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The Importance of Normative Civility Expectations for the Employee Experience: A Time-Lagged Analysis

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The Importance of Normative Civility Expectations for the Employee Experience:

A Time-Lagged Analysis

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Abstract

Previous research regarding the influence of normative workplace civility expectations on psychological health outcomes has often been cross-sectional and analyzed at only an individual-level. Furthermore, there is little knowledge of how these normative expectations may act to reduce the impact of experienced incivility. This study extends the research by conducting a daily diary study that examines longitudinal psychological health outcomes of experienced incivility using a multi-level framework. The additional focus of the study involves identifying the separate influence of supervisor civility expectations vs. workgroup civility expectations, which we test as both direct-effect predictors of daily experienced incivility. We also test these normative expectations as cross-level moderators between daily experienced incivility, and the following day stress and exhaustion. The data for this study were collected fourteen times over a two-week period from 136 healthcare employees across 18 correctional facilities. Findings support the hypothesized normative influences on individual incivility experiences; however, only supervisor civility expectations buffer the relationship between experienced incivility and exhaustion. Results are discussed in terms of implications for future organizational interventions aimed at reducing uncivil behaviors and improving psychological health outcomes as a result of such experienced behaviors.
Workplace interpersonal mistreatment has grown to be a popular construct of interest for researchers and practitioners alike over the past decade. Particular research focus has revolved around the concept of workplace incivility, which acts as a mild form of negative behavior that occurs more frequently than more overt actions (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). Andersson and Pearson (1999) define incivility as a “low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect”. Despite the minor behavioral feature of incivility, the resulting outcomes can be grave. Such consequences involve effects on employee psychological well-being, intentions to quit, stress, and burnout (Caza & Cortina, 2007; Kern & Grandey, 2009; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Reio & Ghosh, 2009; Zhou, Yan, Che, & Meier, 2015). Counteracting incivility is a difficult task. Claiming to a human resources representative or more senior leader that your colleague, supervisor, or subordinate is being uncivil can possibly lead to retaliation among the workgroup members should there be any actions taken to reduce the uncivil behavior. An employee may also feel as though the claim will be completely ignored because it is deemed as unimportant due to the lack of the severity of the behavior. Instead of taking such a traditional and frankly ineffective approach, scientists posit that organizational incivility behaviors can be addressed on a day-by-day basis through building strong cohesive teams that set firm normative expectations for what is considered to be civil behavior, while actively discouraging any behaviors that may be considered to be uncivil (Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). Taking actions to strengthen a strong climate of civility works as a first line of defense to fend off potential developments of incivility (Walsh, Magley, Reeves, Davies-Schrils, Marmet, & Gallus, 2012).

Despite a growing interest in organizational civility behavior, the assessment of workplace norms regarding incivility have only recently come to pass (Griffin, 2010; Lim et al.,
Tolerance for workgroup incivility behavior comes from two main sources, the leader of the workgroup or the members themselves. We identify leadership tolerance of workgroup incivility as supervisor civility expectations (SCE), whereas the workgroup member tolerance of uncivil behavior is regarded as workgroup civility expectations (WCE). The understanding of how both normative variables influence actual experienced workplace incivility have yet to be analyzed past simple individual-level analyses (Laschinger & Read, 2016). Even further still, the understanding regarding how experiences of incivility influence stress and strain has yet to be fully realized. There is still no scientific support to confirm if daily experienced incivility can have a lingering influence on following day outcomes or if these outcomes can be mitigated due to the perception that the supervisor or workgroup will address these incivility behaviors to ensure that they do not occur in the future. Furthermore, longitudinal support for the causal order of stress and exhaustion has yet to be firmly supported due to frequent assessments using only cross-sectional data (Garrosa, Moreno-Jiménez, Rodríguez-Muñoz, & Rodríguez-Carvajal, 2011; Laschinger et al., 2016).

These lingering gaps in the research literature must be addressed to properly identify effective organizational intervention strategies aimed at improving workplace civility. Three major research questions emerge for us to answer within the current paper: Can previous findings concerning civility norms, experienced incivility, and the stress-strain relationship be replicated with a multi-level longitudinal approach? Do SCE and WCE similarly reduce daily experienced incivility? Finally, can these normative expectations also reduce employee stress and the resulting exhaustion once they have experienced workplace incivility? The present study aims to contribute to the existing research by applying multilevel theory and analysis to answer these questions. First, we provide further evidence for the argument that experienced incivility can
have a lasting effect on stress and exhaustion using a time-lagged study design. We also address the cross-level direct effects of WCE and SCE as workgroup-level constructs on daily experienced incivility. Finally, we identify if these workgroup normative variables moderate the relationship between experienced incivility and the following day stress and exhaustion. We hope to provide stronger foundations for current theories on civility from our findings with the intention of guiding organizational efforts towards more efficient applications that are designed to improve employee civility behavior.

*Incivility & the Stress-Strain Relationship*

Workplace incivility is the violation of norms for respect that are present within an organization (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000). Incivility differs from other related constructs within the organizational literature in that it contains subtler, less intense behavior. The subtlety of uncivil acts can often be difficult to identify from a third-person perspective making it challenging to conclude if a behavior is negative to the point of being unacceptable, let alone identify if there is truly any intention to harm from the accused (Pearson et al., 2000). Examples of this type of behavior include denigration of a fellow employee’s work, spreading false rumors about a colleague, socially isolating an individual within a workgroup, and making insulting comments.

