

Personal and Workgroup Incivility: Impact on Work and Health Outcomes

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This article develops a theoretical model of the impact of workplace incivility on employees' occupational and psychological well-being. In Study 1, the authors tested the model on 1,158 employees, finding that satisfaction with work and supervisors, as well as mental health, partially mediated effects of personal incivility on turnover intentions and physical health; this process did not vary by gender. Study 2 cross-validated and extended these results on an independent sample of 271 employees, showing negative effects of workgroup incivility that emerged over and above the impact of personal incivility. In both studies, all results held while controlling for general job stress. Implications for organizational science and practice are discussed.

Keywords: workplace incivility, occupational health, workplace mistreatment, well-being

Over the past decade, workplace aggression has garnered increasing interest in the social and organizational sciences. In researching such conduct as bullying (e.g., Rayner, 1997), psychological aggression (e.g., Baron & Neuman, 1996), and interpersonal aggression (Glomb & Liao, 2003), scholars have focused on behaviors that involve a clear sense of intentional hostility from the aggressor. In contrast, the current study addresses workplace incivility, a "milder" form of interpersonal mistreatment in which intentionality is less apparent. Unlike other antisocial work behaviors, such as harassment or sabotage, incivility typically does not warrant legal attention. Yet because of the lack of sanctions, organizations might often dismiss incivility as transient and trivial conduct that merits no intervention. We aim in this study to dispel these notions by demonstrating that seemingly minor instances of disrespect can have a measurable adverse impact on the workforce.

Specifically, this study extends the nascent literature on workplace incivility in three primary ways. First, we propose a model of mediating processes that link incivility to key outcomes in occupational health psychology. Although it might seem obvious that experiences of mistreatment should have negative outcomes, it is important to understand why and how such everyday forms of disrespect can have wide-ranging costs. We help advance the incivility-outcome literature by grounding our model more extensively in theory (e.g., affective events theory; dysempowerment theory) and by identifying both

direct and indirect pathways of harm. Second, extant research on workplace incivility has been restricted to a single level of analysis, focusing primarily on individual instigators and targets. This has likely led to the assumption that incivility is an individual-level problem that is limited to the parties directly involved. We challenge this assumption by examining incivility at the group level and investigate whether its negative impact extends beyond targeted individuals to other employees who work alongside them. Finally, theory suggests that women demand stronger norms of respect than men do because of enhanced interpersonal sensitivity. Although incivility represents a violation of interpersonal norms of respect, past research has not examined whether men and women experience the effects of workplace incivility differentially; we address this question in the current study.

What Is Workplace Incivility?

In their seminal work, Andersson and Pearson (1999, p. 457) defined *workplace incivility* as "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others." Examples of uncivil conduct include sarcasm, disparaging tones and remarks, hostile stares, and the "silent treatment." The three key characteristics of workplace incivility, then, are norm violation, ambiguous intent, and low intensity (Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001). We discuss each in turn.¹

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¹ More in-depth examinations of the similarities and dissimilarities between the constructs of workplace incivility and other forms of antisocial work behavior can be found in Andersson and Pearson (1999), Cortina (in press), Lim and Cortina (2005), and Pearson, Andersson, and Porath (2005).

Violation of Workplace Norms of Respect

Andersson and Pearson (1999) conceptualized workplace incivility as a specific form of *employee deviance*, which is defined as “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both” (Robinson & Bennett, 1995, p. 556). Employee deviance, in turn, represents a subset of *antisocial employee behavior* (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997). Andersson and Pearson argued that every organization has universal norms of respect for fellow workers, reflecting a shared moral understanding among organizational members that allows cooperation (Hartman, 1996). This implies that although what is considered uncivil in one organization may not always apply to other organizations, we can still hold a common understanding of workplace incivility as behavior that disrupts mutual respect in the workplace.

Ambiguous Intent

There are two dimensions that distinguish workplace incivility from workplace aggression, the first being the instigator’s intent to harm. The definition of aggression generally includes a clear intent to injure someone physically or psychologically (e.g., Folger & Baron, 1996; Kaukiainen et al., 2001; Neuman & Baron, 1997), but uncivil acts do not necessarily come with such transparent intent. Uncivil behavior overlaps with more subtle or psychological forms of aggression (e.g., Björkqvist, Österman, & Lagerpetz, 1994) when it is motivated by a desire to harm the target or organization or to benefit oneself. However, incivility is distinct from aggression when the perpetrator lacks clear intention to harm. In the latter case, uncivil behaviors can be attributed to other factors, such as instigators’ ignorance, oversight, or personality, and any resulting harm may be accidental rather than intentional (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al., 2001). These examples would all qualify as incivility if the injurious intent, if present, was not obvious to at least one of the parties involved (instigator, target, or observer). Facing such ambiguous and subtle behaviors, victims of incivility could experience significant distress, due to difficulty in making sense of the situation, indecisiveness about whether or how to respond, and uncertainty about what could happen next. Instigators might often prefer to use subtle and disguised forms of aggression in which intention is not apparent, making it difficult to attribute the victim’s harm to the aggressor (e.g., Björkqvist, Österman, & Lagerpetz, 1994; Kaukiainen et al., 2001). In fact, Cortina (in press) has argued that some instigators intentionally hide discriminatory intentions behind “general” incivility, which allows them to retain an egalitarian image and escape sanctions.

Low Intensity

Uncivil behaviors generally involve less intensity (i.e., “of lower magnitude of force”; Pearson et al., 2001, p. 1401) than aggression does. Moreover, incivility is not limited to verbal abuse, as it also includes nonverbal disrespectful behaviors such as glaring at, ignoring, or excluding colleagues. Despite its low intensity, acts of incivility can escalate to aggression. Criminologists and psychologists have found that interpersonal violence often begins with rude comments and minor mistreatment (e.g., Felson & Steadman,

1983; Goldstein, 1994), so uncivil acts can potentially spawn a spiral of increasingly aggressive events (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Defining Incivility at the Individual and Group Levels

To date, researchers have studied incivility only at the individual level of analysis, examining characteristics of perpetrators and targets (e.g., Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Pearson et al., 2001). We argue that exposure to incivility in the workplace is a type of job stressor that can be experienced at a personal level (being a direct target) as well as a characteristic of the work environment that can manifest at the group level (e.g., for the target’s workgroup or team). This is in line with R. J. Hackman (1992), who proposed that two types of stimuli in the work environment can produce informational, affective, and behavioral effects on individuals: (a) discretionary stimuli that people experience on a selective basis and (b) ambient stimuli that saturate the setting and potentially affect everyone present. Given that most organizations do not prohibit incivility, it is perhaps more likely that such conduct would occur in the public work space (compared to proscribed behaviors such as sexual harassment), thus increasing the probability that fellow group members would witness it.

