Incivility in the Workplace: Incidence and Impact

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This study extends the literature on interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace by examining the incidence, targets, instigators, and impact of *incivility* (e.g., disrespect, condescension, degradation). Data were collected from 1,180 public-sector employees, 71% of whom reported some experience of workplace incivility in the previous 5 years. As many as one third of the most powerful individuals within the organization instigated these uncivil acts. Although women endured greater frequencies of incivility than did men, both genders experienced similarly negative effects on job satisfaction, job withdrawal, and career salience. Uncivil workplace experiences were also associated with greater psychological distress; however, indices of psychological and physical health were relatively unaffected. The authors discuss these findings in the context of organizational and cognitive stress theories.

Violence, aggression, bullying, tyranny, harassment, deviance, and injustice—each represents a related form of interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace. Over the past decade, organizational researchers have paid increasing attention to these antisocial behaviors. Possibly in reaction to recent high-profile cases of disgruntled-employee violence and rising national preoccupation with such violence, much of this work has focused on physical, active, direct forms of aggression that carry an overt intent to harm (for comprehensive reviews, see Griffin, O'Leary-Kelly, & Collins, 1998; Leather, Brady, Lawrence, Beale, & Cox, 1999; VandenBos & Bulatao, 1996). Others have concentrated on the more prevalent psychological aggression, referring to behavior that intentionally inflicts psychological (rather than physical) injury (e.g., Baron & Neuman, 1996; Folger & Baron, 1996; Glomb, 1998; Neuman & Baron, 1997). Less research has examined even milder forms of psychological mistreatment in which intentionality is less apparent. Andersson and Pearson (1999) referred to such behavior as *workplace incivility*, which constitutes the focus of the present study.

Andersson and Pearson (1999) 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" (p. 457). They conceptualized this as a specific form of *employee deviance* (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), which in turn represents a subset of *antisocial employee behavior* (Giacolone & Greenberg, 1997). When unambiguous intentions and expectations to harm the target or organization are present, definitions of incivility overlap with *psychological aggression*. However, incivility differs from psychological aggression when behaviors lack clear, conscious intentionality. In other words, some uncivil behaviors can be attributed to instigator ignorance or oversight, or they can be attributed to target misinterpretation or hypersensitivity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In such cases, the resulting harm may be accidental, which separates that type of incivility from current definitions of workplace aggression (e.g., Cox & Leather, 1994; Lawrence & Leather, 1999). Further, workplace incivility is completely distinct from *physical aggression* and *violence*. Additionally, incivility is some-

what broader than *interactional injustice*, which refers to unfairness or insensitivity displayed when implementing organizational procedures and policies. The concept of interactional injustice is typically reserved for mistreatment by supervisors, managers, or other organizational decision makers (Bies & Moag, 1986), whereas incivility can derive from employees at any level of the organizational structure. Although uncivil behavior can certainly come from "outsiders" (e.g., customers, contractors) with business in the organization, we follow the custom set by some in the workplace aggression literature (e.g., Greenberg & Alge, 1998; O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996) by focusing on intraorganizational sources of incivility.

Workplace incivility merits serious research and organizational attention because of its theoretically harmful effects on organizations and individuals alike. Andersson and Pearson (1999) posited that incivility can represent the beginning of an upward spiral of negative organizational events, eventually escalating to coercive and violent employee behavior. They suggested that the accumulation of a series of low-level, aggravating encounters leads to a "tipping point," when the last minor injustice triggers intense, retaliatory aggression. Folger and Skarlicki (1998) proposed a similar "popcorn" model of perceived injustices leading to building "interpersonal heat," eventually resulting in explosions of violence. Thus, relatively minor forms of interpersonal mistreatment can, over time, precipitate major organizational conflict.

The theoretical "snow-balling effect" of incivility described by Andersson and Pearson (1999) is similar to perspectives from the stress and coping literature on *daily hassles* (DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1982; Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Specifically, this literature suggests that when daily hassles—that is, routine nuisances of everyday life—are cognitively appraised as threatening (e.g., offensive, inappropriate) and occur with some frequency over time, they can impair psychosomatic well-being. In fact, Pancheri et al. (1979; as cited in Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) suggested that such insidious, low-level hassles have a greater impact on individual outcomes than major, exceptional stressors: "microevents frequently repeated over long time-spans and subconsciously experienced by the person have greater pathogenic potential than episodic dramatic events for which objective control and coping strategies may be more easily developed" (pp. 193–194). In sum, organizational violence theory, as well as more general cognitive theories on stress and coping,

suggests that low-level, interpersonal mistreatment can engender organizational violence and damage individual psychosomatic functioning.

Partly because the concept is still so new, little empirical research has documented characteristics and effects of workplace incivility. Thus, our purpose was to address this dearth in the literature. We begin by briefly reviewing research on workplace psychological aggression, interactional injustice, unfairness, and bullying; although these constructs do not completely overlap with workplace incivility, they are related enough to inform hypotheses on the latter.

Incidence Rates

Findings regarding rates of aggression, injustice, unfairness, and so on vary widely, largely owing to differing definitions, measurement instruments, and time frames. Einarsen and Raknes (1997) learned that approximately 75% of Norwegian engineering employees had endured generalized, nonspecific *harassment* at least once during the previous 6 months. Using a more conservative calculation of incidence, Björkqvist, Österman, and Hjelt-Bäck (1994) found that 30% of male and 55% of female Finnish University employees described encounters with harassment at work at least occasionally during the previous half year. By contrast, Cole and colleagues (Cole, Grubb, Sauter, Swanson, & Lawless, 1997) reported that only 19% of U.S. adults had experienced harassment at work in the previous year, and 13% reported being *threatened* with harassment or violence in the previous 5 years. Research from various Scandinavian countries uncovered even lower rates of workplace *bullying*, ranging from 3%–4% (Leymann, 1992; Leymann & Tallgren, 1989, as reported in Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996[1]) to 8%–10% (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Matthiesen, Raknes, & Rökkum, 1989, as reported in Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). In sum, documented rates of behaviors related to workplace incivility vary dramatically, and rates of incivility itself are virtually unknown. Thus, our first research question is purely exploratory: How prevalent is incivility in the American workplace?

