Minor Incidents with Major Impacts: The Effects of Bottom-up Incivility on Supervisor Targets

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MINOR INCIDENTS WITH MAJOR IMPACTS: THE EFFECTS OF BOTTOM-UP INCIVILITY ON SUPERVISOR TARGETS

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MINOR INCIDENTS WITH MAJOR IMPACTS: THE EFFECTS OF BOTTOM-UP INCIVILITY ON SUPERVISOR TARGETS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction ................................................................................................................. 1
- Method ........................................................................................................................... 21
  - Participants ............................................................................................................... 21
  - Procedure ................................................................................................................. 22
  - Measures ................................................................................................................... 24
- Results ......................................................................................................................... 28
- Discussion .................................................................................................................... 40
- References ................................................................................................................... 49
- Appendix A .................................................................................................................. 54
- Appendix B .................................................................................................................. 56
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Model of the Relationship Between Bottom-up Incivility, Supervisors’ Psychological and Physical Health, and Job Satisfaction..............................................19

Figure 2. The Mediated Relationship Between Incivility and Physical Health..................36
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Covertness and Frequency of Various Forms of Incivility......................54
Table 2. Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on the
        MHI, MSQ, PSI, and UWBQ.................................................................33
Table 3. Predicting Mental Health of All Targets of Incivility and Levels of Job
        Satisfaction for Supervisors Who are Targets of Bottom-up Incivility..........34
Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Testing the Mediated Relationship
        Between Incivility, Mental Health, and Physical Health..........................37
Table 5. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Testing the Mediated Relationship
        Between Incivility, Mental Health, and Job Satisfaction in Targets of Bottom-up
        Incivility..................................................................................................39
Table 6. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Testing the Mediated Relationship
        Between Incivility, Mental Health, and Job Satisfaction in Targets of Any Form
        of Incivility ..............................................................................................40
Incivility within organizations is a rampant problem with dire consequences, including adverse effects on both job satisfaction and psychological states. This study was conducted to address the gap in the current literature that looks at incivility within organizations. To date, no studies have assessed the impact of bottom-up incivility (i.e., incivility that is directed from subordinates to supervisors) on supervisor targets. Thus, this study investigated the impact of bottom-up forms of incivility of supervisors’ mental and physical states, as well as their levels of job satisfaction. However, due to small sample sizes, the current research was expanded to address the effects of both bottom-up incivility and other forms of incivility (i.e., peer-to-peer and superior-to-subordinate). As a result, the study consisted of two samples: bottom-up targets ($N = 19$) and targets of all forms of incivility ($N = 89$). In the bottom-up sample, results showed that instances of bottom-up incivility are a significant predictor of lower levels of job satisfaction. In the sample of targets of all forms of incivility, the results indicated that incivility was a significant predictor of lower levels of mental health. In the sample of targets of all forms of incivility, hierarchical regression analyses also showed that the effects of incivility on physical health were mediated by mental health.
Introduction

In organizations, civility is the glue holding organizational norms of respect and decency together. Civility can be defined as a behavior that, though lacking clear intent and intensity, benefits the organization (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Overall, civil behaviors arise from one’s perceptions of humanity, righteousness, and are actions that show one’s concern for co-workers. With civility, organizations build norms of mutual respect, cooperation, trust, and a common view that people should be treated humanely in every aspect of work and level of the organization (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Within all organizations, however, employees often breach these norms of respect: People ignore input from co-workers, neglect to recognize others’ contributions to projects, fail to return emails promptly, use voicemail to screen calls, and make demeaning comments to others. Within recent years, these norm breaching behaviors have become known as incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001).

Incivility within organizations is a rampant problem with dire consequences, including adverse effects on both job satisfaction and psychological and physical states. For example, Pearson and Porath (2005) found that in a poll of 800 employees, nearly four out of five indicated that they witnessed incivility in the workplace, while one out of five indicated that they have been direct targets of incivility. Additionally, Pearson and Porath state that nearly half of the participants in their survey of over 700 employees considered changing their jobs to avoid the instigator, while one in eight actually did leave their job. A study by Cortina, Magley, Williams, and Langhout (2001) showed that 71% of the employees surveyed experienced some form of incivility within the last five years. More recently, research has shown that incivility is one of the most common forms
of employee anti-social behavior, affecting 71%, 75%, and 79% of the surveyed court, university, and law enforcement employees, respectively (Cortina, 2008). Within the past decade, however, research has begun to thoroughly document the types of incivility experienced, the antecedents to incivility, and the consequences of incivility.

Types of Incivility

Caza and Cortina (2007) state that incidents of incivility fall into three main classifications: top-down, lateral, and bottom-up. Top-down incivility includes incivilities involving higher status instigators (supervisors) and lower status targets (subordinates), while lateral incivility involves peer-to-peer incivility. Kolanko et al. (2006) found that at least within the healthcare community, lateral and top-down incivilities are the most common.

The third type of incivility, bottom-up, is a type of incivility that is directed from subordinates to supervisors (Caza & Cortina, 2007). Kolanko et al. (2006) found this type of incivility to be the least commonly expressed form, presumably because it is more covert and less noticed. Pearson and Porath (2005) state that lower-level instigators retaliate to top-down incivility using more creative, bottom-up incivilities. For example, lower status individuals will spoil superiors’ reputation, or covertly damage superiors’ work efforts or work products. In a landmark study of more than 2,400 people across U.S businesses, Pearson and Porath found that over one-third of targets of incivility will reduce their work efforts formally made on the instigators behalf—always aware of their target’s (supervisor’s) power. Thus, the likely case is that these covert, bottom-up behaviors occur at a rate similar to other incivilities, but that they are simply less noticed by their supervisor targets due to their covertness and, thus, less reported.
Interestingly, power differentials are the only characteristics that play a central role in identifying likely targets and instigators of incivility. In a ten-year study of American businesses, age and tenure differences between instigator and target were found to be insignificant (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Gender differences of the instigator, however, were found to play a small role: Men are more likely to be instigators than women. Yet, both men and women are equally likely to be targets. Regardless, it should be stated that researchers question whether the differences found reflect sampling bias and not actual gender differences. Thus, the most robust finding is: those with greatest power are more likely to be instigators and those in lower status positions are more likely to be targets (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

As shown, incivility presents itself in a number of modes, but the majority of research has focused on defining and documenting the more commonly identified top-down and lateral issues: the impact of top-down and lateral incivilities on subordinates and peers, respectively. In contrast, there has been much less research regarding incivilities that are directed from subordinates to supervisors (i.e., bottom-up incivility) even though these types of incivilities have been shown to exist (Kolanko et al., 2006; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Thus, the present study seeks to examine the characteristics of and psychological and physical effects of bottom-up incivility.

**Defining and Explicating Incivility**

Examples of workplace incivility have several common, distinguishing features: Incivility lacks a clear intent to harm and is ambiguous, lacks the intensity associated with aggression, and can be viewed as a deviant, norm-violating behavior (Cortina, 2008). Accordingly, Andersson and Pearson (1999) define incivility as low-intensity,
deviant behaviors with unclear, ambiguous intentions to harm the target that are in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Regardless of the low intensity of incivility, these behaviors are not limited to verbal expression as they can often take the form of excluding and ignoring others (Cortina, 2008).

In 2001, Pearson et al. collected examples of incivility. In these examples, many employees from various fields mentioned superiors turning their backs to others during meetings if ideas were not liked, openly rolling their eyes, overruling decisions of co-workers without discussion, and disregarding others’ opinions in open meetings. Incivility, however, is not what is typically referred to as aggression. Aggression can be defined as a behavior that is obviously intended to physically and/or psychologically harm someone (Schat, Desmarais, & Kelloway, 2006). Incivility, on the other hand, is a milder form of psychological aggression, lacking the obvious intent to harm, and thus, uncivil behaviors can often be attributed to ignorance, personality factors, hypersensitivity of the supposed target, and misinterpretation (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina, 2008). Because incivility is low intensity, ambiguous, and subtle, few complaints are filed and even fewer issues resolved. Consequently, the victims of incivility are often forced to ignore or avoid their antagonists. Thus, incivility is more similar to understated deviance than to open and direct forms of aggression (Cortina, 2008).

**Antecedents of Incivility**

Over the past 10 years, research into the causes of incivility within organizations has uncovered many contributing factors. According to Bartlett, Bartlett, and Reio (2008) antecedents of incivility arise from workers or organizations as a whole. Organizationally
rooted antecedents revolve around the environment or structure of the organization. Bartlett et al. found that the most prevalent structural cause of workplace incivility was downsizing because, when organizations cut jobs and become more horizontal, pressures for the remaining workers to maintain past performances or outputs is increased. Downsizing, and the resulting flattened organization, has also resulted in decreases in the levels of formality, blurring the lines regarding appropriate conduct (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In addition, downsizing has led to a decrease in workers’ perceived job security, leading to more competition, and, ultimately, more incivility. Other structural antecedents include hiring part-time workers, reengineering, globalizing, and frequent organizational change. Lastly, some examples of environmental antecedents of incivility are autocratic leadership environments (i.e., environments where the supervisor is the only person who possesses authority), environments with high levels of anxiety, and, overall, difficult working conditions (Bartlett et al., 2008).

