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Beyond Targets and Instigators: Examining Workplace Incivility in Dyads and the Moderating Role of Perceived Incivility Norms

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In the 2 decades since Andersson and Pearson (*Academy of Management Review*, *24*, 452, 1999) suggested workplace incivility occurs in dyadic relationships between two employees, research has only studied incivility from the perspective of either the target or the instigator. In doing so, it implicitly treats experienced and instigated incivility as though they solely reflect (viz., dispositional and situational) characteristics of targets and instigators, ignoring that incivility is also attributable to the unique relationship between dyad members. The present study draws on the norm of reciprocity to examine workplace incivility in dyadic relationships and how it differs across individuals. Using dyads as the unit of analysis, we test our predictions among employees at a U.S. restaurant chain (Sample 1); a technology manufacturer in China (Sample 2); and across a range of industries, organizations, and jobs in the U.S. (Sample 3). We find that experienced and instigated incivility exhibit substantial variation at the dyad level, that the two are related within dyads after accounting for individuals' general tendencies to experience and instigate incivility, and that the within-dyad association between experienced and instigated incivility is moderated by perceived descriptive and injunctive norms regarding uncivil behavior. Implications and future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: incivility, mistreatment, dyads, norms, round-robin design

A little more than 20 years ago, the management and applied psychology literatures were introduced to the concept of *workplace incivility*, low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm that violates workplace norms for mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In the ensuing decades, empirical research has significantly advanced our understanding of the antecedents and consequences of these rude and discourteous behaviors for the individuals who experience them and those who engage in them. Experiences of incivility have been shown, for example, to reduce employee engagement (Chen et al., 2013), hinder citizenship and task performance (Porath & Erez, 2007), and cost organizations millions of dollars each year (Porath & Pearson, 2013). Likewise, research shows instigators are more likely to be distrusted and excluded by colleagues (Scott et al., 2013). In a recent review, Schilpzand et al. (2016) found that 95% of incivility research has focused on either targets or instigators of uncivil behavior.

Although we now know a great deal about the personal and situational characteristics that affect individuals' general tendencies to experience or instigate uncivil behavior at work, the occurrence of behavior like workplace incivility "depends not only on the actor's general tendencies to … harm others but also, and perhaps primarily, on the *relationship* between the actor and each potential recipient" (Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007, p. 953). To be sure, scholars have long acknowledged incivility's relational nature (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Hershcovis & Barling, 2007). And yet, as Schilpzand et al.'s (2016) review shows, the incivility literature has neglected to examine incivility as a relational (i.e., dyadic) construct and thus offers no evidence of the extent to which it varies between specific pairs of individuals. In this respect, the incivility literature is inadequate because it fails to incorporate this dyadic, relational perspective (Grant & Pollock, 2011).

This gap between theory and research is problematic for two reasons. First, to the extent that workplace incivility is attributable to the unique relationship between two employees, it is possible that a substantial amount of variance in incivility remains unexplained and, consequently, understanding of workplace incivility remains incomplete (Jones & Shah, 2016; Kenny, 1994). Second, a focus on targets and instigators—without considering their relationship—can lead to overly simplistic explanations for uncivil behavior (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). In reality, "it is very unlikely that a person will behave in an identical manner toward everyone" (Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007, p. 952). Accordingly, Greco et al. (2019) lamented that scholars' failure to study differences in uncivil behaviors *across each of a person's interaction partners* is a "critical shortcoming" of prior research (p. 17) and a "significant obstacle" to understanding the reciprocation of negative behaviors between parties (p. 5).

This is not to say that individual differences are unimportant. Theory and research suggest the reciprocation of uncivil behavior is influenced by norms that affect both specific (i.e., dyadic)

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interactions and individuals' general tendencies (Gallucci & Perugini, 2003; Gouldner, 1960). Given that incivility, by its very definition, involves the violation of norms for mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), knowledge regarding individuals' perceptions of norms concerning uncivil behavior is essential to understand experienced and instigated incivility within dyadic relationships. Incivility norm perceptions can be either descriptive or injunctive (Cialdini et al., 1991), in that they can reflect employees' perceptions concerning the degree to which other organization members *engage* in uncivil behavior (descriptive) or perceptions concerning the degree to which other organization members *approve* of uncivil behavior (injunctive). We contend that both descriptive and injunctive incivility norm perceptions capture important individual differences that could moderate incivility in dyadic relationships. To date, however, empirical research on norms regarding uncivil behavior has been limited (Reich & Hershcovis, 2015; Walsh et al., 2012) and little research has examined multiple norms simultaneously or compared their effects. Thus, an investigation of perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms offers to help scholars and managers understand more precisely when uncivil behavior is more or less likely to occur among specific pairs of individuals.

The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to examine workplace incivility in dyadic relationships and how these relationships are moderated by individuals' perceptions of descriptive and injunctive norms regarding uncivil behavior. We realize Andersson and Pearson (1999) theorized long ago that incivility occurs in dyadic relationships, but our work is not simply a test of their propositions. Rather, the past is prologue: The divergence between theoretical accounts of incivility as a relational construct and empirical treatment of incivility as reflecting general tendencies provides the impetus for the present study. We therefore examine the extent to which *dyadic incivility*—that is, the frequency with which one experiences incivility from, or instigates incivility toward, a specific individual—occurs above and beyond each dyad member's general tendencies to experience and instigate incivility, and whether these dyadic relationships are moderated by individuals' perceptions of descriptive and injunctive norms regarding uncivil behavior. In doing so, we go beyond a consideration of targets and instigators (which differ between persons) to consider their unique relationship (which differs between dyads).

The present study contributes to the incivility literature in two ways. First, unlike prior studies that have examined individuals' general tendencies to experience or engage in workplace incivility, we address repeated calls to examine experienced and instigated incivility in dyadic relationships (e.g., Hershcovis & Reich, 2013; Jensen & Raver, 2018). In shifting attention from the target and instigator to the dyad as the "center of action," our approach allows for more complete understanding of workplace incivility as a dyadic phenomenon by comparing the influence of targets, instigators, and their dyadic relationship (Jones & Shah, 2016; see also Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). Doing so also has "the potential to significantly advance the way we think about perpetrators and targets (i.e., as members of a system rather than individual entities"; Hershcovis & Reich, 2013, p. S37). In this respect, our investigation of dyadic incivility could bring new life to a mature literature. Second, we advance understanding of workplace incivility by considering whether and how these dyadic relationships are affected by employee perceptions of descriptive and injunctive norms regarding uncivil behavior. By investigating perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms as new substantive moderators of the relation between experienced and instigated incivility in dyads, we contribute to theory and research by revealing "when" or "for whom" the relation is likely to hold (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). Moreover, we extend prior research by examining the extent to which perceived norms facilitate or impede incivility within dyads (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013; Pearson & Porath, 2004), by identifying boundary conditions governing dyadic incivility (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Tse & Ashkanasy, 2015), and by testing the relative influence of multiple types of norm perceptions considered simultaneously (Cialdini et al., 1990).

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Workplace Incivility: Generalized Versus Dyadic Reciprocity

In light of our focus on workplace incivility as a dyadic phenomenon, it is important to distinguish between two types of reciprocity. The first is referred to as *generalized reciprocity*, which reflects the extent to which people who perceive or behave toward others in a particular way (i.e., across interaction partners) also tend to elicit similar perceptions or behaviors across partners (Kenny, 1996; Kenny et al., 2006). Generalized reciprocity in incivility represents interindividual differences in the frequency with which a person is uncivil toward (or experiences incivility from) others in general. Between-persons research has shown that people who frequently experience incivility from others (i.e., in general) are more likely to engage in incivility toward others (i.e., in general) than are their counterparts who are less frequently mistreated (e.g., Gallus et al., 2014). In contrast, *dyadic reciprocity* captures the degree to which a person's perception of or behavior toward a particular individual is reciprocated by that individual (Kenny, 1996; Kenny et al., 2006). These distinctions are shown visually in the Appendix.

