure that all acts of aggression are appropriately addressed.

Managers should strongly encourage targets to use the informal process to immediately resolve the indirect/covert aggression and to control the situation by cognisant of the interaction between the target and the target’s aggressor. It is noteworthy that managers are generally responsible within the organisation for initially assessing the target’s report and determining the legitimacy of the claim. This can be largely dependent upon what the organisation deems to be aggressive behaviour. Because indirect/covert aggressive behaviours are subjective and difficult to define, allowing managers within the organisation such authority without a full understanding of the nature of indirect / covert aggression can leave a target feeling helpless and further targeted if their reports are dismissed as illegitimate. As such, my research practically contributes to understanding indirect / covert aggression and
allows managers to have a firmer grasp on the definition of indirect/covert aggression within their organisation to ensure reports of indirect/covert aggression are not framed as interpersonal conflict or personality clashes.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the findings within this research will help managers understand the target’s thought processes and the emotional experience (Study 1a) and to recognise targets’ proclivity to define their aggressors’ behaviours through personal constructs. That said, using the RepGrid technique and subsequently developing a scale from it within this programme of research, is a practical contribution to the field of indirect/covert aggression research. This leads to a recommendation that managers, at the very least, would benefit by adopting the RepGrid method when investigating reports of indirect/covert aggression (i.e., understanding who is the least and who is the most difficult to work with and why) to better understand the target’s perceptions of the reported aggression.

Nevertheless, it is important that organisations be proactive in training line managers to address a target’s reporting of indirect/covert aggression and to ameliorate the untoward relationship between the target and their aggressor. Prevention strategies need to be in place for managers to counter workplace aggression within their organisation. Workshops and/or information sessions should be held regularly with required attendance.

7.6 Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical framework underpinning my program of research (Studies 1a, 1b and 2) was Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events Theory, Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End Theory and Abelson and Schank’s Script Theory. Using these three theories concurrently helped answer the research questions 1) *What are individual’s experiences of indirect/covert aggression at work?* 2) *To what extent do the experiences of indirect/covert aggression impact on an individual’s sensemaking process?* The Peak-End
theory helped identify the most intense emotions experienced during the affective event and how the affective event ended. Using Script theory, I was able to identify three types of targets and what their respective responses tend to be.

The use of Kelly’s (1955) Personal Construct theory to build context around the targets’ frameworks of their aggressor is another contribution to the field of indirect/covert aggression research. Putting Personal Construct theory into practical application, RepGrid helped the target express exactly what they thought of their aggressor. This was helpful to understanding how the target would then formulate scripted responses to their aggressor, which was devised around their personal constructs of the aggressor.

7.6.1 Macro-theoretical framework and a micro-theoretical framework. I used Affective Events Theory as a ‘big tent’ (macro-theoretical framework) to explain that indirect/covert aggression a target experiences within their workplace is what Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) would classify as an affective event. The hassles (e.g., indirect/covert aggressive annoyances) of the indirect/covert aggression elicit discrete negative emotions of anger, frustration, (unpleasant) surprise, and sadness (see Lazarus, 1981). The micro-theoretical framework is Fredrickson and Kahneman’s Peak-End rule that individuals will remember the most intense moments because of the intensity of their feelings and will judge their overall experiences based on how the event ended. The most intense feelings targets reported experiencing during indirect/covert aggression came when the aggression became more frequent and began testing the target’s tolerance. As such, the way in which the event ended was the basis for how the target judged their whole experience in terms of working within their environment and their perceptions of both the aggressor and their colleagues. That is, if the event ended poorly (i.e., being fired, leaving the workplace, taking the organisation to litigation, etc.) then it would be deemed the equivalent of a nightmare. If the
target were able to absolve themselves from the experience of indirect/covert aggression, then the experience would be look upon more as an unpleasant experience. As such, Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events Theory was used as an overarching macro-theoretical framework to explain indirect/covert aggression as a hassle or affective events. As a micro-theoretical framework, I ‘cushioned’ Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End Theory into Affective Events Theory to explain the most intense feelings and how the affective event ended.

Theoretical contributions of these studies also include linking emotional intelligence, emotion regulation, and emotional stability to the types of scripts targets formulate and execute. Results found that low emotional intelligence affected both a target’s perceptions of indirect/covert aggression and the way in which they dealt with the aggressor. In other words, individuals who have low management of emotions will not be able to absolve themselves from being targets of indirect/covert aggression within the workplace, especially if engaging in reactive and passive scripts. The mechanism in which this occurs appears to be the ability to manage negative affectivity and negative responses. Individuals who have low management of emotions do not have the ability to harness their negative emotions (e.g., anger, fear, sadness, etc.) or their negative emotional responses (e.g., reactive, passive scripts). These types of responses impact the quality of the target’s perceived relationships with their aggressor and with other colleagues.