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[1] It is interesting that considerably more studies in Scandinavia than in the United States have investigated workplace incivility and related behaviors. Published in Scandinavian languages, most of these studies are not directly accessible to many English-speaking audiences (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994). Instead, we must rely on secondary accounts of these findings.

Targets and Instigators of Incivility

Conceptualizing incivility as an inherently social phenomenon, Andersson and Pearson (1999) described it as an escalating exchange of behaviors between colleagues. Such a social–interactionist perspective implies that knowledge about individuals involved could advance research on the incivility process.

Targets

In a similar vein, Barling (1996) noted that a thorough understanding of workplace violence must take into account victims or targets; we posit that the same holds true for workplace incivility. Social power theory, as well as research on the related phenomenon of sexual harassment, suggests that some manifestations of workplace incivility may function as a means of asserting power (Carli, 1999; Fain & Anderton, 1987; French & Raven, 1959; Johnson, 1976; Murrell, 1996; Pryor & Whalen, 1997). In general, these theories maintain that society confers greater power on particular individuals through social expectations and norms as well as access to cultural and tangible resources. Conversely, individuals lacking resources are at greater risk for having power exerted against them. Applied to an organizational context, employees with lower social power may be more vulnerable to such abuse. Several potential power bases exist among employees, the most apparent being position within the organizational hierarchy and gender (with "femaleness" traditionally conferring less sociocultural and physical power; Defour, 1990; Johnson, 1976; Karsten, 1994; MacKinnon, 1979; Pryor & Whalen, 1997). Other low-status characteristics theorized to affect harassment vulnerability have been ethnic minority group membership, youth, unmarried status (i.e., lack of "protection" from a powerful spouse), and the underrepresentation of one's gender within the workgroup (Gruber & Bjorn, 1986; Gutek, Cohen, & Konrad, 1990; Murrell, 1996).

Few empirical studies offer data on power-related characteristics of individuals targeted with uncivil, unjust, or aggressive behavior at work. Björkqvist and colleagues (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994) examined organizational positions and genders of harassment targets at a university workplace and found proportionately more targets employed in staff than faculty positions, and more targets being female. By contrast, two past studies found men and women describing similar incidence rates of *nonsexual, non-*

physical abuse (Keashley, Trott, & MacLean, 1994) and bullying (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) at work. Focusing on age, Einarsen and Raknes (1997) reported that younger workers encountered harassment more frequently than did their older colleagues, whereas Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) described the opposite pattern with respect to bullying experiences. Thus, empirical research has yielded mixed findings on targets of interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace. We therefore rely primarily on social power theory to support our hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Having less powerful positions within the organization, working in groups in which one's gender is in the numerical minority, and being female, ethnic minority, young, or unmarried will be associated with more frequent experiences of incivility at work (i.e., each of these demographic variables will have a main effect on incivility).

Instigators

Approaching the incivility process from the reverse perspective, almost nothing is known about demographic characteristics of its *instigators*. However, social power theory is again relevant. For example, Johnson (1976) argued that men tend to exert greater coercive and reward power than women, typically having more resources and perceived social authority. Within an organizational context, individuals who enjoy social and organizational resources should be more likely to abuse power (Pryor & Whalen, 1997).

In terms of empirical evidence, Keashley et al. (1994) reported proportionately more targets identifying superiors as perpetrators of nonsexual, nonphysical abuse (57.8%) compared with coworkers (37.7%) and subordinates (5.0%). Einarsen and Skogstad (1996) found roughly similar proportions (54%) of targets identifying coworkers and superiors as "bullies." Further, nearly half of their targets experienced bullying from men only, 30% reported bullying from women only, and 21% described bullies of both genders. Björkqvist, Österman, and Lagerspetz (1994) found that male employees tended to initiate more *rational-appearing aggression* than female employees, whereas female employees used more *socially manipulative aggression*. Elsewhere in the same survey, Björkqvist, Österman, and Hjelt-Bäck (1994) asked these same participants about observations of aggressive acts perpetrated toward colleagues. Participants had observed that, although roughly one third of aggressive behaviors originated from targets' peers, slightly over half came from

superiors. These past empirical works, along with social power theory, led us to propose the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 2:* Having more powerful positions within the organization and being male will be positively associated with instigation of incivility.

Effects of Incivility

Although the workplace incivility literature does not focus on individual-level outcomes, Barling (1996) theorized how workplace violence can affect individual, targeted employees. His model posits that violent workplace behavior leads to negative mood, cognitive distraction, and fear in targets. These affective and cognitive mechanisms in turn adversely affect three categories of outcomes in targets: organizational, psychological, and somatic functioning. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) more general work on daily hassles presents similar perspectives on individual harm.

In terms of empirical evidence, past research on a range of unjust, harassing, verbally abusive, or psychologically aggressive workplace behavior has linked this behavior with various adverse job-related consequences among targets. These include lowered satisfaction with work, supervision, coworkers, and "the job in general" (Donovan, Drasgow, & Munson, 1998; Einarsen & Raknes, 1997; Keashley et al., 1994; Leather, Beale, Lawrence, & Dickson, 1997; Moorman, 1991); decreases in organizational citizenship behaviors (Betancourt & Brown, 1997; Moorman, 1991; Organ & Ryan, 1995; C. A. Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983); reduced organizational commitment (Barling & Phillips, 1993; Leather et al., 1997); declines in distributive justice (Moorman, 1991); increases in organizational retaliation behaviors and aggression (Bies & Tripp, 1996; Greenberg, 1990; Folger & Skarlicki, 1998; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997); greater absenteeism (Barling & Phillips, 1993; Dittrich & Carrell, 1979); and heightened turnover intentions (Dittrich & Carrell, 1979; Donovan et al., 1998).