The distinction between generalized and dyadic reciprocity makes the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) a conceptual framework that is particularly well suited to guide our predictions. This is because theory and research suggest the norm of reciprocity can likewise be understood in two ways: as an interpersonal motive or as a behavioral rule. The former perspective views reciprocity "as an interpersonal motive that, by itself, represents the goal of the interaction" (Gallucci & Perugini, 2003, p. 475). Conceptualized this way, the norm of reciprocity helps explain why experienced and instigated incivility are positively related within dyads. Indeed, "conceptualizations of negative reciprocity primarily occur between the offender and the offended" (Greco et al., 2019, p. 5). The latter perspective views reciprocity "as an effective behavioral rule to achieve long-term mutual co-operation (i.e., across interactions and individuals) and thus higher outcomes in the long run" (Gallucci & Perugini, 2003, p. 475). This view helps explain why individual differences in perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms—which provide behavioral rules (Feldman, 1984; Fiske, 2004)—can moderate the relation between experienced and instigated incivility in dyads.

The Relation Between Experienced and Instigated Incivility Within Dyads

Although intuition and experience suggest experienced and instigated incivility would be positively related within dyads, there are several reasons why this might *not* be the case. After all,

reciprocity is just one of several dyad-specific patterns that workplace incivility could take within an organization (Pearson et al., 2000). Andersson and Pearson (1999) proposed, for instance, that uncivil reciprocation may not occur if a target ignores the instigator's slight or gives the instigator the benefit of the doubt. Such possibilities represent "departure points" from the famed incivility spiral (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In addition, acts of incivility might not be reciprocated among dyad partners but instead spill over or cascade to other individuals (Foulk et al., 2016; Pearson & Porath, 2004). This has led some to suggest that the occurrence of dyadic reciprocity presupposed by mistreatment scholars is overstated (Cortina et al., 2017; Taylor & Kluemper, 2012).

We should also note that determining which dyad member instigated incivility first is largely moot because the reciprocation of uncivil behavior is inherently bidirectional (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Echoing this view, Köhler et al. (2018) observed that "looking at the target–instigator relationship as determined by a single incident is not necessarily helpful when studying incivility, as it fails to acknowledge that targets and instigators in organizations are part of a social community that continues to interact" (p. 125). We therefore focus on dyad-specific patterns of behavior, which occur above and beyond employees' general tendencies to experience or engage in workplace incivility (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013; Kenny et al., 2006).

Despite the potential for the dyadic interaction patterns described above, the norm of reciprocity maintains that one person's injurious act is likely to be reciprocated by another person (Gouldner, 1960; Perugini et al., 2003). It therefore follows that when an employee makes a rude or disparaging remark to a colleague, for example, the colleague will reciprocate with uncivil behavior. This dyad-specific pattern of reciprocal behavior is likely to occur because the aggrieved employee perceives his or her mistreatment as unfair, experiences negative affect, or develops revenge cognitions (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Research shows, for instance, that mistreatment can trigger aversive arousal and thoughts of retribution, which employees often discharge by engaging in counterproductive behaviors like incivility (e.g., Bordia et al., 2008; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Thus, when an employee feels that a coworker has violated interpersonal norms for mutual respect, the employee is likely to reciprocate in kind to redress the balance in the exchange relationship. Indeed, experienced incivility is associated with these outcomes at the individual level (Schilpzand et al., 2016), thereby providing some indirect support for the idea that the association between experienced and instigated incivility would occur within dyads. We therefore hypothesized:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Experienced and instigated incivility will be positively associated within dyads, above and beyond each dyad member's general tendencies to experience and instigate incivility.

The Moderating Role of Perceived Incivility Norms

Although we expect that experienced and instigated incivility will be positively related within dyads, theory and research recognize that the reciprocation of negative behaviors like incivility varies across individuals (Gouldner, 1960; Perugini et al., 2003). Although several individual differences could moderate the within-dyad relation between experienced and instigated incivility, research supporting the dual interpretation of reciprocity maintains that individuals abide by certain behavioral rules or expectations (Gallucci & Perugini, 2003). That is, uncivil behavior in dyads is governed by *perceived norms*, individuals' perceptions of informal guidelines regarding acceptable and unacceptable conduct (Cialdini & Trost, 1998).[1] We therefore investigate whether the within-dyad relation between experienced and instigated incivility varies according to individual differences in perceived norms regarding uncivil behavior.

Research suggests the full impact of norms can only be recognized when researchers distinguish between descriptive and injunctive norms (Cialdini et al., 1990). Perceived descriptive norms reflect an individual's perceptions of how other people behave in a work setting; they are perceptions of what other organization members do (e.g., Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). In contrast, perceived injunctive norms reflect perceptions prescribing how people should behave; they are perceptions of what other organization members approve or disapprove (e.g., Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). Put another way, descriptive norm perceptions refer to what "is" done, whereas injunctive norm perceptions concern what "ought" to be done (Cialdini et al., 1990). Applying these distinctions to the incivility context, we formally define *descriptive incivility norms* as employees' perceptions regarding the degree to which other organization members engage in workplace incivility. We likewise define *injunctive incivility norms* as perceptions that one's colleagues approve of or endorse incivility as acceptable workplace behavior. Extant incivility research has acknowledged these different types of perceived norms but has not examined them empirically (e.g., Walsh et al., 2012, 2018). Thus, we extend this research by investigating the degree to which the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads is moderated by perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms.

Descriptive Incivility Norm Perceptions

We expect that perceived descriptive incivility norms will moderate the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads for several reasons. For example, because descriptive norms describe what is "normal," they provide "evidence as to what will likely be effective and adaptive action: 'If everyone is doing it, it must be a sensible thing to do'" (Cialdini et al., 1990, p. 1015). In a similar vein, perceived descriptive incivility norms may moderate the positive relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads because of "informational influence" (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). According to this perspective, individuals who perceive that others engage in uncivil behavior are more likely to engage in incivility themselves because the heuristic of social proof identifies incivility as a behavior with a high likelihood of success (Naumann & Ehrhart, 2011). Other research suggests high levels of observed incivility can convey that such behavior is common and

[1] We recognize that norms can be conceptualized at the individual or group level. We focus on individual perceptions (i.e., subjective norms; Cialdini & Trost, 1998) because our study concerns uncivil interactions between specific pairs of individuals and how those interactions might differ across individuals. Our conceptualization is consistent with prior studies examining incivility norms (e.g., Gallus et al., 2014; Walsh et al., 2012, 2018) and with our theorizing, which recognizes individual differences in reciprocity (e.g., Gouldner, 1960; Perugini et al., 2003).

tolerated (e.g., O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1996; Pearson & Porath, 2004).

We therefore anticipate that descriptive incivility norm perceptions will facilitate uncivil behavior within dyads, such that an individual who experiences incivility from a coworker is more likely to instigate incivility toward that coworker when the individual perceives that organization members engage in incivility relatively frequently (i.e., when perceived descriptive norms are higher). Conversely, we anticipate that an individual is less likely to reciprocate uncivil behavior when he or she perceives the level of incivility in the organization (i.e., perceived descriptive incivility norms) to be lower. Supporting this possibility, research suggests observing uncivil behavior in the work environment can affect one's own uncivil behavior (e.g., Glomb & Liao, 2003; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). We therefore hypothesized the following:

> *Hypothesis 2a:* The positive relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads will be moderated by perceived descriptive incivility norms, such that the relation will be stronger (weaker) when individuals perceive higher (lower) levels of uncivil behavior among organization members.