The results indicate the importance the target’s ability to manage their emotions and scripts when trying to resolve the perceived relationship with their aggressor. Theoretical frameworks have been proposed emphasising that the link between proactive scripts (i.e., using company policies, making supervisors aware, etc.) and the ability to manage emotions can lead to a better quality outcome between the target and their aggressor (Aquino, 2000;
Einarsen et al., 2003). My research demonstrates a link between emotional management and the types of scripts in which a target engages. The findings of my research also show that there are practical implications of using negative scripts (e.g., reactive & passive scripts) and managing an aggressor. That is, the less reactive or passive the scripts a target uses to deal with their aggressor, the less likely they are of being a self perpetuating target. Niven et al. (2012) suggest that targets who have the ability to have a critical look at their emotions and then management they tend to experience positive emotions, giving them the ability to negotiate stressful events and that reflective targets have a tendency to share the emotions they are experiencing with individuals with whom they are close. Individuals who suppress their emotions were found to be inauthentic and to lack emotional clarity (Gross & John, 2003). They typically do not share their emotions with others and avoid close relationships. In comparison to reappraisers, suppressors have lower self-esteem, low life satisfaction and more depressive symptoms Gross and John (2003).

7.7 Limitations

There are 7 major limitations to my program of research: 1) the use of non-validated measures in Study 2; 2) response rates for Study 2; 3) the likelihood of self-reporting measures and responses to interview questions being subject to social desirability bias in Studies 1a, 1b, and 2; 4) common method bias; 5) utilising a sample that is non-representative of the general population in Study 2; and 6) the artificial nature of the scenarios in Study 2. 7) The variance in environments and the impact this could have on the target.

7.7.1 Use of non-validated measures. In testing my theoretical model, I was required to develop new measures, as no current measures existed that allowed me to examine some of the variables in my model. Although identifying targets’ use of scripts and the personal constructs they use to describe aggressors is a contribution to the field,
developing and using a non-validated scale was limiting. Although I described my efforts to ensure the factor structure of each measure, the validation was affected by small samples sizes and the lack of additional tests to ensure the concurrent validity of the measures. Further validation of these scales is required.

7.7.2 Sample size. The response rate was low in Study 2 and was a limitation that may have influenced the results. Administering surveys at different times can be complex, hence, it is important to choose the study sample carefully. Split administration designs have a common problem of lower responses in the Time 2 collection. In future studies, I will increase the size of the Time 1 sample to account for this drop-out rate. In future, I could also recruit respondents who are working full time and can be administered the survey online for accessibility and convenience.

7.7.3 Social desirability of self-report measures and interview responses. The major hurdle when hearing one side of a story is the inability to control for self-report bias and social desirability bias. The notion that the target is casting themselves in a ‘hard done by’ light is very plausible. I, as the researcher will never know the whole/real story behind the events targets reported, which leaves me to take them at their word. Self-report bias and social desirability have always been factors when collecting the data for both qualitative and quantitative studies (Deandrea, Tom Tong, Liang, Levine, & Walther, 2012; Krumpal, 2013).

In my qualitative study, targets gave their perceptions of how a situation of indirect/covert aggression unfolded from the aggressor. This limits a researcher’s ability to investigate the circumstances surrounding reported events; it is possible that if the aggressor was interviewed that they may not even be aware of the target’s perceptions of their behaviour. Moreover, it will never be known if the targets of Study 1 downplayed their own inappropriate behaviours while inflating the aggressor’s. However, the intensity of the
emotions the targets reported lends credence to their stories. Emotions were described with
great intensity and conveyed in a real and authentic manner, thus making their stories highly
plausible.

Similarly in Study 2 some of the questionnaires involved items that could be
susceptible to social desirability bias. I introduced a number of measures across both studies
to attempt to limit the amount of social desirability bias. This included ensuring
confidentiality and anonymity to participants across all my studies and specifically focusing
early in Study 1 to build a trusting relationship with the interviewee so they felt they could be
honest in their responses.

7.7.4 Common method bias. Method variance refers to variance that is applicable
to measurement method rather than the constructs within the measurement (Bagozzi & Yi,
1991; Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Method, however, refers to the type
of measurement that is being used and what format is being used (i.e., scale type, response
format, etc., see Bagozzi & Yi, 2001; Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).
Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) state that common method bias is always a
potential issue when conducting research and that it may be a main source of measurement
error. Measurement error may skew the validity of the conclusion about the relationships
between measures, with systematic error being the most serious, as it may inflate the
observed relationships between measures of different constructs (Podsakoff et al., 2003).
One of the main sources of systematic measurement error is method variance—a variance
attributable to the measurement method as opposed to the focal construct (Bagozzi & Yi,
1991; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Irrespective of the source, systematic error variance can
seriously confound empirical results and yield misleading suppositions (Campbell & Fiske,
1959; Podsakoff et al., 2003). In Study 2, I controlled for common method bias (CMB) by
using a split administration design, which separated independent and dependant variables. Other ways in which CMB could be reduced in future studies include the use of a mix of scale formats and different questioning techniques.

7.7.5 **Sample that is non-representative of the general population.** As mentioned in Study 2, Chapter 6, one salient limitation is the use of a student sample that it is not representative of the general working population. The limited work experience and young age of the respondents and the overall life inexperience of the participants may affect the answers a student may give.

