Incivility in Academe: What if the Instigator is a High Performer?

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This analysis of workplace incivility focuses on instigators who are high performers, but have a negative effect on morale. We explore antecedents, manifestations, and consequences associated with these instigators, whom we label "High Performing Instigators." This qualitative study indicates that HPIs are common in academe and engage in a broad spectrum of uncivil behaviors. The consequences of HPI behavior result in losses for all involved – loss of respect, time, emotional energy, and morale. One important finding is that there seems to be no change in HPI behavior in academe when comparing pre- and post-tenure status of faculty identified as HPI.

INTRODUCTION

After a period of focusing almost exclusively on positive and desirable workplace behaviors, organizational researchers are now turning their attention to negative and undesirable workplace behaviors (Vardi & Weitz, 2004), resulting in several sequential models of workplace deviance. The five-block sequence in Robinson and Greenberg's (1998) model of workplace deviance starts with the perpetrator of deviance and his/her intentions, continues by looking at the target of the deviance and the actions taken against the target and concludes with the consequences of the deviant action. Similarly, in their model of dysfunctional workplace behavior, Griffin, O'Leary-Kelly and Collins (1998) consider the antecedents and consequences of dysfunctional behavior. Vardi and Weitz's (2004) model of organizational misbehavior (OMB) is also sequential, beginning with antecedents, and continuing on to manifestations of OMB.

These models all address the broad topic of workplace deviance. One subset of workplace deviance is incivility. Defined as rude and disrespectful behavior that is ambiguous in its intent to harm others and violates the norms of the organization (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), incivility has been described as "pernicious, powerful, problematic, and pervasive" in the workplace (Sypher, 2004, p. 268). It has negative ramifications for the instigator of incivility, the target(s) of the incivility, and the organization in which the incivility occurs. Workers who are targets of incivility may experience higher levels of stress, lower job satisfaction, lower creativity, troublesome emotions, and decreased job performance, which thereby harms the organization (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Laschinger, Leiter, Day & Gilin, 2009; Penny

& Spector, 2005). Organizations are also harmed by incivility when targets resolve the problem by leaving the organization, in extreme cases (Cortina, 2008).

Despite its negative consequences, incivility is not a rare event in organizations. Pearson and Porath (2005) found that the percentage of people who report being the target of workplace incivility at least once per week is as high as 20%. When measured over a period of five years, 71% of employees in one public-sector sample reported being victims of workplace incivility (Cortina & Magley, 2009). Other studies have found the reported incidence of workplace incivility to range as high as 79% (Cortina, 2008).

Just as incivility is a subset of workplace deviance, there may also be subsets of incivility. For example, Cortina (2008) classifies incivility on the basis of a frequent target, minorities and women. Edwards and Greenberg (2010, p. 22) focus on insidious workplace behavior (IWB), an incivility subset which is characterized by acts that are "intentional, minor, repeated, and intended to harm individuals or organizations." Denton, Campbell and Johnson (2009) focus on incivility that is instigated by workers who are high performers on job tasks, but who have a negative impact on organizational morale. Using a sequential framework similar to the models of organizational deviance described previously, Denton and colleagues (2009) present a model of the antecedents, manifestations and consequences of this type of incivility. It is this type of incivility, instigated by people who are high performers on their job tasks, but whose uncivil behavior negatively impacts the morale of those around them, that is the focus of this study. We refer to such individuals as High-Performing Instigators (HPIs) of incivility.

This subset of incivility presents special challenges, as organizational leaders desire to maintain the valuable contributions of these workers, while also minimizing or neutralizing the negativity that they engender. Denton and colleagues (2009) surmise that organizational leaders may tolerate or even ignore this type of incivility, due to the instigator's contributions to the organization. Feldman (1984) explains this phenomenon in terms of "idiosyncrasy credits" that individuals such as HPIs accrue because of their strong contributions to organizational performance. Their high level of performance allows these instigators to amass large quantities of credits which, although depleted by dysfunctional work behavior, may be large enough to counterbalance their negative impact.

Researchers have called for additional inquiry into the antecedents and consequences of incivility, and, in particular, incivility that is instigated by high performers (Denton, et al., 2009). The purpose of this study is to understand the antecedents, manifestations and consequences of incivility by HPIs in a higher education (academic) setting. We chose this setting in particular in order to examine whether the high level of job security and tolerance of idiosyncratic behaviors afforded by the granting of tenure would be a strong contributor to uncivil behavior. This is the first study of its kind that we are aware of, and our efforts were guided by the following basic research questions, (1) Does incivility that is instigated by HPIs occur in the workplace?; (2) If so, how prevalent is it?; (3) What are the antecedents of this type of incivility?; (4) How is this type of incivility manifested?; and (5) What are the consequences of this behavior?
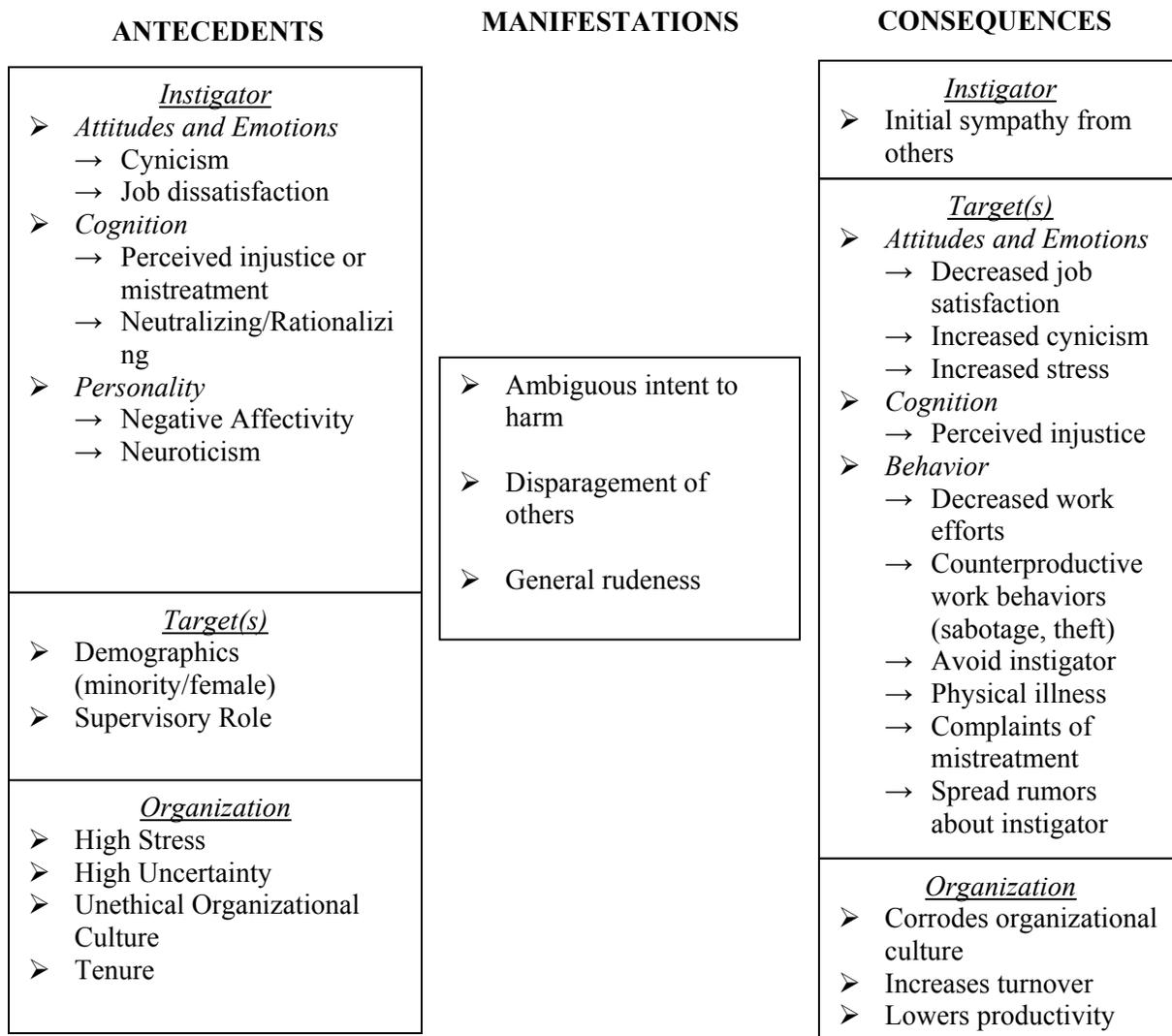
WORKPLACE INCIVILITY