Injunctive Incivility Norm Perceptions

Theory and research suggest that perceived injunctive incivility norms will moderate uncivil behavior within dyads for reasons different from those thought to occur with descriptive norm perceptions. For example, perceived injunctive incivility norms not only provide information about the sort of behaviors that are typical (as descriptive norm perceptions do) but also they signal to employees what behaviors are endorsed or admonished by other organization members (Cialdini et al., 1990; Naumann & Ehrhart, 2011). Individuals are more likely to engage in incivility when such behavior is deemed supported and appropriate (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). Thus, through this process of "normative influence" (Cialdini & Trost, 1998), an individual who experiences incivility from a coworker is more likely to instigate incivility toward that coworker when the individual perceives organization members approve of uncivil behavior (i.e., when perceived injunctive norms are higher). Conversely, an individual will be less inclined to behave rudely toward an instigator when he or she expects such behavior will be met with disapproval from colleagues (i.e., when injunctive incivility norms are perceived to be lower). Thus, we hypothesized the following:

> *Hypothesis 2b:* The positive relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads will be moderated by perceived injunctive incivility norms, such that the relation will be stronger (weaker) when individuals perceive higher (lower) approval of uncivil behavior among organization members.

Comparing the Strength of Perceived Descriptive and Injunctive Norms

In light of our predictions that the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads will be stronger when individuals perceive higher levels of descriptive and injunctive norms regarding uncivil behavior, one might then wonder which type of perceived norm more strongly affects the strength of this association. Given the paucity of empirical research examining multiple types of norm perceptions in general (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1991; Ehrhart & Raver, 2014) and in the incivility literature more specifically (e.g., Schilpzand et al., 2016), little is known about the relative strength of the proposed moderating effects. Such knowledge could shed light on the distinct nature and effects of multiple types of norms and provide a better understanding of when incivility occurs in dyads. Thus, beyond considering *whether* each type of perceived norm affects the strength of the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads, we offer an exploratory research question that asks *which* perceived norm exhibits the stronger moderating effect on this relation. Formally, we offer the following research question:

> *Research Question 1:* Which type of perceived incivility norm—descriptive or injunctive—demonstrates the stronger moderating effect on the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads?

Method

Participants and Procedures

We tested our hypotheses in three field samples to replicate and triangulate our results. Our procedures were largely the same across samples, with differences described below. Sample 1 data were collected as part of a larger study on workplace mistreatment; some data were used by Kluemper et al. (2019, Study 2). Data from Samples 2 and 3 are original to the present study (approved by University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board, SBE-18-14284, "Examining relationships at work").

Sample 1

The setting for Sample 1 was an organization that operates casual dining restaurants across the southeastern U.S. The five store locations we sampled employed 169 individuals, with each led by one general manager and one or two assistant managers. We met with small groups of employees to explain the study protocol and to distribute surveys and collect them when completed. The survey was comprised of sociometric questions, survey measures, and demographic questions. Usable responses were obtained from 142 employees (84%) who received $10 for participation. The sociometric questions asked each employee to report on incivility experienced from and instigated toward every other employee in the store, in what is known as a *round-robin design*. Because participants rated 34 other employees on average, the final sample consisted of 3,705 dyads. The sample was 50% female and 80% Caucasian. Respondents averaged 23 years of age ($SD = 6.5$), 6 years of job experience ($SD = 4.9$), 3 years of organizational tenure ($SD = 2.6$), and 26 work hours per week ($SD = 12.7$).

Sample 2

We sampled employees at a large technology manufacturer in Guangdong, China. We contacted the company's HR manager, explained the study's purpose and protocol, and obtained approval to administer the study to 47 teams in four divisions. Managerial and professional (i.e., Research and Development (R&D), technology, marketing, and financing) teams were selected because these employees have high literacy and frequently communicate with each

other at work. Five members from each team were randomly selected to participate to strike a balance between obtaining information from a sufficient number of dyads while reducing reporting fatigue (namely, during the round-robin portion of the survey). Division leaders introduced the study during a weekly meeting and explained that participation was voluntary. We sent our online survey to 235 employees. We obtained usable responses from 171 employees (73%) who provided data for 666 dyadic relationships. The sample was 67% female. Respondents averaged 31 years of age ($SD = 4.9$), 8 years of job experience ($SD = 4.7$), 4 years of organizational tenure ($SD = 3.5$), and 44 work hours per week ($SD = 14.4$).

Sample 3

We approached 114 part-time masters of business administration (MBA) students at a large university in the southeastern U.S. to serve as organizational contacts in exchange for extra course credit. If student contacts worked 20 hr or more each week and interacted regularly with other members of their work team or unit, they were eligible to act as the focal employee participant. Contacts identified and recruited four coworkers to participate and provided us with their names and email addresses. As in Sample 2, we collected data from groups of five to limit the length of the round-robin portion of the survey and thus minimize response fatigue. To avoid selection bias, contacts were instructed to choose the four individuals whose last names begin with the letter closest to the letter L. We then sent an online survey to each of the 5 members of the 79 teams who elected to participate. We received usable data for 1,003 dyadic relationships from 285 employees in 68 teams. Participants worked in a variety of fields, including retail, manufacturing, finance, hospitality, and government. Fifty-eight percent of respondents were female and 51% were Caucasian. They averaged 33 years of age ($SD = 9.1$), 12 years of work experience ($SD = 9.1$), 5 years of organizational tenure ($SD = 5.3$), and 43 work hours per week ($SD = 7.3$).

Measures

The measures employed in all three samples are reported below. For Sample 2, we employed standard translation–back translation procedures (Brislin, 1980) to ensure the equivalence of the English and Chinese versions of our measures. Two proficient bilingual researchers conducted the translation, with input from five employees (not included in the study) who commented on ambiguously worded items.

Dyadic Experienced and Instigated Incivility

We measured incivility in dyads using a round-robin design in which participants are presented with a list of coworkers and are asked to rate each of them. In Sample 1, employees used single-item measures to report the extent to which they experienced incivility from and instigated incivility toward each coworker. The items instructed participants to "indicate how often each person acted rudely toward you at work during the past year" and to "indicate how often you acted rudely toward each person during the past year." Single-item measures are common in round-robin designs (e.g., de Jong et al., 2007; Lyons & Scott, 2012; Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007) and have been used to measure incivility in other work (Porath et al., 2015). Both measures were anchored on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*about once a day*). Participants were asked to rate only employees who worked in their store because the stores do not share employees.

In Samples 2 and 3, participants were also asked to indicate how frequently within the past year they experienced incivility from and instigated incivility toward each of their coworkers. Unlike Sample 1, however, we used a three-item measure from Tarraf et al. (2017). For experienced incivility, participants reported how often each coworker "treated me rudely," "treated me uncivilly," and "treated me with disrespect." Similarly, the instigated incivility measure asked participants to indicate how often they treated each coworker rudely, uncivilly, and with disrespect. Given the nested nature of the data and incivility's low base rate, we assessed reliability with omega coefficients (Geldhof et al., 2014). Experienced ($\omega = .76, .86$) and instigated ($\omega = .78, .91$) incivility scores showed acceptable reliability in both samples.