The experimental design that I used, however, can also be replicated with a working population (i.e., employed individuals). By administering the cross sectional survey into a business setting and collaborating with targets of indirect/covert aggression within their workplace, my research could be extended to consider various other types of scripts a target builds and the emotions that are attached to those scripts.

7.7.6 **Artificial scenarios.** Scenarios are defined as stories that outline a proposed situation obliging a participant to make a judgement and act upon it in experimental studies (Wason & Cox, 1996). In Study 2 I used a constant-variable-value vignette (CVVV) (Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Wason et al., 2002), where all respondents are reading the same scenario. There are four pitfalls that are associated with CVVV based studies, and they are: 1) uncontrolled respondent projections, 2) the evaluation process is unmeasured, 3) demand artefacts, and 4) social desirability bias. Uncontrolled respondent projections happen when respondents have different perceptions of the scenarios, especially when the CVVV is deficient in detail. Respondents will have difficulty in evaluating the scenario, therefore, will make up the facts within the scenario in order for them to make a judgement when answering the multiple or forced choice questions (Wason et al., 2002). In my study, I controlled for this effect by
piloting the scenarios prior to formal testing. Closed ended responses to CVVV can only summarise peoples’ judgement and not reveal the sequence of thoughts that are used to evaluate the behaviour within the scenario (Hyman & Steiner, 1996; Wason & Cox, 1996). Respondents use vignette-specific logics when they make judgments about the scenario. As such, a broad summary measure (i.e., a fixed set of scale items, such as multiple choice questionnaire) will always exclude important, vignette-specific rationales (Wason et al., 2002). The underlying evaluation process was the focus of Study 1a and Study 1b. Lastly, self-reports that encompass pro-social or unethical behaviours (i.e., scenarios that depict indirect/covert aggression, or other socially undesirable behaviours) are especially susceptible to social desirability (Fernandes & Randall, 1992; Wason et al., 2002). That is, respondents may not want to disclose what types of attitudes they may have or behaviours they may have engaged in regardless of assurance for anonymity when responding to questionnaires specific to the indirect/covert aggression scenario (Fernandes & Randall, 1992; Wason et al., 2002). In order to counter this effect, I ensured the anonymity of all respondents during the experiment.

### 7.7.7 The variance of environments that influence a target’s response.

The theory in my thesis and the data I have analysed has been at the within person, between person and interpersonal levels (Ashkanasy, 2003). Workplace aggression, however, works at many levels including institutional and organizational levels (Kent, Jordan & Troth, 2014). Employees do not function in isolation of the organizations in which they work, and this environment can have a major impact on the aggression employees’ experience (Ashkanasy, 2003; Kent, Jordan, & Troth, 2014). A limitation of my thesis is therefore the lack of consideration of the impact of the working environment. While this was a scoping decision made early in the development of my research, I do not profess that the frameworks I have
developed and the conclusions I have reached can operate in isolation of the environment and this as aspect could be incorporated in future research.

7.8 Future Directions

Studies 1a, 1b and 2 demonstrate that indirect/covert aggression goes beyond discourteous behaviours within the workplace such as not greeting or acknowledging a colleague when passing them in the corridors, or forgetting to hold the door for people. These studies support the notion that indirect/covert aggression is about behaviours that are intended to cause harm by the aggressor by engaging in seemingly innocuous behaviour. These ill-intended behaviours preclude organisations from functioning at an optimum tempo due to employee turnover, absenteeism and low productivity.

Future research should consider: 1) further developing the cognitive script scale that was developed in Study 1 and used in Study 2 (e.g., including the notion that high EI has led to the conclusion that a passive approach has merit), 2) conduct a focus group of human resource practitioners to investigate their role and actions when approached with an allegation of indirect/covert to identify scripts used by HR practitioners, 3) using the same research where the target is a full time employee and the aggressor is a manager.

As noted earlier, further validation of the Cognitive Script scale is required. While I have provided three main responses that targets’ can use against indirect/covert aggression further work is required.

I also identified indirect/covert aggression as an affective event, and one that elicits hot, negative emotions for targets. Future research could capture the full range of emotions that are experienced by targets and more specifically identify specific emotion regulation strategies and how they influences script building. Emotion intelligence is key when a target’s negative emotions are activated (e.g., anger, frustration, etc.) while experiencing
indirect/covert aggression. Specifically, it is important to determine whether a target engages in cognitive reappraisal or emotion suppression when their hot cognition (Abelson, 1963) creates an emotional flood of discrete negative emotions (see Pavlenko, Chernyi, & Goubkina, 2009). More work in these two areas would benefit the field of indirect/covert aggression research.

Negative emotions reduce the target’s ability to focus on proactively responding to the aggressor (see Pavlenko et al., 2009) and inhibit the target’s rational thought process, which consequently ends in responding to their aggressor reactively. Understanding the role of low activating (e.g., sadness) and high activating emotions (e.g., anger, anxiety, etc.) discrete negative emotions that a target feels when experiencing indirect/covert aggression will help determine how they formulate their scripted responses.

Finally, more work could be done around how individual differences impact on the target’s experience of indirect/covert aggression. In my research I examined the target’s emotional intelligence and their emotional stability. More work is required in this area with a number of variables such as self-esteem, self-monitoring and locus of control potentially providing interesting avenues for research.