Experiences of incivility often lead to negative influences on employee health outcomes (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Griffin, 2010). Lim et al. (2008) previously identified that experienced incivility leads to lower levels of employee job satisfaction and mental health. These negative influences can be amplified if the individual who is the victim of uncivil behavior identifies with their perpetrator (Montgomery, Kane, & Vance, 2004). Recent findings indicate that incivility unsurprisingly predicts both stress and burnout (Laschinger et al.,
The concept of a stressor inducing cognitive stress, which in turn causes strain is based on Transactional Stress Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). The theory dictates that stressors, in this instance an uncivil experience, leads to a cognitive appraisal of either challenge, hindrance, or threat. Should the perception be more negative and the individual not perceive themselves to have the resources and coping abilities to combat such stressors, then strain ensues.

Explicit causal analyses of this stress-strain relationship remain lacking despite numerous studies supporting the negative outcomes associated with experiencing workplace incivility (Cortina et al., 2001; Oyeleye et al., 2013; Roberts, Scherer, & Bowyer, 2011). Unfortunately, most research within the psychological and nursing literature is cross-sectional in nature, providing little support for the causal nature of these relationships. The work conducted by Beattie et al. (2014) provides longitudinal support for the influence of incivility on stress yet remains the only study to do so. Similar to the results provided by Beattie et al. (2014), we anticipate that the experiences of workplace incivility will result in increased general stress. Similarly to previous research (Marco & Suls, 1993), we anticipate that the stress will leak over from the experience to the morning of the next workday. Stress behaves as an acute state-like variable that is malleable due to the constant experience of stressors and resources available to counteract such stressors (Lazarus et al., 1987). The perception of experienced incivility is expected to act as a stressor for the victim and cause a trickle over of negative influence into following day stress. Providing a time lag for this stressor-stress relationship will aid in providing causal support for the relationship between the two constructs.

**Hypothesis 1a.** Daily experienced incivility will positively predict beginning of following day general stress.
Similar to hypothesis 1a, we anticipate that perceptions of experienced incivility will lead to an increase in exhaustion at the end of the following workday. Not only will this provide further evidence for the casual nature of the stress/strain relationship, assessing exhaustion will also provide further insight into how incivility can influence more than just general stress, but the resulting emotional strain due to incivility. A popular form of strain is burnout. This construct can be broken down into subfactors. Of these, the most notable is exhaustion (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005; Maslach et al., 1981). Although burnout in general is interpreted as a trait-like construct that may be malleable over extended periods of time due to long-term influences of stressors, experiences of exhaustion may occur relatively shortly, whereas different features of burnout are more likely to occur over weeks, months, or even years. As such, the experience of exhaustion acts as a malleable variable that can be easier to influence on a daily level than that of the other more trait-like features of burnout such as cynicism and professional efficacy (Toppinen-Tanner, Kalimo, & Mutanen, 2002). We anticipate that although the time lag for the influence of incivility on exhaustion may be longer than the acute stress response from experienced incivility, exhaustion will be elevated at the end of the following workday due to the negative experience.

**Hypothesis 1b.** Daily experienced incivility will positively predict end of following day exhaustion.

In spite of the current literature concerning organizational incivility, support for the role of stress as a mediator of the association between exposure to workplace incivility and
exhaustion has also yet to be tested. As stress acts as a state variable that can be influenced
directly by stressors at a daily level, the influence that it has on a more trait-like variable such as
exhaustion is likely. The time lagged design of this study allows for the testing of the predictive
relationships between both the stressor, as well as the chain of stress and exhaustion. Because
stress is conceptualized as a more acute variable that can influence longer term experiences such
as exhaustion, we have designed a temporally lagged study to test how experienced incivility
leads to not only stress and exhaustion separately but test how the resulting beginning of
following day stress, from the stressor, can also build to cause end of following day exhaustion.
We anticipate that not only will direct effects occur between experienced incivility and
exhaustion, but that stress will act to partially mediate this relationship.

**Hypothesis 2.** Beginning of following day stress will mediate the predictive relationship between
daily experienced incivility and end of following day exhaustion.

Resilient employees are able to stay emotionally intact despite adverse situations. In other
words, it is not that they do not experience stress from the demands they face; but rather, they are
able to work past their stress and maintain mental strength to resist future demands and stay both
positive and adaptable (Edward, 2005). Research indicates that resilience acts to reduce
emotional exhaustion, particularly among healthcare providers, through constant experiences to
adverse situations that allow the workforce to learn, adapt, and overcome difficulties (Amini,
2013). These acclimation experiences allow the employees to develop better coping mechanisms
that allow them to handle stress (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Manzano, Calvo, Carlos, 2012). As
such, we wish to examine how resilience acts to reduce the impact between beginning of day
stress and end of day exhaustion. We suspect that individuals who are more resilient will be able
to bounce back from their experiences throughout the workday and show less emotional fatigue when they leave to go home. We wish to provide further support for the influence of resilience as a moderator between stress and exhaustion by providing temporally lagged longitudinal support for this predictive relationship.

**Hypothesis 3.** Resilience will buffer the relationship between beginning of following day stress and end of following day exhaustion.