Andersson and Pearson (1999) also theorized that witnessing incivility could foster an “incivility spiral,” such that increasingly hostile, uncivil behavior could permeate the work environment and become a defining characteristic of the climate. The result would be a generally stressful context that is experienced throughout the workgroup, even by members who are not directly subjected to the disrespectful treatment. This is consistent with the social learning literature, which has long demonstrated that people tend to become more aggressive themselves when exposed to aggression (e.g., Bandura, 1973, 1977; Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Recent studies on antisocial behavior have also started to highlight the influence of the workgroup context on individual employee behaviors (e.g., O’Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996; Robinson & O’Leary-Kelly, 1998). For example, Glomb and Liao (2003) showed that the mean level of aggression in a workgroup (minus the target individual) predicted employees’ reports of engaging in aggression. We take a similar multilevel perspective on incivility, conceptualizing this behavior as both an individual- and a group-level phenomenon. However, rather than examining how workgroup incivility promotes the instigation of incivility, we study the impact of workgroup incivility on individual employee well-being.

Consequences of Workplace Incivility

Our primary aim was to develop a holistic and parsimonious model of the process by which outcomes of incivility unfold among targets and their workgroup members. Using an outcome model of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald, Hulin, & Drasgow, 1995) as a starting point, we grounded our model in theories that are particularly relevant to the experience of incivility, namely affective events theory (AET; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), dysempowerment theory (Kane & Montgomery, 1998), and theories of chronic stress (e.g., Gottlieb, 1997). Following is a brief outline of our model, which appears in Figure 1.

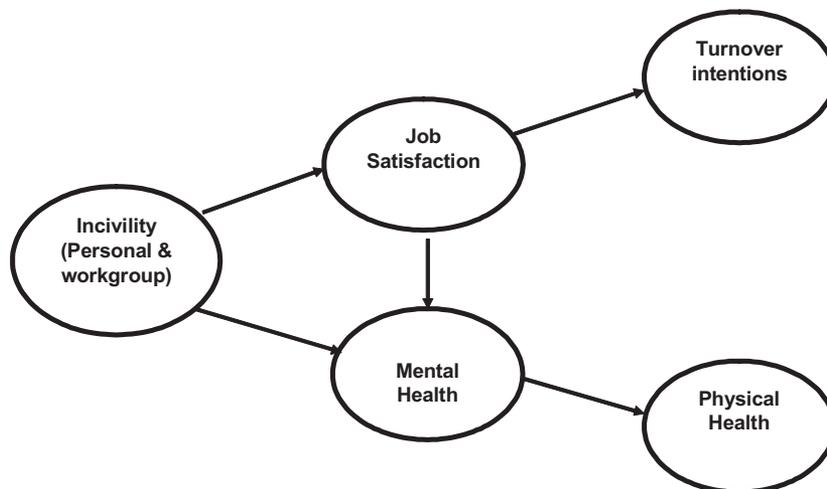


Figure 1. Proposed model of the effects of workplace incivility.

Work Outcomes

Fitzgerald et al. (1995) conceptualized sexual harassment as one of the many organizational stressors that produces adverse effects on occupational, psychological, and health outcomes. In terms of occupational outcomes, reduced job satisfaction is a key consequence of sexual harassment, which in turn leads to increased job withdrawal (i.e., intentions to quit). Although incivility is much more generalized than sexual harassment is, we propose that it will exert similar effects as sexual harassment on such work outcomes. This is because uncivil behaviors, like harassing behaviors, are capable of producing an unequal power situation in which the victim feels that he or she is unfairly subjected to embarrassment or humiliation. Thus, harassing or uncivil behavior from colleagues can evoke feelings of discomfort and distress that contribute to a general sense of unhappiness and dissatisfaction with colleagues and with aspects of the work that are related to the incident. In the long run, such negative feelings and perceptions about one's job and colleagues (i.e., job dissatisfaction) can reduce motivation to stay on the job and increase thoughts of leaving the organization (i.e., turnover intentions). In other words, job (dis)satisfaction is likely to mediate the effect of incivility on turnover intentions.

Two bodies of theory support this proposition: AET and dysempowerment theory. AET argues that individuals' affective reactions to specific work events are important determinants of their attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. Specifically, affective experiences at work have a strong influence on overall job satisfaction. Job satisfaction in turn drives judgment-driven behaviors, such as turnover. Moreover, negative events tend to produce stronger reactions than positive events do because of their more pressing and potentially harmful impact on well-being (Taylor, 1991). Kane and Montgomery (1998; Montgomery, Kane, & Vance, 2004) also theorized that workplace incivility can trigger what they term *dysempowerment*, a process in which an employee experiences a work event as an affront to his or her dignity and as a violation of basic norms of respect and consideration. They contend that uncivil encounters trigger a negative affective response, which then disrupts the individual's occupational well-

being. Because the motivation inherent in empowerment has been damaged, the employee's commitment to the job deteriorates over time.

When we conceptualize workplace incivility as a negative affective event, or as a dysempowering event, the theories above lead us to expect both direct and indirect effects on the incivility target. The most proximal outcome should be more affective or attitudinal in nature, involving negative feelings about the workplace where the uncivil episode occurred (e.g., feeling unhappy about one's work and colleagues). Such lowered job satisfaction, in turn, should trigger behavioral outcomes such as exiting the workplace. If employees did not experience negative affect toward their colleagues and/or work after experiencing the uncivil behaviors, it is less likely that the incivility would lead to greater turnover intentions. We thus see job satisfaction as a key mediator of the process by which incivility drives an employee out of an organization. Supporting these arguments, Pearson and colleagues (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001) found that targets of incivility often experienced negative affective and cognitive reactions at work (e.g., worrying about future interactions with the instigator), and many eventually quit their jobs. Initial data from Cortina et al. (2001, 2002) also showed direct links between incivility experiences and lower job satisfaction. Moreover, a number of studies have found that dissatisfaction with the job predicts various job withdrawal behaviors, including turnover and retirement (e.g., Hanisch & Hulin, 1990; 1991). We thus propose:

Hypothesis 1: Experience with personal incivility will have a direct negative impact on job satisfaction, which in turn will affect turnover intentions.