Only a handful of studies (all Scandinavian) have investigated relationships between psychosomatic functioning and constructs that conceptually relate to workplace incivility. Specifically, Einarsen and Raknes (1997) found associations between workplace harassment experiences and poorer psychological well-being. Matthiesen and colleagues (1989, as reported in Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) documented more psychological complaints among targets of workplace bullying, and Leymann (1992, as reported

in in Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994) linked experiences of bullying to posttraumatic stress disorder. Similarly, Björkqvist, Österman, and Hjelt-Bäck (1994) discovered that victims of harassment reported higher levels of anxiety and depression. With respect to somatic outcomes, one Norwegian study (Matthiesen et al., 1989, as reported in Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996) documented greater physical health complaints among victims of workplace bullying.

The relative inattention, particularly in the United States, to psychosomatic health outcomes of workplace aggression and interpersonal mistreatment is problematic, especially given the widely documented organizational costs associated with decrements in employee mental and physical health. Extensive research has found that psychological conditions such as stress, depression, and anxiety experienced by employees can hurt organizations through performance and productivity declines (Adams, 1988; Baba, Jamal, & Tourigny, 1998; Cartwright & Cooper, 1997; Quick, Murphy, & Hurrell, 1992); decreases in job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Baba et al., 1998; Smither, 1998); tardiness and absenteeism (Baba et al., 1998; Jacobsen, Aldana, Goetzel, & Vardell, 1996; Kompier, Geurtx, Gruendemann, Vink, & Smulders, 1998); sick leave and health compensation claims (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997; Smither, 1998); and turnover intentions and rates (Baba et al., 1998). Similarly, stress-related health problems such as heart disease, migraines, and ulcers are associated with employee productivity decreases (Adams, 1998); disability claims (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990); and organizational withdrawal behavior, including absenteeism, turnover, and early retirement (Gebhardt & Crump, 1990; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990; Kim & Feldman, 1998, Tucker, Aldana, & Friedman, 1990). Clearly, it greatly behooves organizations to attend to workplace phenomena affecting employee mental and physical health.

On the basis of theoretical and empirical considerations, we propose the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 3:* Personal experiences of workplace incivility will be associated with negative job-related, psychological, and somatic outcomes.

The Present Study

Previous research on various forms of workplace interpersonal mistreatment offers insight into workplace incivility. However, several factors limit the utility of these past studies for understanding incivil-

ity, the most notable being that the phenomena they examine (e.g., injustice, harassment, bullying) only partly overlap with workplace incivility, as defined by Andersson and Pearson (1999). In terms of external validity, most empirical studies of incidence rates, targets, instigators, and psychological and health outcomes of these behaviors took place in Scandinavian countries. Because Scandinavia and the United States differ considerably in terms of violence rates (e.g., Farver, Welles-Nystroem, Frosch, Wembarti, & Hoppe-Graff, 1997; Lottes & Weinberg, 1997), occupational mental health laws (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994; Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996), psychiatric epidemiology (e.g., Murphy, 1986; Stefansson, Lindal, Björnsson, & Gudmundsdottir, 1991), and cultural norms (e.g., Triandis, 1994, 1995), it would be premature to assume that these results from Scandinavian employees directly generalize to American employees.

The present work extends past research on interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace, examining the incidence rates, targets, instigators, and impact of workplace incivility among a large and representative U.S. sample of public-sector employees. We consider a number of social power variables that potentially affect vulnerability to and instigation of incivility. We also integrate perspectives on workplace incivility, workplace violence, and daily hassles to propose and document a range of negative individual outcomes. We designed some of this research (e.g., format of the incivility measure, choice of outcome and control variables) to parallel work by Fitzgerald and colleagues on antecedents and outcomes of sexual harassment in the workplace (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Fitzgerald, Hulin, & Drasgow, 1994).

Method

Procedure and Participants

Data were collected by means of pencil-and-paper surveys mailed to a complete enumeration of all employees ($N = 1,662$), excluding judges, of the U.S. Eighth Circuit federal court system. Using procedures recommended by Dillman (1978) to maximize the return rate, we sent employees a second survey if they had not returned the first within 2 weeks of mailing. These procedures yielded a 71% response rate. Owing to extensive missing data, 13 individuals were excluded from all analyses. The final sample of usable data contained 833 women, 325 men, and 9 individuals who declined to identify their gender.

Participants ranged in age from 21 to 78 years ($M = 40.31$), had worked in this organization for an average of 8.4 years, and were nearly all (96%) employed full time. The great majority of these employees were European American/White (88%), had at least some college if not a college or professional degree (85%), and were married (69%). Their job classifications varied somewhat, with 16% employed in management positions, 17% as attorneys, 25% as specialists (e.g., financial specialist, personnel specialist, paralegal), 11% as secretaries, and 31% as administrative support staff (e.g., library technician, data quality analyst, mail room clerk). Interestingly, compared with 55% of the women, only 11% of the men were employed in these latter two categories (literally none as secretaries). Approximately half of the employees worked in environments in which women were in the majority; 35% worked with equal numbers of women and men; and 10% worked in areas numerically dominated by men.

Instrumentation

Construction of the survey focused on two issues: psychometric rigor and minimization of response bias. The placement of measures within the survey addressed the latter concern in part. For example, scales intended to measure the effects of incivility preceded the incivility scale, so that respondents' uncivil experiences would not bias their descriptions of psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and so on. With respect to content, the survey covered demographics; job, psychological, and somatic conditions; and experiences of interpersonal mistreatment, including incivility and sexual harassment. Next, we briefly review scales that were analyzed in the study. Table 1 presents numbers of items, response scales, and descriptive statistics for each scale. Note that all of the items were coded such that higher scores reflected greater levels of the underlying construct.

