

The effects of passive leadership on workplace incivility

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Summary

In this article, we examine the effects of passive leadership on workplace incivility across two studies. Study 1 examines passive leadership–incivility relationships in a sample of employee–supervisor dyads, and Study 2 examines these relationships in a sample of employee–coworker dyads. Results from these studies suggest that passive leadership has a significant direct effect on behavioral incivility and an indirect effect through experienced incivility. Moreover, our results suggest that the relationship between experienced incivility and behavioral incivility is conditional on the level of passive leadership, such that the effect of experienced incivility on behavioral incivility is stronger at higher levels of passive leadership. Copyright © 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords: passive leadership; experienced incivility; behavioral incivility; withdrawal

“When once the forms of civility are violated, there remains little hope of return to kindness or decency”—Samuel Johnson

Rude, discourteous, or disrespectful behaviors that typify incivility have become commonplace in virtually all aspects of modern society, including a former bastion of propriety—the business world (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In fact, incivility has been recognized as being “...one of the most pervasive forms of antisocial behavior in the workplace” (Cortina, 2008, p. 56). Data collected across thousands of North American workers suggest that a staggering 99% of employees have witnessed uncivil behaviors in their workplaces (e.g., Porath & Pearson, 2010), 98% have been on the receiving end of incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2013), and roughly half of employees surveyed report that they experience incivility on a *weekly basis* (Porath & Pearson, 2010, 2013). The epidemic of workplace incivility is particularly disconcerting because incivility carries severe costs for targeted employees, their coworkers, and organizations at large (e.g., Cortina & Magley, 2009; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Lanhout, 2001; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008).

Andersson and Pearson’s (1999) formative theoretical framework on the spiraling effects of incivility (henceforth labeled the spiral framework) suggests that incivility spirals commence when one employee *behaves* with incivility toward another. Behavioral incivility reflects the extent to which an employee has himself or herself engaged in uncivil behaviors, whereas experienced incivility represents the level of incivility that an employee perceives that she or he has encountered at the hands of fellow employees (e.g., Blau & Andersson, 2005; Cortina et al., 2001). Although the spiral framework positions behavioral incivility as central in both the initiation and continuation of incivility spirals, there is a noticeable void of scholarly efforts aimed at understanding factors that contribute to behavioral incivility. Instead, scholars have largely focused their research efforts toward understanding the consequences of experienced incivility. In one of the few studies to investigate behavioral incivility, Blau and Andersson (2005) support the view that behavioral and experienced incivility represent distinct constructs and argue that simultaneous investigation of these constructs would allow for richer theoretical insights regarding the spread of

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workplace incivility. In the current research, we advance scholarly understanding of workplace incivility by delineating antecedents of, and relations between, experienced and behavioral incivility.

Although scant empirical attention has been devoted to understanding the antecedents of incivility, scholars have alluded to the importance of leadership in promoting or inhibiting workplace incivility (e.g., Cortina, 2008; Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013; Pearson & Porath, 2004; Porath & Pearson, 2010, 2013). As noted by Cortina (2008), “leaders set the tone for the entire organization, and employees look to them for cues about what constitutes acceptable conduct” (p. 62). In this article, we argue that passive leadership, defined as a reticence to act or failure to provide leadership altogether (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011), constitutes an important environmental factor that may contribute to the spread of workplace incivility.

To guide our investigation, we draw upon Andersson and Pearson’s (1999) spiral framework. The spiral framework adopts a social interactionist perspective to detail a variety of personal and situational (i.e., the environment) factors that contribute to the initiation and amplification of workplace incivility. Social interactionist perspectives highlight the importance of perceptions (of others’ actions) and situational forces as critical drivers of human behavior (Lewin, 1936; Weber, 1991). We hypothesize that passive leadership may directly influence an employee’s behavioral incivility and indirectly influence behavioral incivility through increasing the level of incivility that an employee experiences at the hands of his or her coworkers. Moreover, consistent with social interactionist theory (e.g., Lewin, 1936), we propose that the presence of a passive leader may result in a stronger effect of experienced incivility on behavioral incivility (Figure 1). We test our hypotheses across two studies by surveying employees and their manager (Study 1) and employees and their coworker (Study 2).

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Workplace incivility definition and consequences

Workplace incivility is most commonly defined as “low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target” (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). Incivility includes behaviors such as eye rolling, checking email during meetings, or showing little interest in another’s opinion (Porath & Pearson, 2010). Extant theory and research (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina & Magley, 2009; Cortina et al., 2001) has established two key features that distinguish incivility from other forms of antisocial work behaviors, such as counterproductive work behavior (CWB): (1) intent and (2) intensity.