Workplace incivility is distinguished from other forms of deviant workplace behavior by two of its characteristics: its low intensity and its ambiguity with respect to the intent to harm others (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001). However, it is important to note that even though the first distinguishing characteristic of incivility is "low intensity" behavior (Pearson & Porath, 2005), it does not follow that it has a low or subtle impact on its targets (Cortina, 2008; Vickers, 2006). In fact, "it is often the small and subtle egregious acts, the little incivilities, that take the largest toll" (Johnson, 2001, p. 457).

The second distinguishing characteristic of incivility, its ambiguous nature with respect to intent to harm a target, can also cause great damage; and may result in even greater distress than would direct aggression. Ambiguity regarding the intent to harm targets means that, if called to account for their actions, instigators can deny purposeful harm to a target, thus exculpating themselves from responsibility (Vickers, 2006). Ambiguous intent also means that the target may be less able to pinpoint the harm and

may thus be criticized as being overly sensitive or misinterpreting actions if they report incivility (Vickers, 2006).

The definition of incivility as behavior that affects others and the organization elucidates three entities that are involved in incivility, (1) the instigator, (2) those that are affected by incivility, and (3) the organization in which the incivility occurs. Based on the existing sequential models of deviant and uncivil workplace behavior, we anticipated that workplace incivility instigated by high performers could also be diagrammed sequentially. Antecedents of HPI-instigated incivility can be identified, as they influence manifestations of HPI incivility and result in consequences to the instigator, to others, and to the organization. Figure 1 diagrams this sequence, each component of which is discussed in the following sections.

FIGURE 1
A MODEL OF INCIVILITY INSTIGATED BY HIGH PERFORMERS

ANTECEDENTS

Instigator
- *Attitudes and Emotions*
  → Cynicism
  → Job dissatisfaction
- *Cognition*
  → Perceived injustice or mistreatment
  → Neutralizing/Rationalizing
- *Personality*
  → Negative Affectivity
  → Neuroticism

Target(s)
- Demographics (minority/female)
- Supervisory Role

Organization
- High Stress
- High Uncertainty
- Unethical Organizational Culture
- Tenure

MANIFESTATIONS

- Ambiguous intent to harm
- Disparagement of others
- General rudeness

CONSEQUENCES

Instigator
- Initial sympathy from others

Target(s)
- *Attitudes and Emotions*
  → Decreased job satisfaction
  → Increased cynicism
  → Increased stress
- *Cognition*
  → Perceived injustice
- *Behavior*
  → Decreased work efforts
  → Counterproductive work behaviors (sabotage, theft)
  → Avoid instigator
  → Physical illness
  → Complaints of mistreatment
  → Spread rumors about instigator

Organization
- Corrodes organizational culture
- Increases turnover
- Lowers productivity

Antecedents of Incivility

There is disagreement over whether the quantity of research on the antecedents, or causes, of incivility has been greater (Christian & Ellis, 2011; Penney & Spector, 2005) or less (Jex, Geimer, Clark, Guidroz, & Yugo, 2010) than research on other aspects of incivility, but there appears to be agreement that there are individual-, group-, and organizational-level factors that are contributors to incivility (Cortina, 2008; Jex, et al., 2010; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Each of these levels is addressed below.

Instigator Antecedents of Incivility

There are a variety of instigator attributes associated with incivility, which can be aggregated into three categories: attitudes (Vardi & Weitz, 2004), cognition (Vardi & Weitz, 2004), and personality (Jex, et al., 2010; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998; Vardi & Weitz, 2004).

1. *Instigator attitudes and emotions as an antecedent of incivility.* An attitude of cynicism, defined as "an attitude of scornful or jaded negativity, especially a general distrust of the integrity or professed motives of others" (http://www.thefreedictionary.com), is an attitude that is prevalent among instigators of incivility. Vardi and Weitz (2004) speculate that cynicism is an antecedent for all deviant behavior in organizations, and Denton, et al. (2009) suggest that high-performing instigators specialize in cynicism. People who are cynical experience frustration and disillusionment (Andersson, 1996) and come to view work as oppressive or unrewarding, which results in incivility when they transfer their frustrations onto others, often by belittling them (Vardi & Weitz, 2004). Cynicism is typically accompanied by job dissatisfaction, another attitude characteristic of instigators of incivility (Vardi & Weitz, 2004).