Incivility. The Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) measured the frequency of participants' experiences of disrespectful, rude, or condescending behaviors from superiors or coworkers within the previous 5 years. The complete list of items appears in Table 2. Note that intention to harm the target or organization is not readily apparent in most of these behaviors. Further, these items are consistent with the most common "negative acts" in the workplace identified by Einarsen and colleagues (e.g., devaluation of work and efforts, insulting remarks, social exclusion; Einarsen, Raknes, Matthiesen, & Hellesøy, 1994, as reported in Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). Specific item content was generated for the present study, derived from focus group interviews with employees working at all levels of the organization.

Job-related outcomes. An abbreviated version of the Job Descriptive Index (JDI; P. C. Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969; revised by Roznowski, 1989) measured satisfaction with five aspects of the job: work, coworkers, supervisor, pay and benefits, and promotional opportunities. The JDI is the most frequently used measure of job satisfaction available, and extensive psychometric data support its validity and reliability. The general construct of organizational withdrawal was assessed through scales measuring (a) *work withdrawal* (neglecting specific tasks associated with one's work role) and (b) *job withdrawal* (thoughts about or intentions to quit an organization; Hanisch, 1990; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990; 1991). Hanisch (in press) reported longitudinal links between earlier job attitudes and stresses and subse-

Table 1
Construct Measurement

Construct	No. items	Response scale	Women			Men		
			M	SD	α	M	SD	α
Incivility	7	0–4[a]	5.27	5.57	.89	4.16	5.18	.89
Fair treatment	18	1–3[b]	25.04	8.54	.91	26.98	8.24	.91
Extrinsic commitment	5	1–5[c]	10.64	2.94	.61	10.32	3.01	.65
Psychological well-being	3	0–4	8.87	2.08	.85	8.53	1.95	.80
Psychological distress	9	0–4	13.84	5.65	.91	12.93	5.87	.91
Job stress	9	1–3	12.26	7.76	.86	13.24	7.52	.85
Life satisfaction	5	1–5	17.81	3.48	.84	18.11	3.62	.85
Health satisfaction	7	1–3	10.41	3.21	.74	11.38	2.78	.75
Work satisfaction	9	0–3[d]	20.46	6.80	.87	22.03	5.98	.84
Coworker satisfaction	8	0–3	19.79	5.50	.85	20.08	4.95	.81
Supervisor satisfaction	9	0–3	20.29	7.43	.88	20.44	7.55	.89
Pay/benefits satisfaction	9	0–3	18.85	7.17	.83	18.21	7.37	.83
Promotional opportunity satisfaction	8	0–3	9.43	6.71	.84	11.21	6.50	.81
Work withdrawal	5	1–5	3.90	2.67	.55	4.52	3.33	.64
Job withdrawal	4	1–5	2.26	2.55	.66	2.60	2.67	.61
Career salience	14	1–5	51.82	6.79	.78	52.33	7.16	.81

[a] Response options on all 0–4 scales ranged from *never* to *most of the time*. [b] All 1–3 scales were scored such that 1 = *no*, 2 = *can't decide*, and 3 = *yes*. [c] All 1–5 scales ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The two withdrawal scales, having response options that vary by item, represented the only exceptions to this. [d] Following standard Job Descriptive Index scoring procedures, 0–3 scales were scored such that 0 = *no*, 1 = *can't decide*, and 3 = *yes*.

quent job and work withdrawal. Finally, we evaluated *career salience* with Swan's (1997) measure, adapted from Farmer's (1985) Career Commitment scale, tapping into the extent to which employees' careers were central and salient to employees' lives in general, regardless of financial necessity.

Psychological and health-related outcomes. Psychological *well-being and distress* were measured with an abbreviated version of the Mental Health Index (MHI; Veit & Ware, 1983), a summary measure of emotional well-being and the absence of psychiatric symptoms. This psychometrically sound scale (Brooks et al., 1979) has been widely used in studies of general health and in other studies of victimization (Koss, Koss, & Woodruff, 1991) for two primary reasons. First, the scale is relatively nonintrusive in its assessment of the constructs; second, the MHI was constructed specifically for use in the general population and focuses on the more prevalent symptoms of psychological distress (e.g., anxiety, depression). In addition, Diener and his colleagues' (Diener, 1984; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) widely used and validated Satisfaction With Life Scale[2] provided a global assessment of participants' satisfaction with all aspects of their lives.

We assessed *health satisfaction* using a subscale of the Retirement Descriptive Index (P. C. Smith et al., 1969), which contains short, descriptive, health-related phrases and adjectives. Hanisch and Hulin (1990) reported links between health satisfaction and health conditions, as well as between health satisfaction and both work and job withdrawal, independent of the relationships between reported health conditions and withdrawal behaviors.

Control and methodological variables. To assess the validity of the incivility construct, we measured employees' perceptions of just interpersonal workplace relationships with a revision[3] of the highly reliable and valid Perception of Fair Interpersonal Treatment Scale (PFIT; Donovan et al., 1998). High negative correlations between the PFIT and WIS would demonstrate construct validity of the latter measure.

We also assessed *extrinsic organizational commitment* to provide a measure of divergent validity. Extrinsic commitment refers to the extent that employees' motivation for working is based on tangible rewards as opposed to intrinsic desire. There is no reason to believe that financial commitment to a job would change as a function of uncivil workplace experiences. Thus, this scale was included because it should *not* be related to incivility. It also provides a methodological check on the possibility that correlations between our variables may simply reflect a response consistency bias. We supplemented one item from O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) measure of compliance-based organizational commitment with four items developed for this study.

To provide a baseline measure of occupational stress

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[2] To maintain some degree of consistency across response scales, we modified this scale's original 7-point response format to a 5-point format.
[3] Because of concerns about the total length of the questionnaire, measures such as this were shortened, based on psychometric analyses from previous scale administrations.