Bartlett et al. (2008) also identified two different types of worker factors that facilitate workplace incivility: enablers and motivators. Enablers include environmental elements that provide a fertile environment in which incivilities can develop; these environmental elements include roles and actions of the instigator. Roles include someone’s status, role requirements, and workload. Motivators can be thought of as fuel or conditions that actually allow or create a rewarding consequence for one’s incivility. Motivating factors include personality characteristics like Type A, aggression, ego, and beliefs (e.g., lenient attitudes towards aggression, the perceived low cost of perpetrating aggressive behaviors, and low levels of assertiveness within leaders).
Additionally, research has shown that when individuals perceive themselves as being treated unfairly, they direct their energies towards the sources of their perceived injustice (Jones, 2004). Often the source of an employee’s perceived injustice is the organization, but because an employee’s immediate supervisor is the most salient representative of the organization and its actions, retaliatory acts are usually directed specifically towards one’s superiors (Jones, 2004). Thus, certain types of injustice have been implicated as a cause of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) directed towards supervisors, which include incivilities. The literature commonly identifies four types of injustice: interpersonal (i.e., extent to which employees perceive themselves as being treated with dignity and free of prejudice within their personal interactions), procedural (i.e., the fairness of an organization’s formal employee procedures), informational (i.e., extent to which explanations for outcomes were reasonable and timely), and interactional (i.e., extent to which employees feel that they are being treated with respect in their interpersonal interactions; Innes, Barling, & Turner, 2005; Jones, 2004). Past research, however, has identified interactional injustice as the type of injustice most strongly tied to supervisor-directed aggression (Innes et al., 2005). In 2004, Jones conducted a study looking at the types of injustice associated with CWBs directed at the organization versus behaviors directed towards one’s supervisor. The results of the study show that levels of interpersonal injustice predict occurrences of CWBs targeted at one’s supervisor, with higher levels of injustice being positively related to CWBs. The study also showed that one’s intentions to retaliate against one’s supervisor or organization were partially mediated by the intended source of one’s revenge. Thus, the question becomes, are subordinates seeking revenge against their supervisor or their organization? For example,
interactional injustice was related to instances of CWBs if a subordinate’s intended target was his or her supervisor, but not if the subordinate’s intended target was the organization. It seems, therefore, that for perceived interactional injustice to affect subordinates’ level of CWBs, they must feel a specific need to seek revenge against their supervisor. The triggers for supervisor directed revenge, however, are simply the artifacts of perceived interactional injustices: moral and social affronts, organizational norm violations, and threats to identity (Jones, 2004). It seems that injustice and revenge motives feed on one another. In the end, supervisors can be a tangible symbol for an employee’s perceived injustices; however, the employee’s desire to get even with his or her supervisor, which is driven by norm violations and threats to one’s identity, determines if those perceived injustices are met with supervisor directed CWBs, creating the potential for a cyclical relationship between perceived injustice, revenge motives, and CWBs (Jones, 2004). Thus, research shows that the workplace is teaming with employees waiting to retaliate against the sources of their perceived injustices through subtle, deviant, counterproductive work behaviors.

Lastly, more mundane, cultural causes of incivility have also been described within the associated literature. For example, Pearson and Porath (2005) have suggested that our newly developed, fast-paced, global lifestyle has contributed to rising rates of incivility. By creating an enhanced feeling of urgency that leaves people with the impression or excuse that they do not have time to be “nice.” Also, because so much of today’s communication forums lie on informal planes, such as email and text messaging, the form of communication itself creates a less formal and more abrupt habit of communication, leading to fewer individuals who are attuned to proper face-to-face
communication skills and fewer individuals who can attend to the proper interpersonal
cues of courtesy and respect for others. Thus, the changing face of how companies
accomplish business transactions and communicate in a global, fast-paced world is
attenuating employees’ ability to respectfully communicate.

Consequences of Incivility at the Individual Level

Both incivility and employee deviance are classified under the category “anti-
social employee behavior”—behaviors that have been found to erode the fibers holding
an organization together (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). Despite the ambiguity of
incivility, the consequences of incivility are far reaching (Cortina, 2008). At the
individual level, exposure to incivility affects workers in numerous ways. Most notably,
incivility affects employees’ levels of job satisfaction, mental and physical health, job
commitment, and productivity (Bartlett et al., 2008; Lim et al., 2008).

One of the most commonly explored aspects of incivility is how it can affect
employees’ levels of job satisfaction. Lim et al. (2008) found that incivility had direct,
negative effects on employees’ levels of job satisfaction, while Cortina (2008) showed
that as employees are exposed to higher levels of general incivilities, they become less
satisfied with their supervisors and work overall. Thus, as their level of supervisor
dissatisfaction increased, their level of job satisfaction decreased.

Research has also focused on the effects of incivility on one’s mental functioning.
Findings suggest that workplace incivility is negatively related to employees’ mental
health; as levels of incivility rise, employees’ levels of psychological wellbeing fall,
resulting in increased levels of depression, anxiety, and stress (Bartlett et al., 2008;
Cortina et al., 2001; Lim et al., 2008). Additionally, Cortina (2008) stated that negative
psychological conditions can also negatively affect individual variables like job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Caza and Cortina (2007) found that regardless of the sex or status of the instigator (male vs. female and peer vs. supervisor), repeated incivilities and the ambiguity of the situation caused feelings of social ostracism within the target, leading to loss of control and, ultimately, psychological effects like lower cognitive functioning, helplessness, depression, and lower self-efficacy.

Research has also explored the relationship between incivility and physical health problems like migraines, heart disease, and heart attacks. Lim et al. (2008), for example, found that incivility was not directly related to physical outcomes, but that the effects of incivility on physical outcomes were fully mediated by the psychological outcomes of incivility. In other words, incivility causes stress, which, in turn, causes migraines; however, incivility would not directly produce migraines without first creating stress within an individual.

In addition to job satisfaction, physical effects, and psychological outcomes at the individual level, incivility can also affect employees’ commitment to the job and, thus, their level of productivity. Cortina et al. (2001) stated that as levels of incivility rise in a company, workers, who are dissatisfied, stressed, and unhappy, start to place more attention and effort towards other areas of their lives, resulting in lower job commitment, withdrawal behaviors, and lower productivity. Many employees report spending valuable work time and cognitive effort focusing on discovering why they have become targets of these incivilities, what will trigger the instigator, and how to avoid the instigator, resulting in less time being spent on pertinent work related duties. In fact, Bartlett et al. (2008) stated that almost 30% of targeted employees wasted work time just trying to
avoid instigators, and Pearson, Andersson, and Porath (2000) stated that employees often admitted to re-routing the pathways they take at work to avoid instigators. Prior research also showed that instances of incivility reduced productivity and satisfaction within targets even after controlling for negative dispositional traits, demonstrating that it is not just the “negative Ned’s” and “Nancy’s” within the company that are affected by the repeated exposure of these deviant, ambiguous norm violations; it is otherwise positive and high functioning individuals that are adversely affected (Cortina, 2008).

**Consequences of Incivility at the Organizational Level**

The impact of incivility is felt at the organizational as well as the individual level. Ultimately, as incivility within an organization grows, these seemingly trivial deviances can have far-reaching, financial effects. Through the costs of turnover, absenteeism, lower productivity, and employee theft, incivilities decrease a company’s effectiveness by damaging a company’s bottom line (Cortina, 2008; Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Bartlett et al. (2008) stated that one of the most costly variables to organizations is employee turnover. Other research has also determined that uncivil acts within organizations increase employee turnover intentions (Cortina et al., 2001). More specifically, Lim et al. (2008) found that incivilities, via managerial abusive behavior, are positively related to employees’ turnover intentions. A recent survey of over 700 employees found that of the employees who reported being exposed to incivility within the workplace, 50% considered leaving, and, out of that 50%, 12% did leave the organization. Similarly, research has also shown exit rates as high as 42% (Bartlett et al., 2008; Pearson et al., 2000). Though this sounds extreme, any amount of turnover within a company is expensive (Pearson et al., 2000). In fact, the American Institute of Stress
states that stress caused worker absences can cost companies up to 300 billion dollars every year (Bartlett et al., 2008).

Turnover is not the only source of financial impact induced by incivility. Incivility can also affect a company’s bottom-line through lowering employees’ commitment and effort. Pearson et al. (2000) found that as employees experience incivility, they adjust their work efforts accordingly. Within their survey of over 700 employees across America, one-third reported that after being a target of an uncivil behavior, they reduced their commitment to the organization, stopped volunteering for extra work duties, stopped assisting colleagues, and reduced their creative input. These researchers also found that nearly one-fourth of the survey respondents stated that they intentionally reduced their efforts in completing their tasks at work. In short, the employees admitted to no longer doing their best. In more extreme situations, some of the employees surveyed actually admitted to stealing property from the company in order to retaliate (Pearson et al., 2000). Regardless of the specific results, it is obvious that workplace incivility can greatly impact a company’s bottom-line, causing massive profit loss from increased turnover, reduced productivity, and increased employee theft.