*Normative Expectations*

Pearson et al. (2000) noted that once an individual is uncivil to another, incivility may cascade to include more employees within the organization through either direct or indirect displacement. These behaviors become expectation and workgroup normative expectations become transparent. Social learning theories also suggest the assimilation of these attitudes and behaviors as employees begin to react in a similar way to those around them (Westman, 2001). Workgroups adapt to these behaviors and provide an, often informal, set expectation for tolerance of workplace incivility. These normative workgroup civility expectations are comparable to what is known in previous literature as civility norms (Hackman, 1992; Walsh et al., 2012). The antecedents and outcomes of civility norms have yet to be fully realized. Walsh et al. (2012) identified, using a criterion-related validity assessment of the Brief Civility Norm Questionnaire (CNQ-B), that civility norms predict future reports of experienced incivility. Increased civility norms indicate an increased workgroup climate that supports civility and works to inhibit incivility. This understanding suggests that employees may perceive that undesired consequences occur as a form of retribution for engaging in uncivil acts. This retribution can
come from workgroup members and may also arise from the supervisor or management of the facility. These tolerance expectations that are set by the workgroup leaders are known in the scientific literature as climate for interpersonal mistreatment (Schat, 2004). This is different from that of similar variables such as supervisor support in that it addresses the leadership tolerance and normative expectations of civil behavior, how likely they are to reprimand those who are uncivil and is measured as leadership behavior directed at the general workgroup. For the sake of simplicity, we identify the two forms of civility expectations that originated from either the team members or the team leaders as workgroup civility expectations (WCE) and supervisor civility expectations (SCE).

Although previous literature has suggested that normative expectations set by workgroup members or leaders can influence employee behavior and reduce incivility incidence rates, little empirical support is provided within the scientific literature to back these claims. These normative practices and characteristics of ensuring respectful treatment by correcting uncivil behavior when it occurs is likely a strong tool for reducing experienced incivility. Research is still required to identify if both SCE and WCE predict daily perceptions of experienced incivility. Beyond the criterion-related validity assessment of the CNQ-B, only one published study indicates a predictive relationship for workgroup civility expectations alone on perceived experienced incivility (Laschinger et al., 2016). Although the findings of the study indicate that a predictive mediation relationship exists between workgroup civility expectations, experienced incivility, and exhaustion, the data collected were cross-sectional and at the individual level. It is important to acknowledge that people work within unique contexts. These contextual settings need to be addressed. By not considering that individuals are nested within workgroups, shared variance is not appropriately accounted for (Hofmann, 1997). Traditional regression analyses
capture only the variance among individuals, yet the more accurate assessment when considering group norms needs to account for variance between groups that express different degrees of social expectations if we are to claim that group norms can influence individual perceptions or experiences.

The current study was designed to assess the nested variance regarding civility expectations. We hypothesize that group-level normative expectations reduce instances of incivility behavior by having a strong supportive workgroup that addresses and reprimands any such poor behaviors.

**Hypothesis 4a.** Workgroup civility expectations (WCE) will negatively predict daily experienced incivility.

Supervisor civility expectations (SCE) are similar to WCE in that the variable is measured as a group-level construct. Put differently, this occurs as a result of group perceptions of the extent to which the workgroup supervisor indicates importance of general civility practices and disciplines workgroup members for participating in uncivil behavior. The leadership of the workgroup sets an expectation for civil behavior and can vary in tolerance for incivility experiences. Due to the power level differences of the leader over the members of the workgroup, the perceptions of disciplinary ability and opportunities of the leader, over other workgroup members, may provide incentive for reduced incivility among workgroup members. We hypothesize that these supervisor civility expectations will predict the reduction in the number of experienced incivility behaviors among members of the workgroup.
**Hypothesis 4b.** Supervisor civility expectations (SCE) will negatively predict daily experienced incivility.

Currently, only Griffin (2010) has identified a multi-level framework for incivility as both a workgroup and individual predictor. Although these findings are in regard to experienced workgroup incivility and not normative expectations, per se, the findings provide insight into how group-level variables may influence experienced individual-level predictive paths for negative employee outcomes. Furthermore, perceptions of a strong climate that is intolerant of uncivil behaviors may also reduce perceptions of stress if the receiver of these behaviors perceives that they have the support of their workgroup members and supervisor/management to help ensure that these behaviors do not persist. Put differently, it could be possible that both SCE and WCE may act as moderators of the relationship between experienced incivility and possibly both stress and strain. However, identification of a moderating effect of SCE and WCE have yet to be tested between the predictive relationships of experienced incivility and stress or strain. Beattie and Griffin (2014) conducted a longitudinal daily diary study that analyzed the predictive influence of experienced incivility on stress. The authors found that supervisor support behaves as an additional moderator. These findings provide an inclination for the use of workgroup normative expectations, such as SCE and WCE, as cross-level moderating variables between the predictive relationship between experienced incivility and stress. Whereas supervisor support may be general care about employee work contributions and well-being, specified civility expectations are not only supportive of specific workgroup civility behaviors, but are also actively set to diminish uncivil acts. As such, scientific research should not address general supportive standards that may not be relevant to all situations, but instead identify the
relationships between specified expectations and their direct outcomes. To this end, we examined how the relationship between incivility and stress/strain is influenced by supervisor civility expectations.

