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THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: INVESTIGATING INCIVILITY THROUGH A  
COGNITIVE PROCESS LENS

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of Psychological Sciences  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science

By  
Melissa B. Sorensen  
May 2023

Through the Looking Glass: Investigating Incivility and Depletion through a Cognitive Process Lens

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## ABSTRACT

Experiencing incivility at work is a common phenomenon that individuals encounter. The effects of experiencing incivility are not bound to the workplace and continue to negatively impact individuals after they leave work. However, little is known about the mechanisms which transmit the experience of incivility at work to a person's non-work domain. One such mechanisms that may be associated with the negative impact of incivility at work in the non-work domain is depletion, which represents a reduced state of cognitive impact. Additionally, the use of active coping mechanisms may buffer the effects of experienced incivility on depletion. In this study, I examined how an individual's cognitive appraisal of experienced incivility influences coping mechanisms, which in turn may buffer the relationship between workplace incivility and depletion. In this study, 63 working adults were recruited via Prolific to complete a baseline survey and daily-diary for 10 working days. I conducted multilevel analysis via path modeling, with hypothesized relationships modeled at the within-level (level 1). Results indicate that daily experienced incivility is associated with less adaptive coping and more depletion. Additionally, employees who engage in adaptive coping experience less daily depletion associated with experienced incivility than those who do not engage in adaptive coping. However, no support was found for the mediation of cognitive appraisal on the aforementioned relationships. Practical implications and future research are discussed. Supplemental analyses indicated that emotional appraisal significantly mediated the association between daily experienced incivility and adaptive coping.

*Keywords:* Incivility, coping, cognitive appraisal, depletion

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all the people who have supported me in my grad school journey – I sincerely could not have completed this thesis without them. Thanks to the Ashley and Tiffanee for being an incredible support system and for always cheering me on. To Jenna for being an incredible cheerleader. To the Geogleins who have been a source of rootedness for the past two years. To Makenzie for being like a sister to me. To each member of my cohort Adam, Alex, Adalin, and Julia – they are the best cohort I could have ever asked for.

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## **Through the Looking Glass: Investigating Incivility Through a Cognitive Process Lens**

Workplace incivility involves behavior that is directed at another organizational member, which is deviant, low-intensity, ambiguous, and which violates the norms for mutual respect (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Examples of workplace incivility include rude and discourteous behavior and displaying a general lack of regard for others. Importantly, workplace incivility differs from aggression, violence, and sexual harassment, because the intent to harm is ambiguous and is a violation of a social norm rather than a direct act of violence (Lim & Lee, 2011). When one experiences incivility from colleagues, supervisors, or customers, one must decide how to cope with such experiences, which may mitigate or exacerbate spillover effects.

Incivility is a common workplace phenomenon, with studies estimating 71% to 96% of individuals have been targets of incivility at work (Hershcovis et al., 2018). The acts of uncivil behavior are subtle and, while they may seem mundane or even inconsequential, acts of incivility can have lasting impacts on the target, eventually causing issues in the workplace (Cortina et al., 2017). On an individual level, those who are targets of incivility may find it affects their physical and psychological health (Lim et al., 2008; Lim & Lee, 2011). Experienced incivility is associated with lower job satisfaction and organizational loyalty, which may, in turn, increase turnover (Lim & Cortina, 2005; Lim & Lee, 2011). Although past research has primarily focused on proximal and distal outcomes of experienced incivility in the workplace (Cortina et al., 2001; Cortina et al., 2013), less is known about the mechanisms and boundary conditions which may facilitate spillover of experienced incivility into one's home domain.

With this in mind, I sought to address gaps in the extant literature by first examining the cognitive process that individuals engage in following experienced incivility that facilitates coping with the uncivil event. Second, I examined how coping serves as a boundary condition of