**Summary**

In the end, due to the ambiguity of incivilities, employees find it difficult to predict, control, or cope with these *low-grade* attacks, leaving an employee distressed and helpless. Add repeat exposure of these anxiety causing incidents to the stressful mix, and a company will develop employees with various psychological and physical problems—problems which developed from seemingly harmless and deniable comments, glares, and dismissals. Incivility can also create anxious employees who constantly worry about what
they did to deserve such treatment and when it might occur again. Moreover, as a result of the continuous worrying, employees are also left with significant psychological distress, lower levels of satisfaction, and lower levels of productivity and commitment (Cortina, 2008; Cortina et al., 2001; Lim et al., 2008).

Ultimately, incivility can negatively affect an entire organization and create an unfavorable psychological climate, leading to decreased levels of organizational commitment (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007). When organizational norms of mutual respect are violated, unfavorable working conditions result, and a cycle of negative effects begins. Because a climate of mistrust, anxiety, and uncertainty can cause the relationships of employees to suffer, and the psychological states of subsequent employees to be adversely affected, incivilities in an organization can trigger a downward spiral of negative employee affect, continuously feeding the cycle of incivilities and negative organizational climates (Lim et al., 2008; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007).

**Current Study**

From past research, it is clear that incivility has a considerable impact on employees. The majority of incivility research, however, has focused on either top-down or lateral forms of incivility (Caza & Cortina, 2007). As a result, less is known about the effects of bottom-up incivility, presumably because it is less frequent; nevertheless, one could argue that bottom-up forms are as frequent as top-down and lateral forms, but because it is more covert, it is simply less noticed and reported. Pearson and Porath (2005), for example, state that because more powerful employees have more freedom to show incivility and fewer consequences, top-down forms of incivility occur more often than bottom-up forms. However, due to the covert nature of bottom-up forms, one could
question whether the actual rate of bottom-up incivility is, in fact, more similar to the rate of top-down or lateral forms than previously thought. For example, it is possible that while bottom-up incivility is less reported within organizations, it actually occurs at a rate similar to top-down or lateral, but because of its increasingly covert and ambiguous nature, bottom-up incivility, even though it frequently occurs, is simply overlooked in formal reports.

Regardless of the frequency, it is clear that various forms of bottom-up incivility have been reported in organizations (Bartlett et al., 2008; Pearson & Porath, 2005). However, the actions employees take when directing incivilities towards superiors are often reported as more subtle, involving such acts as ignoring requests, sabotaging equipment, delaying assistance, or informing others of a superior’s mistakes (i.e., gossip). Pearson and Porath (2005) note that subordinate incivilities are often “curtailed to covert omission” (p. 11). Thus, a poignant question is whether superiors notice these more covert forms of deviance, and, more importantly, do they adversely affect superiors?

Research into employee retaliation against aggression, however, provides support for the view that supervisors do notice subordinates’ deviant behaviors and that they may have widespread, negative effects (Gregory, Osmonbekov, & Gregory, 2009; Penner, Midili, & Kegelmeyer, 1997; Van Scotter, 2000). Namely, Tepper et al. (2009) found that victims of abusive supervision take revenge by employing retaliatory acts that, though noticed by the supervisor, often go unpunished. The researchers clarify by stating that abused subordinates retaliate by reducing contextual behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). For example, subordinates may decrease extra-role behaviors, stop added effort on work assignments, quit being team players, and end
courteous work behaviors. Withholding OCBs that are important in reaching organizational goals are detrimental to an organization; however, key in this concept is the fact that the withdrawal of an OCB is not a punishable offense. Namely, because these behaviors are typically voluntary and not part of an employee’s official job duties, they are not subject to retribution if withheld (Gregory et al., 2009; Tepper et al., 2009; Van Scotter, 2000). Thus, withholding of contextual performance or OCBs provides employees, who may be vengeful, unstable, or blatantly disgruntled, a less risky opportunity for retaliation against their supervisors or organizations (Gregory et al., 2009).

Regardless of the covert nature of most OCBs, researchers provide evidence supporting the fact that supervisors are aware of these behaviors, and, more importantly, are aware of their absences (Van Scotter, 2000). Van Scotter (2000) and Penner et al. (1997) stated that even though OCBs are voluntary, extra-role behaviors, this in no way suggests that these behaviors are not noticed. In fact, research has shown that OCBs are noticed and even have an indirect influence on supervisors’ subsequent evaluations of subordinates. Indirect because most OCBs are not considered part of an employee’s formal, and thus enforceable, job demands. In a study involving sales managers’ ratings of insurance agents, regression analyses showed that when assigning employee performance ratings, managers weighted contextual, citizenship performance, and task performance—performance concerning a job incumbents’ required tasks that contribute to the organizations effectiveness—almost equally (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Thus, the fact that subtle acts like OCBs indirectly affect a supervisor’s ratings of employees and have been shown to carry as much weight in supervisory perceptions of employee
performance as required task performance, even though they are not part of an employee’s official evaluation or subject to retribution, directly points to the reality that supervisors do notice subtle and covert behaviors within their employees. As a result, due to the fact that a majority of behaviors involved in bottom-up forms of incivility are simply the withholding of OCBs, one can reasonably conclude that supervisor targets will notice these covert forms of incivility just as they notice the subtle OCBs.

Thus, while there is evidence that uncivil behavior can affect employees and research which shows that supervisors notice even covert behaviors, which cannot be punitively enforced, there is no research specifically focusing on the effects that subordinates’ uncivil, deviant actions can have upon their superiors. This is a potentially serious deficiency as it is possible to demonstrate the likelihood that bottom-up incivilities can adversely affect supervisors.

Again extrapolating from organizational citizenship and aggression research, a common area of exploration is one concerning the implications or effects of reduced employee OCBs on organizational climate. Van Scotter (2000) suggested that contextual performance can benefit organizations in many ways, but, namely, OCBs can increase the effectiveness of employees through the added effort OCBs involve. Overall, these helpful, cooperative behaviors lead to a more positive psychological and social environment. Further research also stated that because contextual performance leads to a more supportive and pleasant work environment for all employees, effective task performance is fostered, which, in turn, reduces the need for supervisors to closely monitor employee performance (Van Scotter, 2000). Consequently, one could assume that if these types of helpful behaviors, which lead to positive psychological climates,
more effective task performance, and less need for micro-management, were removed through the perpetration of bottom-up incivilities then negative behaviors would result. Namely, there would be less cooperation from subordinates but more work and stress placed on supervisors, which would create a less supportive and more potentially psychologically damaging organizational climate.

Other areas of research also provide evidence for the assumption that bottom-up incivilities will have similar negative effects as other forms of incivility. Caza and Cortina (2007), for example, found that the ostracizing effects of incivility do not vary between lateral and top-down forms of incivility, and that both forms lead to psychological distress in the target. Though the forms are more overt in nature and differ in their targets, they do share similar characteristics with bottom-up forms of incivility. Bottom-up incivility is likely more covert than the more overt, top-down type of incivility, but bottom-up forms of incivility also share defining characteristics with other forms of incivility: they are ambiguous—maybe even more so than top-down—are easily deniable, are low intensity, and are norm-violating actions.

These facts lead to the assumption that bottom-up incivilities, like top-down and lateral, can lead to greater levels of stress and a negative psychological climate. Incivility has the potential to not only create a less supportive employee base through the reduction of OCBs, but incivility also has the potential to generate mental instability within supervisors. Through its subtle, covert nature, bottom-up incivility may lead supervisors into an unpleasant psychological state, invoking a constant rumination regarding these subtle, deviant actions and what they, as supervisors, did to instigate such behaviors from their subordinates. In sum, if bottom-up incivilities share characteristics with both the
top-down and lateral forms, then, in theory, one could postulate that bottom-up incivility will mimic some of the consequences of top-down and lateral forms and lead to similar psychological, physical, and work effects on supervisor targets. Also, in theory, because bottom-up forms of incivility can be equated with the removal of OCBs, it could also be hypothesized that the negative outcomes, like decreased teamwork and reduced effort, associated with the withdrawal of OCBs could also be caused by bottom-up incivility.

Finally, the importance of pursuing how subordinates’ incivility can affect their supervisor targets lies in the research regarding vicarious exposures of incivility at work. Research in this area shows that not only do incivility’s effects reach beyond the target-instigator dyad to subsequent employees, but that a supervisor’s level of satisfaction (perceived by his or her subordinates) can also have an indirect affect on subordinates’ work and health outcomes (Lim et al., 2008; Sykes, 2008). Research has indentified social contagion as an organizational phenomenon responsible for attitude and affect transfer within organizations (Sykes, 2008). Social contagion is defined as the proliferation of affect, behaviors, and attitudes between the members of a group. Research states that this process is often a top-down process with superiors transmitting their feelings to lower-level employees. The theory also suggests that this transmission occurs because lower-status members see it as beneficial to mimic the emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of those in power (Sykes, 2008). Accordingly, a happy leader creates a happy follower—and vice versa.