Due to the tolerance for incivility expectations of the workgroup, the influence of uncivil behavior from an individual perpetrator of the workgroup may be perceived as less stressful or emotionally exhausting from the victim’s perspective if the victim perceives that the workgroup will chastise the perpetrator for uncivil behavior. In this supportive workgroup normative framework, we anticipate that targets of uncivil behavior will not experience high levels of stress about their work or become emotionally exhausted from their recent experiences during the following workday due to their anticipation that the workgroup will support them by addressing the poor behaviors that the perpetrator conducted the day prior.

*Hypothesis 5a.* Workgroup civility expectations will act as a cross-level moderator by reducing the influence of the predictive relationships between both daily experienced incivility on beginning of following day stress and also on end of following day exhaustion.

We anticipate similar findings to that of hypothesis 3a in that supervisor civility expectations may act to reduce the influence of experienced incivility on following day stress and exhaustion because the target of the experience may have a perception of support from the leadership of the workgroup who has the power, and willingness, to ensure that civility is maintained. These expectations that the leadership of the workgroup will discipline the perpetrator for uncivil behavior should quell the target’s negative outcomes the following workday.
**Hypothesis 5b.** Supervisor civility expectations will act as a cross-level moderator by reducing the influence of the predictive relationships between both daily experienced incivility on beginning of following day stress and also on end of following day exhaustion.

**Method**

*Sampling Strategy and Data*

Data were used from the Studying Trends in Affective Reactions database. The study sample was drawn from a population of healthcare employees that operated within a corrections facility work context. Healthcare employees are a population that is widely sampled within the nursing literature for strong external validity claims. This particular workforce also frequently provides samples with a great deal of variance for stress and psychological health outcomes such as exhaustion given the complex and demanding positions that healthcare staff face on a daily basis. For the current study, we also utilize this population not only for such variance, but also the ability to assess beginning and end of day perceptions. We also are able to effectively identify group membership across facilities allowing for group-level analyses to be conducted that will effectively assess normative influences. Although further subgroups could also theoretically be identified and analyzed, such as by shift/discipline, many of these groups are simply too small to effectively do so. Thus, considering the group dynamics for the correctional facilities, we concluded that aggregating by facility was the most appropriate approach.

One hundred twenty-three employees completed the protocol across 18 correctional facilities within a state-wide correctional system. Participants were selected to maximize a 3-level design such that sufficient information could be collected for the group-level variables SCE
and WCE. The sample contained demographic ratios consisting of mostly male (82.5%) participants, medical/dental practitioners (42.1%), mental health practitioners (36.4%), clerical personnel (16.5%), and other (5%). The participants were 78.8% white and 75% were between 34 and 60 years old. More than 70% held at least a college degree.

Due to the nature of a standard healthcare setting, the typical employee work week varied across positions. Given the dynamic nature of healthcare systems, working for over a week with no break, working non-consecutive days, and working over the weekend is a frequent occurrence. For the current research, based on discussions with subject matter experts, we assume that employees work typically ten days over a two-week period.

Participants completed online surveys at baseline, and daily electronic diaries twice a day for 14 days. This procedure occurred in three main phases. The initial phase involved an email that was sent to all 801 employees in the organization, which informed them of the study protocol, constructs of interest, and included a link to the screening survey. Participants were screened based on their ability to access a computer twice a day and be present at work for the two-week period of data collection. For the second phase, participants who were successfully screened were sent an email that included an informed consent, a baseline survey, a request for an identification number to link responses over time, and a link to the survey. The baseline survey included demographic information and time invariant or trait-like variables (i.e., supervisor civility expectations, workgroup civility expectations, & resilience). These variables are engrained over prolonged periods of time and are theoretically stable for time periods such as the two-week data collection of this study. The third phase of the project began one week after the baseline data were collected. In this phase, participants completed an online survey twice each day for two consecutive weeks. All of the surveys provided were created online and a link
was sent to participants through their work email account. Participants received $3 for each completed daily survey. On average, participants completed the survey 7.2 times over the designated two-week implementation time span. Survey responses were not included for non-working days, regardless of the day of the week. Assurance was provided to participants that the completion of the survey was entirely voluntary, and confidentiality was prioritized. Reminders were provided sporadically throughout the collection period to help ensure participant retention for the entirety of the study. Members of each facility responded regarding their own individual experiences and experiences at their facility. The average health care facility team size was 12 employees, with people from 18 facility workgroups responding.

With consideration of the recommendations provided by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), a time lag series design was implemented with consideration toward reducing common method variance by gathering information on the predictor variables first, then subsequently on the criterion variables in order of the mediation process hypothesized. A visual representation of the data collection process is provided in Figure 1. This time lag series approach allows for a robust analysis of perceived workplace stress as a mediator considering that we assessed perceived experienced incivility the day prior, and exhaustion at the end of the workday.