7.9 **Recommendations for managers and organisations.**

There are a number of recommendations that can emerge from my research. The first is that all members within an organisation need a consistent framework for defining the terms of what is and what is not appropriate behaviour. For one person, aggression could come in the simplest form of not saying please and thank you or a colleague not acknowledging them as they meet in a corridor or a lift. Conversely, the starting point for aggression for another person could be with a colleague who makes a flippant remark at the expense of the target and/or other colleagues. Essentially, what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within
the workplace is determined by each individual’s perceptions. It is up to the leaders within organisations to set the social milieu within their organisations and the law of the country in which the organisation operates (Yamada, 2011).

Fostering a polite and engaging workforce that practices inclusivity is one suggested starting point (see Hubert, 2003; Yamada, 2011). Another salient point is to understand the intent of the aggressive behaviour. Understanding can be gained by querying the aggressor regarding their intentions, but there is a risk that the aggressor will not truthfully disclose their real motivation (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012).

Nonetheless, it is the organisational leadership’s responsibility to not only set the tone for a civil workplace, but also to teach individuals how to behave in a civil manner (see Hubert, 2003). The term ‘teaching’ refers to implementing a training programme in which all individuals participate as part of the induction program and/or as an ongoing ‘maintenance’ program centred around civility and respect within the workplace (Hubert, 2003; Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracy, 2012).

As discussed throughout this thesis, indirect aggression is a lower intensity form of aggression in which the aggressor is anonymous or repudiates their ill intentions toward their target. This repudiation makes it difficult for the target to report incidents of indirect aggression to supervisors and/or human resources. To this end, defining behaviours—or giving concrete examples of behaviours (i.e., intimidating stares, social isolation, rumour mongering, etc.) is difficult because the behaviours are nebulous and can be easily blamed on the target and the target’s perceptions of reality. Organizations need to help to develop common understandings of such behaviour before it can be addressed. I noted in Study 1 that participants reported having to defend or try to convince their superiors that they were indeed
experiencing indirect/covert aggression regardless of their credibility within the organisation. This needs to be addressed by managers and organisations.

7.10 Concluding comments

The focus of my thesis was to understand the experiences of indirect/covert aggression within the workplace context and the scripts (responses) used by targets to manage an aggressor. I used a theoretical approach that served as a framework to answer the three core research questions. The theoretical frameworks used included Weiss and Cropanzano’s (1996) Affective Events Theory and Fredrickson and Kahneman’s (1993) Peak-End Theory for understanding the experience of indirect/covert aggression and Schank and Abelson’s (1977) Script Theory to understand the types of responses that a target would formulate. First, in Study 1a, I examined the cognitive process that a target goes through during their experience of indirect/covert aggression and delineated four major stages: realisation, sensemaking, behavioural awareness and the formulation of scripts. The second finding, from Study 1b, I identified the targets’ personal constructs of their aggressors. These personal constructs were influenced by discrete negative emotions, shedding light on the intensity of emotions targets feel toward their aggressor. Third, in Study 2, I showed how there was a significant relationship between indirect/covert aggression and specific responses (proactive, reactive and passive) and outlined a significant relationship between scripts and both perceptions of aggression and individual difference variables.
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the Nebraska symposium on motivation.


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Appendix 1: Study 1a - Screening Questionnaire

1) How many years of work experience do you have?

2) Have you ever had a female colleague that you didn’t get along with?

☐ ☐

3) Did you feel like this inability to get along with you resulted in catty or petty behaviour by that person?

☐ ☐

4) Are you interested in participating in an interview about this behaviour?

☐ ☐
Appendix 2: Example of Codes

DEFINITION: The target is asked if they can recall the moment he/she realised that he/she was being pinpointed as a target. Content in which the aggressor has deterred other work colleagues to avoid and/or ignore the target. The target believes that others do not socially engage them within their workplace because of the aggressor. EXAMPLES: The aggressor invites everyone to a social gathering within the workplace except the target.

EXCLUSIONS / QUALIFICATIONS: Does not need to be mentioned in direct relation to their responses. Can include comments on their job or experience in general.

LABEL: If-then scripts
DEFINITION: The procedural script: Basically what the target resolved to doing in their head. EXAMPLES: “If I work harder, then this person will leave me alone”

EXCLUSIONS / QUALIFICATIONS: Having thought about the incident over and over again, but did not express that they built a strategy of an if-then script.

LABEL: I'm not speaking to you body language
DEFINITION: Body language by the aggressor that gives the target indicators that communication from him/her is not welcomed. This is where the target describes the aggressor pretending not see him/her, closed body language so that the target will not engage the aggressor. EXAMPLES: The target walks by the aggressor and the aggressor folds their arms and gives a half-hearted greeting.

EXCLUSIONS/QUALIFICATIONS: The aggressor had their back to the target, as the target was walking past, etc.

LABEL: Isolated
DEFINITION: The target felt a sense of social isolation and ostracisation by the aggressor and the experience of workplace aggression. EXAMPLES: A feeling being shut out and not having a healthy social network within his/her workplace. The target feels shunned and/or ignored by his/her colleagues, supervisor, etc.