Perceived Descriptive Incivility Norms

Because perceived descriptive norms reflect individuals' perceptions concerning how other organization members *actually* behave (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004), we adapted measures of experienced incivility to capture the extent to which participants observed organization members exhibit uncivil behavior. We adapted Cortina et al.'s (2001) seven-item measure in Sample 1 ($\alpha = .95$) and a four-item version (used by Lim & Cortina, 2005) in Samples 2 and 3 ($\alpha s = .88, .91$). In all three samples, we modified the instructions so that participants, rather than indicating how often they experienced incivility, reported how often (1 = *never*; 5 = *about once a day*) they observed organization members exhibit uncivil behavior in the past year at work. Sample items include "show little interest in someone's opinion" and "put down others or be condescending to them in some way." Our approach is consistent with the operationalizations of subjective descriptive norms (e.g., Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004; Naumann & Ehrhart, 2011) and prior incivility research (Taylor & Kluemper, 2012).

Perceived Injunctive Incivility Norms (Samples 2 and 3 Only)

Because perceived injunctive norms reflect individuals' perceptions concerning how organization members *should* behave (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004), we adapted Lim and Cortina's (2005) measure of experienced incivility to assess perceived injunctive incivility norms in Samples 2 and 3 ($\alpha s = .88, .87$). Participants indicated the extent to which their coworkers would approve of uncivil behaviors (1 = *strongly disapprove*; 5 = *strongly approve*). Sample items include "put down others or be condescending to them" and "pay little attention to others' statements or show little interest in their opinions." This approach to measuring perceived norms surrounding deviant behavior has been used in prior research (e.g., Tepper et al., 2008).

Control Variables

We controlled for employee age, sex, and organization tenure because theory and research suggest younger, female, and less tenured employees are more likely to experience incivility than

their older, male, and more tenured counterparts (e.g., Cortina, 2008; Gabriel et al., 2018; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Research likewise shows that these characteristics can influence individuals' tendencies to engage in uncivil behavior (e.g., Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Ng & Feldman, 2008). Including control variables did not change the pattern of results, so we omit them from the results reported below (e.g., Becker et al., 2016).

Data Analytic Strategy

The data collected for this study have a complex nested structure, wherein dyadic relationships are nested in individuals, who in turn are nested in groups.[2] Unlike data that have a *purely* nested structure (e.g., employees work in one and only one unit), the round-robin design acknowledges that individuals can form perceptions of or enact behaviors toward several other individuals. Dyads are thus said to be cross-classified by actors and partners. To test our hypotheses and Research Question, we estimated cross-classified random effects models in which dyads (Level 1) were nested in both actors and partners (at Level 2), who are nested in groups (at Level 3). Formally, there are $i = 1, 2, \ldots n_{jkl}$ Level 1 units (i.e., dyads) nested within each cell, cross-classified by $j = 1 \ldots J$ units of the first higher-level factor (i.e., actors), designated as rows, and $k = 1 \ldots K$ units of the second higher-level factor (i.e., partners), designated as columns, which are nested in $l = 1 \ldots L$ clusters (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). We used HLM7 (Raudenbush et al., 2011) to estimate our model with the following equations:

$$Y_{ijkl} = \pi_{0jkl} + \pi_{1jkl}(\text{experienced incivility}) + e_{ijkl} \quad (1)$$

$$\pi_{0jkl} = \theta_{0l} + \gamma_{01l}(\text{descriptive norms}) + \gamma_{02l}(\text{injunctive norms}) + b_{00j} + c_{00kl} \quad (2)$$

$$\pi_{1jkl} = \theta_{1l} + \gamma_{11l}(\text{descriptive norms}) + \gamma_{12l}(\text{injunctive norms}) \quad (3)$$

$$\theta_{0l} = \delta_{000} + d_{00l} \quad (4)$$

$$\gamma_{01l} = \delta_{010} \quad (5)$$

$$\gamma_{02l} = \delta_{020} \quad (6)$$

$$\theta_{1l} = \delta_{100} \quad (7)$$

$$\gamma_{11l} = \delta_{110} \quad (8)$$

$$\gamma_{12l} = \delta_{120} \quad (9)$$

where Y = instigated incivility; π_0 is the Level-1 intercept; π_1 is the Level-1 coefficient for experienced incivility; e is the Level-1 or within-cell random effect; θ are Level-2 intercepts; b_{00} and c_{00} are the residual row and column random effects on π, respectively, after taking into account the fixed effects of the predictors; and γ are the fixed effects of perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms. The norms' main effects are estimated in Equation 2, their moderating effects in Equation 3. Finally, in the Level 3 model (Equations 4–9), δ are Level-3 intercepts and d_{00} is the residual random effect. Level 1 and 2 predictors were cell centered and grand-mean centered, respectively (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

Results

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables for all three samples. Before testing our hypotheses, we decomposed variance in experienced and instigated incivility using procedures described by Kenny (1994; see also Snijders & Kenny, 1999) to ensure that each exhibited substantial variance within dyads and between actors and partners.[3] Table 2 shows that experienced and instigated incivility demonstrated significant relationship (i.e., dyadic) variance in all three samples. We therefore proceeded to test our hypotheses using cross-classified multilevel modeling. Results are reported in Table 3. Because we did not assess perceived injunctive incivility norms in Sample 1, Hypothesis 2b and the Research Question were only empirically tested in Samples 2 and 3. We tested our Research Question by comparing the strength of the difference between the moderating effects of perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms with a z test, as recommended by Gelman and Stern (2006; see also Cohen, 1988).

Sample 1

Hypothesis 1 proposed that experienced incivility would be positively associated with instigated incivility within dyads. Providing support for Hypothesis 1, Table 3 shows a significant direct effect of experienced incivility ($\theta_1 = .43$, $p < .01$) in Sample 1. Hypothesis 2a proposed that descriptive incivility norm perceptions would moderate this relation. Table 3 reveals a significant cross-level moderating effect of perceived descriptive incivility norms ($\gamma_{11} = .06$, $p < .01$). Figure 1 further reveals that the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads was stronger among individuals who perceived the level of descriptive incivility norms to be higher ($b = .50$, $p < .01$) than among those who perceived descriptive incivility norms to be lower ($b = .36$, $p < .01$). These results support Hypothesis 2a.

Sample 2

Further supporting Hypothesis 1, Table 3 shows a positive association between experienced and instigated incivility in dyads ($\theta_1 = .39$, $p < .01$) in Sample 2. We then examined the moderating roles of perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms as predicted in Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Table 3 shows that the moderating effect of perceived descriptive incivility norms was not significant ($\gamma_{11} = -.11$, *ns*), but injunctive incivility norm perceptions exhibited a significant moderating effect ($\gamma_{12} = .24$, $p < .01$). Figure 2 shows that the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads was stronger when injunctive incivility norms were perceived as higher ($b = .60$, $p < .01$) than when they were perceived as lower ($b = .19$, $p < .01$). These results support Hypothesis 2b but not Hypothesis 2a. Although injunctive norm perceptions exhibited a significant moderating effect but

[2] Although group-level variation in incivility was neither expected nor evident, we modeled this level in analyses to account for unmeasured differences between groups and reduce potential bias in parameter estimates (Bliese et al., 2018).