As an example, failing to invite a coworker to attend a group lunch could stem from a conscious desire to harm or upset the coworker, an unconscious desire to harm the coworker, or a simple oversight. Because it is unclear whether

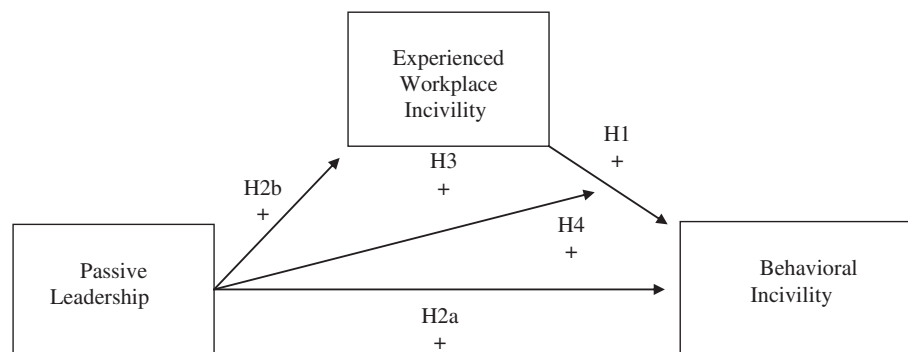


Figure 1. Hypothesized conditional mediated effect of passive leadership on behavioral incivility

harm was intended, an observer's or target's perceptions of the underlying intention become chiefly important in making sense of uncivil behaviors (Weber, 1991). That is, when incivility occurs, it is up to recipients and observers to make attributions regarding intent. In addition to the issue of intent, the intensity of the behavior differentiates incivility from other detrimental work behaviors. Namely, CWB, violence, and aggression involve higher-intensity behaviors (e.g., verbally or physically threatening behavior and production sabotage). Incivility, on the other hand, is characterized by lower-intensity behaviors (e.g., ignoring or excluding someone) that would not be considered CWB (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Neuman & Baron, 1998). Finally, whereas CWB can be directed at both other people and the organization, workplace incivility is only directed at individuals. Behaviors directed at the organization would not be considered incivility.

Although incivility is less extreme than other forms of mistreatment, a growing body of research underscores the personal and organizational costs of being treated with incivility. For instance, in a survey involving 800 workers across a variety of industries, Porath and Pearson (2013) found that 48% of victims intentionally reduced their work effort, 38% intentionally decreased the quality of their work, 66% experienced reduced job performance, and 78% reported reduced levels of commitment. Additionally, scholarly evidence suggests that experiencing incivility negatively affects job satisfaction, psychological well-being, physical health, and turnover decisions (Cortina et al., 2001; Lim et al., 2008; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000; Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001). Moreover, simply witnessing incivility is demonstrated to result in reduced commitment, lower job satisfaction, burnout, and increased turnover (Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2007). Porath and Erez (2007, 2009) found that both experiencing and witnessing incivility resulted in reductions in task performance, creativity, and helping behavior.

Given the deleterious consequences and prevalence of incivility, it is imperative for organizations to better understand the factors that contribute to workplace incivility. Unfortunately, scarce scholarly attention has focused on antecedents of incivility (for exceptions, see Blau & Andersson, 2005; van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010). This oversight is regrettable because widespread workplace incivility can adversely affect an organization's bottom line. Managers of Fortune 1000 companies report that 13% of their time is spent addressing the fallout from incidences of incivility; Porath and Pearson (2013) calculate that this translates into approximately seven work weeks each year! The cumulative negative effects of incivility are estimated to cost employers millions of dollars annually (Porath & Pearson, 2013). Accordingly, a greater understanding of why incivility occurs in the first place is required in order to assist in managerial interventions aimed at preventing incivility.

Effect of experienced incivility on behavioral incivility

Andersson and Pearson's (1999) spiral framework draws on social interactionist theory to provide a detailed framework to support the relationship between experienced and behavioral incivility. Although an incivility spiral begins when an individual (e.g., employee, customer, or supervisor) engages in an uncivil behavior, attributions made for the uncivil act influence how others respond. Weber's (1991) social action theory underscores that in terms of its effect on behavior, an action is less important than the meaning that an observer ascribes to the action. This is particularly important in understanding the effects of workplace incivility, where the intention underlying the action is inherently ambiguous. Perceptions regarding whether an incivility instigator intended harm are critically important in informing targets and witnesses emotional and behavioral responses to the incivility. That is, if a target or witness perceives that the instigator intentionally violated norms for respectful treatment, it is more likely that negative emotions and cognitions will be aroused that may precipitate an uncivil response.