Social contagion research creates a valid argument as to why it is so critical to understand bottom-up incivility. As stated, most emotional contagion is the unconscious transmission of emotions from superiors to subordinates. Sy, Cote, and Saavedra (2005)
found when group leaders’ moods were manipulated to be either negative or positive through watching a video, that the group members’ moods converged to match their respective leaders’ moods—either positive or negative. In addition, Sy et al. found that the leaders’ moods had a great influence over the group members’ cooperation: the more positive the leader, the greater the group’s cooperation. Thus, the importance of understanding why a supervisor can become psychologically strained and unhappy becomes essential. It also becomes essential to understand the effects of incivility on supervisors, and to discover if these seemingly ambiguous and covert behaviors are affecting supervisors’ moods in negative ways. If so, then the supervisor-subordinate dyad will become a two-way street of negative emotional contagion, leading to not only a distressed superior and subordinate, but by virtue of further contagion, a negative and less productive workgroup.

In summation, because the main characteristic—besides intended target—that separates top-down from bottom-up incivility (i.e., level of covertness) has been shown to not greatly affect supervisors’ ability to notice subordinates’ deviant behaviors, and because the withholding of similarly subtle behaviors (i.e., OCBs) within an organization has been shown to have adverse consequences, the following questions and relationships are proposed (see Figure 1):

Due to the fact that the instigators of bottom-up incivility are in more vulnerable positions in relation to their supervisor targets, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 1:** Bottom-up forms of incivility will be classified as more covert than top-down or lateral forms of incivility.
Also, because bottom-up incivilities share characteristics with top-down forms of incivility (i.e., both include ambiguous, low intensity, and deviant behaviors), it is likely that the effects (psychological and physical) found in subordinates who are targets of supervisor incivility (top-down) are also found in supervisors who are targets of subordinate (bottom-up) incivility. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 2**: Bottom-up incivility will have a direct negative impact on superiors’ psychological states (e.g., the more gossip directed towards supervisors, the more anxiety or depression experienced by supervisors).

**Hypothesis 3**: Psychological distress (i.e., depression and anxiety), will mediate the relationship between bottom-up incivility and physical problems (e.g., the more gossip generated from one’s subordinate, the more anxiety one will feel, and the more frequently migraines will occur).
Additionally, because bottom-up incivility may create more stress and less organizational support, it is likely that superiors who are exposed to bottom-up incivilities will have lower levels of job satisfaction. It is not clear, however, if there is a direct link between job satisfaction and incivility or if the effects of incivility on job satisfaction are mediated by psychological distress. Some research has found that job satisfaction is directly affected by incivility (Lim et al., 2008); however, other researchers have found that psychological distress is negatively correlated to job satisfaction, demonstrating the fact that these constructs may influence one another (e.g., Jain, Lall, McLaughlin, & Johnson, 1996). Moreover, other organizational research has found a direct path between psychological burnout and job satisfaction. Namely, that psychological burnout appears to have a causal relationship to job satisfaction—but not vice versa (Wolpin, Burke, & Greenglass, 1991). Thus, some contradictions exist within organizational literature, so research is needed to clarify whether job satisfaction is directly affected by incivility or if psychological aspects mediate this relationship.

Overall, because incivility literature (e.g., Cortina, 2008) states that psychological distress can lead to lower levels of job satisfaction, and that incivility can lead to higher levels of psychological distress, this leads to the conclusion that, like physical effects, job satisfaction within an uncivil environment could first be affected through experiencing the negative psychological effects of incivility. Consequently, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 4**: Higher levels of perceived incivilities will predict lower levels of job satisfaction.
**Hypothesis 5:** The relationship between incivility and job satisfaction will be partially mediated by psychological stress.

**Method**

**Participants**

Data were collected from a total of 179 participants employed by a mental health organization based out of northern Kentucky that offers inpatient and outpatient services for those with mental health issues, developmental disabilities, and alcohol and drug problems. This organization employs just fewer than 1,000 employees in over 14 locations in Kentucky as well as locations in New Mexico, Nevada, North Carolina, and Texas.

The participants ranged in age from 20 to 65, with a mean age of 40.53. Of the 179 participants, the majority were female (86.6%), employed full time (91.1%), had worked there 3 years or less (51.9%), and possessed a bachelor’s degree or higher (57%).

The age of participants in the bottom-up sample ($N = 19$) ranged from 21 to 62, with a mean age of 36.7. Of the 19 participants, the majority were female (78.9%), employed full time (94.7%), and had worked at the organization for 3 years or less (52.7%); 47.4% possessed a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Due to small sample sizes, however, a subset of individuals who had reported being a target of any form of incivility (i.e., peer-to-peer, top-down or bottom-up; $N = 89$) was also utilized to address the hypotheses. The age of these participants ranged from 21 to 65, with a mean age of 39.57. Of the 89 participants, the majority were female (86.5%), employed full time (91%), and possessed a bachelor’s degree or higher (56.2%); 50% worked at the organization for 3.5 years or less.
Procedures

Data were gathered online via SurveyMonkey and through anonymous paper and pencil surveys. All employees were invited to participate through email, which informed them of the survey’s importance in helping the company assess employee satisfaction, and, overall, to gain valuable input from employees as to why uncivil behaviors were being perpetrated within the organization. Employees were provided with a link to the online survey through an email invitation or were provided with pre-addressed survey packets and anonymous drop-off centers located at several locations. Data were collected from all locations. Complete anonymity was guaranteed.

Currently, there is no scale to classify incivilities as covert. Thus, the covert or overt nature of the incivilities was assessed by an outside focus group comprised of graduate students in the psychology program ($N = 8$). Before the focus group received the incivilities they were to rate, all group members received a brief, 15-minute training session regarding the characteristics of both overt and covert aggression, which was modified to fit the purposes of incivility research. Thus, new definitions of overt and covert incivility were created for the purposes of this research. The main training criteria used to educate the focus group and to develop the definitions of overt and covert incivility were obtained from research dealing with the Overt-Covert Aggression Scale (OCAS) developed by Kaukiainen et al. (2001) and research dealing with Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (Gregory et al., 2009; Penner et al., 1997; Van Scotter, 2000). In adapting overt and covert aggression to fit incivility, the definitions and characteristics of both overt and covert aggression were simply applied within the context of incivility (i.e.,
the word aggression was replaced with incivility within the definitions and descriptions of overt and covert aggression, thereby creating categories of overt and covert incivility).

By adaptation of the covert and rational appearing aggression classifications found in Kaukiainen et al. (2001) and through the description of negatively framed OCBs (i.e., framed as the absence of the behavior), examples of incivility were classified as covert if they resembled the following characteristics of covert or rational-appearing aggression or the removal of OCBs: The perpetrator makes an attempt to hide their deviances (incivilities), harms superior via his or her significant affairs and matters, or reduces performed duties to hamper work. For example, an employee could harm a superior by lowering his or her extra role behaviors (e.g., not staying late to work on a project) or effort, which would indirectly affect a supervisor’s task performance. Overall, the logic behind labeling behaviors as covert is that victims do not readily observe the perpetrators’ behaviors.

By adaptation of the direct overt classifications found in Kaukiainen et al. (2001), examples of incivility were classified as overt if the perpetrator is identifiable and the action includes face-to-face interactions where the behavior is more easily detected. Thus, although the instigators’ intent to harm is still ambiguous, their behaviors are more easily detected. For example, an instigator may make an ambiguous remark that could be seen as either a tease or an affront, but, regardless, the behavior is still readily observable and a face-to-face interaction.

All definitions and characteristics of overt and covert incivility created from the purposes of this research were provided to group members in both written and verbal forms. After the training, the focus group was instructed to individually rate the degree of
covertness or overtness of the reported incivilities using a 6-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from extremely covert (1) to extremely overt (6). For each example of incivility, ratings were averaged across all eight raters to formulate an average covertness score.

**Measures**

**Workplace incivility.** Incivility was measured using the Uncivil Workplace Behavior Questionnaire (UWBQ). The UWBQ consists of 20 items which have been shown to be internally consistent, $\alpha = .92$ (Martin & Hine, 2005). The UWBQ was supplemented with 17 items designed to specifically measure bottom-up incivility. The additional items were taken from a study by Geddes and Baron (1997) that identified common behaviors enacted by subordinates when retaliating against their supervisors, the OCAS (Kaukiainen et al., 2001), and the Organizational Citizenship Behavior Scale (OCBS; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). The OCAS consists of 21 items that assess aggression in two ways: the extent to which one has (1) observed aggression in their workplace and (2) been a direct target of workplace aggression. The internal consistency reliabilities of the OCAS ranged from .86 to .90 for observed aggression and from .76 to .89 for self-experienced aggression (Kaukiainen et al., 2001). The OCBS contains 20 items that measure five categories of OCBs (civic virtue, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and altruism) and has internal consistencies ranging from .70 for civic virtue to .85 for altruism. All OCBs were negatively worded to reflect the withdrawal of the behavior (Moorman, 1991).