[3] We also conducted confirmatory factor analysis to examine the distinctiveness of descriptive and injunctive incivility norm perceptions in Samples 2 and 3. Results showed that a two-factor model fit better than a one-factor model in both samples ($p < .01$). Results are available upon request.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Dyad level		Person level							
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sample 1										
1. Experienced incivility	1.25	0.68	1.24	0.27	—	.68**				
2. Instigated incivility	1.18	0.54	1.18	0.27	.80**	—				
3. Descriptive incivility norms	—	—	1.43	1.13	.58**	.49**	—			
4. Employee age	—	—	23.22	6.45	−.01	.08	.12	—		
5. Employee sex	—	—	0.50	0.50	.00	−.07	−.00	−.02	—	
6. Employee organization tenure	—	—	2.65	2.59	.17	.25**	.24**	.45**	.02	
Sample 2										
1. Experienced incivility	1.07	0.30	1.06	0.22	—	.63**				
2. Instigated incivility	1.07	0.29	1.07	0.25	.91**	—				
3. Descriptive incivility norms	—	—	1.86	0.81	.13	.16*	—			
4. Injunctive incivility norms	—	—	2.04	0.87	.19**	.22**	.54**	—		
5. Employee age	—	—	30.71	4.92	.07	.06	−.02	.05	—	
6. Employee sex	—	—	0.67	0.74	.12	.09	−.04	−.02	.18*	—
7. Employee organization tenure	—	—	4.44	3.53	.10	.11	.12	.11	.50**	.16*
Sample 3										
1. Experienced incivility	1.10	0.39	1.11	0.39	—	.40**				
2. Instigated incivility	1.06	0.28	1.07	0.28	.40**	—				
3. Descriptive incivility norms	—	—	1.96	1.06	.31**	.26**	—			
4. Injunctive incivility norms	—	—	1.56	0.67	.11	.25**	.43**	—		
5. Employee age	—	—	32.82	9.10	.07	−.02	.11	.17**	—	
6. Employee sex	—	—	0.58	0.50	.01	−.04	−.01	−.06	−.01	—
7. Employee organization tenure	—	—	4.88	5.29	−.01	−.03	.13*	.21**	.57**	−.05

Note. Sample 1 $n = 3{,}705$ dyads among 142 employees in 5 stores. Sample 2 $n = 666$ dyads among 171 individuals in 46 teams. Sample 3 $n = 1{,}003$ dyads among 285 individuals in 68 teams. Correlations above diagonal are within-dyads, those below the diagonal are between persons. Person-level statistics for experienced and instigated incivility were computed by aggregating dyadic scores to the individual level; correlations should be interpreted with caution. Sex: 0 = *male*, 1 = *female*.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

descriptive norm perceptions did not, we nevertheless tested our Research Question by comparing the strength of their effects. Results revealed that perceived injunctive incivility norms exhibited a significantly stronger effect than did perceived descriptive incivility norms ($z = 3.24$, $p < .01$).

Sample 3

In Sample 3, we again observed a positive relation between experienced and instigated incivility in dyads ($\theta_1 = .20$, $p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Table 3 also shows that the moderating effect of descriptive incivility norm perceptions approached but did not meet the a priori alpha level of statistical significance ($\gamma_{11} = .04$, $p = .078$).[4] The moderating effect of injunctive norm perceptions was significant ($\gamma_{12} = .22, p < .01$). Figure 3 shows that the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads was stronger among individuals who perceived higher levels of injunctive incivility norms ($b = .34, p < .01$) than among those who perceived lower injunctive norms ($b = .06$, *ns*). These results provide support for Hypothesis 2b. Finally, we tested our Research Question to explore which type of perceived norm would exhibit the stronger moderating effect. As in Sample 2, the effect of injunctive incivility norm perceptions was significantly stronger than that of perceived descriptive incivility norms ($z = 4.94$, $p < .01$).

Discussion

The past 20 years of research on workplace incivility has considerably advanced our understanding of targets and instigators. By focusing almost exclusively on either the target or the instigator, however, prior research has treated experienced and instigated incivility as reflecting individuals' general tendencies. In doing so, it implicitly assumes that an employee experiences incivility from, or behaves uncivilly toward, all other organization members equally (Venkataramani & Dalal, 2007). Given that workplace incivility occurs within unique relationships between two individuals with varied experiences and perceptions (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), we drew on the dual interpretation of the norm of reciprocity (Gallucci & Perugini, 2003; Gouldner, 1960) to shed light on the relational context in which workplace incivility occurs and how it differs across individuals. We found that experienced and instigated incivility exhibit substantial variation at the dyad level, that the two are related within dyads after accounting for individuals' general tendencies to experience and instigate incivility, and that the within-dyad association between experienced and instigated incivility is moderated by perceived descriptive and injunctive norms regarding uncivil behavior. We also explored which type of norm perception more strongly moderated this dyadic association, finding that the effect of injunctive incivility norm perceptions was significantly stronger than that of perceived descriptive incivility norms. By conceptualizing and examining workplace incivility as a dyadic phenomenon that varies across dyads and individuals,

[4] When tested separately (i.e., without perceived injunctive norms in the model), the moderating effect of perceived descriptive incivility norms was stronger and statistically significant, as expected ($\gamma = .11$, $p < .01$).

Table 2
Variance Decomposition of Experienced and Instigated Incivility

Variable	Experienced incivility β	Instigated incivility β
Sample 1		
Actor	.13**	.21**
Partner	.17**	.11**
Dyad	.70**	.68**
Group	.00	.00
Error[a]	—	—
Sample 2		
Actor	.36**	.32**
Partner	.02	.00
Dyad	.22**	.25**
Group	.01	.01
Error	.41	.43
Sample 3		
Actor	.20**	.15
Partner	.04	.00
Dyad	.33**	.44**
Group	.03	.02
Error	.43	.42

Note. Sample 1 $n = 3{,}705$ dyads among 142 employees in 5 stores. Sample 2 $n = 666$ dyads among 171 employees in 46 teams. Sample 3 $n = 1{,}003$ dyads among 285 employees in 68 teams. Standardized estimates are reported.
[a] Error variance could not be separated from dyad variance in Sample 1 because we used single items to measure experienced and instigated incivility (Kenny, 1994). Results do not sum exactly to 1 due to rounding.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

our study offers several implications for theory, practice, and future research.

Implications for Theory and Research

The Importance of Dyadic Relationships

We found that experienced and instigated incivility exhibit considerable variation at the level of the dyad, and that experienced and instigated incivility covary within dyads above and beyond individuals' general tendencies to experience and instigate incivility. We realize we are not the first to suggest that workplace incivility occurs in dyads, so it is worth emphasizing why and how our findings are novel and important. First, the results demonstrate that individual differences in target and instigator characteristics (e.g., personality and situation) are not entirely responsible for workplace incivility, as prior (i.e., between-persons) research has assumed. But, beyond finding *that* dyadic relationships matter (as theorized by Andersson & Pearson, 1999), we illustrate *how much* they matter to explaining workplace incivility. Across our three samples, individual characteristics on average were responsible for 31% and 27% of the variation in experienced and instigated incivility, respectively. The dyad, in contrast, accounted on average for 41% and 46% of the variation in experienced and instigated incivility.[5] As 95% of studies have examined target and instigator characteristics that explain about 30% of the variation in incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016), our results expose the need to investigate factors related to the dyad, which represents an equally large proportion of variance in incivility. In this respect, our findings demonstrate why prior work's focus only on targets or instigators inhibits a "comprehensive understanding of factors influencing (workplace incivility) and can lead to incorrect inferences about the importance of observed effects" (Jones & Shah, 2016, pp. 392–393). Indeed, we advance the incivility literature by establishing the dyadic relationship as an important source of influence that is underrepresented in extant research.