Importantly, in keeping with the notion that incivility carries ambiguous intent, Andersson and Pearson clarified that just because a person may reciprocate after perceiving an incivility, it does not necessarily mean that a person intentionally wishes to harm the target of their behavior; an uncivil response may merely display that negative thoughts or feelings have been aroused. Further, a person who perceives that she or he has been a target of incivility might respond by reciprocating the incivility toward the instigator or might misdirect uncivil behavior to an innocent

third party. In this way, incivility can easily spread throughout a workplace. Andersson and Pearson (1999) describe that these sorts of incivility spirals will generally continue unless or until a party chooses to ignore the incivilities and disengage from the spiral. Alternatively, spirals may escalate to the point that individuals are clearly intending to harm one another, at which point the phenomenon would extend beyond the incivility construct domain (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Empirical results suggest that as many as 94% of employees who perceive they have been treated with incivility tend to respond in kind (Porath & Pearson, 2010). Thus, consistent with Andersson and Pearson's (1999) spiral framework, we hypothesize that employees will be more likely to behave with incivility to the extent that they perceive that they have experienced workplace incivility.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant positive relationship between experienced incivility and behavioral incivility.

Direct effects of passive leadership on behavioral and experienced incivility

As aforementioned, the spiral framework (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) advances a social interactionist perspective (e.g., Lewin, 1936), stressing that situational factors affect the initiation and amplification of workplace incivility. Lewin (1936) underscored situational factors, and in particular, the interplay between situational and personal forces, as drivers of behavior. For instance, factors that contribute to a lax, informal, work environment (e.g., policies, procedures, and social norms) are theorized to play an important role in the incivility process (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Building on this framework, we argue that the leadership style exhibited by managers represents an important situational factor that may impact workplace incivility. It is imperative for managers to establish clear norms dictating acceptable conduct and reinforce adherence to norms by swiftly correcting or otherwise punishing offenders (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina, 2008; Porath & Pearson, 2013). With respect to the deterrence of workplace incivility, leaders should proactively make explicit that rude or otherwise uncivil behavior will not be tolerated, clarify the consequences for behaving uncivilly, and enforce those consequences. In the absence of a proactive leader, workplaces may become too informal and lack clear norms to help shape appropriate behavior (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). For this reason, we expect that incivility will be especially likely to occur in workplaces with passive managers. Indeed, meta-analytic evidence suggests that the negative effects of passive leadership rival the positive impact of effective (e.g., transformational and transactional) leadership behavior (DeRue et al., 2011; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Passive leadership involves a pattern of inaction exhibited by a person in a position of authority (e.g., DeRue et al., 2011). Examples of passive leadership include behaviors such as avoiding decisions, neglecting workplace problems, and failing to model or reinforce appropriate behavior. Passive leadership encompasses passive management by exception (MBEP) and *laissez-faire* leadership. Conceptually, both MBEP and *laissez-faire* leadership involve an inactive, hands-off approach to managing employees (Den Hartog, Van Muijen, & Koopman 1997; DeRue et al., 2011). Empirically, evidence suggests that MBEP and *laissez-faire* leadership are strongly correlated, demonstrate similar relationships with outcome variables (e.g., Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2008), and represent a common underlying factor (e.g., Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Den Hartog et al., 1997).

Managers who display a passive leadership style model an apathetic, indifferent mode of behavior consistent with the "whatever" mentality that allows incivility to flourish (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Passive leaders are less likely to define and clarify behavioral expectations for their employees. They generally do not take proactive steps to model and reward appropriate conduct. Moreover, because incivility represents *low-intensity* behavior, it is likely that passive leaders may simply overlook or ignore acts of incivility among subordinates. Thus, it is unlikely that a passive leader will swiftly intervene to punish or correct uncivil behavior. Generally, passive leaders will not provide the needed normative presence to convey expectations regarding employees' behavior and their treatment of one another. Indeed, Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly (1998) determined that the less an employee believed that his or her manager would punish him or her for bad behaviors (operationalized as antisocial behaviors such as theft), the more likely she or he was to engage in such behaviors.

While passive managers do not necessarily treat employees in an uncivil manner, the spiral framework (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) suggests that the failure to actively promote positive social norms and take necessary preventative action to control negative behavior may foster informal environmental conditions in which workplace incivility will thrive. Thus, we expect a positive relationship between passive leadership and an employee's *behavioral* incivility. Further, if there is indeed a positive relationship between passive leadership and behavioral incivility, then an employee working for a passive leader will generally encounter greater incivility from his or her coworkers. In essence, behavioral and experienced incivility represent two sides of the same coin—employee A's behavioral incivility is employee B's experienced incivility. Accordingly, we also expect a positive relationship between passive leadership and *experienced* incivility.

Hypothesis 2a and 2b: Passive leadership will have positive direct effects on employees' (a) behavioral incivility and (b) experienced workplace incivility.