Mental and Physical Health Outcomes

Over and above the impact on work outcomes, we also expect incivility to have negative consequences for the targets' mental and physical health. We base this thinking on theories of chronic stress, which emanate from the clinical and health psychology literatures. Chronic stressors differ from traumatic events in that

they have an extended duration, an onset that is difficult to identify, and no clear or predictable offset (Hepburn, Loughlin, & Barling, 1997; Wheaton, 1997). Gottlieb (1997, p. 10) characterized chronic stressors as “persistent demands” that are “woven into the tapestry of life.” Lazarus and colleagues termed these experiences *daily hassles*—that is, insidious frustrations that become fixed and ongoing in everyday settings, including settings of work (e.g., DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Many instances of workplace incivility would qualify as chronic stressors or hassles. These uncivil events would create “socially noxious environments” (Gottlieb, 1997, p. 5) for employees, which could trigger mental and physical health problems.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) presented two theoretical alternatives on why and how everyday stressors can undermine health and well-being. First, hassles can have an additive effect, accumulating over time to add to the total “wear-and-tear” experienced. However, their more complex, preferred explanation emphasizes the role of cognitive appraisal. That is, an individual appraises a situation to determine the degree of its actual or potential harm, threat, or challenge. If the person determines that she or he has sustained injury—or is likely to sustain future injury—then the result is a psychological experience of stress. These theories of chronic stressors/hassles explain how seemingly “minor” but chronic uncivil events can have an adverse effect on mental health, causing psychological harm beyond transient emotional disturbance.

Although researchers have found that victims of workplace aggression tend to experience poorer mental health (e.g., Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994), little empirical data have addressed the effects of incivility on employees’ personal psychological adjustment. In a qualitative study, Pearson et al. (2000, 2001) found that personnel commonly reported negative psychological reactions to uncivil incidents, such as being “depressed” and “hurt.” Due to the ambiguity of intent and uncertainty about what might follow, they reported that the impact could last for years after the uncivil event occurred. Likewise, Cortina et al. (2001) reported that encounters with incivility in the prior 5 years were related to employees’ psychological distress symptoms (i.e., depression and anxiety) in the prior month.

In addition, we expect that mental health problems could lead to physical health impairment among targets of incivility. The link between mental and physical health has been a key premise of clinical and health psychology, where psychological and social factors are known to play a prominent role in determining physical health (Bishop, 1994). Psychological stress can exert significant adverse physiological effects on the human body (e.g., increased heart rate and blood pressure), resulting in a number of health problems (e.g., migraines, ulcers, heart disease). Individuals suffering from mental health problems such as anxiety or depression are also more at risk for physical ailments, due to their tendency toward unhealthy lifestyles (e.g., insufficient sleep, drug abuse), less attention to their physical conditions, and difficulty maintaining social support—all of which reduce their ability to care for themselves and cope effectively with stressful situations (e.g., Carney, Rich, & Jaffe, 1995; Mayers, 2000). We argue that mental health symptoms (e.g., depressed mood and anxiety) may be more immediate reactions to incivility, and these psychological reactions can produce a strain on the body over time. In the domain of sexual harassment, empirical results suggest that harassment exerts an

adverse effect on physical health conditions indirectly, through its influence on mental health (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Glomb et al., 1997). Likewise, we propose:

Hypothesis 2: Experience with personal incivility will have a direct negative impact on mental health, which in turn will affect physical health.

Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Mental Health

Not only might incivility have a direct impact on mental health, this effect could also emerge indirectly, via job satisfaction. That is, decreases in satisfaction with work and colleagues could trigger increases in symptoms of general psychological distress. Theoretical models such as the demand–control–support model (Karasek & Theorell, 1990) and the job characteristics model (J. R. Hackman & Oldham, 1980) promote the general idea that work-related experiences can affect personal well-being. This is not surprising given that much of waking adult life is spent in the workplace. Employees who are unhappy at work often spend time worrying and thinking about their work problems both during and outside work hours, inadvertently affecting their mental well-being as well as the quality of time spent with their family. Supporting this line of reasoning, Rice, Near, and Hunt (1980) reviewed 23 studies and found that job satisfaction was consistently related to life satisfaction. In a 12-year longitudinal study, Rogers and May (2003) also reported that job satisfaction and quality of marriage were related over time. From this research, we derived the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Job satisfaction will be positively related to mental health.

Workgroup Incivility

We further propose that workgroup incivility will exert negative effects similar to those of personal experiences of incivility. As noted above, theory holds that incivility can permeate and define the workgroup environment (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Thus, not only does workplace incivility involve the instigators and direct targets, it also concerns other organizational members who are embedded in that context. Likewise, Kane and Montgomery (1998) argued that dysempowerment can have collective effects that extend to the group and even the organizational level. That is, negative attitudes and behaviors that an individual experiences following workplace disrespect can spread vicariously to other inhabitants of that workplace, through the collective phenomenon of “vicarious dysempowerment.”

In explaining how and why workplace mistreatment can have vicarious effects, Glomb et al. (1997) drew on theories of “co-victimization,” defined as “the experience of directly observing the violent assault of another person” (Shakoor & Chalmers, 1991, p. 233). Based on this concept, the witness of a violent event becomes a co-victim and suffers adverse effects, because the indirect exposure alone is a traumatic experience. Furthermore, such situations may invoke empathy for the plight of the victim. Awareness of ingroup members’ mistreatment could also arouse feelings of injustice, fear, or frustration, making employees feel less satisfied about their job conditions. Indeed, Glomb et al. (1997) found that

ambient harassment at the workgroup level predicted job dissatisfaction and psychological distress among individual workgroup members. On the basis of this work, we propose that the consequences of workgroup incivility will mirror those of personal incivility:

Hypothesis 4: Workgroup incivility will have a direct negative impact on job satisfaction and mental health.

We integrated Hypotheses 1 through 4 into a holistic model of the impact of incivility on work and health outcomes. This model appears in Figure 1.

Gender Differences in Outcomes

While testing this model, we also sought to understand the impact of gender on this process. For this, we again turned to disempowerment theory, as well as to research on interpersonal sensitivity. Montgomery et al. (2004) concurred with Andersson and Pearson's (1999) reasoning that organizations can have norms of respect, or expectations about "appropriate" interpersonal behavior. However, Montgomery et al. (2004) discussed not only shared social norms but also internalized personal norms. With the latter concept, they argued that individuals navigate disparate social environments outside of the workplace, which results in varied expectations and standards for respectful behavior. Hence, the workforce is comprised of diverse personal standards for mutual respect.