2. *Instigator cognition as an antecedent of incivility.* A cognitive stance associated with incivility is rationalization, wherein the instigator thinks that his or her misbehavior is justified (Denton, et al., 2009; Vardi & Weitz, 2004). This is consistent with Baron and Neuman's (1998) finding that all participants in their study rated their own aggressions as significantly more justified than those of other persons. Part of instigators' rationalization for their misbehavior is that they view themselves as a victim of incivility, rather than as an instigator. Therefore, they view their uncivil behavior as being justified by their mistreatment (Baron & Neuman, 1998). This may explain the disconnect between percentages of workers who view workplace incivility as a serious, growing problem (89%) and those who view their own behavior as civil (99%) (Johnson, 2001). Indeed, workers who believe that they have been treated unfairly are more prone to incivility and organizational misbehavior (e.g., Blau & Andersson, 2005; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2008).

   One way in which instigators may see themselves as being treated unfairly is in their perceptions of injustice in their workplace. Once again, this perception is associated with a higher incidence of incivility (Henle, 2005; Robinson and Greenberg, 1998). Denton and colleagues (2009) speculate that high-performing instigators of incivility actually have a distorted, negatively-biased, perception of justice in their organizations.

3. *Instigator personality as an antecedent of incivility.* Attitudes and perceptions are interrelated with personality, another instigator antecedent of incivility. There is, however, no single personality profile of those who are likely to engage in deviant behavior in organizations (Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Nonetheless, there are several personality characteristics that have been shown to individually have a relationship with incivility, including negative affectivity and neuroticism (e.g., Jex, et al., 2010; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Vardi & Weitz, 2004).

   Negative affectivity is a dispositional trait related to negative emotionality and self-concept, such that individuals high in negative affectivity tend to focus more often on negatives and suffer from low self-esteem (Siomkos, Rao, & Narayanan, 2001). Negative affectivity is a personality characteristic that may be associated with incivility (Jex, et al., 2010). Looking at the relationships among negative affectivity, perceptions of organizational justice, and vindictiveness, Skarlicki and colleagues (1999) found a positive relationship between negative affectivity and organizational vindictiveness and a negative relationship between vindictiveness and perceptions

of organizational justice. These results support the idea that negative affectivity is an antecedent of incivility.

Similarly neuroticism, one of the personality dimensions measured on the Big Five assessment, has been associated with incivility. Neuroticism is defined as the tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, or depression (Costa & McCrae, 1992) Although employees high in neuroticism tend to have lower performance (Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991), which is counter to our definition of high-performing instigators, we believe that neuroticism is still a characteristic of HPIs, who are presumed to be more likely to be dissatisfied with their work demands, their co-workers, and their salary (Denton, et al., 2009). Additionally, higher levels of neuroticism are conjectured to be associated with higher levels of vindictiveness (Vardi & Weitz, 2004). In fact, Denton and colleagues (2009), in their description of Dementors, expect HPIs' personalities to include a high need for achievement, low self-esteem, low self-monitoring, high narcissism, hostile attribution style, and high passive aggression.

Target-Level Antecedents of Incivility

As of now, there has not been a great deal of attention given to the characteristics of target(s) that serve as antecedents to incivility. In one of the few articles to address target characteristics as antecedents of incivility, Cortina (2008) speculates that demographic characteristics of the target, such as race and gender, may elicit incivility from some individuals, perhaps even subconsciously. Jex, et al. (2010) report that targets who are lower in status than the instigator are more likely to be victims of incivility, than are targets who have similar or higher status.

Organization-Level Antecedents of Incivility

Stress that originates from organizational-level factors may contribute to incivility. For example, organizational settings in which workers experience high levels of stress, perhaps due to downsizing that leads to overwork for the remaining employees, or due to financial difficulties that leads to pay freezes, are the types of settings in which incivility might occur (Denton, et al., 2009; Johnson, 2001). Similarly, stress that is caused by high levels of organizational change is likely to be related to an increase in incivility (Baron & Neuman, 1998; Vardi & Weitz, 2005). High levels of uncertainty, perhaps caused by vague organizational goals or a lack of systems that control deviant behavior, can also create conditions that are ripe for incivility (Vardi & Weitz, 2005). When employees perceive injustice in their organization, they are more likely to engage in uncivil behavior (Jex, et al., 2010). If the reward system is truly unjust, there is likely to be increased incivility (Denton, et al., 2009; Vardi & Weitz, 2005).

Blau and Andersson (2005) speculated that a high level of uncertainty in the form of job insecurity would be accompanied by increases in workplace incivility; however, their results did not confirm their expectations. We speculate that the relationship might exist in a different direction, such that a high level of job security, allowing the instigator to feel confident that incivility would be unlikely to lead to job loss, might embolden instigators of uncivil behavior. One work setting where job security can be high is academe, with its attendant tenure system. Additionally, the emphasis on free speech in academe may embolden individuals to make offensive statements, justifying them as their right under conventions regarding academic freedom.

Manifestations of Incivility

Incivility is typically manifested in forms that are verbal, covert, indirect and passive (Baron & Neuman, 1998; Denton, et al., 2009). Consistent with this idea, a distinguishing feature of incivility, as compared with other forms of workplace deviance, is the ambiguity of the instigator's intent to harm a target (Pearson, et al., 2001). It is possible that instigators of incivility truly have no intention to harm others or to be malicious, but it is also possible that the instigator intends harm, but wants to be able to deny incivility if confronted about their behavior (Penney & Spector, 2005). Thus, they engage in incivility in such a manner that intent to harm others can be denied (Penney & Spector, 2005), giving the

instigator greater control in the situation and minimizing the danger to themselves (Baron & Neuman, 1998; Sypher, 2004). If confronted directly about their behavior, the instigator may claim that the target misunderstood the situation (Pearson, et al., 2001).

Indirect manifestations of incivility include behaviors such as being inattentive when a target is speaking, interrupting the target, not listening to the target at all, or even not speaking to the target (Blau & Andersson, 2005; Denton, et al., 2009; Johnson, 2001; Laschinger, et al., 2009; Sypher, 2004). Incivility of this type constrains the target's "voice" in the organization and stunts their ability to participate fully in the organization (Blau & Andersson, 2005). Instigators can deny intent to harm when they are rude, explaining their behavior as preoccupation or work overload.