Indirect effect of passive leadership on behavioral incivility

As discussed previously, the spiral framework (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) suggests that there will be a positive relationship between experienced incivility and behavioral incivility (Hypothesis 1). When considered in conjunction with our second set of hypotheses, another possible avenue of leadership influence emerges. Namely, passive leadership may exert an *indirect* effect on behavioral incivility through its influence on experienced incivility. Again, employees of passive managers are expected to experience higher levels of incivility. Further, the spiral framework posits that employees who experience incivility tend to respond in kind. Data from Porath and Pearson (2010) suggest that the overwhelming majority of employees who experience incivility respond with incivility themselves. Taken together, we anticipate that an employee working for a passive leader will be more likely to experience incivility, which, in turn, will increase the likelihood that the employee will engage in behavioral incivility himself or herself.

Hypothesis 3: Passive leadership will have a positive indirect effect on behavioral incivility through experienced incivility.

Moderating effect of passive leadership on behavioral incivility

Andersson and Pearson's (1999) spiral framework views workplace incivility through a social interactionist paradigm (e.g., Lewin, 1936). In addition to suggesting that situational factors that promote informality (e.g., management practices and policies) will increase the *occurrence* of workplace incivility, the spiral framework posits that situational factors will also affect the *escalation* of incivility spirals. For instance, if there is no swift intervention at the occurrence of incivility, then a "tit-for-tat" incivility spiral may accelerate and spread throughout the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Managers who are actively engaged in leading their employees will conceivably step in and punish or correct a perpetrator of incivility. Such actions make it unnecessary for a victim to reciprocate the experienced incivility and strongly signal that incivility goes against workplace norms. Conversely, a leader who fails to intervene and does not punish or correct an offender fails to reinforce civility as the appropriate behavioral norm and implicitly signals that uncivil behaviors are acceptable. As a result, an employee who experiences incivility and is managed by a passive leader may be even more likely to exhibit incivility himself or herself.

In addition to the spiral framework, support for the role of leadership in moderating incivility spirals can be found in other prominent behavioral theories. For instance, social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) argues that individuals gather information from their social environment for cues regarding (un)acceptable behavior and its consequences. The combination of experiencing incivility along with passive leadership is likely to signal to employees that incivility is considered an acceptable behavioral response. In a similar vein, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) describes that the consequences (positive or negative) associated with a given behavior are critical

for the establishment of behavioral norms. In an organizational context, if managers do not address an employee's uncivil behavior (e.g., no punishment), other employees may infer that such behavior is tolerated, if not implicitly condoned (Pearson & Porath, 2004). Bandura highlighted this effect in his early work on social learning theory. In one experiment, children either observed that an aggressor was punished, was rewarded, or was neither punished nor rewarded for their aggressive behavior (Bandura, 1965). Results revealed that the children in both the reward and the no-consequences conditions engaged in similar levels of imitative aggressive behaviors and significantly more aggressive behaviors compared with those in the punishment condition. These findings suggest that the negative consequences of failing to punish bad behaviors, such as aggression or incivility, can be on par with rewarding such behaviors.

Furthermore, employees may simply grow careless in their own behavior if they witness that incivility goes unpunished (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and grow to believe that nobody else in their organization is concerned about civility (Pearson & Porath, 2004). Ultimately, passive leaders, who fail to intervene in the face of workplace incivility, may implicitly signal that uncivil behavior is an acceptable response to experienced incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Taken together, we expect that passive leadership will amplify the relationship between experienced and behavioral incivility. In other words, we expect that the indirect effect of passive leadership, through experienced incivility, should be stronger at high rather than low levels of passive leadership.

Hypothesis 4: Passive leadership will moderate the relationship between experienced and behavioral incivility. More specifically, the positive relationship between experienced incivility and behavioral incivility will be stronger at higher levels of passive leadership.

In an effort to minimize variance inflation common to single-source designs and to help ensure that any observed effects do not represent an artifact of the measurement source used, we test this set of hypotheses across two studies that incorporate multiple sources of data (e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). These studies are described in the following.