EXCLUSION/QUALIFICATION: The target is in an office by themselves or works from home.

LABEL: Sabotaging the target's work
DEFINITION: Do any types of acts to reduce the target’s productivity surreptitiously and is guised as being cooperative and cordial. EXAMPLES: The target cannot turn their computer on because the power cord is missing, or cannot complete a task that was assigned to them because information is purposely withheld.

EXCLUSION/QUALIFICATION: The target gives concrete examples of sabotage that include: unplugging phones, having passwords changed purposely without their knowledge, having information purposely withheld so the target will fail to complete the deliverable.
These code examples are direct extracts from the full Codebook, which is available upon request.
Appendix 3: Illustrative Examples of Reported Negative Affectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Dominating Affect</th>
<th>Illustrative Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect response to destabilisation</td>
<td>Pissed off, upset</td>
<td>I would have been inwardly <em>pissed off</em> but -- because I was young at the time too. It's <em>upset</em> and all those things so it would have been inward. I would have kept it in. (Interview 16F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upset, sad, angry, hurt</td>
<td>I felt really upset. I felt I wanted to cry because I don't want to let people down. And for me, when someone is direct with me and I'm having to just tread on eggshells around them, I feel sad, I feel <em>angry</em>, I feel hurt. It's really everything. It's just not pleasant. (Interview 10F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Angry, disappointment, betrayal</td>
<td><em>Anger</em> was the first and most dominant emotion and, yes, <em>disappointment</em> and <em>betrayal</em> by my superior for not exercising appropriate policy and being sensitive to my feelings about being accused or unfoundedly accused. (Interview 12F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect scripts in response to indirect/covert aggression</td>
<td>Frustration, powerlessness</td>
<td>Sometimes, it just varied to “Oh well, you know, the issue wasn’t all that important anyway and this is just her general behaviour” to sheer and utter <em>frustration</em> and “How do I get out of this?” My flight response was “I have to get out of this. I don’t want to do this. This is not me. I can’t participate in it because that’s not me either.” So, it’s <em>powerlessness</em> as well. (Interview 4F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>I wouldn't say, what this, okay is. You know what; I just thought you're not worth it anyway? In reality, you're not someone to drive one contact, you know, I've got plenty of friends, it wasn't something that <em>upset</em> me, really. (Interview 1F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Yeah, I… I get very <em>upset</em> by it and I tend to internalise it and stew on it and, you know… and I have thought about going to speak to her and saying “What’s going on here, because this is ridiculous?” (Interview 2F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confused, angry</td>
<td>Confused and <em>angry</em>. (Interview 3F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hurt, guilty, surprise, shock,</td>
<td>Oh, it was really <em>hurtful</em> because it was like it was taking away from my character. It was like I felt <em>guilty</em>. She's trying to make me feel <em>guilty</em>, and I did feel <em>guilty</em> so it worked, I did feel <em>guilty</em> for trying to seek help. But yeah, it was really quite upsetting because I knew in my heart that I was doing the right thing that I wasn't supposed to lie. And I guess, yeah, mostly it was just really -- it was a bit of <em>shock</em> too as well because I thought, I can't believe I'm being asked to do this. I can't believe this actually happened. It was really quite <em>shocking</em>. And then when I kind of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
got over the *shock* I was like, oh, my God! It was really bad. I was upset. And then when she found out I've gone to HR, she made me feel *guilty*. Yeah, I guess she was trying to run me down and make me feel I guess less confident or less sure of myself and trying to get me to give in to the pressure. (Interview 11F)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect response to isolation</th>
<th>Frustrated, Powerlessness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, absolutely. I think I was particularly <em>frustrated</em>. I wasn't angry but I was feeling like those waves of emotion like I just don't understand what's going on. I don't know why I'm actually being isolated like this. I don't know if there's anything particular that I'd done wrong personally or is there anything that I can change or is it just her behaviour? As I said, I felt isolated at the time and just I had a lack of focus and direction. (Interview 14F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect response to sensemaking/mindfulness</th>
<th>Stressed, withdraw,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get highly <em>stressed</em>, that is how my reactions are, I get hypertensions, my stomach feel compressed, I actually tend to <em>withdraw</em> and get quiet, I try to work even harder to try to feel whatever it is that I am doing, over a period of time I again get highly critical and I get verbalized [25:16:7] with various things and again a times be quite confronting that I [25:28:0] and I can describe things or whatever it is that is actually happening. (Interview 15F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Terrible, Intimidation | Mm. I felt *terrible*. I felt… I felt… she *intimidated* me a hell of a lot. She… I lost my self-esteem and I told her that, that she’d done that to me and for her I think it was the power that she gained from that, that made her feel good about herself. (Interview 5F) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxious, anger, confusion, annoyance, hatred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Anxiousness, anger, confusion, annoyance, hatred</em> I guess, disliking the situation, disliking the situation. (Interview 7 F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxious, nauseous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes. Very <em>anxious</em> and <em>nauseous</em> and completely belittling myself. (Interview 9F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hurt, frightened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yeah, I felt <em>hurt</em> and towards the end I was very <em>nervous</em> about going to work. I could actually feel myself shaking with <em>fear</em> as to what was going to happen next after I was verbally attacked. I was probably not <em>frightened</em> for my life but <em>frightened</em> for what the next event was going to be. (Interview 13F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Time 1 Survey

You are invited to participate in a survey about behaviours within the workplace.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey.