the relationship between experienced incivility and subsequent depletion of self-control. I did so by integrating the transactional model of stress and coping with ego depletion theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Baumeister et al., 1998) and examined these relationships at the daily level. Importantly, prior research has primarily examined outcomes associated with incivility using a retrospective lens that relies on the recall of participants to report incivility as a critical event over certain times frame (e.g., in the last year; Bunk & Magley, 2013; Cortina et al., 2013). However, increasingly recent research suggests that experiencing incivility is associated with proximal outcomes examined via daily diary and experience sampling methodology (Park et al., 2022; Vahle-Hinz, et al., 2019), suggesting that there are important within-person variations in this phenomenon of interest.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of the transaction model of stress and coping and ego depletion theory were used to support this study. The transactional model of stress and coping was posited by researchers Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as a way of understanding the process by which individuals appraise stress and subsequently choose how to cope with that stress. This model suggests that once an event occurs, an individual goes through the process of the primary appraisal to determine if the event has any relevance to their life. Importantly, during the primary appraisal of the event, an individual is placing importance on the event and determining whether it is a threat to their goals. Once the importance of the event is determined, an individual may decide that it is not a threat and move on or, in another case, the individual may decide that it is a threat to their goals and will continue with a secondary appraisal. This secondary appraisal allows an individual to decide if they have the resources to cope with the incident. If an individual feels they do not have the necessary ability to cope with an event, this will cause

stress. Finally, after going through the process of both appraisals with the outcome of stress, an individual will need to decide how to cope with the stress. Coping refers the cognitive or behavioral efforts employed by an individual to control, mitigate, or simply to endure the demands that are brought on by a stressful interaction. Coping strategies can be categorized into those that are adaptative or maladaptive. Those that are adaptive can help an individual cope with stressors in a healthy manner while maladaptive coping can increase stress in the long run because it typically leads to an individual ignoring the stressor.

Ego depletion theory is another foundational theoretical framework to this study. Ego depletion theory suggests that depletion occurs when an individual does not have the full range of resources they typically would have (Baumeister et al., 1998; Baumeister et al., 2007). Individuals may enter this depleted state after exhausting their limited resources on stressors. Ego Depletion theory suggests that individuals possess a limited amount of mental resources. Once this limited store of mental resources is spent, an individual become depleted and are less able to make decisions or function as they would when they have full range of their resources (Baumeister et al., 2007). This theoretical framework is helpful in understanding the mechanisms that can influence the depletion an individual feels after experiencing stressors.

### **Workplace Incivility and Coping**

Workplace incivility is estimated to cost organizations upwards of \$14,000 per employee annually, as this common workplace behavior is associated with reductions in job performance, detriments in emotional and mental health, and counterproductive behavior (Porath & Pearson, 2013). Those who experience workplace incivility also experience heightened emotionality, emotional exhaustion, depression, and anxiety (Bunk & Magley, 2013; Lim & Lee 2011; Miner et al., 2012; Sliter et al., 2010). Incivility is typically described as a stressor, therefore

experiencing incivility may be associated with psychological, physical, and cognitive strain outcomes. When an individual experiences incivility at work, they may spend time thinking about the uncivil event, avoiding the instigator of the uncivil event, or may even feel their commitment to the organization decline due to incidents of incivility (Porath and Pearson, 2010). While organizations may experience the cost of incivility in the workplace, individuals are tasked with dealing with repercussions of uncivil events themselves.

As noted above, the transactional model of stress and coping suggests that individuals decide whether to use maladaptive or adaptive coping mechanisms in response to incidents that they deem to be stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Incivility is conceptualized as a stressor, therefore experiencing incivility will precipitate coping for individuals. Additionally, research supports the examination of incivility and associated outcomes using within-person methods (e.g., Park et al., 2022; Vahle-Hinz et al., 2019). Therefore, I hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1:* Daily experienced incivility will be negatively associated with adaptive coping.

### **Cognitive Appraisal as a Mediating Mechanism**

Because workplace incivility is perceived to have ambiguous intent to harm (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), the experience of incivility for the victim is highly subjective. Understanding how a person interprets incivility will determine how important the event is for that individual and, consequently, will affect how the person chooses to cope with incivility (Cortina et al., 2017). The transactional model of stress and coping supports the idea that individuals will need to make sense of the incivility that they have experienced and then determine how they will respond to the incivility (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The implication of this theory is that to understand the subsequent actions of individuals after they have responded to stressors, it is

imperative that we understand the ways in which the individual appraises an event that is ultimately defined as a stressor (Cortina & Magley, 2009).