Study 1 Method

Participants and procedure

Employee–supervisor dyads were recruited using a snowball sampling technique. This sampling methodology has been employed in numerous prior studies assessing leadership and/or antisocial workplace behaviors (e.g., Ambrose, Schminke, & Mayer, 2013; Grant & Mayer 2009; Greenbaum, Mawritz, & Eissa, 2012; Holtz & Harold, 2013). Namely, undergraduate business students helped recruit participants into this study in exchange for extra credit. The authors e-mailed personalized messages to each recruit, with instructions on how to access the online surveys. The employee survey assessed their supervisor's leadership behavior and their own experiences with incivility. The supervisor surveys contained self-report measures of leadership behavior and items directed at their employees' behavioral incivility. A total of 182 employees and 143 supervisors completed the surveys. However, 24 respondents were flagged as careless responders. Three items from Meade and Craig (2011) were used to identify careless responders: (1) "This is just a check to ensure participants are not responding carelessly. Please simply select the option that corresponds to the word 'Sometimes' below" (other response options include never and always); (2) "Just another check. Please select the option that corresponds to the word 'Never' below"; and (3) "We know that some individuals rush through surveys and respond carelessly. In your honest opinion, should we use your data in our analyses for this study" (Yes or No). If an employee or supervisor was flagged for careless responding, both members of the dyad were eliminated from the sample. The final sample included 122 employee–supervisor dyads from numerous occupational fields (e.g., retail, health care, accounting, and public services). The average employee was female (61%), 32 years of age (range = 18–68 years), with 4 years' job tenure (range = 0.50–29 years). The average supervisor was

Table 1. Study 1 scale means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Age	33.20	13.41	—												
2 Gender	0.39	0.49	-.03	—											
3 Tenure with boss	4.00	5.15	.44**	.05	—										
4 Transformational	5.27	1.24	.02	-.05	.14	(.94)									
5 Transactional	5.10	1.16	-.01	-.02	.13	.88**	(.82)								
6 Passive	2.68	0.94	-.04	-.07	-.07	-.70**	-.64**	(.85)							
7 EWI	2.03	1.03	.06	-.05	-.07	-.40**	-.40**	.43**	(.91)						
8 Job tenure ^a	9.76	8.33	.39**	.13	.46**	.01	.02	-.01	-.07	—					
9 Transformational ^a	5.85	0.77	.06	.10	.14	.14	.19*	-.26**	-.06	.00	(.88)				
10 Transactional ^a	5.53	0.86	.06	.07	.21*	.22*	.25**	-.22*	-.10	.04	.83**	(.76)			
11 Passive ^a	2.50	0.74	.02	-.05	-.05	-.18*	-.21*	.34**	.30**	.14	-.47**	-.38**	(.72)		
12 BI ^a	1.66	0.84	.11	-.03	.14	-.21*	-.18*	.36**	.36**	.13	-.34**	-.26**	.53**	(.92)	
13 Withdrawal ^a	1.47	0.84	.18*	-.02	.11	-.13*	-.13	.30**	.25**	.26**	-.37**	-.33**	.39**	.59**	(.89)

Note. *n* = 158. Values in parentheses are internal consistency reliability estimates. EWI = experienced workplace incivility; BI = behavioral incivility.

^aSupervisor-reported data. *n* = 122.

***p* < .01, **p* < .05.

Table 2. Study 1 conditional mediated regression analyses involving behavioral incivility.

Dependent variable	Predictor	Employee-reported leadership					Supervisor-reported leadership					R ²
		b	95% CI	b ₁	95% CI ₁	R ²	b	95% CI	b ₁	95% CI ₁	R ²	
EWI	Age	.01	[0.00, 0.02]				.01	[0.00, 0.02]				
	Gender	-.11	[-0.41, 0.19]				.01	[-0.36, 0.38]				
	Tenure	-.01	[-0.04, 0.02]				-.01	[-0.05, 0.02]				
	Transformational	-.06	[-0.32, 0.20]				.24	[-0.20, 0.67]				
	Transactional	-.12	[-0.39, 0.14]				-.13	[-0.51, 0.24]				
	Passive	.32**	[0.10, 0.54]			.23***	.45***	[0.18, 0.73]				.11*
BI	Age	.00	[-0.01, 0.01]				.00	[-0.01, 0.01]				
	Gender	-.05	[-0.34, 0.24]				-.06	[-0.31, 0.20]				
	Tenure	.02	[0.00, 0.05]				.03*	[0.01, 0.06]				
	EWI	.22**	[0.07, 0.37]				.24***	[0.11, 0.37]				
	Transformational	-.03	[-0.29, 0.22]	.02	[-0.04, 0.11]		-.18	[-0.48, 0.12]	.06	[-0.03, 0.21]		
	Transactional	.11	[-0.15, 0.38]	-.05	[-0.17, 0.00]		.01	[-0.25, 0.26]	-.03	[-0.15, 0.04]		
Passive	.28**	[0.07, 0.49]	.08	[0.01, 0.25]	.22***	.44***	[0.24, 0.64]	.11	[0.01, 0.26]	.41***		
BI	Age	.00	[-0.01, 0.01]				.00	[-0.01, 0.01]				
	Gender	.01	[-0.26, 0.27]				-.03	[-0.28, 0.22]				
	Tenure	.02	[-0.01, 0.04]				.03*	[0.01, 0.06]				
	EWI	.11	[-0.04, 0.25]				.20*	[0.08, 0.33]				
	Transformational	.01	[-0.23, 0.24]	.02	[-0.01, 0.09]		-.16	[-0.45, 0.14]	.05	[-0.02, 0.17]		
	Transactional	.02	[-0.23, 0.26]	-.04	[-0.14, -0.01]		-.04	[-0.30, 0.21]	-.04	[-0.15, 0.02]		
Interaction	.27***	[0.15, 0.39]				.14*	[0.02, 0.26]					
Passive	.21*	[0.01, 0.40]	-.06 _{low}	[-0.18, 0.00]	.34***	.36*	[0.16, 0.56]	.05 _{low}	[-0.01, 0.18]	.44***		
			.04 _{average}	[0.00, 0.12]				.09 _{average}	[0.01, 0.23]			
			.14 _{high}	[0.02, 0.31]				.14 _{high}	[0.01, 0.33]			