Measures

The measures used in the current study were based on previously validated scales that were slightly adapted to fit a daily diary methodology as needed. Each scale collected individual perceptions of the following list of constructs.
Workgroup civility expectations (WCE). The survey included questions that asked participants at baseline about perceived general civility expectations of the group. The construct was measured using the 4-item Brief Civility Norms Questionnaire. The items were scored 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and was developed by Walsh et al. (2012). The authors designed this measure to capture the breadth of workgroup respect and intolerance for uncivil behavior at a normative level. This construct was analyzed for the current study by aggregating the individual scores. Before aggregation was implemented, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted, using workgroup as the independent variable, to determine if there was greater variability in the ratings between workgroups rather than within workgroups. This procedure was conducted based on the recommendations provided from Winer (1971). The $F$ ratio was significant ($p < .01$) supporting aggregation. The intragroup reliability of the scale ($r_{wg} = .40, \text{SD} = .31$) was relatively poor with a wide range of variance. This may be due to the inherently small group sizes that exist within some healthcare facilities. These small group sizes can make assessment of intragroup reliability challenging particularly with arbitrary estimations of what range of variance may be acceptable (Bliese, 1998). Further intraclass correlations provide information that although there is fair variability within groups, there is strong variability between groups ($\text{ICC}(1) = .14; \text{ICC}(2) = .72$). Based on the results of these preliminary analyses we decided on further pursuit of workgroup civility expectations as a normative variable for this study. The overall measure of workgroup civility expectations had an acceptable reliability of $\alpha = .90$ at the individual level.

Supervisor civility expectations (SCE). This construct was measured at baseline as a general measure of the extent to which supervisors tolerate interpersonal mistreatment within the workplace. The construct was measured using a 3-item scale modified from Kessler, Spector,
Chang, and Parr (2008) from 1(\textit{strongly disagree}) to 7(\textit{strongly agree}). The scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha = .84$) at the individual level. Consistent with the measure of workgroup civility expectations, an initial one-way analysis of variance indicated support for aggregation ($p < .001$). Intragroup reliability was considered to be acceptable ($r_{\text{wg}} = .71$). Further, intraclass correlations provided fair support for aggregation (ICC(1) = .48; ICC(2) = .76). SCE was thus aggregated to the workgroup level using individual group member scores.

\textbf{Resilience} was measured at baseline as an assessment of general ability to recover from stressful events. The construct was measured using a 6-item scale provided by Smith, Delan, Wiggins, Tooley, Christopher, and Bernard (2008). The response scale ranged from 1(\textit{disagree}) to 5(\textit{agree}). The scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha = .85$).

\textbf{Stress} was measured at the beginning of each workday as a measure of general perceived stress regarding how the employee felt since the prior workday. The construct was measured using a 4-item scale adapted by Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein (1983), with items ranging from 1(\textit{not at all}) to 5(\textit{extremely}). The reliability of the scale was acceptable at day 1, as well as day 14 ($\alpha = .75$, $\alpha = .71$).

\textbf{Incivility}. The survey asked participants at the end of each workday to assess to what extent they experienced general incivility for that day. The construct was measured using a single item scale from 0 (\textit{not at all}) to 2 (\textit{two or more times}) that was adapted from the works of Cortina et al. (2001). The authors designed this measure to capture the number of instances of lack of respect, rudeness, and impolite behavior that the employee perceived to experience during the day.
Exhaustion was measured at the end of the workday shift. The construct was measured using 2-items derived from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). The subscale was created to measure general emotional exhaustion that employees felt throughout the current workday. Items ranged from 1(not at all) to 5(extremely). Reliability statistics for the 2-items were strong at both day 1 and day 14 ($\alpha = .93$, $\alpha = .96$).

Analyses and Results

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, and correlations for each of the measures provided within this study. Justifiable aggregation and acceptable significance of between-group variance provided the conditions to be met for the use of multi-level analyses, which were conducted using the HMLM module of the HLM 7 statistical software program (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2011). Missing data was accounted for by implementing multiple imputation strategies with consideration for recommendations provided by Spratt, Carpenter, Sterne, Carlin, Heron, Henderson, and Tilling (2010). Imputation methods were conducted by providing the mean score of a variable for an individual when the participant missed up to a maximum of three working days to allow for the connection of multiple strings of daily information that may have otherwise been removed from the analysis. This technique was only provided for when there was a minimum of two strings of data, containing at least three data points each, that could be linked with imputed means. The imputed data accounted for days off from work, as well as occasional days that the participants did not complete the surveys. Imputation was not provided when participants dropped out of data collection partially through
the duration of the study, or failed to begin completing surveys once data collection began, due to the possibility that data may not be missing at random.

Grand-mean centering was conducted for the level-three predictors (workgroup civility expectations & supervisor civility expectations) that allow for cross-level conflated interactions. Initial assessment of the baseline model was tested to identify the fit comparisons for a fixed or random effect model. Results indicate that a random effects model is preferable and that a polynomial trend is not appropriate ($\chi^2 = 160.81, p < .001; \text{ICC}(1) = 0.64$). Thus, a restricted maximum likelihood procedure was implemented to allow for non-normal distributions as found with the measurement of stress and exhaustion. Finally, we calculated deviance scores to compare between unrestricted, homogeneous, and first order autoregressive models. Results indicate a first order autoregressive approach over others based on the significance values of chi-square comparisons (Table 2).