Cortina and Magley (2009) demonstrated that the coping strategies employed following an uncivil event are associated with the target's primary cognitive appraisal of the uncivil event. Cortina and Magley (2009) also found individuals rarely report incidents of incivility because they feel the incidents do not rise to the occasion of reporting (i.e., they are not egregious enough). Cognitive appraisal, as a mechanism that precipitates coping, is a significant factor in determining whether an uncivil event is reported or is just ignored by the target. Therefore, understanding the cognitive process associated with experiencing incivility is necessary to support targets of incivility. Based on the transactional model of stress and coping and building on prior research, if daily experienced incivility is associated with proximal outcomes in the work domain (e.g., lowered organizational commitment; Porath & Pearson, 2013), then it is likely daily experienced incivility will be associated with immediate cognitive appraisal and coping. As such, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 2: Cognitive appraisal will mediate the relationship between experienced incivility and adaptive coping such that positive cognitive appraisal will be associated with adaptive coping following daily experienced incivility.*

### **Daily Experienced Incivility and Subsequent Depletion**

Increasingly, research is focusing on the ways individuals experience incivility and the potential spillover of incivility experienced at work into one's home domain (e.g., Cortina et al., 2017). Spillover is a process by which both the behaviors and attitudes developed in one domain are subsequently transferred to another domain. This research indicates that the effects of

incivility are not bound to individuals' work domains, but rather can still have negative impacts on individuals after leaving work.

One avenue that may influence spillover of workplace stressors into individuals' home domains is depletion. Ego depletion theory suggests that depletion occurs when an individual does not have the full range of resources that they typically have and consequently have a lowered capacity to make decision or to function as they typically would (Baumeister et al., 1998; Baumeister et al., 2007). According to ego depletion theory, depletion may result from experiencing incivility because incivility, as a stressor, requires self-regulatory effort which can lead to a state of diminished control (i.e., depletion; Baumeister et al., 1998).

Research supports the association between experienced incivility and depletion. Using an episodic sampling approach, Rosen et al. (2016) found that experienced incivility is associated with depleted self-control, which then influences the target to commit acts of incivility later in the day. Individuals who experienced incivility are more likely to be depleted because they expended energy to make sense of why they were the target of experienced incivility and how they should respond (Rosen et al., 2016). Therefore, drawing on ego depletion theory and prior empirical support, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 3:* Daily experienced workplace incivility will be positively associated with depletion.

According to Loschelder and Friese (2016), leverage point factors may moderate the influence of stressors requiring self-regulatory effort (i.e., experienced incivility) on subsequent depletion. Leverage point factors include situational and state differences of a person; in other words, the ways in which an individual copes with the experience of incivility at work may exacerbate (i.e., through maladaptive coping) or mitigate (i.e., through adaptive coping) the

relationship between experienced incivility and subsequent depletion. For example, research suggests the use of adaptive coping strategies such as problem-focused coping styles decreases levels of emotional exhaustion and job anxiety (Boyd et al., 2009). In contrast, the use of maladaptive coping styles has been shown to increase levels of emotional exhaustion and job anxiety.

Research has found that maladaptive coping, such as avoidance, in response to experienced incivility is associated with the recurrence of incivility and is negatively associated with psychological forgiveness of the perpetrator (Hershcovis et al., 2018). Avoidance coping also was associated with individuals being more likely to experience emotional exhaustion. Because maladaptive coping does nothing to stop the incivility or even to help the individual deal with the experienced incivility, it is not a useful way to cope with incivility. In contrast, an adaptive coping mechanism, such as confronting the perpetrator, may help the individual because it gives them the ability to exert control, which may have a cathartic effect. Because the target is dealing with the incivility, they may be better able to let go of the stress or negative emotions that were originally incited from the incivility (Hershcovis et al., 2018). Therefore, I hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 4:* Adaptive coping following experienced incivility will moderate the association between daily experienced incivility and depletion such that adaptive coping will be associated with less depletion.