Note. Low, average, and high subscripts indicate the conditional indirect effects of passive leadership on behavioral incivility at low (1 SD below the mean), average, and high (1 SD above the mean) levels of passive leadership, respectively. EWI = experienced workplace incivility; BI = behavioral incivility; Interaction = Passive Leadership × Experienced Workplace Incivility. ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05.

female (57%), 44 years of age (range = 19–66 years), with 9.8 years' job tenure (range = 0.50–39 years). Following Judge, Scott, and Ilies (2006) we collected names, e-mail addresses, company names, job titles, and Internet Protocol (IP) addresses to help ensure data integrity. Employees and supervisors were entered into a random drawing to win one of four \$50 electronic gift cards to Amazon.com.

Measures

Passive leadership (employee and supervisor reported) was measured with the eight items from the passive management-by-exception and *laissez-faire* subscales of the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ; Bass & Avolio, 1997). The items included in the MLQ are proprietary and cannot be reproduced here. The internal consistency reliability estimate ($\alpha = .85$) of the resulting scale surpassed the convention for acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978) and was consistent with previous research reporting reliability estimates in the .80–.90 range for this scale (e.g., Avolio et al., 1999; Druskat, 1994; Frooman, Mendelson, & Murphy, 2012). In addition to having employees assess their supervisor's leadership, supervisors self-reported their own leadership style using the leader self-report version of the MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

Experienced incivility was assessed with Cortina et al.'s (2001) seven-item measure. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which their coworkers had engaged in a variety of uncivil behaviors. Example items include "Addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately," "Put you down or was condescending to you in some way," and "Ignored or excluded you from professional camaraderie (e.g., social conversation)." The internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .91$) for this scale was consistent with past estimates in the .80–.95 range (e.g., Chen, Ferris, Kwan, Yan, Zhou, & Hong, 2013; Cortina et al., 2001; Ferguson, 2012).

Behavioral incivility (supervisor reported) was assessed using Blau and Andersson's (2005) modified version of Cortina et al.'s (2001) seven-item incivility scale. Specifically, rather than asking employees how frequently they had experienced incivility, supervisors were asked how often their employee had behaved with incivility. For example, supervisors reported how often their employee had "Addressed someone in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately." The behavioral incivility scale reliability ($\alpha = .92$) was consistent with past estimates ranging from .74 to .91 (e.g., Blau & Andersson, 2005).

Control variables included age, gender, tenure, and transformational and transactional leadership. Transactional leadership was assessed with the four-item contingent reward scale of the MLQ. Transformational leadership was assessed with the seven-item scale developed and validated by Carless, Wearing, and Mann (2000). In their validation study, Carless et al. found that this shortened scale demonstrated impressive internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .90$). As a few examples, respondents indicated the extent to which their boss does things like "Communicate a clear and positive vision of the future," "Instill pride and respect in others and inspire you by being highly competent," and "Encourage you to think about problems in new ways and question assumptions." Excluding demographics, all Study 1 responses were collected using 7-point scales ranging from 1 = *never* to 7 = *every day*. Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and scale reliabilities are presented in Table 1.

Study 1 Results

All hypotheses were tested using the PROCESS tool in SPSS 19.0. PROCESS is a flexible computation tool that integrates contemporary techniques (e.g., nonparametric bootstrapping procedures) optimal for testing conditional process models (Hayes, 2012a). As noted earlier, we collected *employee-reported* leadership and *supervisor-reported* leadership. Substantively, the results were consistent across the two sources of leadership data. Thus, rather than repeat the results across the two data sources, we focus on employee-reported leadership behavior in the following space and present the full results in Table 2.