A focus on dyadic relationships also has implications for the research questions asked, the variables studied, and the research designs employed by incivility scholars. Whereas between-persons research has investigated the questions of why some people are uncivil or treated uncivilly more than others, our results suggest scholars go beyond studying targets and instigators to begin examining questions concerning how the relationship between them influences uncivil behavior in organizations. Conceptually, the knowledge of a person's relationship with an interaction partner is important because, as our results show, his or her experience or display of uncivil behavior can be determined as much by the interaction partner as his or her own characteristics. From a statistical standpoint, overlooking one party to an uncivil interaction can undermine construct validity, lead to model misspecification, and produce biased parameter estimates (Kenny et al., 2006; Tse & Ashkanasy, 2015). Even worse, misalignment between theory and method can lead to logical inconsistencies and inaccurate inferences (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012; Tse & Ashkanasy, 2015).

The Importance of Perceived Incivility Norms

We demonstrated that the within-dyad relation between experienced and instigated incivility was moderated by perceived descriptive incivility norms (in one of three samples) and perceived injunctive incivility norms (in two of two samples). "Despite the explicit recognition that workplace norms are central to the experience of incivility ... there has been little examination of such norms and ... [how they] promote civility versus incivility among employees" (Walsh et al., 2012, p. 407). Moreover, although scholars acknowledge that various norms coexist (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1991), little research has examined multiple types of workplace norms. Toward this end, the current study identified two important boundary conditions of uncivil behavior and illustrated the impact of employees' beliefs about how other organization members behave (i.e., perceived descriptive incivility norms) and should behave (i.e., perceived injunctive incivility norms). In this way, our results contribute to the incivility literature by advancing understanding about how differences in individuals' norm perceptions affect their dyadic interactions (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013; Pearson & Porath, 2004).

In addition to finding that perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms each strengthen workplace incivility in dyads, we

[5] The amount of variance attributable to individual characteristics is represented by the combined influence of actor variance and partner variance. When averaged across our three samples, actor [(.13 + .36 + .20)/3 = .23] and partner [(.17 + .02 + .04)/3 = .08] variance represent 31% (i.e., 23% + 8%) of the variation in experienced incivility (see Table 2). If we only consider Samples 2 and 3, where we were able to separate error from relationship variance (by using multi-item measures), individual characteristics were responsible for 31% and 24% of the variation in experienced and instigated incivility, respectively, whereas the dyad was responsible for 28% and 35%. Thus, regardless of how the numbers are computed and compared, the dyad is responsible for a considerable amount of variation in workplace incivility.

Table 3
Multilevel Analyses Predicting Dyadic Instigated Incivility

Model	Sample 1			Sample 2			Sample 3		
	coef	*SE*	*t*	*coef*	*SE*	*t*	*coef*	*SE*	*t*
Fixed effects									
Intercept, θ_0	1.19**	.03	35.92	1.07**	.02	48.34	1.07**	.02	66.83
Experienced incivility, θ_1 (H1)	.43**	.01	35.61	.39**	.05	7.55	.20**	.04	4.95
Descriptive incivility norms, γ_{01}	.12**	.02	7.08	.01	.03	0.46	.04**	.01	3.21
Injunctive incivility norms, γ_{02}				.07**	.03	2.78	.07**	.02	3.40
Experienced incivility × Descriptive norms, γ_{11} (H2a)	.06**	.01	7.51	−.11	.09	−1.27	.04†	.02	1.76
Experienced incivility × Injunctive norms, γ_{12} (H2b)				.24**	.06	3.80	.22**	.03	7.50
Variance components									
Within dyads (σ^2)	.126			.028			.036		
Between actors (τ_{b00})	.047**			.044**			.021**		
Between partners (τ_{c00})	.006**			.000			.000		
Between teams (τ_{d00})	.003**			.008**			.009**		
Goodness of fit									
Deviance	3295.86			−142.54			−109.26		
Explained variance									
Pseudo R^2	.39			.09			.23		

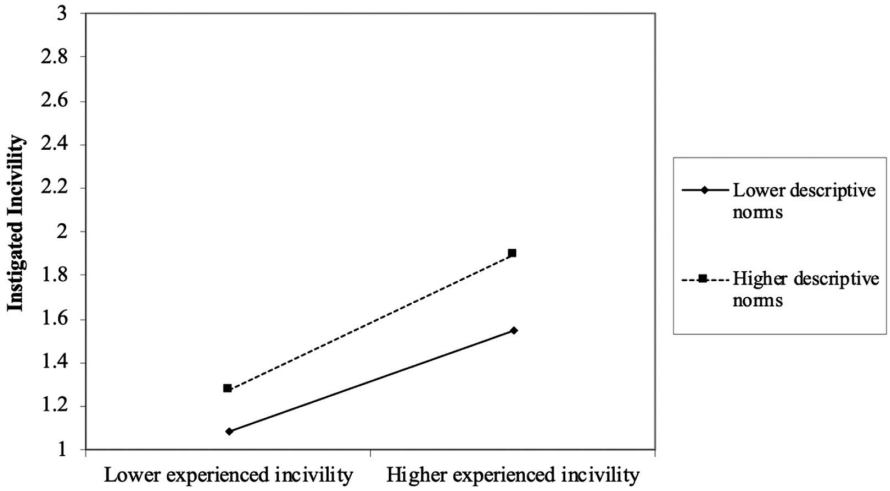
Note. Sample 1 n = 3,705 dyads among 142 employees in 5 stores. Sample 2 n = 666 dyads among 171 employees in 46 teams. Sample 3 n = 1,003 dyads among 285 employees in 68 teams. Pseudo R^2 calculated using Kreft and de Leeuw's (1998) formula. *coef* = coefficient; *SE* = standard error; t = t value; H1 = Hypothesis 1; H2a = Hypothesis 2a; H2b = Hypothesis 2b.
† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

also explored their relative impact. We found that perceived injunctive incivility norms exhibited a significantly stronger moderating effect than did descriptive norm perceptions in Samples 2 and 3. That is, we found that employees' perceptions about how organization members ought to treat one another (i.e., perceived injunctive incivility norms) had a stronger impact on their uncivil behavior than did their perceptions about how organization members actually treat one another (i.e., perceived descriptive incivility norms). These results highlight the importance of considering multiple types of norm perceptions when seeking to understand uncivil interactions among dyad members. As little research has examined multiple types of norms concurrently, we hope our findings spur future studies examining the effects of various norms for uncivil behavior.

Incidence Rates at the Person and Dyad Levels

A final implication from our findings concerns the incidence of workplace incivility. Some scholars have observed that more than 95% of employees report experiencing incivility at work over the course of a year (Porath & Pearson, 2013). In the participating

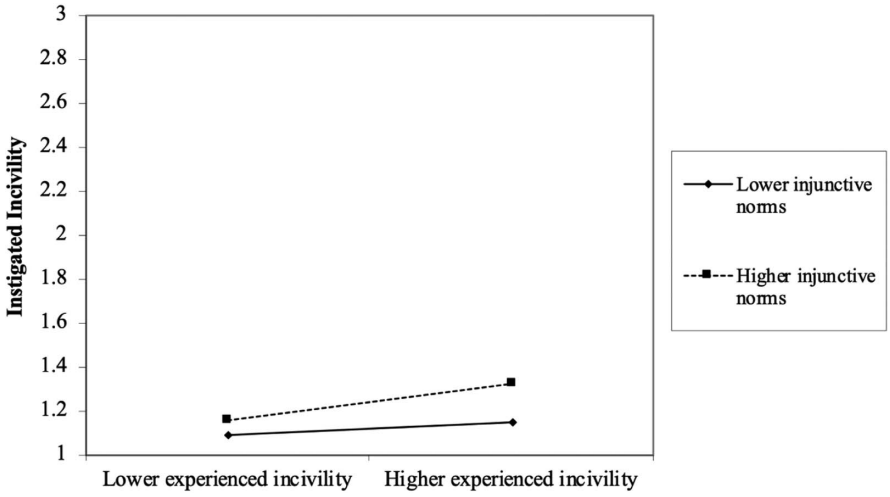
Figure 1
Moderating Effect of Descriptive Incivility Norm Perceptions (Sample 1)



Note. Sample 1. Moderating effect of perceived descriptive incivility norms on the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads. The positive relation between experienced and instigated incivility is stronger among individuals who perceive descriptive incivility norms as higher (+1 *SD*) than among those who perceive such norms as lower (−1 *SD*).