### **Present Study**

Importantly, research suggests that dynamic phenomena should be studied at the level of the phenomena (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2019). As such, in the present study, I used a two-week daily diary design to examine the cognitive process of appraisal and coping associated with



experiencing incivility at the daily level, as well as subsequent daily depletion. I examined coping as a moderator which may exacerbate or mitigate the relationship between daily experienced incivility and subsequent depletion. Cognitive appraisal was examined as a mediator between experienced incivility and coping. The conceptual model that I used to guide this research is presented in Figure 1.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Two waves of daily diary data were collected over 10-day periods (two working weeks, Monday – Friday) from full-time working adults working outside the home who are not self-employed ( $N = 63$ ). Participants were recruited through Prolific Academic and pre-screened to fit the eligibility criteria (adult, working full-time outside the home, not self-employed, interact with coworkers/supervisors on a regular basis), which also indicated they needed to interact with coworkers or supervisors on a regular basis. Only participants that met the study's inclusion criteria were invited to participate in the full study, which also included completion of a baseline survey where participant demographics and trait characteristics were collected. Approximately 1-2 weeks following the completion of the baseline survey, participants completed daily diary surveys, with all communications sent through Prolific to maintain the confidentiality of participants. Participants received \$2 per daily survey completed. Additionally, participants who completed all 10 daily surveys received a \$5 bonus. An external grant through NIGMS #8P20GM103436 provided monetary support for participant incentives, and all study procedures were in compliance with the approved study protocol (IRB#21-127).

The majority of participants were white (80%), male (57%), and educated with at least a 4-year college degree (74%). The mean age was 37.21, with approximately 79% of participants married and 25% living with a partner. Approximately 45% of participants reported an income of

\$100,000 or more. Participants were employed in a variety of occupations, including professional (33%), management/business/financial operations (27%), and office/administrative support (8%).

## **Measures**

Participants were asked to respond to the following measures daily, reflecting their experiences that day. All measures have been previously validated and were adapted to fit the daily context. Work and personal demographics were collected at baseline. For the purposes of this research, I measured the following:

*Daily experienced incivility* was assessed using the six-item Workplace Incivility Scale (Cortina et. al, 2001). All items contained the adapted stem, “Today at work, a coworker or supervisor...” An example item is, “Put me down or was condescending to me.” Items were assessed along a 5-point Likert-type response scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Items were coded such that higher scores were indicative of more experienced incivility at work that day. Average Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .91$  (across 10 days).

*Cognitive appraisal of the uncivil event* was assessed with a five-item Cognitive Appraisal Scale developed by Cortina and Magley (2009). All items contained the stem, “at the time of your experience that bothered you the MOST today, how much did you...” An example item is “think you would be able to make things better.” Items were assessed with a 5-point frequency scale ranging from *not at all* to *extremely*. Items were coded such that higher scores were indicative of more positive cognitive appraisal. Average Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .67$  (across 10 days). While the reliability for this measure is lower than to be expected, it is close to the acceptable value of .70.

*Coping* was assessed with the six-item Coping with Harassment Questionnaire (CHQ; Fitzgerald, 1990). All items contained the stem, “Please indicate ALL the different things you did today.” An example item is, “I just put up with it.” Items were assessed with a 3-point scale (Yes,?, No). Items were coded such that higher scores are more indicative of adaptive coping. Because coping is a behavioral inventory, a reliability assessment would not be appropriate for this assessment.

*Depletion* was assessed with a five-item scale developed by Christian and Ellis (2011). All items contained the adapted stem, “please indicate the extent to which each of the following statements represent how you feel at this moment.” An example item is “right now, it would take a lot of effort for me to concentrate on something.” Items were coded such that higher scores were indicative of greater depletion. Average Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .81$  (across 10 days).

Because appraisal of a stressful event (such as experienced workplace incivility) is associated with primary (cognitive) and secondary (emotional) appraisal, I also collected emotional appraisal information to include in supplementary analyses.

*Emotional Appraisal* was assessed with a five-item scale developed by Bunk and Magley (2013). All items contained the stem, “How were you feeling during this experience that bothered you the most?” An example item is “frustrated.” Items were assessed with a 5-point Likert-type response scale ranging from *not at all* to *extremely*. Items were coded such that higher scores were indicative of more negative emotional appraisal following an uncivil event. Average Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .74$  (across 10 days).

## **Results**

Multilevel random coefficient modeling (MRCM) was used due to the hierarchical nature of the data. Daily observations (level 1,  $N = 545$ ) are nested within people (level 2,  $N = 63$ ). All

level 1 variables are person-mean centered while all variables at level 2 are grand-mean centered, which allows for clean partitioning of the variance into within-person and between-person.