Montgomery et al. (2004) further theorized that personal norms of respect and propriety vary along gender lines, due to women's heightened sensitivity to the nuances of social behavior. This refers to extensive research showing that women, relative to men, have greater nonverbal sensitivity. Theorists attribute this gender difference to a range of factors, such as cultural norms, roles, expectancies, socialization, and the social stratification of society (e.g., Hall & Halberstadt, 1997; LaFrance & Henley, 1997). Because women are more "in tune" to their interpersonal environments than men are, women may be more likely to attend to and to become distressed by interpersonal problems at work, such as incivility. Men, in contrast, may be less sensitive to and therefore less upset by such conduct.

Empirical support of this theorizing has been mixed. Studies have consistently found that women are more likely than men to rate potentially harassing or uncivil conduct at work as offensive, inappropriate, or insulting (e.g., Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Konrad & Gutek, 1986; Montgomery et al., 2004). Moreover, in her seminal work on sexual harassment among working adults, Gutek (1985; Konrad & Gutek, 1986) found women were much more likely than men were to report adverse job-related outcomes (e.g., transferring or quitting a job) from being sexually harassed. Likewise, Magley, Cortina, and Kath (2005) documented negative longitudinal effects of sexual harassment on female—but not male—university employees. These findings support the prediction that women should be more adversely affected than men by aversive interpersonal events in the workplace.

At the same time, other research has reported that women and men experience comparable outcomes from antisocial work behavior. This is true in studies of sexual harassment, generalized workplace abuse, and incivility (Cortina et al., 2002; Magley,

Waldo, Drasgow, & Fitzgerald, 1999; Richman, Shinsako, Rospenda, Flaherty, & Freels, 2002; Rospenda, Richman, Wislar, & Flaherty, 2000). In contrast to such findings, Kaukiainen and colleagues (2001) reported stronger correlations between experienced workplace aggression and subjective well-being among male employees compared to female employees. These inconsistencies between the theoretical and empirical literatures, and also within the empirical literature, make it difficult to derive a specific hypothesis. Instead we pose an open-ended research question: Does the impact of incivility differ by gender?

The Current Studies

We tested the proposed model on two public-sector employee populations. The first study involved a secondary analysis of data collected by Cortina et al. (2001), who examined job and health outcomes as direct correlates of incivility. Study 1 integrates these outcomes into a holistic model to test for mediational processes.

In Study 2, we validated the proposed model in an independent sample, adding the construct of workgroup incivility to assess its impact on outcomes relative to personal incivility. The two studies also differ in their operationalization of job satisfaction—one global and one facet-based. Past research has found merit in both conceptualizations of job satisfaction, each having independent effects on intentions to quit (e.g., Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989). AET postulates that overall satisfaction mediates the impact of negative affective events on turnover, which implies a role for global job satisfaction in the incivility-outcome process. At the same time, because incivility is a stressor of human design, it could have a stronger impact on satisfaction with work colleagues than satisfaction with the work itself does. Such differential relationships can be considered only by breaking down the components of job satisfaction. To explore both possibilities, we tested hypotheses with respect to both facet-based job satisfaction (Study 1) and global job satisfaction (Study 2).

Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected through paper-and-pencil surveys mailed to all employees ($N = 1,662$) of the federal courts of one of the larger U.S. circuits. A response rate of 71% yielded a final sample of 833 women and 325 men, after the exclusion of 13 individuals with extensive missing data and 9 individuals who did not identify their gender. The employees averaged 40 years of age and 8 years of job tenure, and 85% had some college, if not a college or professional degree. Most were employed full time (96%), were White (88%), and were married (69%).

Their job classifications varied somewhat, with 16% employed as managers, supervisors, or unit heads; 17% as attorneys; 25% as specialists (e.g., budget analysts, systems administrators, automation support specialists); 11% as secretaries; and 31% as administrative support staff (e.g., library technicians, data quality analysts, mail room clerks).

Measures

Construction of the survey focused on two issues: psychometric rigor and minimization of response bias. The placement of mea-

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Coefficients, and Correlations in Study 1

Variable	No. of items	Women			Men			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α								
1. Incivility	7	5.27	5.57	.89	4.16	5.18	.89	—	-.48**	-.30**	-.15**	.37**	.43**	-.45**	-.12*
2. Supervisor satisfaction	9	20.29	7.43	.88	20.44	7.55	.89	-.48**	—	.25**	.27**	-.33**	-.47**	.39**	.08
3. Coworker satisfaction	8	19.79	5.50	.86	20.08	4.94	.81	-.39**	.42**	—	.43**	-.15**	-.35**	.30**	.10
4. Work satisfaction	9	20.46	5.80	.87	22.03	5.98	.84	-.25**	.36**	.31**	—	-.08	-.39**	.25**	.03
5. Job stress	8	11.80	7.59	.88	12.86	7.33	.87	.33**	-.32**	-.18**	-.05	—	.20**	-.51**	-.13*
6. Turnover intentions	3	2.26	2.55	.75	2.60	2.67	.71	.37**	-.40**	-.33**	-.47**	.27**	—	-.33**	.00
7. Mental health	12	31.02	7.25	.92	31.59	7.25	.92	-.27**	.30**	.22**	.32	-.34**	-.29**	—	.38**
8. Physical health	7	10.41	3.21	.74	11.38	2.78	.75	-.12**	.15**	.09*	.16	-.15**	-.05	.43**	—

Note. Overall index scores are derived for each individual by summing responses across all items in each scale; higher scores reflected greater levels of the underlying construct. Women's correlation coefficients are below the diagonal, and correlations for men appear above the diagonal.
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

asures within the survey partly addressed the latter concern; scales intended to measure the effects of incivility appeared before the incivility scale, so that respondents' uncivil experiences would not influence their descriptions of job-related, psychological, and health conditions. Following are brief descriptions of each scale used in the current article. Note that, to achieve as high a response rate as possible, we relied on abbreviated versions of some instruments. We selected items for these measures based on construct validity considerations and on factor analyses of the scales administered in prior studies. Descriptive statistics, coefficient alphas, and intercorrelations for all variables appear in Table 1.

Personal incivility. The Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001) measured the frequency of participants' experiences of disrespectful, rude or condescending behaviors from superiors or coworkers within the past 5 years. Participants responded on a 5-point scale (0 = *never* to 4 = *many times*) to this seven-item measure, which asked them whether they had been in a situation where any of their superiors or coworkers "made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you," "addressed you in unprofessional terms," "paid little attention to your statements or showed little interest in your opinion," and so on. In contrast to measures of workplace aggression (e.g., Björkqvist, Österman, & Lagerspetz, 1994; Kaukiainen et al., 2001), the intention to harm the target or organization is not readily apparent in the instructions or items, allowing us to capture the low intensity and ambiguous nature of incivility. Cortina et al. (2001) demonstrated the content and discriminant validity of this reliable measure.