The opportunity to statistically control for experienced incivility during the following workday was possible for assessment of the direct effect on exhaustion, however, the authors did not include the control in their analyses. Experienced incivility was only assessed at the end of each workday. To this end, following workday experienced incivility could not be controlled for the relationship with beginning of following workday general stress. Furthermore, exhaustion is a construct that tends to behave as a midway variable between a state and a trait. Exhaustion is malleable over time, yet it takes prolonged exposure from stressors to increase (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). We posit that exhaustion occurs as incivility continues to be experienced over time. The data sampled in the current study supports this concept as experienced incivility scores were relatively stable over time. Furthermore, should the predictive relationship between experienced incivility and beginning of the following workday general
stress be significant, the lasting influence on end of following workday exhaustion would be additionally supported given that incivility can have lingering influence into the next day. As such, the possible confounding influence of following workday incivility is not problematic for answering our hypothesis that experienced incivility positively predicts exhaustion.

In order to test for the longitudinal influence of daily-level incivility on stress, and resulting exhaustion, a mediation approach was conducted with initial 1-1-1 mediation of the variables perceived experienced incivility, general stress, and exhaustion. The mediation was conducted using the Monte Carlo method (Selig & Preacher, 2008). The overall distribution of indirect effect indicates significant mediation (95% CI[0.06, 0.15]). Experienced incivility was found to positively predict beginning of following day general stress ($b = 0.35$, $t(776) = 9.15$, $p < .001$). General stress was also found to positively predict end of day exhaustion ($b = 0.29$, $t(765) = 5.60$, $p < .001$). The direct path between experienced incivility and exhaustion was assessed and indicates that a partial mediation occurs ($b = 0.27$, $t(778) = 5.26$, $p < .001$). Next, the cross-level moderating influence of individual-level resilience was assessed. The initial predictive path between resilience and exhaustion was significant ($b = -0.50$, $t(57) = -2.85$, $p < .01$). The interaction between stress and resilience was also significant ($b = 0.12$, $t(763) = 1.96$, $p < .05$). These findings support the hypothesis of cross-level interaction in which resilience helps to reduce the influence of stress on exhaustion (Figure 3).

The final assessments involve the workgroup variables of SCE and WCE. First, cross-level mediation Monte Carlo methodology allowed for overall distribution of indirect effects for both workgroup constructs with perceived experience of incivility as the mediator and general stress as the outcome variable. Confidence intervals for WCE as the independent variable were (95% CI[-0.07, -0.02]), and SCE as the independent variable were (95% CI[-0.08, -0.02])
indicating statistically significant predictive relationships for both. Individual regression indicates that WCE was confirmed to negatively predict daily perceptions of experienced incivility ($b = -0.12, t(58) = -3.81, p < .001$). SCE was also confirmed to negatively predict daily perceptions of experienced incivility ($b = -0.15, t(58) = -3.93, p < .001$). Traditional hierarchical regression approaches were conducted to identify if any interactions existed. An interaction between WCE and daily perceptions of experienced incivility does not emerge with general stress as an outcome ($b = 0.04, t(776) = 1.55, p = .121$). Similarly, an interaction between SCE and daily perceptions of experienced incivility with general stress as the outcome did not emerge ($b = 0.01, t(529) = 0.224, p = .823$). Similar assessments were made with exhaustion as the outcome. The direct relationship between WCE and exhaustion was not significant ($b = -0.07, t(58) = -1.247, p = .213$); however, the negative predictive relationship between SCE and exhaustion was found to be significant ($b = -0.31, t(58) = -2.03, p < .05$). In addition, SCE moderated the relationship between perceived experienced incivility and exhaustion ($b = 0.21, t(529) = 4.99, p < .001$) (unstandardized coefficients and significance values are reported in Figure 2). However, WCE did not act as a moderator between perceived experienced incivility and exhaustion ($b = .05, t(776) = 1.268, p = .205$). These predictive analyses indicate support for all hypotheses with the exception for the interaction effects of both workgroup level constructs concerning stress as the outcome and the interaction effect of WCE and incivility with exhaustion as the outcome (Figure 2).
Discussion

The current research study provides a complex assessment of the emerging research concerning normative influences on incivility by incorporating a multi-level framework. By providing a temporally lagged and nested analytical design, further evidence is provided for how supervisor and workgroup civility expectations influence employee experiences at the daily level. These findings also provide empirical evidence of the daily stress-strain relationship as a result of incivility experiences that act as stressors for employees.

The partial mediation hypothesized for the daily-level time lagged variables was supported, confirming hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 2. Perceived incivility on a particular day predicted morning stress on the following workday and exhaustion at the end of the following workday. Beginning of workday day stress also led to end of workday exhaustion. This partial mediation indicates that experienced incivility can have lasting effects on psychological health outcomes on a daily basis. Support was also provided for resilience as a moderator of the association between stress and exhaustion. Resilience behaves as a formulated construct that is built as an individual’s cognitive resource through experiences of stressors of varying degree and intensity (DiCorcia & Tronick, 2011). Those who have built resilience for stressful workplace scenarios such as this, where healthcare workers are within a correctional facility context, will be better able to resist the emotional exhaustion that results from stress.

The predictive relationships hypothesized in 4a and 4b were both found to be significant indicating that normative expectations of civil behavior from fellow workgroup members, and the workgroup leader, predict a decrease in daily perceptions of experienced incivility. These findings support previous cross-sectional literature that indicates causal influence (Laschinger,
2016; Walsh et al., 2012). Although this is an intuitive finding, its implications for how to reduce experienced incivility are important. Incivility is found to more likely occur when poor and uncivil behavior is normalized and permitted by the workgroup as an acceptable form of interaction. These findings provide evidence for the importance of both workgroup normative expectations and the role of workgroup leadership for reducing employee incivility. As shown in Figure 2, the unstandardized coefficients for both group-level predictors are similar in strength, although supervisor civility expectations appear to be slightly stronger.