Please read these instructions carefully and keep them in mind while completing this questionnaire. Completion of the survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes (as observed in a pre-test).

There are six sections in this questionnaire. Please answer ALL questions in EACH section.

We would like you to answer the questions as honestly as you can.

- There are NO right or WRONG answers for the questions.
- We are only interested in your experiences.
- We are not trying to test your knowledge.

How to answer the questions? An example.

Please indicate your experience about the following statement by circling the appropriate number inside the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The design of this questionnaire is:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprofessional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 1: YOUR UNIQUE IDENTIFIER

Before you start filling in your responses, it is important that you generate a unique 4-digit code identifier. This enables the two surveys you complete, 2 weeks apart, to be matched.

Remember, the questionnaires and your answers to it are completely confidential. The only identifier is a number unique to yourself and known only by you.

For example:

What is the FIRST LETTER of your mother’s first name? E (Mother’s name is Ellen)

What is the LAST LETTER of your father’s first name? N (Father’s name is Cameron)

What is the DAY on which you were born? (Two digits) 26 (Birthday is 26/11/90)

EXAMPLE UNIQUE ID IS: EN26

Please create your Unique Identifier using the following information:

What is the FIRST LETTER of your mother’s first name?

What is the LAST LETTER of your father’s first name?

What is the DAY on which you were born? (Two digits)

YOUR UNIQUE ID IS: 

SECTION 2:

Q1. What is your gender? (Please circle) 1. Male 2. Female

Q2. What is your age?

Q3. What is your enrollment status? (Please circle) 1. Fulltime 2. Part-time

Q4. What is the length of your work experience? ______ (Years) ______ (Months)

Q5. What is your ethnicity? (Please circle)

Australian  Australian Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander
Chinese Taiwanese Japanese Korean
New Zealander Maori English Scottish
Welsh American Canadian African American

Other: ____________________________
SECTION 3: We want to know about your attitudes and behaviours in relation to working with others. While you are completing these questions, please think about how you work with others most of the time. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements (circle the instructions you followed when taking this measure).

|   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|------------------|---------|---------------------------|------|               |
| 1 | I respect the opinion of others, even if I think they are wrong. | | | | |
| 2 | I can explain the emotions I feel to others. | | | | |
| 3 | I can read my others “true” feelings, even if they try to hide them. | | | | |
| 4 | I can discuss the emotions I feel with others. | | | | |
| 5 | When I am frustrated with others, I can overcome my frustration. | | | | |
| 6 | I am able to describe accurately the way others are feeling. | | | | |
| 7 | When deciding on a dispute, I try to see all sides of a disagreement before I come to a conclusion. | | | | |
| 8 | My enthusiasm can be contagious for others I work with. | | | | |
| 9 | When I talk to others I can gauge their true feelings from their body language. | | | | |
| 10 | If I feel down, I can tell others what will make me feel better. | | | | |
| 11 | I can tell when others don’t mean what they say. | | | | |
| 12 | I am able to cheer others up when they are feeling down. | | | | |
| 13 | I can talk to other about the emotions I experience. | | | | |
| 14 | I can get my others to share my keenness for a project. | | | | |
| 15 | I can provide the “spark” to get others enthusiastic. | | | | |
| 16 | I give a fair hearing to other people’s ideas. | | | | |
SECTION 4: This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then list the number from the scale below next to each word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment OR indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week (circle the instructions you followed when taking this measure).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Quite Often</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Distressed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Excited</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Upset</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Guilty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Scared</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Hostile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Strong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Interested</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Enthusiastic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Proud</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Irritable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Alert</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Jittery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Attentive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Nervous</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Active</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Ashamed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Inspired</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Determined</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Afraid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 5: We would like to ask you some questions about your emotional life, in particular, how you control (that is, regulate and manage) your emotions. The questions below involve two distinct aspects of your emotional life: one is your emotional experience, or what you feel like inside; the other is your emotional expression, or how you show your emotions in the way you talk, gesture, or behave. Although some of the following questions may seem similar to one another, they differ in important ways. For each item, please answer using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Quite Often</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I'm thinking about.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When I feel positive emotions, I am careful not to express them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When I'm faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I control my emotions by not expressing them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. When I am feeling negative emotions, I make sure not to express them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I'm thinking about.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I keep my emotions to myself.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I'm thinking about.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. When I am feeling positive emotions, I am careful not to express them.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 6: Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Extraverted, enthusiastic.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Critical, quarreling.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dependable, self-disciplined.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Anxious, easily upset.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Open to new experiences, complex.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Reserved, quiet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sympathetic, warm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Disorganized, careless.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Calm, emotionally stable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Conventional, uncreative.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**SECTION 7**: Answer the following questions the way you feel. There are no right or wrong answers. Mark your response to the question. Don’t take too much time answering any one question, but do try to answer them all. Mark your response to the question by labelling each line as either a or b in the middle column. You should choose the statement that most applies to you.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>a. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck</td>
<td>b. People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>a. One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics.</td>
<td>b. There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>a. In the long run, people get the respect they deserve in this world.</td>
<td>b. Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>a. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.</td>
<td>b. Most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>a. Without the right breaks, one cannot be an effective leader.</td>
<td>b. Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>a. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.</td>
<td>b. Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>a. In the case of the well-prepared student, there is rarely, if ever, such a thing as an unfair test.</td>
<td>b. Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>a. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.</td>
<td>b. The few people in power run this world, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.</td>
<td>b. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of luck anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>a. In my case, getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.</td>
<td>b. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>a. What happens to me is my own doing.</td>
<td>b. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>a. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do with it.</td>
<td>b. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SECTION 8: The following behaviours are often seen as examples of negative behaviours within the workplace.
Over the last six months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts at work? Please circle the number that best corresponds with your experience at work over the last 6 months:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Quite Often</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Someone withholding information which affects your performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Unwanted sexual attention</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Being ordered to do work below your level of competence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trivial or unpleasant tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Spreading of gossip and rumours about you</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Being ignored, excluded or being &quot;sent to Coventry&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habits and background), your attitude or your private life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Intimidating behaviour such as finger-pointing, invasion of</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal space, showing, blocking/barring the way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Threats of violence or physical abuse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Persistent criticism of your work and effort</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Having your opinions and views ignored</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Insulting messages, telephone calls or e-mails</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Systematically being required to carry out tasks which clearly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fall outside your job descriptions, e.g. private errands</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deadlines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Having allegations made against you</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Excessive monitoring of your work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!
Appendix 5: Time 2 Survey, Indirect/Covert Aggression Scenario survey