Table 2
Workplace Incivility Items and Factor Loadings

Item	Factor loading
"During the PAST FIVE YEARS while employed by the Eighth Circuit courts, have you been in a situation where any of your superiors or coworkers":	
Put you down or was condescending to you?	.84
Paid little attention to your statement or showed little interest in your opinion?	.79
Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you?	.74
Addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately?	.73
Ignored or excluded you from professional camaraderie?	.72
Doubted your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility?	.71
Made unwanted attempts to draw you into a discussion of personal matters?	.58

against which outcomes of incivility could be measured, we evaluated *job stress* through a shortened version of the Stress in General (SIG) scale (P. C. Smith, Sademan, & McCrary, 1992). This scale represents a global measure of occupational stress with good convergent and discriminant validity. In a format that parallels the JDI (P. C. Smith et al., 1969), the SIG scale asks respondents if each of a list of adjectives (e.g., hectic, tense, calm) describes their "job in general." We included it as a covariate in our analyses, reducing the possibility that ordinary job stress would drive significant relationships between incivility and outcomes.

Results

Workplace Incivility Scale Properties

To assess whether the incivility items did, in fact, represent a single identifiable construct, we first conducted confirmatory factor analyses on the seven items. All of the items loaded significantly onto a single-factor model with standard errors less than .03; factor loadings appear in Table 2. LISREL fit statistics, $\chi^2(14, N = 1,142) = 148.63$, root mean square residual = .032, goodness of fit index = .96, adjusted goodness of fit index = .93, and nonnormed fit index = .95, indicated that these items fit the single-factor model quite well. Further, only eight of the standardized residuals exceeded an absolute value of 3.0; these residuals did not appear to be systematic in any way, again indicating that the unidimensional model adequately accounted for the data.

The seven incivility items were then summed into the WIS scale, which an alpha coefficient of .89 demonstrated to be highly reliable and cohesive. To measure convergent validity, we correlated the WIS with Donovan et al.'s (1998) PFIT scale. Because the latter instrument assesses perceptions of (or climate for) interpersonally fair or civil treatment in the workplace, it should be highly negatively correlated with personal experiences of rude, uncivil behaviors

in the same environment. A Pearson correlation of −.59 confirmed this hypothesis.

Incidence Rates

Analyses revealed that 71% ($N = 808$) of employees reported some experience with workplace incivility in the previous 5 years, sometimes in conjunction with sexually harassing experiences. More specifically, 39% had encountered uncivil behavior an average of "once or twice," 25% experienced incivility "sometimes," and 6% endured the behavior "often" or "many times." A full 23% ($N = 265$) described incivility in isolation, without sexual harassment; remaining analyses focused on this latter subset of employees.[4]

Demographics of Targets

We tested demographic variables to determine what predicted the frequency with which an employee was targeted with incivility (i.e., investigating which power-related variables increased vulnerability). A series of nested regression models were tested, comparing full and reduced models. Specifically, the WIS score was regressed onto the following variables, each of which was added to the model in a separate block to determine its relative contribution to the percentage of variance explained by the model: (a)

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[4] Sexual harassment was measured via a modified version of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). Because we were focusing on incivility and did not want to confound any results with those pertaining to sexual harassment, all WIS analyses included these 265 employees who experienced incivility in the absence of sexual harassment, as well as the 298 individuals reporting neither incivility nor harassment.

Table 3
R^2 and Change Statistics for Regressions Predicting Vulnerability
to Workplace Incivility

	Workplace incivility frequency	
Block	ΔR^2	$\Delta F\ (df)$
Gender	.011	5.154 (1, 473)*
Add job position	.073	9.291 (4, 469)***
Add ethnicity	.006	0.942 (3, 466)
Add job gender context	.006	1.014 (3, 463)
Add marital status	.007	1.216 (3, 460)
Add age	.000	0.040 (1, 459)
Add interaction terms (Gender × Ethnicity, Gender × Age)	.012	1.484 (4, 455)

$*p < .05.$ $***p < .001.$

gender; (b) job position (which encompasses five groups: unit heads/managers/supervisors; attorneys; specialists; secretaries; and administrative support staff); (c) ethnicity (African American, European American, Native American, or "other"); (d) job gender context (as indicated by supervisor gender, coworker gender ratio, and gender traditionality of the person's position); (e) marital status (single, married/partnered, separated/divorced, or widowed); and (f) age. With the exception of age and coworker gender ratio, each variable was categorical and therefore dummy-coded. Finally, to test the possibility that women and men might be targeted with different rates of incivility depending on their ethnicity and age, we added Gender × Ethnicity and Gender × Age interactions in a final block. For all regression analyses in this article, two criteria determined the importance of the contribution of each of set of predictor variables: (a) a change of at least 1% in the percentage of variance accounted for by the model and (b) significance of this change at the .05 level.

Results revealed that the model containing only gender explained 1% of the variance in workplace incivility (see Table 3). On average, women experienced greater frequencies of incivility ($M = 2.47$) than did men ($M = 1.62$, $\beta = .15$). Adding job position significantly improved the model's ability to predict incivility, with the model accounting for a total of 8% of the variance. Inspection of standardized regression coefficients for this model suggests that attorneys ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .01$) and secretaries ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .001$) experienced the least frequent incivility, when compared with other job positions (unit head $\beta = -.03$ and specialist $\beta = .11, p > .05$). The addition of ethnicity, job gender context, marital status, age, and interactions did not significantly enhance the prediction of workplace incivility.

Demographics of Instigators

Respondents who had experienced interpersonal mistreatment (i.e., incivility or sexual harassment or both) in the workplace at least "once or twice" were branched to a section of the survey with questions about the "one situation" that they identified as having made the greatest impression on them. Some of these questions addressed instigator characteristics, specifically position within the organization and gender.[5] Respondents could mark as many characteristics as necessary to characterize the instigator or instigators in their one situation. That is, they had the option of checking more than one instigator position and gender, if multiple individuals had been involved.