Prior to conducting analyses, unconditional models were estimated for all variables of interest. The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC1) is defined as the between-person variance divided by the total variance (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). All ICC1 values reflected evidence sufficient to warrant multilevel modeling (ICC1s ranged from 0.37 - 0.57, indicating moderately high values). In addition, decomposing the variance into within and between persons indicating that a moderate to substantial proportion of variance existed at the within-person level for each construct of interest (ranging from 13% to 30%). In addition, zero-order within- and between-person correlations were examined to assess whether work and personal demographics may be used as potential use as control variables. Results indicated that gender ( $r = .20, p < .01$ ), negative affect ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ), and age ( $r = -.18, p < .01$ ) should be included as controls given significant zero-order correlations with the outcome variable of interest, depletion. For means, standard deviations, correlations, and proportions of within-person variance for the study constructs of interest, please see Table 1.

### **Multilevel Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

I conducted a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (MCFA) to confirm the factor structure of the hypothesized multilevel model. Because nested data are not independent a MCFA is necessary; decomposing the total sample covariance matrix into two matrices (between and within) produced the factor structure at each level (Dedrick & Greenbaum, 2011).

Research indicates that with smaller sample sizes, diagonally weighted least squares (DWLS) estimation techniques yield more accurate model results (Hox et al., 2010). Therefore, I used a robust DWLS estimator in Mplus 8.5 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012) with 8000

iterations. Loading all indicators onto each factor, I fit a five-factor (including emotional appraisal) model in Mplus 8.5 at both the within- and between- levels. For each latent construct at the within- and between- levels, I correlated items that comprised each construct. In addition, I set the residual variances of the factor indicators at the between level to zero. The hypothesized five-factor model fit the data well [ $\chi^2(133) = 197.62.31, p = .0002$ ; RMSEA = .03; CFI = .96; SRMR (within) = .069; SRMR (between) = .10]. To ensure discriminant validity among study constructs of interest, I conducted a WALD test on my hypothesized measurement model. A significant WALD test indicates that there is discriminant validity among the study constructs of interest. Results indicated there was discriminant validity among the study constructs [WALD (10) = 631345.32,  $p < .001$ ].

### **Hypothesis Testing**

Hypotheses were tested using a multilevel path modeling approach. Path modeling estimates the regression coefficients among paths in a hypothesized model, estimating all regression coefficients simultaneously, and treating variables as observed rather than latent. Because variables were treated as observed, model fit statistics are not informative and thus are not reported. All hypotheses were analyzed simultaneously with age, gender, and negative affect included at Level 2 as controls, along with the aggregate means of the study constructs of interest; please see Figure 1 for a graphical representation of the results, as well as Table 2. Hypothesis 1, which stated that daily experienced workplace incivility will be associated with coping following the uncivil event was supported ( $\beta = -0.92, p < .001$ ), indicating that on days when employees experienced incivility, they engaged in less adaptive coping following the uncivil event. Hypothesis 2, which stated that cognitive appraisal would mediate the relationship between daily experienced incivility and coping was not supported as there was not significant

indirect effect (*indirect effect* =  $-.024$ ,  $p = 0.64$ ). Further, Hypothesis 3 stating that daily experienced workplace incivility would be positively associated with daily depletion was supported ( $\beta = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that on days when employees experienced incivility, they were more depleted. Finally, Hypothesis 4, stated that adaptive coping following experienced workplace incivility will moderate the association between daily experienced incivility and depletion, such that adaptive coping will be associated with less depletion. Hypothesis 4 was supported ( $\beta = -.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Results were graphed (see Figure 2), with high and low values of the predictor and moderator variables set at meaningful values (for incivility, values were set at 1 and 4 indicating the range of responses across the 10 days of study; for coping, values were set at 1 and 3 indicating the range of responses across the 10 days of study). As can be seen from Figure 2, results indicate that on days when employees experienced more incivility, those who engaged in more adaptive coping experienced less depletion than those who engaged in more maladaptive coping.

### **Supplemental Analysis**

Given that appraisal is a dual process, with cognitive appraisal indicating primary appraisal following a stressful event, and emotional appraisal indicating secondary appraisal following a stressful event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), I alternatively examined the hypothesized relationships using emotional appraisal in lieu of cognitive appraisal in the aforementioned hypothesized model.