Job satisfaction. Items from the Job Descriptive Index (JDI; Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969; revised by Roznowski, 1989) measured satisfaction with work, coworkers, and supervisors on a 3-point scale (0 = *no*, 1 = *can't decide*, 3 = *yes*). The JDI is a widely used facet-based measure of job satisfaction, and extensive psychometric data support its validity, reliability, and response-option scoring (e.g., Roznowski, 1989). The supervisor, coworker, and work satisfaction subscales consisted of nine, eight, and nine items, respectively. Sample items from each include "praises good work," "work well together," and "a source of pleasure."

Turnover intentions. A three-item job withdrawal scale (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990; 1991) measured thoughts about or intentions to quit the organization, using a 5-point scale (response options vary, depending on the item: 0 = *once or twice*

a year to 4 = once a week or more, or 0 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*). Hanisch (1990) conducted psychometric evaluation of the job withdrawal scale, reporting longitudinal data linking earlier job attitudes and stresses and subsequent job withdrawal 3 years later.

Mental health. An abbreviated version of the Mental Health Index (Veit & Ware, 1983) constituted a summary measure of psychiatric symptoms.² This psychometrically sound scale has appeared in various studies of general health, as well as in studies of mistreatment (Koss, Koss, & Woodruff, 1991). It was constructed specifically for use in the general population and focuses on the more prevalent symptoms of distress (i.e., anxiety and depression). Twelve items asked respondents how often in the past month they had "felt depressed," "felt tense or high strung" and so on, using a 5-point response scale (0 = *never* to 4 = *most of the time*).

Physical health. We assessed physical health with the Health Satisfaction subscale of the Retirement Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). Seven items assessed the extent to which short, health-related phrases or adjectives described participants' health (e.g., "have a lot of minor illnesses," "need little or no medical care") using the JDI response scale. Hanisch and Hulin (1990) reported strong links between health satisfaction and actual health conditions.

Control variables. We controlled for job stress in all analyses, to reduce the possibility that ordinary job stress may drive significant relationships between incivility and outcomes. Thus, in a format that parallels the JDI, eight items from the Stress in General scale (Stanton, Balzer, Smith, Parra, & Ironson, 2001) asked respondents if each of a list of adjectives (e.g., "hectic," "tense," "calm") describes their "job in general."

² In Cortina et al.'s (2001) analyses of these data, mental health was separated into "psychological distress" and "psychological well-being," where the former assessed psychiatric symptoms and the latter assessed positive affect (e.g., "felt cheerful and lighthearted," "been a happy person"). For the sake of parsimony, we combined both components to assess overall mental health.

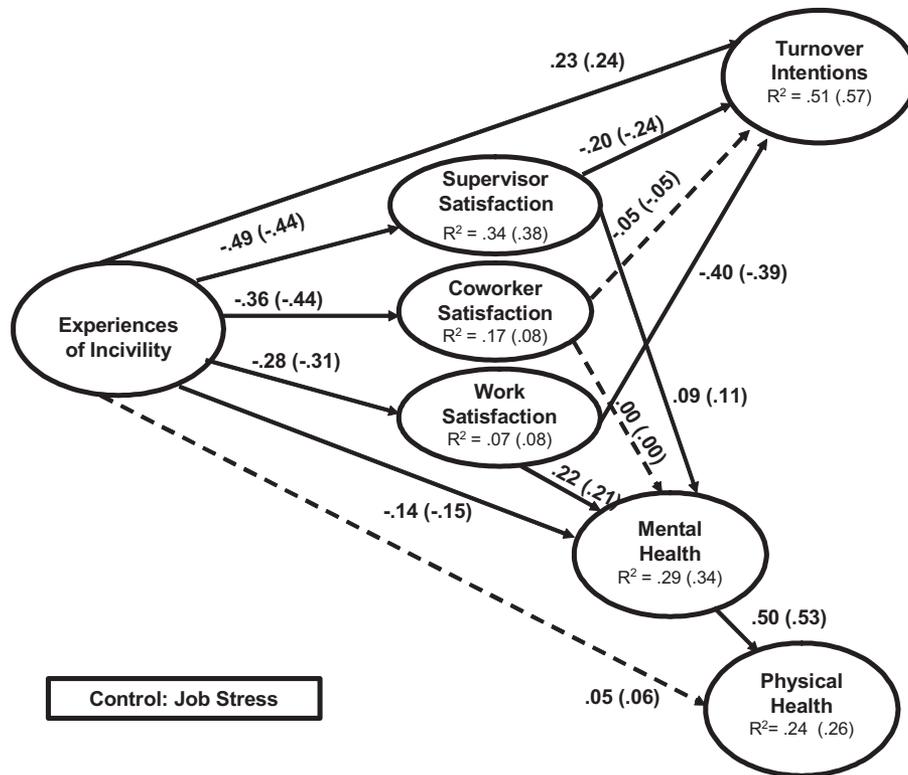


Figure 2. Completely standardized structural model results for Study 1. Estimates for men are in parentheses. Solid arrows indicate statistically significant path coefficients ($p < .05$). Dashed arrows indicate insignificant path coefficients. Not shown are the correlations between supervisor and coworker satisfaction, .25 (.29); supervisor and work satisfaction, .24 (.25); and coworker and work satisfaction, .26 (.40). Also not shown are the paths from the control variable, job stress, to experiences of incivility, .39 (.40); supervisor satisfaction, $-.18 (-.17)$; coworker satisfaction, $-.10 (-.12)$; work satisfaction, .07 (.09); turnover intentions, .15 (.17); and mental health, $-.33 (-.37)$.

Results

Structural equation modeling, with maximum likelihood estimation, was used to test the proposed model (reflected in Figure 1). For the measurement model (tested separately from the structural model), we created three psychometrically balanced indicators for each latent construct by randomly distributing items from the underlying measure across its indicators. The factor loading of one indicator for each latent construct was fixed to 1 to identify the model. To determine whether the measurement model fit both women's and men's data equally well, we constrained factor loadings to be invariant for the two groups. The measurement model constituted a good fit to the data for both genders, $\chi^2(378, N = 730 \text{ women}, 283 \text{ men}) = 1,066.52, p < .05$, normed fit index (NFI) = .92, nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = .95, comparative fit index (CFI) = .95, root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .05. All factor loadings were statistically significant, with standardized loadings ranging from .49 to .95.