Of all respondents who branched, 326 reported only incivility (i.e., without sexual harassment) in this one situation. Nonparametric chi-square analyses revealed significant differences with respect to instigator positions, $\chi^2(5, N = 320) = 313.811, p < .001$. Specifically, 50% of instigators of these incidents were court personnel acting alone (i.e., without individuals in other positions), 15% were judges alone, 7% were attorneys alone, 1% were Marshals or court security officers alone, and 16% worked in "other" positions within the organization. An additional 12% were instigators from different job positions acting together. Similar analyses uncovered instigator gender differences, $\chi^2(2, N = 320) = 84.531, p < .001$.

[5] Additional characteristics relevant to social power (e.g., age, ethnic minority status) might also be associated with incivility instigation, but this questionnaire did not assess them.

Overall, 42% of these instigators were men, 49% were women, and 9% were men and women together.

Outcomes of Incivility

Next, we performed a series of multiple regressions involving nested models to examine the effects of incivility on 12 psychological, somatic, and job-related variables (outcome variables). Because past research suggests that these variables differ with gender (e.g., Chusmir & Parker, 1992; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Rushing & Schwabe, 1995; Russ & McNeilly, 1995; Talaga & Beerh, 1995), ethnicity (e.g., Bailey, Wolfe, &Wolfe, 1996; Cox & Nkomo, 1991; Okolo & Eddy, 1994), and position within the organization (e.g., Chusmir & Parker, 1992; Guppy & Rick, 1996), effects of such demographic variables were statistically controlled. Specifically, each outcome variable was first regressed onto the following set of predictors: gender, ethnicity, and position within the organization. To control for effects of general job stress, we added the SIG scale score in the second block. Next, we added the WIS score to determine if it accounted for a significant amount of variance, over and above that already explained by demographic variables and job stress. Finally, because incivility could conceivably affect women and men differently, a WIS × Gender interaction term was added in the last block. Note that, because demographic and job stress variables were included in the regressions essentially as control variables, we do not focus in detail on the effects of these variables. Rather, results address the incivility construct. Table 4 presents R^2 and change statistics for each model, and Table 5 presents standardized regression coefficients for the best-fitting model corresponding to each outcome.

Job-related outcomes. Incivility significantly predicted each of the five components of job satisfaction (above and beyond the effects of personal demographics and occupational stress), with satisfaction always declining as incivility rose. Increases in explained variance ranged from 3% (pay and benefits satisfaction) to 16% (supervisor satisfaction).

In terms of organizational withdrawal behavior, the WIS score led to an 8% increase in R^2 for job withdrawal, with turnover intentions increasing as incivility became more frequent. By contrast, the inclusion of incivility in the work withdrawal model, although statistically significant, did not reach our minimum R^2 change criterion of 1%. The WIS × Gender interaction was also statistically significant, but it also did not meet the required threshold.

The addition of workplace incivility significantly improved prediction of career salience, leading to a 2% change in R^2. More frequent uncivil experiences were associated with lowered career salience. Again, despite statistical significance, the WIS × Gender effect did not meet our R^2 change criterion.

Psychological and somatic outcomes. With regard to psychosomatic outcomes, the WIS score significantly improved only the psychological distress model, resulting in a 2% increase in the percentage of variance explained. As personal encounters with incivility became more frequent, employees' feelings of general psychological distress (e.g., symptoms of depression and anxiety) rose. Moreover, the psychological distress model represented the only case within this article in which the addition of the WIS × Gender interaction term led to a meaningful improvement in outcome prediction. Specifically, both women and men became more distressed as incivility became more frequent; however, this effect was more pronounced for men. For psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and health satisfaction models, the addition of workplace incivility and the interaction did not significantly improve predictions of any outcome.

Control variable. Effects of incivility on extrinsic commitment were tested to provide a check against response method bias in the data. Only the model containing demographics accounted for a significant amount of variance in this variable. Adding job stress, incivility, and the interaction term did not enhance the model's performance.

Discussion

Recent years have seen increasing interest paid to interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace. Although much of the past research on this topic has focused on either general aggression or specific forms of aggressive behavior (e.g., sexual harassment, racial harassment), we sought to investigate the more subtle, nonspecific, nonphysical *incivility*, as called for by Andersson and Pearson (1999). Some might dismiss these routine slights and indignities— some of which lack overt malice—as trivial. However, consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theories and findings on daily hassles, we document a range of negative effects from these quotidian injustices.

Table 4
R^2 and Change Statistics for Regressions Predicting Outcomes of Workplace Incivility

Outcome	Block 1: Demographics		Block 2: Add job stress		Block 3: Add WIS		Block 4: Add interaction	
	R^2	F (df)	ΔR^2	ΔF (df)	ΔR^2	ΔF (df)	ΔR^2	ΔF (df)
Work satisfaction	.079	6.47 (8, 501)***	.050	29.50 (1, 500)***	.040	24.69 (1, 499)***	.001	0.66 (1, 498)
Coworker satisfaction	.010	1.61 (8, 503)	.029	15.43 (1, 502)***	.101	593.73 (1, 501)***	.001	0.71 (1, 500)
Supervisor satisfaction	.021	2.33 (8, 499)*	.107	62.25 (1, 498)***	.158	112.63 (1, 497)***	.000	0.04 (1, 496)
Pay/benefits satisfaction	.020	2.30 (8, 493)*	.080	44.60 (1, 492)***	.027	15.70 (1, 491)***	.000	0.19 (1, 490)
Promotional satisfaction	.037	3.34 (8, 475)**	.075	40.69 (1, 474)***	.059	34.07 (1, 473)***	.000	0.04 (1, 472)
Work withdrawal	.041	3.63 (8, 483)***	.003	1.78 (1, 482)	.008	3.97 (1, 481)*	.004	1.94 (1, 480)
Job withdrawal	.021	2.36 (8, 500)*	.111	65.15 (1, 499)***	.079	51.05 (1, 498)***	.008	4.99 (1, 497)*
Career salience	.018	2.20 (8, 506)*	.023	12.57 (1, 505)***	.017	9.31 (1, 504)**	.009	4.74 (1, 503)*
Psychological well-being	.023	1.49 (8, 501)	.090	50.71 (1, 500)***	.008	4.81 (1, 499)*	.000	0.00 (1, 498)
Psychological distress	.017	2.12 (8, 501)*	.182	115.63 (1, 500)***	.024	15.99 (1, 499)***	.012	8.22 (1, 498)**
Life satisfaction	.053	4.60 (8, 503)***	.062	35.79 (1, 502)***	.002	0.89 (1, 501)	.001	0.74 (1, 500)
Health satisfaction	.037	3.40 (8, 495)**	.023	12.35 (1, 494)***	.007	3.70 (1, 493)	.002	0.93 (1, 492)
Extrinsic commitment	.106	8.65 (8, 507)***	.005	2.84 (1, 506)	.003	1.66 (1, 505)	.002	0.98 (1, 504)