Figure 2

Moderating Effect of Injunctive Incivility Norm Perceptions (Sample 2)

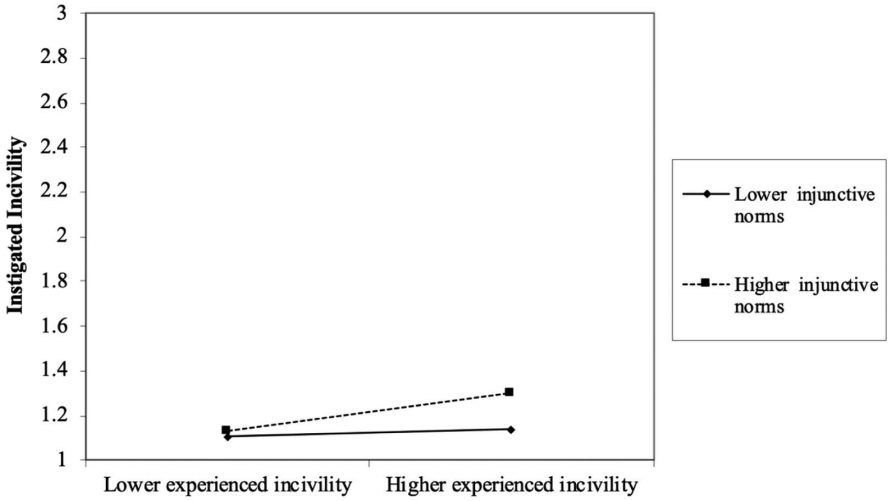


Note. Sample 2. Moderating effect of perceived injunctive incivility norms on the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads. The positive relation between experienced and instigated incivility is stronger among individuals who perceive these norms as higher (+1 *SD*) than among those who perceive the norms as lower (−1 *SD*).

organization for Sample 1, 69% of employees reported experiencing some incivility in the last year. Because this figure comes from a single organization, we hesitate to draw comparisons with prior studies. What is more striking, however, is the incidence rate at the dyad level. Across all dyadic relationships, the average incidence rate across the five restaurant locations comprising Sample 1 was 16%—53 percentage points lower than the incidence rate at the individual level. Indeed, although a majority of employees reported experiencing some incivility in the past year, most indicated that these experiences came from a relatively small number of coworkers. Accordingly, our results show that most *people* experience incivility, but for any given person, most of his or her *relationships* are not characterized by rude or discourteous behavior (see Figure 4). In doing so, the results further highlight the unique perspective provided by adopting a dyadic approach to understanding workplace incivility.

Figure 3

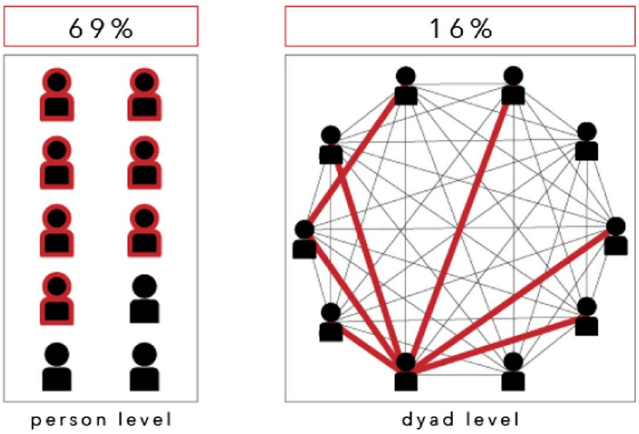
Moderating Effect of Injunctive Incivility Norm Perceptions (Sample 3)



Note. Sample 3. Moderating effect of perceived injunctive incivility norms on the relation between experienced and instigated incivility within dyads. The positive relation between experienced and instigated incivility is stronger among individuals who perceive these norms as higher (+1 *SD*) than among those who perceive the norms as lower (−1 *SD*).

Figure 4

An Illustration Distinguishing Participation Rates for Experienced Incivility at the Individual and Dyad Levels



Note. Individual- and dyad-level participation rates for experienced incivility observed in Sample 1. The left panel depicts the proportion of employees who experienced some incivility in the last year (i.e., across all coworkers). The right panel depicts the proportion of dyadic relationships in which one member reported experiencing some incivility from the other member in the last year. Results suggest most experienced incivility originates from just a few individuals. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Implications for Practice

Understanding how workplace incivility functions within and across unique target–instigator relationships has important consequences for managerial practice. It is important to note that our results affirm some prior recommendations to address incivility in organizations while qualifying others. For example, our findings regarding the moderating role of perceived descriptive and injunctive incivility norms support prior recommendations that managers clearly articulate organization-wide expectations of civil behavior to establish widespread norms (Pearson & Porath, 2005). One way they might do so is by implementing interventions that improve civil interactions by altering organizational norms (Leiter et al., 2011). Indeed, our results demonstrate that employees' perceptions of such norms play an important role in the reciprocation of uncivil behavior.

At the same time, our results offer practical implications beyond those suggested in prior incivility research. In light of evidence presented in the current study that incivility is determined in large part by the unique relationships an employee has with each of his or her colleagues, prior recommendations to recruit and select civil employees may be overly simplistic. Moreover, our results suggest efforts to teach or train civil behavior could be delivered more effectively (i.e., by targeting specific pairs of employees who do not get along) and at lower cost (i.e., because training need not be mandated for an entire organization). So, in addition to considering characteristics that might predispose an employee toward instigating (or experiencing) incivility, we recommend that managers also identify and address factors that influence the quality of the employee's *relationships* with other organization members. Managers might, for example, encourage employees to express feelings of appreciation or gratitude to their colleagues, as this has been shown to reduce uncivil behavior (e.g., Locklear et al., 2020). Other managerial efforts to improve interpersonal relationships, whether through one-on-one meetings or team-based activities, could help reduce workplace incivility (Sguera et al., 2016).

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is not without limitations. For example, our use of self-reported data raises the possibility that the observed relations are affected by various respondent biases (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Though our centering approach removed general response tendencies from dyadic (relationship) effects (e.g., Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) and significant interactions are robust to method-related variance (Siemsen et al., 2010), scholars may nevertheless wish to replicate or extend our results with data collected from other sources (e.g., coworkers or supervisors) or methods (e.g., machine learning: Davidson et al., 2020; Jose, 2016).

A second potential limitation concerns the possibility that the observed interactions occurred because changes in descriptive and injunctive incivility norm perceptions restricted variance in incivility. To test for this possibility, we followed Cortina et al.'s (2019) recommendation to employ the procedure developed by Breusch and Pagan (1979). We found that variance in incivility was indeed compressed at lower values of the moderators in Samples 2 and 3. Cortina et al. (2019) note that restricted variance interactions like these are common in the organizational sciences, exist at every level of analysis, and are relatively simple to defend. Even so, they suggest that scholars ensure their moderation arguments are consistent with the type of restricted variance interaction observed. We believe our theorizing is consistent in this regard (e.g., when perceived incivility norms are lower, incivility levels are uniformly low—e.g., see Figures 2 and 3) and we encourage other scholars to do the same.