More direct manifestations of incivility include behaviors such as belittling or degrading other people. Belittling others can be passed off as "just joking" or as something that "everyone" does (Jex, et al., 2010). Examples of such behavior include derogatory talk about the target(s) to others, making condescending or demeaning comments about the target(s) either directly or in public situations, displaying a lack of respect for the target(s), insulting the target(s), or even questioning the target's intentions and motives (Baron & Neuman, 1998). These types of behaviors can affect not only the target's self-esteem, but also the way others view them.

Another direct manifestation of incivility involves displays of anger, ranging from moderate, such as hanging-up (the phone) on the target and writing surly e-mails to the target; to more severe, such as having temper tantrums, engaging in emotional tirades, and actually yelling at the target directly.

Consequences of Incivility

Instigator Consequences

The consequences that instigators experience as a result of their incivility are not yet fully articulated. One of the few investigations into instigator consequences found that instigators may initially experience positive consequences of their actions. Those who complain to co-workers about their mistreatment by the organization may initially find a supportive and sympathetic audience (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2008). Co-workers may even support the instigator's cause or cover for the instigator when meetings or appointments are missed (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2008). However, we have found no information suggesting that such sympathy is maintained in the face of continuing incivility.

Another consequence to instigators as a result of their uncivil behavior may be confusion, as instigators typically have different perceptions of incivility than their victims and so may not understand why their actions cause problems (Jex, et al., 2010).

Target(s) Consequences

Most of the research on consequences of incivility has focused on the consequences experienced by the target(s), including a recent report of a large-scale study of target consequences of incivility (Pearson, 2010). The consequences that targets experience are broad, affecting targets' attitudes, emotions, cognition, and behavior.

- *Effect of incivility on targets' attitudes.* If the organizational response to incivility is to ignore it (which may be more likely for high-performers than for low-performers), targets observe instigators engaging in incivility and experiencing no repercussions. In this situation, targets are likely to become frustrated and form their own perceptions of injustice occurring in their organization (Pearson & Porath, 2005). Concomitantly, job satisfaction decreases, and targets become less engaged in their organization (Penney & Spector, 2005). Targets may experience increased cynicism due to their exposure to HPIs (Penney & Spector, 2005). Not only is job satisfaction lowered by being a target of incivility, but so is commitment to the organization, as targets may contemplate leaving the organization (Laschinger, et al., 2009; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001). Johnson (2001) even notes that incivility can cause the target to experience lowered self-esteem, particularly if belittled or demeaned by the instigator. These negative experiences of the target(s) and their beliefs that it is permitted by the organizations may, in turn, lead them to become instigators of incivility.

- *Effect of incivility on targets' emotions.* Experiences with workplace incivility have a strong negative impact on emotions, in that some type of negative affect is a consequence of incivility 100% of the time (Pearson, et al., 2001). For example, targets frequently report that incivility increases their levels of stress (Laschinger, et al., 2009; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001), in the form of worrying about, or avoiding, future encounters with the instigator (Johnson, 2001; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Continued exposure to incivility may actually result in stress that increases to the level where physical illness can occur (Johnson, 2001).

  Stress may occur as a by-product of other negative emotional experiences, such as anger, fear and sadness, all of which are also associated with incivility (Pearson, 2010). Anger is a common emotional reaction to incivility, particularly when incivility affects the target's self-esteem or threatens the target's professional identity (Pearson, 2010). Sadness and fear also seem to accompany experiences of incivility, perhaps because incivility leads to feelings of loss - loss of a relationship or of professional standing (Porath & Pearson, 2005).

- *Effect of incivility on targets' cognition.* Just as high-performing instigators of incivility may justify their actions by casting the targets as "bad guys," deserving of mistreatment; targets of incivility may engage in their own cognitive reappraisals, recasting the situation as an unimportant one (Cortina & Magley, 2009).

- *Effect of incivility on targets' behaviors.* The outcomes of experiences with incivility are also displayed in targets' behaviors. One of the most commonly-used strategies for dealing with incivility is avoiding the instigator (Cortina & Magley, 2009; Pearson, et al., 2001; Pearson & Porath, 2005). If targets respond actively to incivility, one option is that they respond to incivility in like-kind with their own incivility, thereby creating a cycle of incivility. For example, targets may strike back at the instigator, using tactics such as spreading rumors about them (Pearson & Porath, 2005). If they perceive that there are no repercussions to instigators of incivility (which may be the likely case for high-performers), targets may strike out at the organization in the form of counterproductive work behaviors, such as deliberately decreasing their productivity, stealing from the organization, or damaging equipment (Pearson & Porath, 2005; Penney & Spector, 2005). Each of these active responses to incivility results in lost work time (Johnson, 2001).

  Targets who experience fear as a result of incivility may respond indirectly (Pearson, 2010). For example, they may reduce their level of work efforts or withdraw from the organization (Pearson, 2010). Sadness on the part of targets may also lead to withdrawal from the organization, perhaps even exit from the organization (Pearson, 2010). However, one behavior that is unlikely to occur as a result of incivility is for a target to report incivility to his/her supervisor, as this rarely happens (Cortina & Magley, 2009).

Organization Consequences

As targets of incivility experience lowered job satisfaction and organizational commitment, levels of productivity and attention to quality are both lowered, resulting in poorer outputs for the organization (Laschinger, et al., 2009). When targets begin to perceive the workplace as an unpleasant place (Pearson, et al., 2001), they may respond by exiting the organization and thus, increasing the level of organizational turnover (Johnson, 2001; Pearson & Porath, 2005). The reputation of the organization suffers, as targets express their mistreatment to people both within and outside of their organization (Pearson & Porath, 2005).

METHOD

The increase in research on incivility has not been accompanied by an increase in the research methods used to explore it, with survey methods predominating thus far (Spector & Rodopman, 2010). Noting the calls for greater use of qualitative approaches to studying dysfunctional workplace behaviors (Griffin & Lopez, 2005), our study addressed this issue through the use of semi-structured interviews,

which have been hailed as one of the "most powerful methods in the qualitative armory" (McCracken, 1988, p. 9).