You are invited to participate in a survey about behaviours within the workplace.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey.

Please read these instructions carefully and keep them in mind while completing this questionnaire. Completion of the survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes (as observed in a pre-test).

There are three sections in this questionnaire. Please answer ALL questions in EACH section.

We would like you to answer the questions as honestly as you can.

- There are NO right or WRONG answers for the questions.
- We are only interested in your experiences.
- We are not trying to test your knowledge.

How to answer the questions? An example.

Please indicate your experience about the following statement by circling the appropriate number inside the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The design of this questionnaire is:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprofessional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 1: YOUR UNIQUE IDENTIFIER

Before you start filling in your responses, it is important that you generate a unique 4-digit code identifier. This enables the survey you completed previously to be matched with this one.

Remember, the questionnaires and your answers to it are completely confidential. The only identifier is a number unique to yourself and known only by you.

For example:

What is the first letter of your mother’s first name? E (Mother’s name is Ellen)
What is the last letter of your father’s first name? N (Father’s name is Cameron)
What is the day on which you were born? (two digits) 26 (Birthday is 02/11/90)

EXAMPLE UNIQUE ID IS: EN02

Please create your Unique Identifier using the following information:

What is the first letter of your mother’s first name? 
What is the last letter of your father’s first name? 
What is the day on which you were born? (two digits) 

YOUR UNIQUE ID IS: ______

SECTION 2:

Q1. What is your gender? (Please circle) 1. Male 2. Female
Q2. What is your age?
Q3. What is your enrollment status? (Please circle) 1. Fulltime 2. Part-time
Q4. What is the length of your work experience? ______ (Years) ______ (Months)
Q5. What is your ethnicity? (Please circle)

Australian  Australian Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander
Chinese  Taiwanese  Japanese  Korean
New Zealander  Maori  English  Scottish
Welsh  American  Canadian  African American

Other: __________________________
SECTION 3 (CA): You have recently been transferred to a new team comprising four other team members. The team has been created to work collaboratively on a marketing project. You show your enthusiasm by showing up to team meetings, being on time, being well prepared and motivated to offer new ideas. You are very professional in your manners, dress, and attitude. However, there is one teammate who constantly rolls their eyes at you whenever you speak and pretends not to hear you whenever you are speaking. When you are at your desk chatting to colleagues/friends you find out that this team member has been gossiping about you and questioning your professional competency to be on the team. At a meeting, you notice the same team member write something in their notebook and pass it to the person sitting next to them while you are speaking. After the meeting, the same person tells you that he/she has written feedback about your meeting presentation that he/she would like to give you suggesting some changes to the things you have proposed. Later you find out that this person has changed some of your work without telling you.
The following table contains a number of statements that are applicable to the above scenario on page 3. Please rate how much you personally agree or disagree with each of these statements i.e., how much they reflect how you feel or think personally about this scenario. A high score indicates positive endorsement of that statement.