To test whether the structural model fit both men and women equally well, we constrained all corresponding factor loadings, variances, covariances, and regression coefficients to be equal across the two groups. Similar to the measurement model, the fit of this model was quite good, $\chi^2(501, N = 730 \text{ women}, 283 \text{ men}) = 1,077.68, p < .05$, NFI = .92, NNFI = .95, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .05. To examine whether incivility exerted any direct effect on the

distal outcomes after controlling for the mediated relationships, we tested an alternative model that included direct paths from incivility to turnover intentions and physical health, which significantly increased the fit of the model, $\Delta\chi^2(2, N = 730 \text{ women}, 283 \text{ men}) = 31.25, p < .01$. Standardized parameter estimates of this model appear in Figure 2.

Most hypothesized paths between latent variables were statistically significant for both men and women, even after controlling for the influences of job stress. Results supported Hypothesis 1, suggesting that incivility significantly reduced supervisor, coworker, and work satisfaction. However, only supervisor and work satisfaction (but not coworker satisfaction) had significant paths to turnover intentions and mental health, thus providing partial support for Hypothesis 3.³ Consistent with our expectations, incivility exhibited stronger relationships with supervisor and coworker satisfaction than with work sat-

³ Tests for indirect effects of incivility on mental health and turnover intentions via supervisor/work satisfaction, as well as the indirect effect of incivility on physical health via mental health and supervisor/work satisfaction were all significant ($ps < .05$).

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics, Alpha Coefficients, and Correlations in Study 2

Variable	No. of items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Personal incivility	12	7.56	8.03	.92	—						
2. Workgroup incivility	12	6.87	3.39		.31**	—					
3. Job satisfaction	18	41.92	11.66	.92	-.50**	-.41*	—				
4. Job stress	8	15.12	6.73	.84	.27**	.08	-.34**	—			
5. Turnover intentions	3	1.98	2.40	.77	.50**	.32**	-.58**	.26**	—		
6. Mental health	12	3.59	4.81	.86	-.44**	-.27*	.41**	-.29**	-.46**	—	
7. Physical health	7	1.57	2.68	.75	-.41**	-.21*	.36**	-.25**	-.47**	.63**	—

Note. Overall index scores are derived for each individual by summing responses across all items in each scale; higher scores reflected greater levels of the underlying construct.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

isfaction.⁴ Incivility also had a significant direct path to turnover intentions, suggesting that supervisor and work satisfaction did not fully mediate the incivility–turnover link. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, experiencing incivility adversely affected mental health, which in turn influenced physical health. The direct path from incivility to physical health was not significant, suggesting that mental health fully mediated the effects of incivility on physical health.

We conducted a second study to (a) validate the proposed model in an independent sample, (b) incorporate workgroup incivility into the model, and (c) test the model using an alternative (global) conceptualization of job satisfaction.

Study 2

Method

Participants and Procedure

Approximately 50% of the employees of a midwestern municipality were randomly sampled and invited to participate in this study. An on-site survey was administered to 393 employees, yielding a 79% response rate. Participants' job types varied, primarily including public safety, manual labor, and administrative positions. We excluded 4 participants from all analyses due to extensive missing data. To create workgroups, we grouped employees who worked in the same division of the same department and on the same shift. Participants who did not provide this information were eliminated from the analyses. Following Glomb and Liao (2003), we eliminated workgroups with fewer than 3 employees from analyses due to unreliability in computing a mean workgroup score. Hence, the final sample consisted of 271 employees who worked in 26 groups, ranging in size from 3 to 27 ($M = 15$). Sixty-six percent were male, 80% were White, and 61% were married. They averaged 40 years of age and 12 years of job tenure, and 84% had at least some college education.

Measures

The same procedures from Study 1 (e.g., placing outcome measures before the incivility scale) were used in Study 2 to maintain psychometric rigor and to minimize response bias. Descriptive statistics, alphas, and intercorrelations for all variables appear in Table 2.

Personal and workgroup incivility. We used an expanded 12-item version of the Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et al., 2001) to measure the frequency of participants' personal experiences of incivility in their current workplace within the past year. This included additional items such as "interrupted or 'spoke over' you" and "made jokes at your expense." Participants again responded on a 5-point scale (0 = *never* to 4 = *many times*). Personal incivility scores were based on each person's own responses to this scale.

Workgroup incivility scores were based on a person's coworkers' responses to the 12-item incivility scale. For example, we computed Employee A's workgroup incivility score by summing the personal incivility scores for Employees B through J, who comprise A's workgroup. Note that A's own personal incivility score is not part of A's workgroup score; the workgroup measure is comprised solely of incivility as reported by A's workgroup members. In other words, if an individual's workgroup members are experiencing high levels of incivility, the individual would have a high workgroup incivility score, regardless of the individual's own reports of personal incivility. This allows us to capture the workgroup climate independent of the individual's personal biases and to examine the unique effects of indirect and/or vicarious exposure to incivility. This method parallels past researchers' computation of ambient workgroup scores for various antisocial behaviors, including interpersonal aggression and sexual harassment (Glomb & Liao, 2003; Glomb et al., 1997; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998).

Job-related outcomes. The Job in General Scale (Ironson et al., 1989) was used to assess global job satisfaction. Using the same response format as the JDI, we asked respondents to think about their job "in general" and whether various words and phrases (e.g., "ideal," "worthwhile," "enjoyable") described their job most of the time. Parallel to Study 1, turnover intent was measured by three items from Hanisch and Hulin (1990).

⁴ Constraining the path from incivility to supervisor satisfaction to be equal to the path from incivility to work satisfaction resulted in a poorer model fit, thus showing that the two paths were significantly different. The same result emerged when constraining the incivility→coworker satisfaction path to be equal to the incivility→work satisfaction path; a poorer fit indicates significantly different paths.