Our findings provide a key insight into how normative expectations influence individual psychological outcomes once uncivil behavior has been directed towards them. We were surprised to find that workgroup civility expectations had no influence as a moderator of the predictive relationships of experienced incivility on stress and exhaustion. We suspect that workgroup civility expectations simply do not relieve victim perceptions of strain when they have experienced uncivil behavior directed at them. This could be due to members of the group not handling colleague behaviors as well as what would be expected by the victim leading that individual to believe that it will continue to occur. It could also be a possibility that the workgroup does not have the formal power, like the group leader would have, to properly address the issue. Although they may be supportive of civility, they may not be able to punish poor behavior.

Despite both workgroup normative constructs reducing the number of experienced incivility behaviors, only supervisor civility expectations reduced the influence of incivility on victim exhaustion. Perceiving that one’s leadership is supportive and intolerant of uncivil behavior appears to be the main feature that makes the individual feel that the issue may get resolved. This is similar to the findings of previous literature (Hobfoll, 2002; Väänänen,
Toppinen-Tanner, Kalimo, Mutanen, Vahtera, & Peiró, 2003), which indicates that individuals who have more work-related coping resources will be less stressed when they are faced with negative events than those who do not have similar resources. However, the results for the current study only found significance when exhaustion was the outcome, not for when stress was the outcome. It is possible that normalization is occurring from the target’s perspective considering the consistency of experienced incivility reports. If this possibility is true, then targets of uncivil behavior may acclimate to the consistent behavior and rather than become cognitively stressed by it, grow to simply be exhausted over time. Due to these results, we conclude that these perceptions of lowered exhaustion may only be a possibility when those with power over the workgroup provide and enforce strong civility expectations.

Finally, it is important to identify the extent to which the moderational influences of SCE and resilience reduce the negative impact on employee exhaustion. As depicted in Figures 3 and 4, individuals who were more resilient reported less exhaustion at the end of the following workday, and those who had group leaders with higher civility expectations also reported less exhaustion. However, these interaction effects appear to be stronger only for when either stress or incivility are low. When stress and incivility are high these interaction effects appear to be less influential. This could be the result of how overwhelmed the employees may feel when stress and incivility become too extensive for these resources to be effective for helping to hinder exhaustion. It would appear that regardless of how resilient an individual may be or how strong their supervisor’s civility expectations are may only have an influence to a certain extent before the employee simply becomes too overwhelmed by the stressors at hand. This could be explained using the Job Demands-Resources Model presented by Demerouti et al. (2001) who assert that
both internal and external resources help to hinder the influence of demands on burnout, yet once demands overwhelm the resources available it is expected that burnout will increase.

**Implications for Practice**

Despite the reduced intensity of incivility, as compared to other more extreme behaviors such as workplace aggression, the experience of incivility has the potential to escalate into more intense behaviors. This escalation is theoretically portrayed as the *incivility spiral*, as noted by Andersson et al. (1999). These escalations can saturate and define the organizational environment if left unchecked. To this end, organizations should not ignore employee incivility just because it is a less intense behavior than outright aggression. However, attempts to stop these unfortunate workplace behaviors may take the form of the “see something, say something” approach. Yet, too often do organizations propose such tactics only for their employees to ignore them. Working professionals are typically focused on their image and maintaining a strong network to improve their career outlook. The findings of this study have important implications for interventions aimed at reducing the amount of uncivil behaviors within an organization. This research suggests that intervention approaches should be focused not only at reducing incivility by taking an individual punishment approach to addressing incivility, but also take steps to address the normative expectations of civility at the workgroup level. Interventions should prioritize setting civility norms for workgroups to adhere to and point out any behaviors that may arise that are considered to be uncivil and stop them early. The workgroup should indicate what the behavior was and address expectations for it to not occur in the future. A similar strategy should be applied for supervisors and management of a workgroup by setting civility expectation and firmly adhering to them by reprimanding any behavior that may be deemed as uncivil within the workgroup that they oversee. Their actions appear to not only reduce daily experiences of
incivility from perpetrators, but also help provide support for targets of incivility by addressing issues and providing perceptions from the victim that the issue will be resolved in the future, thus reducing emotional exhaustion.

Another practical implication of this research is the support for intervention approaches that prioritize building resilience in healthcare provider personnel. This holds particularly true for highly stressful work contexts such as a correctional facility where a variety of daily stressors can influence general workplace stress, and subsequently end of day exhaustion. Our study provides further evidence that resilience is a key factor for helping to reduce the impact of general stress on end of day exhaustion. We suggest further applications of resilience training for employees to aid in reducing daily exhaustion. Those who have built resilience through experience and coping training are likely to be better able to reduce emotional exhaustion and help reduce long-term health effects associated with psychological strains.