**WITH REGARD TO THE SCENARIO ON PAGE 3: My perceptions of my teammate’s behaviour are as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample Agree</th>
<th>Moderately Agree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>Sample Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It seems as though my teammate is discouraging people from allowing me to be on the team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My teammate is ignoring me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My teammate is gossiping about me as though they are angry with me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My teammate is telling bad or false stories about me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It is as though my teammate plans secretly to antagonise me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My teammate says bad things behind my back</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My teammate is telling my secrets to a third person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. It is as though my teammate is trying to get others to dislike me because they are angry with me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. It seems like my teammate is becoming friends with my friends as a kind of revenge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My teammate criticises my work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My teammate seems to criticise my appearance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My teammate is supportive of me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My teammate respects my opinions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. It seems as if my teammate is interested in what I have to say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I could rely on this teammate for constructive feedback</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Answer the following questions the way you see your teammate in the above scenario on page 3. There are no right or wrong answers. Don't take too much time answering any one question, but do try to answer them all. You should rate the statements below in terms of how you view your teammate in this scenario.

WITH REGARD TO THE SCENARIO ON PAGE 3: I view my teammate as a person who:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Quite Often</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is warm toward me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is approachable when I need help</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is friendly with me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is genuine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is polite</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Takes responsibility for their behaviours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Seeks other colleagues’ input</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is a team player</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Seeks collaboration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is relaxed at work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Controls their emotions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Help will not provide help</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Is aloof with me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Is fake</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Is rude</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Help will not accept responsibility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Is controlling with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Prefers to work as an individual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Does not like teamwork</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Is closed off at work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Is emotionally reactive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Is callous toward me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of the scenario on page 3, please respond to each statement below regarding how you would deal with this type of team mate in a similar situation at work. Please rate the extent to which you would engage in the following thoughts, feelings or behaviours. A high score indicates positive endorsement of that statement.

### WITH REGARD TO THE SCENARIO ON PAGE 3: In responding to this situation:

<p>| | | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>If I do nothing to stop my teammate, then it will ‘keep the peace’.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>If I copy this teammate’s behaviour, then they would see me as a team player.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>If I inform my teammate that their behaviour is unacceptable, then they would stop.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>If I approach my manager/supervisor and ask them to ‘speak to’ my teammate about their behaviour, then things will get better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>If I pay no attention to my teammate, then she would leave me alone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>If I ‘lose it’ by getting really angry at my teammate, then they would stop.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>If I keep my mouth shut, then things will improve.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If I respond the same way to my teammate, then I would feel better.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If I yell at my teammate, then they would leave me alone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>If my teammate continually shows me they are actively listening to me, then I will do the same for them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>If I allowed my teammate to continue with this behaviour, then I would not be able to manage how angry I get.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>If I challenged my teammate on their behaviour, then they would stop.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>If I seek help from my teammate, then they would leave me alone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>If I listen to my teammate’s feedback, then my work will improve.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>If my teammate continues to behave like this in working with me, then I will do the same to them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>If I mention the company policy on appropriate behaviours in the workplace, then it would stop my teammate.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>If I don’t say anything, then my teammate will leave me alone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>If my teammate continues to work like this, then I would be happy to work with them in the future.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please rate how much you agree or disagree with each of the statements below regarding the teammate in the scenario. A high score indicates positive endorsement of that statement.

**WITH REGARD TO THE SCENARIO ON PAGE 3: How I view the future with my teammate:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I would recommend this teammate to other colleagues for future teamwork</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If I had the opportunity to work with this person again, I would</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I would avoid this teammate in future interactions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I would be happy to continue working with this team member</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I would speak positively of this team member to others in the future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!
Appendix 6: Ethics Approval – Study 1

Dear Ms Kent

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "Examining women who are the targets of social manipulation in the workplace." (GU Ref No: EHR/24/11/HREC).

The additional information was considered by Office for Research. This is to confirm that this response has largely addressed the comments and concerns of the HREC.

This decision is subject to:

The contact officer signing sF1 of the Expedited Ethical Review Checklist.

The primary supervisor signing sF1A of the Expedited Ethical Review Checklist.

An appropriate authorising officer, who is not a member of the research team, completing and signing sF2 of the Expedited Ethical Review Checklist.

We will email you a PDF copy of your application, so you can return a signed and authorised copy to us.

Please note that when you are ready to move onto the next phase of the research, you may be able to vary this clearance, rather than submitting a new application. The variation process is discussed in Booklet 6 of the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual.

However, you are authorised to immediately commence this research on the strict understanding that these matters are addressed and that you provide details of how they were addressed.

Please note that failure to provide a timely response to these matters may result in this authorisation being suspended or withdrawn. The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

It would be appreciated if you could give your urgent attention to the issues raised by the Committee so that we can finalise the ethical clearance for your protocol promptly.

Regards

Dr Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
G39 room 3.55 Gold Coast Campus
Griffith University
Dear Ms Kent

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the conditional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "NR: Examining indirect aggression within the workplace context" (GU Ref No: EHR/21/13/HREC).

This is to confirm receipt of the remaining required information, assurances or amendments to this protocol.

Consequently, I reconfirm my earlier advice that you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

Dr Gary Allen
Senior Policy Officer
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: +61 (0)7 3735 5585
fax: +61 (0)7 3735 7994
email: g.allen@griffith.edu.au
web:

Cc:

Researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students.

You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting
http://policies.griffith.edu.au/pdf/Code%20for%20the%20Responsible%20Conduct%20of%20Research.pdf

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