Participants and HPI Demographics

Data gathering through interviews allows researchers to understand a phenomenon from someone else's perspective (Patton, 2002). Consistent with the majority of past research on incivility (Jex, et al., 2010), the perspective we sought was that of a victim of incivility, the instigator's supervisor. We believe that the supervisor's interpretation of HPI-instigated incivility is valuable because supervisors have a unique vantage point within their unit, making them more likely to have a broad perspective on the impact of incivility on the unit. Additionally, because supervisors are often required to manage and evaluate their unit members, we speculated that they would have reason to devote thought to this phenomenon.

Having chosen academe as the setting for our study of HPI-instigated incivility, we contacted all Department Heads at a large US University to ascertain whether they, currently or in the past, had a faculty member in their department who is highly productive, but bad for the morale of the unit. Twenty-four Department Heads were contacted, with 11 (approximately 46%) of them reporting that they currently (at their present institution) or previously (at a previous institution) had a high-performing instigator in their unit. All 11 of those Department Heads agreed to be interviewed and were assured of confidentiality. This number of interviews is consistent with reports that redundancy of information gathered occurs beyond 8-15 interviews (Kvale, 1983). These Department Heads had been in their current position for an average of 8 years, and supervised an average of 31 individuals.

Of the 11 high-performing instigators they described, 6 were male (approximately 55%); 10 were Caucasian; and 3 were from cultures other than the US. All were tenured at their current institutions in the time frame used by respondents.

To shield the identities of both the HPIs and their supervisors (the interviewees), whenever direct quotations are presented in this paper, all referential pronouns will arbitrarily be assigned as male (he, his, etc.). As a further confidentiality check, the authors sent the final draft of the current paper to all of the interviewees to solicit their comments and opinions. Overall, positive feedback was received from all interviewees regarding the content of this paper.

Data Collection

All interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed by the authors and lasted from 15 minutes to 1 hour. We used two measures to determine the prevalence of HPI-instigated incivility in the organization. The first was a simple calculation of the percentage of Department Heads who reported having an HPI in their department, and the second was the following interview question, "How common do you think this type of employee is in your industry?"

After confirming that the Department Head has, or has had, an HPI in his or her Department, we started the interview with a broad and non-directive "grand tour" question (McCracken, 1988), "How would you describe this employee?" and continued with directed questions that addressed specific parts of the model presented in Figure 1.

The grand tour question was intended, in part, to elicit descriptions of instigator antecedents to incivility. Additionally, we used two directed questions to identify the antecedents of HPI-instigated incivility; "What do you think motivates this employee?" and "What aspects of the organization or job setting contribute to this employee's behavior?"

We used a directed question with a follow-up question to identify manifestations of HPI incivility in the organization, "What kinds of things does this employee do that lower morale?" and, "What is an example of something this employee has done that contributes to poor morale?"

To ascertain the consequences of HPI incivility, we asked, "How do you feel when you are around this employee?," "How does this employee impact you?," "What is this employee's impact on others around him or her?," and "Do you believe that this person's behavior has had an impact on turnover in your department?"

To be sure that we obtained all of the information possible, at the end of each interview we asked, "What should I have asked that I didn't ask?" (Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

We began analyzing data once the first interview was completed and transcribed. In this initial phase of coding, we coded every phrase in each transcript, looking for theoretical categories that were present in the data (Charmaz, 2006). As we conducted more interviews and obtained more data, we moved into a focused coding phase, in which we settled upon several initial codes and began to look at relationships between theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006). As data analysis progressed and we began to see trends in the data, we refined our categories, using a decision rule for including a category in the final model if that topic was mentioned in at least three interviews.

RESULTS

Our first research question concerning whether HPIs actually exist in higher education settings was answered affirmatively by the fact that 46% of Department Chairs contacted reported that they currently, or in the past, had an individual in their Department who is a high performer but a negative influence on work-unit morale. This conclusion was further supported by our second research question regarding the prevalence of HPI behavior in higher education. There was a general consensus that high-performing instigators are fairly common in academe. As one of the interviewees put it "I think it's pretty common. I think there's probably one individual in all departments everywhere that is probably like that." This is further illustrated by statements such as "I don't think there's any place that I have been that there hasn't been someone like this…" and "I think there is at least one in every department… I think they are everywhere."

Having found evidence for the existence and prevalence of HPIs in academic settings, we continued by exploring the antecedents, manifestations and consequences of HPI behavior. Figure 2 provides a summary of all of our findings and is the framework for the discussion below. We would like to note once again that these conclusions are based on the perceptions of the supervisor respondents, and caution must be used when attempting to address the causality/correlation conundrum.

FIGURE 2
FINDINGS ON INCIVILITY INSTIGATED BY HIGH PERFORMERS

ANTECEDENTS	MANIFESTATIONS	CONSEQUENCES

Instigator
➢ Unresolved negative past/current life experiences
Which contribute to:
➢ Personality issues all subsumed under low self-esteem
   → Craves Attention
   → Neuroticism
   → Narcissism
   → Lack of social skills and social intelligence
 	
➢ Perceived injustice and mistreatment at work/Sense of entitlement
	Manifestations involving self
	➢ Unpredictability
	➢ Complaining behavior and general negativity
	➢ General disruptive behavior
	➢ Unintentional self-defeating behavior
		Instigator
		➢ Devalued and ostracized
		➢ Loss of trust

Target(s)
➢ Gender
➢ Status
	Manifestations involving peers
	➢ Disparagement of and degradation of others
	➢ Intimidation
	➢ Refusal to speak to others
		Target(s)
		➢ Increased work load – severe time drain
		➢ Emotional negative impact
		   → Fear and intimidation (younger faculty)
		   → General negative emotions
		➢ Coping strategies
		   → "Learned indifference" to instigator

Organization ➢ Organizational culture/Lack of systems and support to control HPI behavior ➢ Academic freedom instead of tenure	*Manifestations involving supervisors* ➢ Insubordination: Ignoring established chain of command/Deliberately undercutting or overly challenging the supervisor ➢ Wasting time & resources *Manifestations as pertaining to the organization* ➢ Lack of contribution to and participation in department	*Organization* ➢ Increase in turnover, especially among "friends" of HPI ➢ Lowers morale

Antecedents of Incivility

Instigator Antecedents of Incivility

In the course of our interviews, one of the recurrent themes associated with HPIs seemed to be negative past/current life experiences. Based on previous research, we had not anticipated this to be a factor in HPI behavior. However, it was not only the life experience that mattered; it was also the instigator's response to the negative experiences. Many people have negative experiences in their family of origin, in their sociocultural milieu, or in life in general; but it seems that many HPIs were unable to resolve those experiences. For example, one respondent noted about the HPI that "this is a lower class [person] who went to a second university and you know therefore always felt the weight of the [country's] class system and always felt the underdog position of it."

