What About Workplace Incivility?

Thomas G. Reio, Jr., PhD  
Florida International University
Introduction

- As economic and competitive pressures mount, workplace incivility has been increasing across the world (Porath & Pearson, 2013)
- 75% of justice workers experienced incivility at least once in the past five years (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001)
- 77% of Asian respondents experienced incivility at least once in the past year (Yeung & Griffin, 2008)
- Reio & Ghosh (2009) 54% of respondents admitted to instigating uncivil behavior in the past year
- Defined as deviant acts that include rude verbal and non-verbal behaviors towards another organizational member with ambiguous intent to harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Thus, it is a mild form of aggression.
Introduction

- Incivility is frequent, yet insidious
- Ambiguous as to intent to harm
- Relatively mild form of deviant behavior
- Impacts targets and onlookers
- Incivility can develop into patterns of behavior that harm psychologically/emotionally (bullying) or physically
- Incivility targets perform more poorly, less satisfied, less committed to organization
- Costly to organizations: Roughly 50% of incivility targets report thinking of leaving the organization within the next year (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Porath & Pearson, 2013)
Examples of Workplace Incivility

Paying little attention to someone’s opinion
Not giving credit where credit is due
Doubting your judgment
Putting you down
Talking behind your back
Ignoring you
Giving you the silent treatment
Leaving the copier jammed for someone else to handle
Neglecting to turn off cellphone during a meeting
Giving you dirty looks
Addressing you unprofessionally
Not being mindful of wasting someone else’s time (Reio & Ghosh, 2009)
Incivility Theory

Andersson & Pearson’s (1999) “Tit-for-Tat” theory
Organizational Socialization

- Organizational socialization is a learning process, motivated by curiosity-driven exploratory behaviors through which employees proactively acquire the technical and interpersonal knowledge needed to perform well and fit into the organization (Reio & Wiswell, 2000)
- “Learning the ropes” (Schein, 1988)
- Ongoing throughout the tenure of the employee
- Results in the employee “fitting in” on a continuous basis
Organizational Socialization

- Socialization-related learning (Reio & Wiswell, 2000)
  The mostly informal learning associated with becoming an organizational insider and thus **adapting to the organization**

  - Initiated by establishing relations with coworkers to acquire information related to coworkers who are most respected and might be interested in providing mentoring
  - Followed by acculturation through communicating with supervisors (learn the norms, acceptable image, reward system, what is really valued)
  - Result in acquiring the job knowledge needed to perform most job-related tasks without assistance and fit into the organization
  - Examples:
    - Participating in an orientation program
    - Trial-and-error experimentation
    - Observing coworkers performing a task related to one’s job
    - Consulting with a supervisor to update knowledge and beliefs
    - Self-directed learning
Organizational Socialization

- Without learning the ropes and adapting to the job and organization, performance, satisfaction, and commitment suffers
- Turnover intent increases
- Intention to turnover is the strongest predictor of actual turnover (Azjen, 1991)
Prelude to Hypotheses

The essence of the study is this:

- Workplace incivility dampens the socialization-related learning required to adapt to the organization because employees are less likely to seek the information they need from coworkers and supervisors; lack of communication.
- Without this learning, turnover intent likely increases because the employee does not feel they fit in.
- Incivility has a direct association with turnover intent.
Hypotheses

H1: There is a negative relation between supervisor incivility and the socialization-related learning variables.

H2: There is a negative relation between coworker incivility and the socialization-related learning variables.

H3: There is a positive relation between supervisor incivility and turnover intent.

H4: There is a positive relation between coworker incivility and turnover intent.

H5: The influence of supervisor incivility on turnover intent is mediated through the socialization-related learning variables.

H6: The influence of coworker incivility on turnover intent is mediated through the socialization-related learning variables.
Incivility, Socialization-Related Learning and Turnover Intent Model

H1: negative relationship
H2: negative relationship
H3: positive relationship
H4: positive relationship
H5 & H5: mediation

Supervisor Incivility
Coworker Incivility
Socialization-Related Learning
Turnover Intent
Method

Paper-and-pencil survey distributed at work

- $N = 420$
- 52% female ($n = 218$)
- Mean Age = 37.71 years of age
- 82% ($n = 344$) had at least some college
- Ethnicity: 21.6% African-American; 3.2% Asian, 18.4% Hispanic; 54.6% Caucasian; 2.4% other
- Current job tenure 3.93 years
- 15.4% administrative aid; 21.5% managers; 53.6% workers; 9.5% did not specify
Method

Measures

- **Supervisor and Coworker Incivility** (Cortina et al., 2001) 12/15 items “Talked behind your back” “Neglected to turn off cellphone during meeting” “Gave you dirty looks”
  
  1 (*never*) – 5 (*most of the time*)

- **Socialization-Related Learning** (Morton, 1993) 18 items “I know which coworker is interested in helping me” (establishing relationships) “I know what is really valued in my organization” (acculturation) “I know the tasks that I must perform on the job” (job knowledge)
  
  1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*)

- **Turnover Intent** (Singh, Verbeke, & Rhodes, 1996) 2 items

  - Cronbach’s alphas .72-.96
### Results: Frequency of Supervisor Incivility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor Incivility Items</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>A few times (%)</th>
<th>From time to time (%)</th>
<th>Frequent (%)</th>
<th>Most of the time (%)</th>
<th>Total Incivil. (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid little attention</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>53.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not give credit</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>45.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doubted judgment</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>45.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Put you down</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut off conversation</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talked behind back</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignored you</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>37.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addressed unprofessionally</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>28.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gave silent treatment</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>27.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gave dirty looks</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>26.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Derogatory remarks</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>24.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unwanted discussion</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>26.6</td>
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## Results: Frequency of Coworker Incivility

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<tr>
<td>Left jammed copier</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>26.4</td>
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<td>10.3</td>
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<td>12.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>51.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn off cell phone</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>49.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snapped at you</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>51.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not give credit</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.01</td>
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Supervisor and Coworker Incivility, Socialization-Related Learning, and Turnover Intent Structural Model

Fit Indexes:
Chi-square $p < .01$;
CFI = .96; NNFI = .96; IFI = .96;
RMSEA = .072
Discussion

- Negative associations between supervisor incivility and each socialization-related learning variable (establishing relationships, acculturation, job knowledge)
- Supervisor incivility was directly associated with turnover intent, as well as indirectly (mediation) through socialization-related learning (acculturation)
- Supervisors were chief information sources in this research
- Uncivil behavior disrupts information seeking and exchange about informal policies and procedures and what is really valued to acculturate employees
- Communication, learning and subsequent adaptation to organization suffers, which was associated with greater turnover intent
Future Research

- Multi-source data needed
- Test model in other contexts, particularly internationally
  - Expatriates
  - Different cultures
    - What is perceived as incivility can differ markedly by culture
- Online contexts (e-mails, blogs)
- Investigate new mediators and moderators
  - Trust as mediator
  - Personality traits, organizational climate as moderators
Implications for Practice

- Organizational leaders need to be alerted to the problems associated with uncivil behavior and how it can spiral into more serious forms of aggression; costly to organization
- Leadership counseling for effective leadership behaviors
- Training for conflict management, anger management; coaching and mentoring techniques
- Managers need to model appropriate behavior
- Reward structure adjustment for managers
- Zero-tolerance policies
References