Multilevel path analysis indicated that daily experienced workplace incivility is associated with coping following the uncivil event ( $\beta = -0.591$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that on days when employees experienced incivility, they engaged in less adaptive coping. Contrary to results

mentioned above regarding cognitive appraisal, supplemental analyses indicated that emotional appraisal significantly mediated the association between daily experienced incivility and adaptive coping (*indirect effect* =  $-.32, p < .001$ ). I further examined the indirect effect using Bayes Credibility Interval as suggested by Bauer et al. (2006) to account for nonnormality of the effect. Analyses further supported the significance of the mediation, with the 90% Bayes Credibility Interval containing a non-zero value. Finally, supplemental analyses indicated support for the association of daily experienced workplace incivility on daily depletion ( $\beta = .39, p < .001$ ), as well as support for a significant interaction of adaptive coping on the association between daily experienced incivility and daily depletion ( $\beta = -.33, p < .001$ ).

## Discussion

I sought to examine the association between daily experienced incivility and subsequent daily depletion through a cognitive process lens, integrating the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and ego depletion theory (Baumeister et al., 1998) to do so. I accomplished this using a 10-day daily diary study, using intensive an intensive longitudinal design as a means of addressing weaknesses in prior research. Prior workplace incivility has typically been examined through a retrospective lens, requiring participants to recall experiences of incivility as far back as a year (Bunk & Magley, 2013; Cortina et al., 2013). I found partial support for my hypothesized relationships.

Results indicate that on days when employees experience incivility, they engage in less adaptive coping following the uncivil event. Furthermore, results indicated that on days when employees experienced incivility, they were more depleted. Finally, results indicated a significant interaction between daily experienced workplace incivility and adaptive coping on daily depletion. In other words, on days when employees experienced incivility and engaged in

adaptive coping, they experienced less depletion. Results did not indicate that cognitive appraisal mediated the relationship between daily experienced incivility and coping, with the 90% Bayes Credibility Interval around the indirect effect indicating a zero-value.

Because appraisal is considered a dual process (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), I sought to investigate the hypothesized relationships using emotional appraisal in lieu of cognitive appraisal in the theoretical model. In contrast to the aforementioned results, using emotional appraisal as the mediational mechanism through which daily experienced incivility is associated with coping and depletion was yielded significant results. Specifically, I found a significant mediation effect of daily experienced incivility on adaptive coping through emotional appraisal.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The results from the current study include several theoretical implications. Supporting the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), my results indicated that daily experienced incivility was significantly associated with subsequent coping following the uncivil event(s). However, there was no mediation of cognitive appraisal in the association between daily experienced incivility and coping, contrary to theory. There are a number of reasons which may support this nonsignificant result. For example, according the transactional model of stress and coping, the mechanisms which facilitate coping for stressors is a dual process consisting of both cognitive and emotional appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The unsupported mediation could be due to the affective nature of incivility as incivility may have a more significant impact on the emotions of individuals in the short term than the cognitive appraisal process of individuals. The present study was designed to determine the mechanisms which facilitate depletion on days when individuals experience incivility at work, therefore, it could be that the cognitive appraisal of incivility may occur days after the incivility has occurred



rather than right after it has happened. Individuals could potentially lack the cognitive process of determining the meaning of the incivility that occurred and rather, may be more likely to engage in an immediate emotional process of appraisal. This was supported by the supplemental analyses, which indicated a significant mediation of emotional appraisal in the association between daily experienced incivility and coping.

Additionally, daily experienced workplace incivility was positively associated with daily depletion, lending support to ego depletion theory which indicates that depletion of resources occurs when individuals experience stressors (Baumeister et al., 1998; Baumeister et al., 2007). Finally, adaptive coping following experienced workplace incivility moderated the relationship between the incivility and depletion, such that on days when employees experienced incivility at work, adaptive coping was associated with lower rates of depletion. The transactional model of stress and coping indicates that adaptive coping can better help individuals to manage stressors which would indicate individuals would experience less depletion (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The current study has a number of important strengths. First, data were collected at the daily level, allowing for the examination of within-person variability in experienced workplace incivility and subsequent depletion through cognitive appraisal and coping. This reduces retrospective bias in the reporting of experiences that can occur at the interindividual level. In addition, prior research has often focused on categorizing incivility as a critical incident having individuals recall their past experiences of incivility (Cortina et al., 2017); the strength of intensive longitudinal methods in examining workplace incivility as it occurs allows for the examination of proximal effects, which has the ability to contribute to more precise theory and support causal relationships.