First, we ran a simple process model (Model 4; Hayes, 2012b) specifying passive leadership as a predictor, experienced incivility as a mediator, and behavioral incivility as an outcome variable. Age, gender, tenure, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership were entered as control variables. In support of Hypothesis 1, the results indicated that experienced incivility was positively and significantly associated with behavioral incivility. Similarly, consistent with Hypotheses 2a and 2b, passive leadership was positively associated with both experienced incivility and behavioral incivility. Further, consistent with Hypothesis 3, bootstrapped estimates (calculated across 1000 samples) suggested that passive leadership had a significant indirect effect on behavioral incivility ($b_1 = .08$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.25]) through experienced incivility. We also tested for possible indirect effects of transformational and transactional leadership. There were no significant indirect effects for these variables (Table 2). Next, we tested a conditional process model (Model 74; Hayes, 2012b) that included passive leadership as a moderator of the mediator (experienced incivility) to outcome (behavioral incivility) relationship. Together, the variables accounted for 34% of the variance in behavioral incivility ($R^2 = .34$, $F(8, 114) = 7.26$, $p < .001$). Consistent with Hypothesis 4, there was a significant interaction between passive leadership and experienced incivility ($b = .27$, $t(121) = 4.55$, $p < .001$). Results suggested that the indirect effect of passive leadership, through experienced incivility, was negligible at low levels of passive leadership ($b_1 = -.06$, 95% CI [-0.18, 0.00]) and stronger at high levels of passive leadership ($b_1 = .14$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.31]).

Finally, we conducted a simple slopes analysis to further delineate the multiplicative effects of passive leadership and experienced incivility (controlling for transformational leadership, transactional leadership, age, gender, and tenure). The results are plotted in Figure 2. First, employee-reported passive leadership had significant positive relationships with behavioral incivility ($b = .49$, $t(121) = 4.52$, $p < .001$), at high levels (+1 *SD*) of experienced incivility. Conversely, at low levels (-1 *SD*) of experienced incivility, the effects of passive leadership on behavioral incivility ($b = -.08$, $t(121) = -0.63$, *ns*) were nonsignificant. Similarly, when we examined supervisor-reported leadership, there were significant positive effects of passive leadership on behavioral incivility ($b = .50$, $t(121) = 5.00$, $p < .001$) at high levels of experienced incivility. In contrast, passive leadership had no effect on behavioral incivility ($b = .22$, $t(121) = 1.64$, *ns*) at low levels of experienced incivility.

Supplemental analyses

The results presented earlier focus on the outcome of behavioral incivility, which can be described as one specific form of low-intensity deviant behavior. Interestingly, Andersson and Pearson (1999) also posited that incivility spirals can begin to take on a different shape when the spiral reaches a critical tipping point. At this tipping point, incivility can escalate to more severe forms of deviance such as withdrawal or aggression. Indeed, research strongly supports the notion that experiencing incivility positively influences employee CWBs including withdrawal behavior (Penney & Spector, 2005; Sliter, Sliter, & Jex, 2012). For instance, Sliter et al. (2012) found that employers who experienced incivility (from coworkers and customers) were more likely to be absent from work. Additionally, results from Penney and Spector (2005) support that employees who experienced incivility more frequently were more likely to also engage in CWBs. In a similar manner, passive leadership has been associated with a variety of negative employee attitudes and behaviors including employees' desire to leave the organization (Bernhard & O'Driscoll, 2011).

Although withdrawal behavior was not a central focus of the current research effort and we did not formulate *a priori* hypotheses involving withdrawal, our survey did include a four-item withdrawal scale from Spector et al. (2006). Specifically, supervisors were asked to indicate how often their employee had engaged in the following behaviors: "Came to work late without permission," "Stayed home from work and falsely claimed he/she was sick," "Took a longer break than he/she was supposed to take," and "Left work earlier than he/she was supposed to." Spector et al. (2006) reported an internal consistency reliability estimate of .63 for this scale.

First, the bivariate relationship between experienced incivility and behavioral withdrawal was positive and significant ($r = .25$, $p < .01$; Table 1). The results of a simple process model (Model 4; Hayes, 2012b; see Table 3 for full results) indicated that passive leadership was positively associated with withdrawal behavior. However, bootstrapped estimates suggested that passive leadership did not have a significant indirect effect on withdrawal