Limitations and Future Research

Data were collected using a daily diary approach by asking participants to complete surveys at the beginning and end of each day for two weeks. The temporal delay between surveys is relatively short and may potentially inflate relationships among study variables, which raises concerns for common-method variance issues (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, multi-level analytical approaches, such as centering scores, aids in eliminating the potential issue of inflating relationships. A similar concern can be made of the high correlation between workgroup civility expectations and supervisor civility expectations. These both act as third-level predictors and their high correlation could be an issue for multicollinearity. We posit that our centering techniques for the multilevel model and the strength of the correlation between the two
predictors are adequate for the interpretation of the results. Yet, it is important to know that there remains no, even arbitrary, cut-off limit for acceptable correlation values for multilevel analyses such as what we conducted. As of the writing of this article, very little work has been done concerning the understanding of multicollinearity for multilevel analyses, particularly when using third-level predictors (Yu, Jiang, & Land, 2015). We encourage researchers to help advance our understanding of multicollinearity issues for future scientific endeavors. To further understand the influence of both normative constructs, future research may implement experimental manipulation to better identify the separate effects that they may have on experienced incivility.

The generalizability concerning our findings should be recognized. The current study contains a sample that was collected from a specific population of healthcare employees working in correction facility contexts. Although the evidence is strong, generalizability for other workgroups that may not experience as impactful workplace stressors may find less reliable replicability, as general workplace stress for correctional facility healthcare workers is often unpredictable, demanding, and dangerous. The workers also worked in a shift-work format, which is considered to be irregular hours compared to a standard nine-to-five job, and long hours may build to greater exhaustion. However, many healthcare roles were assessed at several workplace facilities that may help to accommodate the issue of generalizability by providing a large amount of variance between locations which better captures between-group ranges of experience.

Future research may prioritize the effectiveness of targeted incivility interventions directed at building strong formative expectations for the workgroup and adhering to these expectations, and confirm that normative change initiatives reduce uncivil behavior experiences
among employees. Within-group variability among civility norm expectations was high for this study. Future studies may pursue larger workgroups and identify if those with less agreement of civility expectations experience more frequent instances of uncivil behaviors compared to groups with more agreement of civility expectations. Groups with less agreement may have certain individuals that are either unwilling to uphold their civility expectations or there may be little consensus on what should be expected civility behavior possibly resulting in instances of incivility going unnoticed and undisciplined.

We also consider the possibility that the reason supervisor civility expectations did not moderate the relationship between experienced incivility and following day stress is that we assessed employee perceptions of stress in general. It may have been more accurate to assess employee perceptions of stress as it relates to their groups social standing or their stress perceptions regarding their interaction with the individual who conducted the uncivil behavior the day prior. However, it is also possible that the victim of the uncivil behavior may simply have had time to emotionally recuperate for the next morning, which is when the stress assessment was conducted. We find it likely that the employee may not feel stressed about the job in general in the morning after receiving uncivil behavior, but despite their perceptions of their general stress, they may carry the emotional burden over time leading to exhaustion. Regardless of our insights into the reasoning for these findings, we suggest that future research more deeply assess the influence that normative expectations can have on stress perceptions.

Finally, despite the moderating influence of SCE and resilience have, their effect appears to dissipate for high stressor and stress situations. Unfortunately, further research needs to be conducted to help identify how to reduce exhaustion for these high-stress situations which current resources, such as SCE and resilience, are unable to do. Future research may use the
information that we have provided in the current study to develop further intervention approaches that may provide more impact for psychological health in the workplace for employees who experience excessive amounts of incivility and tend to high-stress situations.

Conclusion

The present study not only provided additional longitudinal support for daily-level outcomes influenced by experienced incivility, but also multi-level support for the influences of normative expectations on experienced incivility. Furthermore, employees who had workgroup leaders with little tolerance for incivility were less exhausted when faced with uncivil experiences as compared to those whose workgroup leaders were more tolerant of incivility. Our findings suggest that daily incivility behaviors can be reduced by providing focused interventions which prioritize normative expectations of civility and reduced tolerance for incivility, and leadership provides a pivotal role in reducing emotional exhaustion that accompanies experience workplace incivility.
References


Table 1.
Correlations among the study variables

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<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td>1. Workgroup Civility</td>
<td>4.26 (1.80)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
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<td>3. Incivility</td>
<td>0.18 (0.46)</td>
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<td>-.362**</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. General Stress</td>
<td>1.84 (0.56)</td>
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<td>-.161*</td>
<td>.112</td>
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<td>4.05 (0.86)</td>
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<td>-.136</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.076</td>
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<td>6. Exhaustion</td>
<td>1.78 (1.04)</td>
<td>-.127*</td>
<td>-.348**</td>
<td>.184**</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>-.205**</td>
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*p < .05, **p < .01
Table 2.

*Summary of Model Fit*

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<td>2. Homogeneous $\sigma^2$</td>
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<td>3. First order Autoregressive</td>
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<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df.</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<td>Model 1 vs Model 3</td>
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<td>Model 2 vs Model 3</td>
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<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
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<td>End of First Day</td>
<td>Beginning of Next Day</td>
<td>End of Next Day</td>
<td></td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience Incivility</td>
<td>General Stress</td>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.

*Visual representation of when each variable was assessed over time.*
Figure 2.

Multi-level model including significant cross-level interactions and direct effects. Values are presented as unstandardized coefficients.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
Figure 3.

Cross-level moderated regression examining the effect of resilience on stress-exhaustion relationship.
Figure 4.

Cross-level moderated regression examining effect of SCE on incivility-exhaustion relationship.