With the added questions, as with all the questions on the standard UWBQ, participants were asked to indicate the status of the target of the listed incivility.
(Superior, Subordinate, Peer or Me), the status of the instigator (Superior, Subordinate, Peer or Me), and if they consider that particular behavior to be uncivil. Given this answer format, distinctions could be made with respect to whether the respondent was a witness, perpetrator, or target, and if the witness or the people directly involved (i.e., instigator or target) considered the behavior to be uncivil. Specifically, because respondents selected Superior, Subordinate, Peer or Me to identify both the target’s status and the instigator’s status, based on their combination of response options, the direction of incivility described could be deduced. Also, based on their answer combinations, it was possible to determine if the respondent was a victim, perpetrator, or witness to the incivility (e.g., if an instigator is identified as superior and target identified as me, then it can be deduced that the behavior was top-down incivility with the respondent as a victim, or if subordinate is listed as instigator and the target as superior, then it is demonstrated that the behavior was bottom-up incivility and that it was only witnessed).

Psychological outcomes. The current study also looked at both the psychological and physical outcomes of supervisor directed incivility. Psychological outcomes (i.e., anxiety, depression, etc.) were assessed with an abbreviated version of the Mental Health Inventory (MHI). This abbreviated, 5-item inventory asked participants to describe to what extent in the past four weeks, on a 1 (All of the Time) to 6 (None of the Time) scale, they have “been very nervous,” “have felt downhearted and blue” and so on. Scores on this scale range from 5 to 30, with higher scores indicting better mental health. This psychometrically sound scale has appeared in numerous studies relating to incivility, and has a reported alpha of .82 for the abbreviated version, and an alpha of .93 for the full, 18
item version (Lim et al., 2008; National Multiple Sclerosis Society, 2007). In the current study, the abbreviated version of the MHI was found to have an alpha of .60 for the bottom-up sample and an alpha of .31 for the sample consisting of targets of all forms of incivility. However, low alphas are likely due to small sample sizes.

**Physical outcomes.** Physical outcomes were assessed using the Physical Symptoms Inventory (PSI). The PSI asks respondents to indicate, within the last 30 days, whether they have experienced certain physical symptoms, and which of these symptoms were serious enough to require medical aid. Thus, the scale ranges from 1 to 3 with 1 indicating they did not experience the symptom, *(No, I Did Not)*, 2 indicating they did experience the symptom, but sought no medical attention *(Yes, But I Did Not See Doctor)*, and 3 indicating they suffered from the symptom and sought medical attention *(Yes, I Did and I Saw Doctor)*. The rational behind the scale choice is that physical symptoms not requiring medical attention are not actual physical ailments, but a projection of psychological distress (Spector & Jex, 1998). Overall scores on this measure range from 0-18, with higher score indicating worse physical health; however, for the purposes of this research, the scale was reverse coded, creating a metric wherein higher scores mean better physical health. In the study of incivility, reputable researchers have used this scale; however, estimates of internal reliability are not provided due to the fact the items are indicators of distinct constructs, and thus, internal consistency for the scale would not be meaningful. The PSI *Saw Doctor* subscale, however, shows strong convergent validity with self-reported doctor visits *(r = .54)* and moderate convergent validity with self-reported work absences *(r = .31)*, which are assumed to be caused by physical illnesses (Spector & Jex, 1998).
**Job satisfaction.** Job satisfaction was measured using an abbreviated version of the The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), developed by Weiss, Dawis, England, and Lofquist (1967). This measure exists in both a long (100 item) and short (20 item) form. Due to concerns related to the length of the questionnaire, the short form was used for this study. Both versions of the forms cover two dimensions of job satisfaction: (1) intrinsic job satisfaction and (2) extrinsic job satisfaction, but the dimensions can be aggregated to form a score of overall job satisfaction. Responses are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is *(Very Dissatisfied)* and 5 is *(Very Satisfied)*. Scores on this measure range from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher levels of satisfaction. Researcher’s agree that this is a sound measure of overall job satisfaction with strong reliability (*r* = .89) and internally consistency, *α* = .90 (Weiss et al., 1967). In the current study, the MSQ was also found to be internally consistent in both the bottom-up sample and the sample consisting of targets of all forms of incivility, *α* = .93.

**Analyses**

The relationship between the frequency of being a target of bottom-up incivility (independent variable) and participants’ composite scores on measures of mental health (MHI), physical health (PSI), and job satisfaction (MSQ) was explored using standard linear regression and hierarchical multiple regression. To specifically address the original hypotheses, a subset of 19 participants (i.e., participants who reported they were targets of bottom-up incivility) was selected from the total sample.

However, due to small sample sizes, the current research was expanded to address the effects of both bottom-up incivility and other forms of incivility (i.e., peer-to-peer and superior-to-subordinate/top-down) on an employee’s/target’s mental health, physical
health, and job satisfaction. Thus, to compensate for small sample sizes in the bottom-up target sample, research was extended to include targets of all forms of incivility (i.e., targets of peer-to-peer, superior-to-subordinate, and bottom-up incivility). As a result, hypotheses were analyzed using the overall sample including targets of all forms of incivility \((N = 89)\) and the original bottom-up target/supervisor sample \((N = 19)\).

Additionally, the mediated effects of incivility on job satisfaction and physical health were assessed through Baron and Kenny’s (1986) four-step method for assessing mediation using hierarchical multiple regression.

**Results**

**Exposure to Various Types of Incivility**

Of the sample consisting of all surveyed employees \((N = 179)\), 49.7% reported being a victim of some type of incivility \((N = 89)\). The reported victimizations ranged from 1 to 22, \(M = 4\) \((SD = 3.9)\). Of those 89 employees, 27% reported being a victim of at least one type of incivility while employed at the organization \((N = 24)\); 15.7% reported being a target of at least two types of incivility while employed at the organization \((N = 14)\); 12.4% reported being a victim of at least three types of incivility while employed at the organization \((N = 11)\), and 16.9% reported being a victim of at least four types of incivility while employed at the organization \((N = 15)\). The remaining 25 employees admitted to being victims of five or more types of incivility while employed at the organization.

In the sample consisting of victims of bottom-up incivility \((N = 19)\), the number of reported victimizations of incivility also ranged from 1 to 22, \(M = 6\) \((SD = 5.4)\). Of those 19 employees, 15.8% reported being a victim of at least one type of bottom-up
incivility while employed at the organization \( (N = 3) \); 5.3\% of employees admitted to being a victim of two types of bottom-up incivility while employed at the organization \( (N = 1) \), 15.8\% also admitted to being a victim of at least three types of bottom-up incivility while employed at the organization \( (N = 3) \), and 26.3\% admitted to being a victim of at least four types of bottom-up incivility while employed at the organization \( (N = 5) \). The remaining seven employees admitted to being victims of four or more types of bottom-up incivility while employed at the organization.

**Covertness of the Reported Incivilities**

**Hypotheses 1:** Bottom-up forms of incivility will be classified as more covert than top-down or lateral forms of incivility. To address Hypothesis 1, the reported instances of incivilities were divided into three groups based upon their instigator/target characteristics. Namely, incivilities were grouped according to whether they were reported as being perpetrated in a bottom-up manner, a top-down manner, or a peer-to-peer manner.

Incivilities were considered “bottom-up” if they were reported as being perpetrated in any of the following forms: “subordinate-to-superior,” “me-to-superior,” “subordinate-to-me,” or “peer-to-superior.” Incivilities were considered “peer-to-peer” if they were reported as being perpetrated in any of the following forms: “superior-to-superior,” “subordinate-to-subordinate,” “peer-to-peer,” “me-to-peer,” or “peer-to-me.” Incivilities were considered “top-down” if they were reported as being perpetrated in any of the following forms: “superior-to-subordinate,” “me-to-subordinate,” “superior-to-me,” “superior-to-peer.” Thus, incivilities included in the three groups represented various modes of bottom-up, top-down, and peer-to-peer incivility: being a perpetrator of
that specific type of incivility, being a victim of that specific type of incivility, or witnessing that specific type of incivility. For a list of all incivilities included in the survey, their individual covertness ratings, frequency ratings, and whether they were reported as being perpetrated in a bottom-up manner, top-down manner, peer-to-peer manner, or all three, see Table 1.

Overall, results indicated that 32 of the 37 examples of incivility were reported as occurring in bottom-up, top-down, and peer-to-peer forms. Specifically, the survey results indicated that all 37 examples of incivility were reported as occurring in a peer-to-peer manner across various modes (i.e., as either a behavior respondents had perpetrated first hand towards their peers, as a behavior respondents had been a victim of at the hands of their peers, or as a behavior respondents had witnessed between other peers).