Another limitation is that we treated incivility norms as individual perceptions. We did so not because incivility norms cannot exist at the group level, but because we studied how uncivil interactions between specific pairs of individuals differ across individuals, and because our theorizing recognizes individual differences in reciprocity (e.g., Gouldner, 1960; Perugini et al., 2003). Moreover, there was little group-level variation in our samples. This could have occurred because counterproductive work behaviors like incivility are not easily observable (Carpenter et al., 2017), or it could have been due to small group size (e.g., Bliese, 2000), which we limited in Samples 2 and 3 to prevent respondent fatigue. Another possibility is that dyads may have their own distinctive set of norms. For example, an employee may have a relationship with one coworker in which it is acceptable to tease one another and give each other a hard time, whereas in a relationship with another coworker, these same behaviors would be considered rude and inappropriate. As this requires more theorizing and evidence, we believe studying the emergence of incivility norms across levels (see Chan, 1998) is an interesting opportunity for the future research.

Another opportunity for the future research involves exploring the roles that other (unexamined) variables might play in our conceptual framework. The results reported in Table 3 indicate that after accounting for the direct and joint effects of experienced incivility and perceived incivility norms, there remains substantial variability in instigated incivility to be explored. This variance could

be explained by other dyad- or person-level characteristics, such as dyad members' personality traits. Given that no prior study has examined factors that explain (what our results suggest is substantial) dyad-level variance in incivility, we urge scholars to explore other dyad-level predictors to further understand why incivility occurs in dyadic relationships. One logical direction to extend our work in this regard is to examine mediating mechanisms that carry the influence of workplace incivility in dyads.

A final opportunity for the future research involves longitudinal extensions of our relational approach. Because our data were collected at a single point in time, causality cannot be inferred from our study designs. Although scholars recognize "it would make little difference if (choices or behaviors measured simultaneously) were treated as sequential" (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981, p. 1393; see also Hershcovis & Reich, 2013), investigating which dyad member *initiated* an uncivil episode (and why) is an interesting research question to be examined in the future research. Such an examination would require extending our relational approach over time (cf., Jones & Shah, 2016) and would constitute a first step toward empirically examining an incivility spiral as theorized by Andersson and Pearson (1999). Of course, scholars should also examine other ways employees might react to experienced incivility in dyads (e.g., avoidance and assertiveness; Cortina & Magley, 2009; Hershcovis et al., 2018) and relationship factors that explain why an employee might use a particular strategy with a specific coworker. Undoubtedly, the future dyadic studies of this sort would be of value to the incivility literature.

Conclusion

The present research sought to understand workplace incivility within its relational context. Our results highlight the value in going beyond target and instigator characteristics to explicitly conceptualize workplace incivility as a dyadic relationship, occurring between two people who are affected by the perceptions of wider workplace norms. In doing so, we hope our findings spur managers and scholars to think about incivility's incidence and impact not only as differing between individuals but also between specific pairs of people. We encourage continued investigations along these lines to better understand workplace incivility and prevent its spread throughout organizations.

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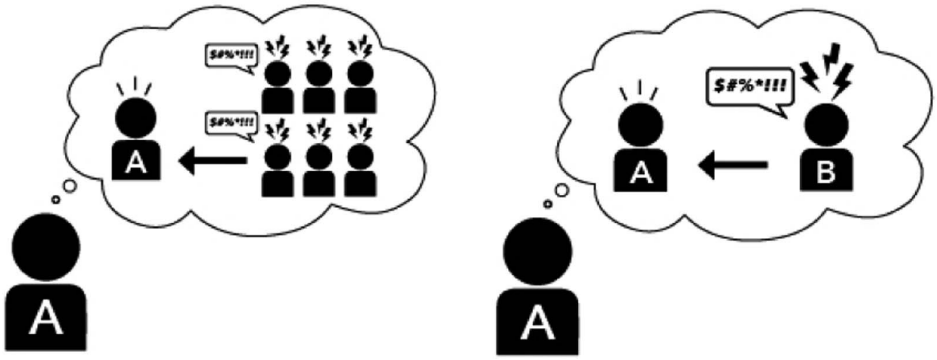
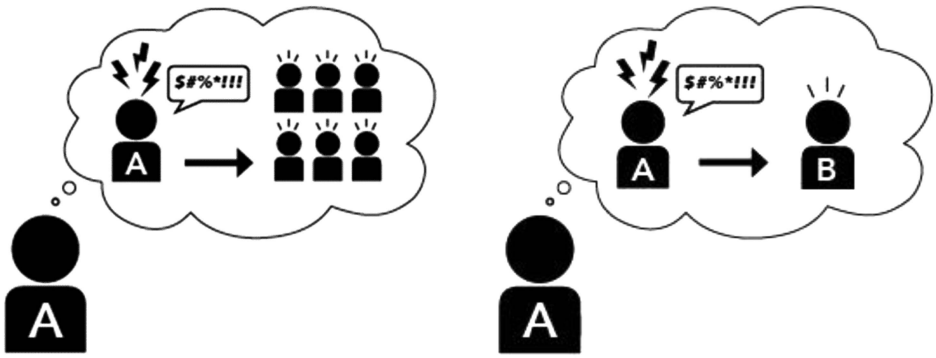
(*Appendix follows*)

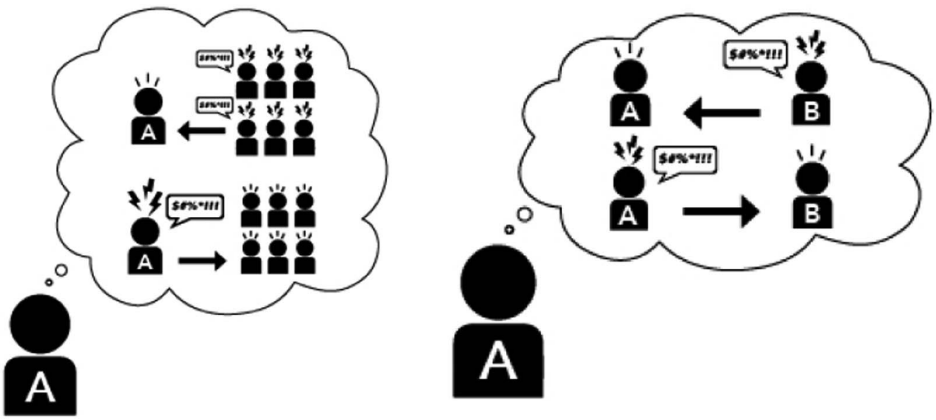
Appendix



Experienced incivility at the person level and dyad level. The former (left) reflects the extent to which an individual experiences incivility from coworkers in general. The latter (right) reflects the extent to which an individual experiences incivility from a particular coworker



Instigated incivility at the person level and dyad level. The former (left) reflects the degree to which an individual instigates incivility toward coworkers in general. The latter (right) reflects the degree to which an individual instigates incivility toward a particular coworker



Reciprocity at the person level (generalized reciprocity, left) and dyad level (dyadic reciprocity, right). The former suggests an individual who frequently experiences incivility from coworkers is more likely to instigate incivility toward coworkers. The latter suggests an individual who experiences incivility from a particular coworker is more likely to instigate incivility toward that coworker.

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