Perhaps those experiences contributed to diminished self-esteem and helped form the basis of certain negative personality issues. One such personal characteristic that seems strongly associated with HPI

behavior, is a very strong need for attention, even if it was negative attention. This is well exemplified by the quote "you ever had a dog that it didn't matter if you beat them...as long as you were paying attention to them, that was all that mattered…that was him...as long as he was the focus of attention, it doesn't matter what you say to him or what you do he just needs to be the center of attention."

Another characteristic that seems to be at the forefront of HPI personality is neuroticism and according to supervisors, it is expressed in a variety of ways. As mentioned earlier, neuroticism is one of the dimensions of the Big Five framework of personality, and has been defined as the tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, or depression (Costa & McCrae, 1992). For example, interviewees described the HPIs' as having "deep psychological issues." Some other descriptions that support neuroticism as an HPI personality factor include "depression and anger…very angry, very hostile" and "I don't see this person ever being happy…he's just a miserable person."

There was also strong evidence that HPIs tend to be narcissistic. Lubit (2002) suggests that destructive narcissism stems from fragile self-esteem which may have been derived from a traumatic childhood. These individuals are characterized by their tendency to devalue others and have a grandiose self-image (Lubit, 2002) which is demonstrated by being self-centered, arrogant, and opinionated. This trait in HPIs was strongly exemplified by comments such as "he just felt like he was better than everybody else," "by kind of having an inflated value of self-worth he tends to devalue people around him," and "this individual is very opinionated and this individual believes that his opinion is the only one that matters".

Grounded in their destructive narcissism, these individuals may not realize that their behavior is a problem for others (Lubit, 2002), for example "I don't think he's able to see that he's doing anything wrong." These and other statements, such as "he was always socially awkward," are indicative of a general lack of social skills and social intelligence among HPIs. These individuals also seem to expect to be treated differently than others and tend to have a sense of entitlement (Lubit, 2002), perhaps concluding that their high performance levels justify special treatment. Some statements, such as "this person being very productive feels like he should be paid more than he is" and "if you have resources that are available, space, anything that's tangible, there's this idea that he should get first shot at the stuff," illustrate this sense of entitlement.

In summary, the respondents indicate that HPIs seem to be deeply troubled, perhaps in part due to unresolved negative life experiences, and that their troubles manifest themselves in a strong need for attention. Perhaps they feel that such attention is their due, as their destructive narcissistic proclivities encourage them to believe that they are superior to others and therefore deserve special treatment. Their judgments seem to be based solely on consideration of themselves, as they seem unable or unwilling to view the world from others' perspectives and are poor at interacting with others. These findings support previous literature which states that cognition and personality issues are instigator-level antecedents of incivility. However, contrary to past research, although there were statements hinting at cynicism and a lack of job satisfaction as antecedents of incivility, there did not seem to be an emphasis placed on them among these respondents (mentioned by fewer than three interviewers). Nevertheless, even though there were few direct references to cynicism, a great number of the negative HPI behaviors mentioned by supervisors could easily be categorized as having some form of cynical foundation.

Target-Level Antecedents of Incivility

While the male-female dynamic and status of the targets of the incivility seemed to play a part in the incidence of incivility ("I do believe that the male-female dynamic has something to do with it…there's a pattern I believe of this individual (who is male) not wanting to work with women in authority [irrespective of administrative level]"), these antecedents were more difficult to pinpoint, especially status. For example, while some HPIs seemed to concentrate their incivilities on more junior employees ("a lot of his negative behavior became the bullying of younger faculty, intimidating them"), the majority of them did not hesitate to be uncivil to their direct supervisors (the interviewees). Previous research suggests that another major target of incivility is individuals belonging to minorities. Although we did not

find any evidence of this in our interviews, this might still be an important target-level antecedent of incivility in organizations with a higher proportion of minority personnel.

Organization-Level Antecedents of Incivility

Based upon past research, we speculated that high levels of job security, in the form of tenure, might have a positive relationship with the incidence of incivility because instigators may feel emboldened. However, to our surprise, there was unanimous agreement among the interviewees that tenure did not have an effect on the HPIs' incivility; e.g., "he behaved the same before tenure." In other words, the HPIs instigated incivility both before and after tenure. However, we did find that the academic freedom that is a hallmark of higher education does seem to have an emboldening effect; e.g., "so I tell him, 'You shouldn't be doing that' and then he starts talking academic freedom". Academic freedom, rather than tenure, thus seems to provide the cover, justification, or camouflage for HPI incivilities and not one faculty member, identified as an HPI in this study, lost their job because of behavioral issues or collegiality.

The interviews also revealed other interesting organizational characteristics that might serve as antecedents of HPI-instigated incivility: lack of support from supervisors higher up in the hierarchy and other direct-reports when dealing with HPI-instigated incivility and a system that, while rewarding high performance in other areas of the job, turns a blind-eye to incivility. Examples of these organizational-level antecedents of HPI-instigated incivility include, "why aren't there more things in place to deal with a case like this," "I think the legitimate question would be was there any legitimate support from MY supervisors to help me deal with this problem and the answer would be NO," "I think universities let employees get away with a lot more stuff," and "we don't really have a function for collegiality... so that contributed to it... and in a business environment I would have fired him in the second or third year."

Finally, contrary to the predictions of prior research reported in our review of the literature, high stress resulting from financial difficulties, high uncertainty, organizational change, perceptions of overwork, or vague organizational goals were not emphasized as organizational-level antecedents of incivility within the academic context. Perhaps these antecedents were overshadowed by the overarching influence of working at a state university and all HPIs having tenure.

Manifestations of Incivility

The combination of low self-esteem, with an inflated view of self, an inability to experience empathy and an enabling organizational structure lead to certain manifestations of HPI-instigated incivility. Even as antecedents of incivility can be divided by instigator, target (peers and supervisors), and the organization, manifestations can also be characterized by whether they are specific to the instigator or whether they are directed at peers, supervisors or the organization.