However, results indicated that two examples of incivility were not reported as types of incivility that occur in a bottom-up manner within the organization: “Publicly discussed confidential personal information” and “Withheld resources needed for others to perform job.” Further, results indicated that three other examples of incivility were not reported as types of incivility that occur in a top-down manner within the organization: “Took object from desk without returning it,” “Took objects from or out of desk without permission,” and “Purposely being less productive to hurt others [sic] performance.” Thus, with the exception of five examples, all other examples of incivility were reported as occurring in bottom-up, top-down, and peer-to-peer forms.

Based on a six-point Likert scale where higher scores correspond to higher levels of overtness, the mean level of covertness of all incivilities reported as occurring in a bottom-up manner \((N = 35)\) was 3.59 \((SD = 1.04)\), the mean level of covertness of all
incivilities reported as occurring in a peer-to-peer manner ($N = 37$) was 3.59 ($SD = 1.02$), and the mean level of covertness all incivilities reported as occurring in a top-down manner ($N = 34$) was 3.69 ($SD = 1.01$). Independent samples t-tests showed that the mean level of covertness of bottom-up forms of incivility did not differ in any significant way from the mean level of covertness of either top-down forms of incivility ($t(67) = .41, p > .05$) or peer-to-peer forms of incivility ($t(70) = 0, p > .05$). However, to further address Hypothesis 1, an additional analysis, which factored in the frequency of occurrence of each of the 37 examples of incivility, was employed. As discussed above, in formulating the average calculation of the overall covertness of a particular form of incivility (i.e., bottom-up, top-down, or peer-to-peer), the first analysis included all examples of incivility that were reported as occurring at least once.

The second analysis, however, took into consideration the frequency with which each example of incivility was reported in bottom-up, top-down, and peer-to-peer forms. The purpose behind this method of analysis was that with the first analysis, incivilities, which occurred only once were given the same weight as incivilities that occurred 20 times. Thus, the first analysis did not accurately capture the extent to which each example of incivility occurred within the three forms. As a result, in the second analysis, the frequency of occurrences of a particular example of incivility directly informed the number of times a particular incivility’s covertness rating was included in the average calculation for the overall covertness ratings of top-down, bottom-up, and peer-to-peer forms of incivility. For example, if “Publicly discussed confidential personal information” was reported as occurring in a top-down manner 13 times across various modes of expression, (i.e., reported as a behavior someone was a victim of, perpetrator
of, or witness to), and that particular incivility had a covertness rating of 4.13, then that incivility’s individual covertness rating (i.e., \( M = 4.13 \)) was factored into the calculation of the average covertness level of top-down forms of incivility 13 times. The frequencies with which each type of incivility occurred across bottom-up, top-down, and peer-to-peer forms is found in Table 1.

Using this method of analysis, the mean covertness rating of bottom-up forms of incivility was 3.88 (\( SD = 1.21 \)), the mean covertness rating of peer-to-peer forms of incivility was 3.54 (\( SD = 1.10 \)), and the mean covertness rating of top-down forms of incivility was 4.47 (\( SD = 3.07 \)). Independent samples \( t \)-tests showed the mean level of covertness of bottom-up forms of incivility to differ significantly from the mean level of covertness of both top-down forms of incivility (\( t(1078) = 3.91, p < .05 \)) and peer-to-peer forms of incivility (\( t(510) = 2.62, p < .05 \)), with top-down being more overt than both bottom-up and peer-to-peer forms; however, incivilities which were reported as being perpetrated in a bottom-up manner were found to be more overt than peer-to-peer forms. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

Effects of Incivility on Mental Health, Physical Health, and Job Satisfaction

**Hypothesis 2: Bottom-up incivility will have a direct negative impact on superiors’ psychological state.**

**Bottom-up only sample.** Participants’ mean scores and bivariate correlations between incivility (i.e., frequency of instances), mental health, physical health, and job satisfaction are depicted in Table 2.
In the bottom-up sample, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Though a negative relationship was found between exposure to forms of bottom-up incivility and supervisors’ levels of mental health, the relationship was nonsignificant, \( p = .316 \).

Table 2

*Summary of Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Scores on the MHI, MSQ, PSI, and UWBQ*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. MHI</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>22.11</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. MSQ</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.49*</td>
<td>75.84</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PSI</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>12.59</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. UWBQ</td>
<td>-0.31*</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>21.69</td>
<td>73.55</td>
<td>11.97</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>12.30</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Intercorrelations for the sample consisting of targets of all forms of incivility (\( N = 89 \)) are listed below the diagonal, and intercorrelations for the sample consisting only of targets of bottom-up incivility (\( N = 19 \)) are listed above the diagonal. For all scales, except UWBQ, higher scores mean better health or higher satisfaction. MHI = Mental Health Inventory; MSQ = Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire; PSI = Physical Symptoms Inventory; UWBQ = Uncivil Workplace Behavior Questionnaire. *\( p < .05 \)

*Any form of incivility.* Bivariate correlations showed positive relationships between measures of mental health (MHI) and physical health (PSI), \( p = .002 \), and between measures of physical health and job satisfaction (MSQ), \( p = .032 \). Also, reported
instances of being a target of incivility showed a negative relationship to measures of mental health (MHI), \( p = .003 \).

In the sample consisting of employees who reported being victims of any form of incivility (i.e., bottom-up, top-down, or peer-to-peer) results showed support for Hypothesis 2. Thus, incivility was a significant predictor of one’s psychological state \((F(1, 86) = 9.22, \ p = .003)\) with \( R^2 = .097 \). Regression of measures of mental health onto measures of incivility resulted in the following regression equation, \( Y' = 22.725 + .238 \) (x), implying that with every experienced instance of being a target of some form of incivility, one’s self-reported level of mental health decreased by .238 units. \( R^2 \) suggests that around than 9% of the variance in an employee’s mental health can be explained by instances of incivility. \( R, \Delta R^2, \text{Adjusted } R^2, \text{ and 95% confidence intervals for the effects of all forms of incivility on targets’ levels of mental health are listed in Table 3.} \)

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependant Measures</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>( \Delta R^2 )</th>
<th>Adjusted ( R^2 )</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSQ</td>
<td>.488*</td>
<td>.238*</td>
<td>.193</td>
<td>[.238, 3.62]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHI</td>
<td>.311*</td>
<td>.097*</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>[-.393, -.082]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. MSQ = Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire; MHI = Metal Health Inventory. * \( p < .05 \)
Hypothesis 3: Psychological distress (i.e., depression and anxiety), will mediate the relationship between incivility and physical problems.

Bottom-up sample. No support was found for Hypothesis 3 in the sample consisting of only targets of bottom-up incivility. However, though the correlations between psychological health, physical health, and incivility were nonsignificant, all correlations were in the hypothesized direction (see Table 2).

Any form of incivility. In the sample consisting of targets of all forms of incivility, support was found for the mediated relationship of incivility and physical health using Baron and Kenny’s (1986) four-step model to test mediation (see Figure 2). In order to test this hypothesis, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were run. Regression statistics for each step can be found in Table 4. The first test involved the regression of the mediator (mental health) onto the IV (incivility). This test revealed a significant relationship between instances of incivility and one’s mental health ($F(1,86) = 9.22, p = .003$). Also, a significant relationship between the mediator and the DV (physical health) was found ($F(1,76) = 10.21, p = .002$), with 95% confidence intervals ranging from .145 to .625. Step three involved controlling for the initial IV (incivility), to test the effects of the mediator on the DV in the absence of the IV. Thus, measures of physical health were regressed onto measures of mental health (mediator) while controlling for incivility. Results showed that while controlling for the effects of the IV (incivility) on the DV (physical health), the mediator variable still had an effect on physical health, $p = .002$. To further support the mediated relationship, the DV was regressed on the IV while controlling for the mediator; the effects of the initial IV (incivility) on the DV (Physical health) disappeared, $p = .659$. 
In addition, to test the significance of the indirect effects of the IV on the DV, or to test the extent to which the mediator (mental health) carries the influence of the independent variable (incivility) to a given dependent variable (physical health), the Sobel test was used. The results of the Sobel test indicated that for the overall target sample, the indirect effect of the IV on the DV via the mediator is significantly different from zero, $p = .023$. Thus, there is a significant mediated relationship between incivility (IV) and physical health (DV), with mental health serving as the mediator.
Table 4

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Testing the Mediated Relationship Between Incivility, Mental Health, and Physical Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>.344*</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.385*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>-.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>.348*</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.116*</td>
<td>.405*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>.348*</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\beta$ in table corresponds to the variable not controlled for.

* Incivility was controlled for in Step 3 and mental health was controlled in Step 4.

* $p < .05.$

Hypothesis 4: Higher levels of perceived incivilities will predict lower levels of job satisfaction.

Bottom-up sample. In the sample consisting of supervisors who reported being targets of subordinate incivility, higher levels of incivility predicted lower levels of job satisfaction, $p = .034$ (see Table 2). Thus, instances of bottom-up incivility were a significant predictor of job satisfaction ($F(1, 17) = 5.32$, $p = .034$) with $R^2 = .238$.