Note. WIS = Workplace Incivility Scale.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Best-Fitting Model Predicting Each Outcome

Outcome					Explanatory variable						
	Gender	African American	Euro American	Native American	Unit head	Attorney	Specialist	Secretary	Job stress	WIS	WIS × Gender
Work satisfaction	.06	.03	.07	.09	.31***	.14**	.32***	.07	-.19***	-.22***	—
Coworker satisfaction	.04	.02	-.01	.05	.07	.01	.10	.09	-.09*	-.34***	—
Supervisor satisfaction	-.03	-.05	-.08	.03	.07	-.04	.11	.05	-.24***	-.43***	—
Pay/benefits satisfaction	.12*	.03	.02	.08	.18***	.09	.15**	.01	-.26***	-.18***	—
Promotional satisfaction	-.03	.01	-.05	-.01	.22***	-.01	.19***	-.04	-.22***	-.26***	—
Work withdrawal	-.04	.01	-.03	-.03	.05	.22***	.09	-.04	.04	.10	—
Job withdrawal	-.07	-.03	-.10	-.06	-.13**	.19***	-.12*	-.01	.28***	.31***	—
Career salience	.05	-.03	-.01	.01	.21	.06	.14**	.07	-.13**	-.14**	—
Psychological well-being	.06	.03	-.03	-.06	.06	-.01	.01	.03	-.30***	-.10*	—
Psychological distress	.14	.01	.08	.08	-.03	.05	-.03	-.04	.42***	.40***	-.28**
Life satisfaction	.02	-.05	-.02	-.05	.21***	.22***	.20***	.06	-.27***	—	—
Health satisfaction	-.18	-.02	-.10	-.06	.06	.04	.08	.15**	-.16***	—	—
Extrinsic commitment	-.05	.05	.03	.06	-.32***	-.32***	-.16**	-.23***	—	—	—

Note. WIS = Workplace Incivility Scale. Dashes indicate that the best-fitting model did not include this variable.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Characteristics of Incivility

Results demonstrate that incivility is quite prevalent in the American workplace, with over two thirds of employees reporting disrespect, condescension, social exclusion, and so forth. A closer examination of these employees partly supports Hypothesis 1, suggesting that this form of interpersonal mistreatment may be gendered not in its content but rather in its targets. Specifically, as in Björkvist and colleagues' (Björkqvist, Österman, & Hjelt-Bäck, 1994) study, female employees experienced greater frequencies of incivility than did male employees. General disrespect, condescension, or social exclusion in the absence of overtly sexist or sexual behaviors is not typically thought of as illegal sex discrimination. However, findings in this article suggest that, at least in some cases, employees may be targeted with different rates of workplace incivility on the basis of their sex—potentially creating disparate work environments for women and men.

Results also demonstrated that employees in certain job positions—namely, secretaries and attorneys—experienced *lower* rates of incivility when compared with other employees. Although one typically does not see secretaries falling into the same category as attorneys, this finding most likely reflects their unique positions within the federal court workplace. Specifically, many of these particular employees work for federal judges as judicial secretaries and assistants, law clerks, and staff attorneys. As a result, secretaries and attorneys enjoy a somewhat "privileged" status within the organization, explaining why others within the workplace might hesitate before targeting them with rude, unprofessional comments or behaviors. Thus, although these results do not support the prediction (Hypothesis 1) that incivility targets would be disproportionately represented at the lower end of the official organizational hierarchy, they do uphold the more general notion that status affects vulnerability to such abuse.

Contrary to expectations (Hypothesis 2), the most powerful individuals within this organization—judges—represented a relatively small proportion of instigators of incivility; instead, a majority of instigators were fellow court personnel. This may partly reflect the fact that court personnel far outnumber judges in this workplace. One should also consider such numbers in relation to total population numbers; these judicial instigators represented as many as one third of the total number of judges ($N = 149$) working within the organization, whereas the court personnel instigators represented at most 10% of the total personnel pool ($N = 1,662$). Thus, relative to their total numbers within the organization, it appears that more judges than court personnel may be instigating uncivil acts. We did not test this observation with a formal statistical analysis because we were unable to determine exact numbers of instigators. That is, multiple respondents could potentially report on the same instigator, creating overlap in our instigator data; at best we can only compute an upper limit on numbers of instigators. Nevertheless, trends in the data support the thinking that more powerful individuals are more apt to behave uncivilly toward others within the workplace. This may prove a fruitful direction for future research.

Effects of Incivility

This study extended past workplace interpersonal mistreatment research by exploring three categories of effects, thus providing a rich picture of the toll that such behavior takes on employees and organizations. Partly confirming Hypothesis 3, incivility influenced 8 of 12 expected outcomes. Overall, with more frequent experiences of disrespectful, insensitive, uncivil behavior on the job, respondents were less satisfied with all aspects of their employment—their jobs, supervisors, coworkers, pay and benefits, and promotional opportunities. Further, they considered quitting more frequently. In addition to such numerous job-related effects, respondents who experienced more frequent incivility also endured greater psychological distress. The scope of these negative effects might seem surprising; however, they are highly consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) findings that ordinary daily hassles considerably outstrip major life stressors in predicting damaged morale, impaired social and work functioning, and psychosomatic symptoms.