Despite the strengths of this study, there are limitations. First, the level 2 (between person) sample size was smaller than expected. While power analyses indicate sufficient power is achieved to detect small effects with a level 2 sample size of 75 persons; my level 2 sample consisted of 63 individuals. This may have contributed to the lack of significance in the hypothesized mediation effect. In addition, all constructs were measured each day during each survey, which indicates that causal inferences cannot be made due to the lack of temporal separation of constructs. Furthermore, the data are self-report, so there is the potential for social desirable responding. Finally, the sample was largely white, and more male than female, which is not reflective the U.S. working population at large. Some research suggests that women may experience incivility at work to greater degrees than men (Miner et al., 2018), though this could be grounded in societal gender norms, and the ways in which men and women relate to affective events. In addition, persons of color may experience selective incivility, the ambiguous intent to harm based on one's race and ethnicity (Cortina et al., 2013). Those with intersectional identities (e.g., Black, female) may experience selective incivility more so than their male counterparts or those who do not identify with an intersectional identity (Cortina et al., 2013).

### **Practical Implications and Future Research**

This research provides additional support to the idea that while incivility in the workplace may be subtle, the effects of it are not. The results of this study demonstrate that individuals experiencing workplace incivility are more likely to use maladaptive coping upon experiencing incivility in the workplace. Furthermore, on days when employees encountered higher rates of incivility, they experienced more depletion. Past research has found that employees indicated that being the target of incivility can lead to negative repercussions for organizations such as decreased quality of their work and their work effort, as well as reporting lowered organizational

commitment (Porath & Pearson, 2014). Organizations should understand the importance of the impact incivility can have on those employed in their organizations, as well as the impact of incivility for the organization itself.

Organizations should be held responsible for allowing incivility to occur in organizations. This can be done through creating organizational cultures that do not tolerate acts of incivility. The impact of incivility from supervisors to subordinates can be extremely impactful for individuals, more so than incivility from colleagues (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Additionally, organizations should determine the mechanisms through which incivility thrives in an effort to lower rates of incivility. Organizations should consider their organizational climate and how different stressors can impact rates of incivility. Furthermore, organization should consider an intervention to prevent incivility, which starts with leadership. Organizations should be mindful of the behaviors their leaders are modeling to their teams in organizations.

The scope of the present study focused on the effects of incivility in the form of depletion. As support was found for high rates of depletion in individuals who had higher rates of experienced incivility, further research should be conducted to determine the impact of depletion or other spillover effects of incivility on both the individual and those with which they have social ties. For example, some research has examined the impact of experiencing incivility can have on an employee's work-to-family conflict and further impact the marital satisfaction of employees and their partners (Ferguson, 2012). Further research should explore the boundary conditions of incivility to determine the full weight of the implications of experiencing workplace incivility for employees.

Finally, due to the lack of support for the mediating mechanism of cognitive appraisal, further research could be conducted with a weekly time frame in addition to than daily. The

mediation may have been unsupported because targets of incivility had not adequately processed the implications of the incivility on the day of its occurrence, which was the timeframe for this research. Some proximal incivility experiences may not be properly understood by the individual until they have had additional time to reflect on those experiences and their implications (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Further research on the impact of incivility could request participants to reflect on their experiences of incivility during a different time frame with potentially allowing for a week or two of reflection in addition to same-day evaluation to determine the cognitive appraisal process more accurately.

### **Conclusion**

The current study contributed to the literature on the impact of daily experienced incivility on individuals. The intensive longitudinal nature of this study allowed for the examination of the effects of daily experienced workplace incivility and the direct spillover of this experience in the form of depletion. This study further expanded on the research on the impact that incivility can have on employees. Further, the impact of incivility can have negative ramifications for organizations, consequently, ways to decrease the impact of incivility and to prevent incivility in their workplaces should be considered.

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