Regression of measures of job satisfaction onto measures of the frequency of incivility resulted in the following regression equation, $Y' = 82.331 + -1.081(x)$, implying that with every experienced instance of being a target of subordinate incivility, supervisors’ levels
of jobs satisfaction decrease by 1.081 points. Additionally, $R^2$ suggests that bottom-up incivility accounts for more than 20% of the variance in supervisors’ reported levels of job satisfaction. $R$, $\Delta R^2$, Adjusted $R^2$, and 95% confidence intervals for the relationship between bottom-up incivility and supervisor’s levels of job satisfaction are listed in Table 3.

**Any form of incivility.** No support was found for Hypothesis 4 in the sample consisting of targets of all forms of incivility. However, though the correlations between incivility and job satisfaction were nonsignificant ($p = .202$), they were in the hypothesized direction (see Table 2).

**Hypothesis 5: The relationship between incivility and job satisfaction will be partially mediated by psychological stress.**

**Bottom-up sample.** No evidence of psychological distress mediating the relationship between incivility and job satisfaction was found, $p = .07$. Though levels of job satisfaction and incivility were significantly, negatively correlated, measures of psychological health were not significantly correlated with incivility ($p = .316$) or job satisfaction ($p = .791$). Each step of the regression analyses is listed in Table 5.
Table 5

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Testing the Mediated Relationship Between Incivility, Mental Health, and Job Satisfaction in Targets of Bottom-up Incivility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>-.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>.488*</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>.238*</td>
<td>-1.08*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>-.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td>.274*</td>
<td>.270*</td>
<td>-1.186*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $\beta$ in table corresponds to the variable not controlled for.

*a* Incivility was controlled for in Step 3 and mental health was controlled in Step 4.

*p < .05*

**Any form of incivility.** No evidence of psychological distress mediating the relationship between incivility and job satisfaction was found in this sample as well, $p = .455$. Levels of job satisfaction and incivility did not significantly correlate (see Table 2). Measures of mental health and job satisfaction were also not significantly correlated, $p = .676$. Moreover, the relationship between psychological health and job satisfaction was one of the weakest, nonsignificant relationships found in the overall target sample. Each step of the regression analyses is listed in Table 6.
Table 6

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Testing the Mediated Relationship Between Incivility, Mental Health, and Job Satisfaction in Targets of Any Form of Incivility*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>-.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>-.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\beta$ in table corresponds to the variable not controlled for.*

*Incivility was controlled for in Step 3 and mental health was controlled in Step 4.*

*$p < .05$.*

**Discussion**

**Effects of Incivility**

Results of this study demonstrate that incivility is quite rampant in organizations. Around half of the employees surveyed admitted to being a victim of some type of incivility. These results are not surprising as they mimic past research (Cortina et al., 2001). The fact that being a victim of incivility has a negative effect on one’s psychological functioning has also been found in many previous studies (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001; Lim et al., 2008). Thus, the current research confirms the already well-established fact that being a target of any form of incivility seems to have a negative
impact on one’s psychological health. Additionally, though no significant relationship between mental health and incivility was found in the bottom-up sample, because all correlations were in the hypothesized direction (i.e., negative), low levels of power, resulting from small sample sizes, are likely to blame.

The most interesting finding, however, concerned the bottom-up sample. Namely, the current research revealed a negative relationship between being a target of bottom-up forms of incivility and supervisors’ levels of job satisfaction. Interestingly, being a target of subordinate incivility seems to have a negative effect on supervisors’ levels of job satisfaction—but this effect was not found in the sample consisting of targets of all forms of incivility (i.e., those who were targets of not only subordinate incivility, but peer and superior incivility as well). Thus, perhaps being a victim of subordinate incivility alters one’s work environment more substantially than being the victim of peer or superior incivility. An examination of supervisor’s individual responses to questions on the job satisfaction measures (i.e., MSQ), revealed that the lowest rated item, or the element of the job that victims of bottom-up incivility were the least satisfied with, was “The way company policies are put into place” ($M = 3.05, SD = 1.27$). Given this evidence, it may simply be that companies who do not take definitive measures to control lower-level employees’ uncivil actions towards their superiors—whether those actions are ambiguous or not—are adversely affecting supervisors’ view of company policy and supervisors’ satisfaction with the job itself. Overall, it seems that there is some element within subordinate deviance, which affects supervisors more strongly than targets of other forms of incivility, though more research is needed to identify the exact impetus behind this finding and its implications.
Because the construct of job satisfaction is a complicated one, the nonsignificant results for the mediated relationship between incivility and job satisfaction (i.e., Hypothesis 5) could be due to the fact that job satisfaction is affected by a number of variables such as job characteristics (e.g., task variety), individual differences (e.g., growth need strength), and environmental variables (e.g., job market), which may serve as a mediator of job satisfaction in place of psychological health.

The effect of incivility on one’s physical health was found to be mediated by one’s psychological health in the sample consisting of targets of all forms of incivility, meaning that in the absence of mental distress, incivility will not have an impact on one’s physical health; this is also reflective of past research (Lim et al., 2008). This effect, however, was not found in the smaller, bottom-up sample. Again, due to the fact that the correlations were in the hypothesized direction, small sample sizes are likely to blame for the nonsignificant results.

The attempt to establish whether bottom-up incivilities are more covert than incivilities reported as being perpetrated in a peer-to-peer manner or top-down manner was partially successful. The results showed that bottom-up forms of incivility were rated equally as covert as peer-to-peer forms of incivility, and that top-down forms of incivility were rated as slightly more overt than bottom-up forms. Though additional analyses, which factored in the frequency of each individual incivility’s occurrence, actually showed that bottom-up forms of incivility were, statistically, more overt than peer-to-peer forms; this difference, however, was trivial and likely holds no practical significance (i.e., \( M = 3.88 \) for bottom-up v. \( M = 3.54 \) for peer-to-peer).
An explanation for the similarity of covertness between peer-to-peer and bottom-up forms of incivility may be due to the fact that co-workers may try to “save-face” by being less direct and more covert/ambiguous when perpetrating incivilities towards other co-workers or peers—just as they would with superiors. In fact, a lot of the incivilities reported as being perpetrated in a peer-to-peer manner, where rated the most covert (i.e., “Took object from desk without returning it” \([M = 2.75]\), “Was unreasonably slow in seeing to matters on which someone else depended on you/Them for, without good reason” \([M = 3.00]\), “Purposely stopped going the extra-mile at work” \([M = 2.50]\)). Thus, it may be that employees are as concerned about their relationships with peers as they are about their relationships with supervisors. As such, when employees choose to perpetrate peer-to-peer incivility, they do so in a manner that will be covert and less direct, thereby increasing the chances that they can easily deny the malice intent of the actions, avoid punishment, and maintain, at least on a superficial level, a friendly relationship with their victims/peers. Future research should look into this topic to further to divulge the motives behind such covert, peer-to-peer behaviors.

Additionally, all examples of incivility were reported as being perpetrated in a peer-to-peer manner, but not all examples where reported as being perpetrated in a bottom-up or top-down manner. A possible explanation for these findings are as follows: There are many more opportunities to perpetrate peer-to-peer incivility than there are to perpetrate top-down or bottom-up because employees have significantly more opportunities to interact with co-workers and peers than they do their superiors and subordinates, so this could explain why all examples were described as being perpetrated in a peer-to-peer manner in some mode. Thus, it simply boils down to accessibility, and
since there are more peer relationships than supervisory relationships within the target organization, there are simply more opportunities for peer-to-peer transgressions of incivility than top-down or bottom-up forms.

Though the difference in covertness ratings between top-down and bottom-up forms of incivility was statistically significant, the difference was not very large: .59. Thus, to further understand the differences between bottom-up and top-down incivility’s covertness levels, the types of incivilities, which were not reported as occurring in either a top-down of bottom-up manner, were examined. The three types of incivilities, which were not reported as a top-down form of incivility (i.e., “Took object from desk without returning it,” [M = 2.75] “Took objects from or out of desk without permission,” [M = 2.50], and “Purposely being less productive to hurt others [sic] performance” [M = 2.25]), were, as one would expect, located on the more covert end of the scale. Additionally, the two types of incivilities, which were not reported as a bottom-up form of incivility, (i.e., “Publicly discussed confidential personal information” [M = 4.13], and “Withheld resources needed for others to perform job” [M = 3.25]), were located the more overt end of the scale. Thus, though overall the average covertness rating between bottom-up and top-down forms of incivility did not vastly differ, when looked at on an item-by-item basis, one can see that behaviors employees do not perpetrate in a bottom-up manner are rated as more overt, and that behaviors employee do not perpetrate in a top-down manner are rated as more covert, which helps explain where the differences in the covertness levels between incivilities perpetrated in a bottom-up verses top-down manner are derived.
Lastly, another explanation for the similarity in covertness between the various forms of incivility is that the focus group used to rate the covertness of items had a tendency to use the middle of the scale instead of the extremes. This central tendency bias may have contributed to the small differences in means, preventing the covert/overt ratings to vary substantially from the median scale rating, thereby minimizing the chance that the three types of incivility could vary in their individual covertness ratings.