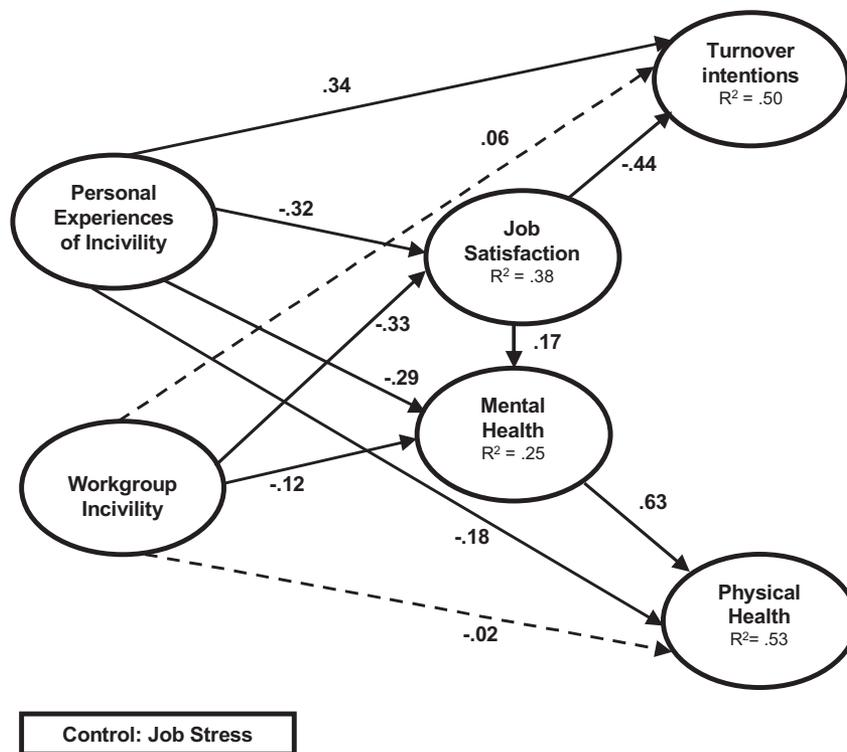


Figure 3. Completely standardized structural model results for the entire sample in Study 2, collapsing across gender. Solid arrows indicate statistically significant path coefficients ($p < .05$). Dashed arrows indicate insignificant path coefficients. Not shown are paths from the control variable, job stress, to personal experiences of incivility (.33), workgroup incivility (.16), job satisfaction (-.27), turnover intentions (.04), and mental health (-.13).

Mental and physical health outcomes. Nineteen items from the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis & Spencer, 1983) were used to assess the mental health (12 items) and physical well-being (7 items) of the employees. Numerous studies across different medical contexts and populations provide confirmation of the validity and utility of this inventory, demonstrating its sensitivity to clinically significant changes in stress and distress levels (Derogatis & Savitz, 2000). Using a 5-point response scale (0 = *never* to 4 = *extremely*), respondents described how often in the past week they had been distressed by various mental and physical health symptoms.

Control variable. As in Study 1, job stress was measured by eight items from the Stress in General scale (Stanton et al., 2001).

Results

To assess the appropriateness of aggregating incivility scores to the group level, we conducted a one-way analysis of variance to test between-group variance. Results showed that there were significant between-group differences for incivility, $F(26, 228) = 3.55, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .29$. Next, we computed within-group agreement (r_{wg}) using a uniform null distribution (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984) for the incivility scale, which yielded values ranging from .82 to .99, with a median of .97, well above the conventionally acceptable values of .70. This shows that there was

high within-group agreement, justifying the workgroup-level measure of incivility.

We again tested our hypotheses by using structural equation modeling. Due to the smaller sample size in Study 2 and the lack of gender differences found in Study 1, we tested measurement and structural models on the entire sample, collapsing across gender. The measurement model provided a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(168, N = 250) = 313.80, p < .05$, NFI = .93, NNFI = .96, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .06. All factor loadings were statistically significant, with standardized loadings ranging from .54 to .98.

Echoing Study 1 results, the fit of the structural model was good, $\chi^2(177, N = 250) = 392.07, p < .05$, NFI = .91, NNFI = .94, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .07. We then tested the alternative model by adding direct paths from incivility to the distal outcomes, which significantly increased the fit of the model, $\Delta\chi^2(4, N = 250) = 33.15, p < .01$. Standardized parameter estimates appear in Figure 3. Consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 3, personal experiences of incivility negatively affected job satisfaction, which in turn influenced turnover intentions and employee mental health. Supporting Hypothesis 2, personal incivility had a direct negative impact on mental health, which in turn affected physical health. In addition, personal incivility had significant direct links to both turnover intention and physical health. Workgroup incivility also had a negative impact on job satisfaction and mental health, consonant with Hypothesis 4. However, direct paths from work-

group incivility to turnover intentions and physical health were not significant, which suggests that the impact of workgroup incivility on turnover intentions and physical health is fully mediated by its effects on job satisfaction and mental health.⁵ These outcomes held even after controlling for general job stress.

We also conducted a follow-up analysis of the two significant workgroup incivility effects, on job satisfaction ($\beta = -.33$) and mental health ($\beta = -.12$). The workgroup variable is computed based on individuals who share similar environments, so by definition there is interdependence in their data (i.e., high correlations among workgroup incivility scores for employees who share the same workgroup). This clustering in the data could potentially inflate the estimates of workgroup effects on outcomes. To offset this potential problem, we recomputed the standard errors of the coefficients for these two significant workgroup effects. Following Kish (1995), we computed "upper-bound" standard errors (SE_{u-b}) that essentially assume perfect within-group correlation. To do this, the calculation of the SE_{u-b} factored in the number of workgroups (26) rather than the number of cases (271). Using this conservative approach, we found that the effect of workgroup incivility on job satisfaction remained significant, but the effect on mental health lost significance.

Discussion

Organizational research has traditionally focused on more explicit antisocial behaviors of greater intensity (such as workplace aggression and sexual harassment), and much less is known about lower-level interpersonal stressors. The current studies advance knowledge in this area by developing and testing a holistic model for understanding the effects of workplace incivility. We extend prior work on incivility by focusing on mediating mechanisms in this process and considering gender as a potential moderator. We show that incivility has a more direct impact on certain outcomes as compared to others, and contrary to theories of interpersonal sensitivity, the effects of incivility do not differ by gender. Importantly, we also introduce the concept of workgroup incivility, demonstrating that both direct and vicarious experiences of incivility contribute independently to various work and health outcomes, even after controlling for general job stress. We now review key findings and their implications for science and practice in organizations.

Theoretical Implications

In Study 1, direct experiences of incivility were associated with lower supervisor, coworker, and work satisfaction. In turn, supervisor and work satisfaction were related to greater intentions to quit and poorer mental health. Uncivil work experiences also appear to have a direct negative influence on mental health, and employees with mental health problems were more likely to suffer from poorer physical health. Such findings support hypotheses that mental health mediates effects of incivility on physical health. Moreover, job satisfaction mediates the impact of incivility on mental health and turnover intention, but only partially, as incivility also had a direct link to both outcomes. These negative outcomes emerged over and above the impact of job stress, so they cannot be attributed to the hectic pace or stressful nature of the job.