Some of the techniques that HPIs use to promulgate their incivility toward peers include disparaging and degrading them ("the worst thing he ever did was slandering others," "posting derogatory things about colleagues," "he would berate people"), intimidating them ("he would imply that if they [junior peers] did not do what he wanted or didn't meet his expectations that they would not succeed"), and refusing to speak to them if displeased ("if people don't agree with him, he doesn't like them and he won't speak with them anymore"). These uncivil behaviors seem to be, at least in some part, an off-shoot of the destructive narcissism that characterizes HPIs.

HPIs also do not seem to hesitate in directing their uncivil behavior toward their supervisors by being insubordinate ("he undercut consistently almost everything I tried to do mostly by his behavior…he was just overtly challenging what I was trying to get done"). Sometimes, they will circumvent their supervisor completely and appeal directly to higher ups ("to get something that he wanted he often starts at the highest level that he can rather than going [via the chain-of-command]"). They will also deliberately waste the supervisor's time or resources, e.g., "he'll like make a big deal like he really needs something and I'll gather it all. And then he's like 'oh I didn't really want that.' He's done that several times."

Additionally, we found that supervisors were unable to anticipate when instigator incivility may occur ("its like a snake, you know its there and its going to strike you at some time but you just don't know when"), and they must thus be constantly vigilant in order to try to anticipate problems instigated by these

individuals. Several of the interviewees reported how exhausted this made them, always having to be on guard and trying to lift the mood dampened by the HPI and their overall general negativity. Examples of this include "he just brings the negativity to every discussion that's held" and "I got a two-page analysis from this person, on why they will not be attending a meeting."

The organization suffers from the HPIs' deliberate non-participation in the goings-on of the unit ("asking to be on a committee, demanding to be on a committee (asking is a nice way of saying it!) demanding to be on a committee and then not attending, showing up for any meetings, not doing any of their work"). When these typically high performers did have a weak area, it tended to be in service ("rarely attends faculty meetings, doesn't do committee work, says he will then its pulling teeth").

These findings support previous literature's claim that one of the most obvious manifestations of incivility was the degradation and belittling of others. However, contrary to prior research, ambiguity was not always maintained; some instances of HPI behavior tended to be very definitive. Similarly, displays of anger, which is mentioned by previous studies as one manifestation of incivility, was only mentioned by two of the supervisors.

Consequences of Incivility

The manifestations of HPI-instigated incivility had consequences, not only for the targets of the incivility and the organization, but also for the instigator.

Instigator Consequences

As expected based on previous research, a short-term consequence of HPI incivility appeared to be a positive one for the instigator, in that their incivility did help them get the attention they craved, albeit not always positive. Although, only one interviewee mentioned this phenomenon ("I think there is a payoff for people...its like if this is the only way I can be noticed, I'm going to be noticed"), other comments seem to hint at this increased attention, at least initially. However, after the initial surge in sympathy and support, colleagues seemed to go in the opposite direction and paid less attention to the instigators by actually devaluing ("but then this group of faculty decided they didn't like that and didn't like him and started trying to point out all of his problems and shortcomings") and ostracizing them ("they just simply stopped dealing with him"). This bid for and subsequent loss of attention also tended to be accompanied by a loss of trust in the HPI ("people would say things to me like, 'you shouldn't trust him'"). Thus, HPIs lost the attention they so desperately wanted and became more isolated from colleagues. From the perspective of the HPI, this is a severe consequence of their actions and could possibly set off a vicious circle in which they feel further unjustly devalued and hence, become more prone to exhibit uncivil behaviors in the future.

As we surmised at the outset, HPIs rarely face the possibility of demotion or termination, presumably because of their high level of performance. Not one of the HPIs described in this study was ever terminated or denied tenure based on their incivility, and even the threats of termination or denial of tenure were few and far between. Yet supervisors rarely reported success in getting an HPI to change their attitude or typical behaviors. At best, supervisors report resignation to the situation and deciding not to let it get to them anymore.

Target(s) Consequences

HPI-instigated incivility negatively impacted target(s) of the incivility, whether they were peers or supervisor. Though not explicitly stated by targets, based on our evidence, we surmise that stress was one of the most common consequences of HPI behavior. For supervisors, HPI behavior resulted in consequences both on and off the job. One of the major and almost unanimously agreed upon professional impacts for supervisors was the increase in their work load and the severe time drain caused by the HPI ("I think I dedicate more time to managing this faculty member than I do others," "when problems are caused and damage is done sometimes it then requires me to work with other people not just [the HPI] so it can take time," "it ultimately creates a lot more work and a lot more discussion"). Peers were also affected in this regard at times, as they picked up the load not shouldered by the HPI ("so other people are

having to like cover for [the HPI]"). Additionally, HPIs engendered negative emotional impacts on both peers ("I think discouraged is a good word to use how the faculty see it," "I think [the HPI] instilled a lot of fear in the faculty the younger faculty who felt that he might actually be able to influence their careers") and supervisors ("It's frustration. Sometimes you want to just close your door and get away for a while…").

Although the following consequences were not emphasized (fewer than 3 interviewees mentioned them) we felt that they were serious consequences and warranted a mention. These supervisor-related consequences included being questioned by people higher up in the hierarchy as to why they were unable to deal with and control the HPI, and considering quitting their jobs in order to avoid having to deal with the HPI. Moreover, some of the interviewees reported that they knew of at least two department chairs that had either voluntarily or involuntarily left their positions due to frustrations associated with dealing with HPI faculty.

In keeping with previous literature, learned indifference seemed to be one of the main coping strategies utilized by the supervisors and colleagues of the HPI. After dealing with the HPI for an extended period of time, some of the supervisors and colleagues seemed to simply accept the HPI and their tactics and made a conscious effort to not let it affect them ("he just doesn't really matter too much to me anymore," "I will drive home and I am like 'No, I am not bringing this person home with me he is not allowed in the door…'").

Although there were mentions of other negative consequences to peers and supervisors which supported previous literature, like perceptions of organizational injustice, lowered self-esteem, physical illness, anger, etc., these were not included here because they were mentioned by fewer than three interviewees.