**Limitations**

One major limitation of the study was that all the measures were self-report. As with all self-report measures, a common problem is response bias. Also, the sample size was very small, especially in the bottom-up sample, and, thus, small sample sizes or response biases could potentially explain the nonsignificant results in both samples. To improve honesty, future studies might assess the effects of bottom-up incivility using multiple perspectives (e.g., using subordinate, self-report measures, and comparing those self-report measures to the respondent’s peers’ ratings). Similarly, because the data collected was self-report, there may be issues with common method variance, which could possibly inflate the relationships among the variables. Thus, as with the response bias issue, future research may consider using multiple sources of data (Cortina, 2008).

A second limitation to this study is that we did not control for individual differences in cognitive affect. Past research has shown that the effects of incivility are unaffected by individual levels of stress within targets (Lim et al., 2008); however, no such research has assessed the psychological and physical effects of incivility on supervisors while controlling for supervisor stress and negative affectivity. Thus, future research could investigate this issue.
Thirdly, because the data is anonymous, the subordinate-superior dyads could not be identified, which is another limitation. As such, no hypotheses can be made regarding specific superior-subordinate relationships. Future research could attempt to identify the particular superior-subordinate dyads and the affects bottom-up incivility may have on supervisor performance.

Finally, another limitation lies in the fact that research suggests that women respond more covertly to acts of incivility (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Thus, in interpreting the results, one must consider the fact that the “covertness” of the self-reported bottom-up behaviors may be due to varying numbers of men and women who perpetrate these bottom-up incivilities, reflecting differences in gender, not differences in power. Said another way, the results may be due not to power differences affecting the covertness of incivilities, but sex differences because, presumably, in many organizations, more women are in subordinate roles than men and women are more likely to use covert expressions of deviance (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

Conclusions and Future Research

Like past research, the current study has shown that exposure to incivility, regardless of the source, can directly affect one’s mental health and indirectly affect one’s physical health. However, with this research, it was also discovered that bottom-up forms of incivility could have a direct, negative impact on supervisors’ levels of job satisfaction.

Thus, though not all of the hypotheses were supported, overall, this study does expand current incivility research through establishing the fact that not only do supervisors notice the small, ambiguous behaviors initiated by their subordinates, but that
when they are victims of subordinate incivility, it can have a negative impact on their perceptions of their work environment (i.e., job satisfaction). Additionally, this study further supports the well-established finding that when any employee, superior or subordinate, falls victim to incivility, it can lead to negative psychological effects, which can then lead to negative physical effects. Due to small sample sizes, however, more research is needed to examine the effects of bottom-up forms of incivility on supervisors. Because information was only collected from one organization, future research should also collect additional data to ensure that these findings replicate within other organizations with various organizational climates.

Though rudimentary in its current form, this study also established the first attempt to define the average covertness level of various forms of incivility. This attempt identified statistically significant differences between the mean level of covertness of top-down, peer-to-peer, and bottom-up forms of incivility, with top-down being slightly more overt than bottom-up and peer-to-peer forms, and bottom-up and peer-to-peer forms varying only minimally.

There are several areas in which future research is needed: Future research could look at how supervisors’ individual leadership styles and self-confidence (i.e., susceptibility to negative information about self) affect the ways in which incivilities are noticed, responded to, and influential in cognitive/psychological functioning.

Future research should look at the sex of the target (i.e., supervisor), and the potential differences a target’s sex would create within the outcomes of bottom-up incivility. Research has shown that females are more prone to instigate bottom-up forms
of incivility than males. Thus, sex differences, with regards to the instigator of bottom-up incivilities, have been noted (Pearson et al., 2000).

Lastly, future research could look at sex’s effects on covert versus overt forms of incivility. In the past, research has focused more on sex difference in terms of covert and overt expressions of aggression (Kaukiainen et al., 2001). Accordingly, future research could look at sex differences in expressions of lateral incivility where the power difference is removed to see if there are still, in fact, difference between men and women in terms of overt vs. covert expressions of deviance.
References


Unpublished manuscript, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada.


# APPENDIX A

## Table 1

**Covertness and Frequency of Various Forms of Incivility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of Incivility</th>
<th>Covertness Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bottom-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gossiped behind someone's back</td>
<td>2.00 (1.41)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Failed to return important messages</td>
<td>3.00 (1.3)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Raised voice in an angry manner while speaking</td>
<td>5.60 ( .52)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Used an inappropriate tone when speaking</td>
<td>4.50 (1.04)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Spoke in an aggressive tone of voice</td>
<td>5.40 (.51)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Rolled eyes in a derogatory manner</td>
<td>5.00 (.93)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Took object from desk without returning it</td>
<td>2.75 (1.16)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Took objects from or out of desk without permission</td>
<td>2.50 (1.06)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Purposely interrupted a phone conversation</td>
<td>5.00 (.53)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Read communications addressed to others, such as emails or faxes</td>
<td>2.38 (1.19)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Knowingly failed to consult the appropriate person when making a decision</td>
<td>2.13 (.64)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Purposely gave unreasonably short notice when canceling or scheduling important events</td>
<td>3.12 (1.35)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Purposely failed to inform someone about a required meeting</td>
<td>3.25 (1.34)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. On purpose, was excessively slow in returning phone messages or e-mails</td>
<td>3.13 (1.46)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Failed to transmit information needed by others</td>
<td>2.63 (1.06)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Was unreasonably slow in seeing to matters on which someone else depended on you/them for, without good reason</td>
<td>3.00 (1.31)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Publicly discussed confidential personal information</td>
<td>4.13 (1.80)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Made rude remarks</td>
<td>4.63 (.92)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Talked about others behind their back</td>
<td>2.00 (1.41)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of Incivility</td>
<td>Covertness Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Ignored others when they were speaking</td>
<td>3.87 (1.13)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Left work area when someone entered</td>
<td>4.00 (1.31)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Spread unkind rumors</td>
<td>2.37 (1.19)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Gave someone the &quot;silent treatment&quot;</td>
<td>4.25 (1.28)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Did not stick up for others who were being unfairly criticized</td>
<td>3.63 (.92)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Reduced or increased ones' duties to hamper others' work</td>
<td>3.25 (1.16)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Refused to work weekends or overtime when asked</td>
<td>4.00 (1.31)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Engaged in intentional work slow-downs</td>
<td>3.25 (1.60)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Abused the rights of others</td>
<td>4.25 (1.30)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Created problems for coworkers</td>
<td>4.12 (.84)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Stopped helping others who have work-related problems</td>
<td>3.50 (1.07)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Withheld resources needed for others to perform job</td>
<td>3.25 (1.03)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Whistle-blew or told others about negative behaviors</td>
<td>4.63 (1.06)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Did not retract inappropriate comments made</td>
<td>3.75 (1.04)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Talked back in a negative Way</td>
<td>5.37 (.52)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Disobeyed direct instructions</td>
<td>4.50 (1.19)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Purposely being less productive to hurt others' performance</td>
<td>2.25 (1.28)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Purposely stopped going the &quot;extra mile&quot; at work</td>
<td>2.50 (.70)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Office of Research
301 Potter Hall
270-745-4652; Fax 270-745-4211
E-mail: Paul.Mooney@wku.edu

In future correspondence, please refer to HS11-123, December 14, 2010

Abby Meador
Lindsey Greco
c/o Dr. Paquin
Psychology
WKU

Abby Meador &
Lindsey Greco:

Your research project, *Bottom-up Incivility and Its Effects on Supervisors*, was reviewed by the HSRB and it has been determined that risks to subjects are: (1) minimized and reasonable; and that (2) research procedures are consistent with a sound research design and do not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk. Reviewers determined that: (1) benefits to subjects are considered along with the importance of the topic and that outcomes are reasonable; (2) selection of subjects is equitable; and (3) the purposes of the research and the research setting is amenable to subjects’ welfare and producing desired outcomes; that indications of coercion or prejudice are absent, and that participation is clearly voluntary.

1. In addition, the IRB found that you need to orient participants as follows: (1) signed informed consent is not required; (2) Provision is made for collecting, using and storing data in a manner that protects the safety and privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data. (3) Appropriate safeguards are included to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

   **This project is therefore approved at the Exempt from Full Board Review Level.**

2. Please note that the institution is not responsible for any actions regarding this protocol before approval. If you expand the project at a later date to use other instruments please re-apply. Copies of your request for human subjects review, your application, and this approval, are maintained in the Office of Sponsored
Programs at the above address. Please report any changes to this approved protocol to this office. A Continuing Review protocol will be sent to you in the future to determine the status of the project. Also, please use the stamped approval forms to assure participants of compliance with The Office of Human Research Protections regulations.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Mooney, M.S.T.M.
Compliance Coordinator
Office of Research
Western Kentucky University

cc:  HS file number Meador HS11-123