As suspected, employees subjected to uncivil behavior (from other organizational members) were much more likely to become dissatisfied with their supervisors and colleagues than with their work in general. This finding suggests that mistreatment of an interpersonal nature is likely to have the greatest impact on interpersonal aspects of job satisfaction. In addition, it is interesting that supervisor satisfaction, but not coworker satisfaction, had significant relationships with turnover intentions and mental health. This suggests that employee perceptions of their supervisors might have a greater impact on their work and health outcomes compared to perceptions of their coworkers. This is consistent with past research showing that having a supportive supervisor is more effective in reducing one's work stress compared to receiving support from one's coworkers or other sources (e.g., Frese, 1999; House, 1981; Lim, 2005). Such findings also indicate that organizations should pay particular attention to supervisor actions and perceptions of supervisors, especially because supervisors are in a more "convenient" position to engage in uncivil behaviors without sanctions.

Study 1 also revealed that outcomes of incivility are quite comparable for women and men, contrary to the predictions of dysempowerment theory (Montgomery et al., 2004). This is particularly notable given that women in this study, on average, faced greater rates of incivility ($M = 5.27$) than did men ($M = 4.16$; see Table 1). A similar pattern of gender similarities in outcomes has emerged in the literature on sexual harassment (Cortina et al., 2002; Magley et al., 1999; Richman et al., 2002; Rospenda et al., 2000). This growing literature speaks to women's strength and resilience: Despite the experience of more hostile treatment in the workplace than men, women generally feel no less satisfied, no more stressed, and no more likely to quit than their male counterparts do.

Study 2 validated and extended the proposed incivility model in Figure 1, testing the effects of workgroup incivility within a different organization where employees largely work in cohesive groups. Even after controlling for general job stress and the employee's personal experiences of incivility, we still found a significant relationship between workgroup incivility (i.e., that directed toward workgroup members) and job satisfaction and mental health. The impact of workgroup incivility on mental health ($\beta = -.12$) appeared smaller than the effect of personal experiences of incivility did ($\beta = -.29$), which was not surprising given the more personally relevant context of the latter. In fact, when submitted to a very conservative test of significance, using an upper-bound estimate of standard error, the workgroup effect on mental health lost significance. Nevertheless, results suggested that the consequences of uncivil behavior extend beyond direct targets, producing negative outcomes for employees who work alongside those targets. This could be the result of the covictimization experience (Shakoor & Chambers, 1991) of witnessing incivility in one's workgroup. It is also possible that group members fear that they will be the next target or perceive the incivility as an indicator of a negative work environment, all of which could

⁵ Replicating Study 1, tests for indirect effects of incivility on mental health and turnover intentions via job satisfaction as well as the indirect effect of incivility on physical health via mental health and job satisfaction were all significant ($ps < .05$).

detract from job satisfaction. Such results cannot be explained in terms of an artifactual “whiner effect” (Glomb et al., 1997), in which monomethod bias, consistency response bias, or negative disposition inflates correlations among self-report measures of negative work experiences (e.g., incivility) and outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, mental health). Instead, self-reported outcomes were strongly related to an other-reported index of workgroup incivility. That is, reports of workgroup incivility and personal outcomes came from independent sources, and yet they still showed a clear association. Thus, incivility in the workplace may be even more damaging than once believed.

Our model proposed that effects of workplace incivility on employee well-being are mediated by job-related affect. Using two different conceptualizations of job satisfaction as an indicator of this affective mechanism, we found support for this argument. In future studies, this model could be extended to include other constructs that may also intervene in the relationship between workplace incivility and turnover/employee well-being. For example, theory suggests that perceived injustice, anger, fear, negative mood, damaged social identity, cognitive distraction, and attributions mediate effects of interpersonal mistreatment on employee behaviors, attitudes, and mental and physical health (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Barling, 1996; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Future research could also consider incivility outcomes at the level of the workgroup (e.g., cohesion) and organization (e.g., firm performance). In addition, refining the Workplace Incivility Scale to include separate questions for uncivil behaviors from supervisors versus coworkers could also provide interesting insights into the effect of power relations on the experience of incivility.

Limitations and Future Directions

As always, there are limitations associated with the use of single-source, self-report methodology (Study 1), raising concerns about common method bias. However, in Study 2, we computed workgroup incivility in the workgroup from group members’ responses to the incivility measure (excluding the focal individual’s incivility scores), still finding support for the incivility-outcome relationships with the variables assessed from multiple sources. Furthermore, the fact that the outcome relationships emerged even after controlling for job stress (which was measured by the same method) provides us with greater confidence that the results cannot be solely attributable to common method variance. Future studies on incivility outcomes should seek objective data (e.g., organizational records of days absent) to corroborate these outcomes without interference from common method bias.

The cross-sectional nature of the data prevents strong inferences regarding causal sequences or changes over time. However, considerable theory supported our outcome interpretations, and previous longitudinal research on other forms of interpersonal mistreatment (e.g., Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999) provides strong evidence that similar outcomes do indeed follow—not precede—experiences of workplace mistreatment. Nevertheless, more longitudinal work in this area is needed.

Regarding generalizability, one strength of the current study is that we validated our model in two independent workplaces. Both, however, represented traditional, hierarchical, “tall” organizations in the public sector; extending the results to private companies, with innovative, “flat” structures, is an interesting direction for

future research. Future research could also study incivility in nontraditional workplaces (e.g., telecommuting or “portable” worksites).

Practical Implications

Finally, this research has practical implications for organizations. There is a need for employers and managers to be aware of incivility and to recognize its widespread negative effects for both targets and nontargets. Rather than regard uncivil behavior as a harmless nuisance or as a private problem for individuals to resolve, organizations should actively discourage it. We concur with Pearson et al. (2000) that management should model appropriate, respectful workplace behavior and clearly state expectations of civility in mission statements, policy manuals, and new-employee orientations. Reference checks for prospective employees could address past interpersonal behavior. Employers could provide interpersonal skills training, particularly for personnel with social deficits. When incivility does arise, instigators should be swiftly, justly, and consistently sanctioned.

Currently, workplace interventions targeting antisocial behavior focus more on overt, potentially illegal conduct (e.g., sexual and racial harassment), often with little attention to issues of civility. This and other research suggests that such oversight can carry substantial costs, potentially fostering employee distraction and discontentment, job accidents, overuse of sick leave, work team conflict, productivity decline, and turnover (Cortina et al., 2002; Pearson et al., 2000, 2001). Such outcomes appear to extend beyond direct targets of uncivil conduct. It is therefore imperative that leaders work proactively at incivility management, so that norms of respectful interaction prevail at all levels of the organization.

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