Organization Consequences

Besides the negative impact on target(s), HPI-instigated incivility has negative consequences for the organization. The interviews revealed low morale as the leading negative consequence at the organizational level ("[the HPI] definitely has caused the morale to go down in the department").

Another negative consequence for the organization is in the form of turnover that was a direct or indirect result of the HPI-instigated incivility ("I lost two [faculty] who had been hired in the program, one absolutely because of [the HPI] because he told me so...another one because...he certainly let the whole affair get to him..."). Surprisingly, some of the reported turnover within the HPIs' units was among the "friends" of the HPI ("so the turnover has been in [the HPI's] friends so to say not in his enemies, which is very interesting!"). These "friends" were so influenced by the negativism displayed by the HPI that they voluntarily quit, which caused the department to lose valuable employees and increased the workload of the remaining faculty.

In summary, the theme of this section (consequences) seems to be loss. Everyone loses because of HPIs: the HPIs themselves, the peers, the supervisor, and the organization.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Contribution to Literature

This preliminary summation of antecedents, manifestations, and consequences of one particular form of workplace incivility, HPI-instigated incivility, within a unique environment, higher education, sheds light on a phenomenon that has long challenged managers (in this case Department Chairs and Deans). What does an organization do with employees who are highly productive in certain areas but overall detrimental for the morale of the unit? What factors may be contributing to the problem? This study is an attempt to help managers understand this vexing situation; and to our knowledge, is the first study to focus on this type of behavior. This is the initial step toward helping managers find ways to help these individuals succeed within the academic arena, recognizing and maximizing the contributions of their productivity and helping avoid the behaviors leading to lowered unit morale. This study also represents one of the first times that qualitative research has been utilized to examine workplace incivility.

Additionally, this study is a first attempt to categorize interviewee responses related to HPI behaviors into meaningful assortments associated in most cases with antecedents, manifestations, and consequences of incivility previously identified in the literature. Yet, in many instances, little or no literature exists to describe what was found; thus, many new categories are included in the model and much research is yet to be done to validate these new entries. This means that at this time, many of these linkages are speculative, and we recognize that this is a limitation of this analysis.

HPI individuals manifest many behaviors that can be described under the general term "incivility" including among others lying, complaining, undercutting and challenging supervisors, disparaging others, general rudeness, inappropriate anger, trying to recruit others to their "side," and ignoring traditional chains of command. The behavior is most often shrewd, making it difficult to accurately determine intent to harm, although in some instances, intent to harm is clearly evident. These manifestations are the catalysts for morale issues within the unit.

This study also seeks to identify the contributing factors that are thought to precipitate these uncivil behaviors; the antecedents of HPI behavior. These are grouped into three main categories: Instigator Characteristics, Target Characteristics, and Organizational Characteristics. While the responses related to attitudes and emotions, cognition, personality and target-level antecedents are what one would expect; one surprising finding has to do with the organizational antecedents of uncertainty and tenure. In informal conversational circles, the practice of granting tenure is often viewed as one of the most important contributory factors to academic incivility. This study finds that, in the opinions of our respondents, tenure had little to do with the problems; and manifestations of incivility were present *before* the granting of tenure in all cases where tenure was discussed. In other words, there were no cases where these behaviors began only *after* the award of tenure.

The culprit, it would seem, is rather the notion that academic freedom gives individuals the right to exhibit behaviors and attitudes that in most cases would not be tolerated in private industry. The principle of academic freedom, that scholars hold dear, is a philosophy that protects the faculty right to pursue truth and speak freely of their inquiries with immunity from outside influence, political pressure, or threat of job loss. High-Performing Instigators are experts at shielding their negative behaviors under this broad umbrella as their right to stand up for the truth, and since these negative behaviors often fall outside the evaluative realms of teaching, research, and service, supervisors find this defense difficult to breach. HPI incivility would best be evaluated using the criterion of "collegiality." While many institutions include the criterion of "collegiality" in their evaluations of faculty, in many cases the standards are ill-defined and seldom used. Because of the potential of abuse inherent in the use of this subjective criterion, the American Association of University Professors (1999) has formally indicated that collegiality should not be used in the promotion and tenure guidelines for faculty, bolstering the case against its use.

The consequences of these uncivil behaviors are powerful and negative. This study describes the impact on targets of the behaviors (on both colleagues and supervisors), on the organization, and on the instigators themselves. There are few surprises here as organizational morale decreases, colleagues become less satisfied with their jobs and work environment, and in particular, supervisors become increasingly frustrated in their attempts to respond to the problem. We did uncover that universities, in general, are not well equipped in terms of processes or procedures to deal with this particular type of problem behavior. Several Chairs reported a sense of futility as they struggled to deal with these issues with little or no administrative or institutional support.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As mentioned earlier, since this is an exploratory investigation, many of the proposed relationships are speculative and deserving of future study. It is difficult to determine whether a relationship between variables is causal or simply correlated using our qualitative methodology. In addition, we did not study instigators who were not high performers, so we cannot conclude with certainty that our findings apply only to HPIs. Future research should address this issue.

The findings of this report are based solely on the perspective of the supervisor, in this case, the Department Chair, who has evaluative responsibilities over the HPI. Without collecting the statements

and responses of the HPIs themselves, this report only presents the supervisory perspective on the situation. Certainly much could be learned by examining the HPIs' perspective, although as with many uncivil behaviors, this may be impossible.

Because we investigated HPI-instigated incivility from the supervisor's perspective, our research could be subject to the common pitfalls of this approach. As Jex (2010) points out, these include potentially differing conceptions of HPI-instigated incivility among the study participants, low generalizability in the behaviors that constitute incivility due to potential differences across industries, biased recall of past information, more prevalent recall of recent events (recency bias), the likelihood that participants may present their information so as to create a desirable impression of themselves, the possibility that the participants might themselves be considered HPIs by their colleagues, and cultural differences in how the participants would perceive incivility. These issues, though they are not completely unique to interview methodologies, can be mitigated by future research that expands across varied industries and perspectives, with a very clear and specific description of HPI-instigated incivility.

Finally, by limiting the scope of the study to a higher education setting, we reduce the generalizability of the findings to private industry and other diverse environmental settings. The higher education environment, with its great emphasis on academic freedom and tolerance for eccentricity, may produce a situation that exists in no other venue. However, anecdotal evidence from private industry management training sessions indicates that this problem is widespread in other industries in addition to education. Hence, future research should include data from more diverse environs.

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