Thus, these results demonstrate that workplace incivility merits serious attention, and they replicate previous findings of job-related effects of related forms of interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace. This study also offers novel evidence of relationships between interpersonal mistreatment and psychological and somatic health among American employees. Interestingly, incivility did not directly influence positively valenced psychological and health outcomes—results that can be interpreted in several ways. First, incivility in the workplace could be differentially related to positive and negative affect; that is, although the presence of incivility can lead to distress, the lack of such condescending, hostile behavior does not improve emotional and physical

health. This pattern of results appears reasonable, given theoretical and empirical distinctions between positive and negative affect (e.g., Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999). Also, our exclusive focus on the organizational context might explain the abundance of job-related effects, suggesting that consequences of uncivil behavior are most concentrated in its immediate environment (in this case, the workplace). Alternatively, job-related effects could simply be more long-lasting than positively valenced psychological and health-related effects. Given the somewhat broadly defined time frame of the incivility experiences (5 years), it could be that evidence of positively valenced effects of incivility requires more specific, short-term measurement of the offense (or offenses). It is clear that all of these interpretations are post hoc and require further study.

Limitations and Future Directions

We should always interpret results from a single organization with a certain degree of caution regarding generalizability. One might wonder whether the federal court workplace is highly unique, being based on the American adversarial model of justice and therefore giving rise to greater incidence of or sensitivity to incivility. In actuality, however, this model applies only to the *trying of fact*, not the typical organization and functions of court personnel (e.g., managing court documents, accounting, supervising fellow personnel). Thus, this organization is not as unusual as it might seem at first glance. We contend that this workplace is comparable with organizations with similar gender ratios and hierarchical power structures. Here, women overall are in the numerical majority; however, men dominate the top of the organizational structure, women far outnumber men at the bottom, and gender ratios approach parity in the middle. We believe that our findings would generalize to similar organizations.

We argue for the validity of our incivility measure through convergence with the climate measure of fair interpersonal treatment and divergence from extrinsic commitment, and we provide a first look at the nomological net surrounding incivility. Nevertheless, the WIS could undergo improvement. Specifically, the instrument is perhaps a fairly conservative measure of incivility, containing only seven items. Although such brevity is often necessary in applied organizational research, additional manifestations of workplace incivility undoubtedly exist. Further, a 5-year time frame may not be ideal for estimating

incidence rates of subtle workplace behaviors, based on retrospective self-reports. For these reasons, workplace incivility may be even more widespread than reported in this study. Future research on this construct might benefit from focus-group or individual interviews with employees to identify a larger constellation of uncivil workplace behaviors.

This research also does not capture effects of cognitive and affective variables that may link workplace incivility to individual outcomes. Theory suggests that anger, fear, negative mood, damaged social identity, cognitive distraction, cognitive appraisal, and attributions mediate effects of workplace interpersonal mistreatment on employee behaviors, attitudes, and psychological and physical health (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Barling, 1996; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This inattention to mediators may explain weak or insignificant relationships to certain outcome variables.

The present study focuses only on incivility originating from within the organization and taking place at a relatively traditional worksite. Thus, it does not address extraorganizational sources of incivility. The manifestation and impact of incivility instigated by "outsiders" may differ from insider incivility, because oftentimes no former or ongoing relationship is at stake. Nontraditional workplaces, such as those that involve telecommuting or "portable" worksites, are also not well-represented in our sample. Future studies of these variations on workplace incivility may uncover even higher incidence rates.

In addition, even the most sophisticated survey methodology brings with it certain drawbacks. Although a return rate of 71% on a large-scale mail survey is typically considered outstanding, it may also yield unknown biases, limiting the validity of our findings. Further, our survey results are based entirely on single-source, self-report data, raising the potential for common-method variance to drive significant results. We attempted to build into this research several methodological checks against such a bias, including the placement of "outcome" measures before the incivility measure in the survey. Our examination of extrinsic commitment represented a second check; widely varying relationships between incivility and outcomes—including a lack of effect on extrinsic commitment—further assuaged our mono-method bias concerns.

Our cross-sectional data prevent strong inferences regarding changes over time, information crucial to Andersson and Pearson's (1999) "incivility spiral." In addition, the correlational nature of these data renders our causal inferences preliminary. However,

considerable theory supported these interpretations, and previous longitudinal research on sexualized forms of interpersonal mistreatment (e.g., Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999; Munson, Hulin, & Drasgow, 2000) provides strong evidence that our job and psychological outcomes *follow* such workplace experiences. Nevertheless, more longitudinal work in this area is clearly needed.

Conclusion

As Andersson and Pearson (1999, p. 457) so aptly stated, incivility in the workplace revolves around a "violation of workplace norms of mutual respect." Their spiral model highlights the interpersonal nature of incivility; however, Andersson and Pearson did not explicitly focus on deleterious outcomes for the persons involved. By combining this management perspective on incivility with the psychological stress literature, our work represents a first glance at the individual harm that results from uncivil behaviors in the workplace. An interesting question arises when viewing our results through the ascent of an incivility spiral: Because the spiral involves an amplification of deviance over time, could our findings of negative individual outcomes imply a bad omen for the future? In other words, although we cannot determine our point of entry into the incivility spiral, it remains possible that individual negative outcomes could deteriorate further as conflict continues and escalates. Regardless of our point of entry, the adverse individual impact of workplace incivility is evident.

Finally, a number of interesting questions remain about workplace incivility. For example, what organizational conditions facilitate or inhibit incivility, and how do these interact with individual differences among employees? Do Employee Assistance Programs buffer effects on individuals? What strategies do employees use to respond to or cope with incivility, and do the strategies moderate relationships to outcomes? These and other issues must await future research.

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