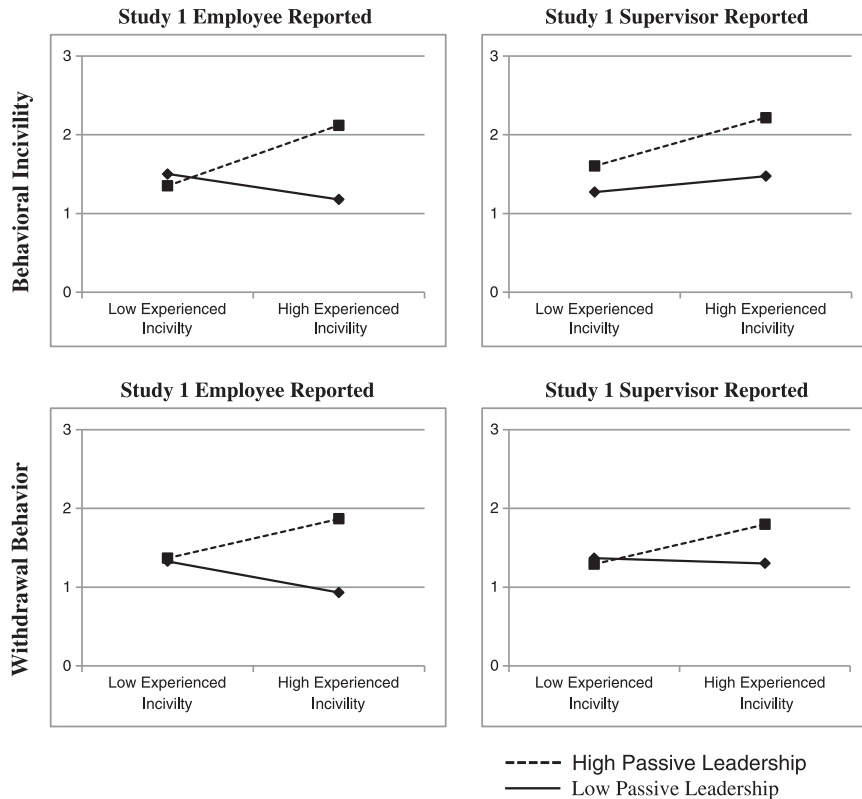


Figure 2. Interactive effects of passive leadership and experienced incivility on behavioral incivility and withdrawal behavior

behavior ($b_i = .04$, 95% CI $[-0.01, 0.19]$). Moving forward, we ran a conditional process model (Model 74; Hayes, 2012b) to examine the possibility that passive leadership might moderate the effect of experienced incivility on withdrawal behavior and whether significant indirect effects might occur at different levels of passive leadership. Together, the set of variables accounted for 23% of the variance in withdrawal behavior ($R^2 = .23$, $F(8, 112) = 4.24$, $p < .001$). There was a significant interaction between passive leadership and experienced incivility ($b = .22$, $t(121) = 3.40$, $p < .001$). The results did not support an indirect effect of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior (through experienced incivility) at any level of passive leadership (Table 3). Taken together, these results suggest that the effects of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior were direct and varied depending on employees' level of experienced incivility.

We then conducted a simple slopes analysis to further delineate the multiplicative effects of passive leadership and experienced incivility (controlling for transformational leadership, transactional leadership, age, gender, and tenure). The results are plotted in Figure 2. First, employee-reported passive leadership had significant positive relationships with withdrawal behavior ($b = .12$, $t(121) = 4.13$, $p < .001$), at high levels (+1 *SD*) of experienced incivility. Conversely, at low levels (−1 *SD*) of experienced incivility, the effects of withdrawal behavior ($b = .02$, $t(121) = 0.15$, *ns*) were nonsignificant. Similarly, when we examined supervisor-reported leadership, there were significant positive effects of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior ($b = .34$, $t(121) = 3.04$, $p < .01$) at high levels of experienced incivility. In contrast, passive leadership had no effect on withdrawal behavior ($b = -.06$, $t(121) = -0.39$, *ns*) at low levels of experienced incivility.

Study 1 supported our propositions that passive leadership has direct, indirect, and multiplicative effects on employees' level of behavioral incivility. Study 2 examines the same set of hypotheses using employee-reported

Table 3. Study 1 supplemental analyses involving withdrawal behavior.

Dependent variable	Predictor	Employee-reported leadership					Supervisor-reported leadership				
		<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i> ₁	95% CI ₁	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i> ₁	95% CI ₁	<i>R</i> ²
WB	Age	.01	[0.00, 0.02]				.01	[0.00, 0.02]			
	Gender	.00	[-0.31, 0.30]				.01	[-0.27, 0.30]			
	Tenure	.01	[-0.02, 0.04]				.02	[-0.01, 0.05]			
	EWI	.11	[-0.04, 0.27]				.16*	[0.02, 0.30]			
	Transformational	.11	[-0.16, 0.38]	.01	[-0.02, 0.11]		-.20	[-0.53, 0.13]	.04	[-0.01, 0.17]	
	Transactional	.01	[-0.26, 0.28]	-.03	[-0.16, 0.01]		-.12	[-0.40, 0.17]	-.02	[-0.15, 0.02]	
	Passive	.31**	[0.09, 0.53]	.04	[-0.01, 0.19]	.15**	.25*	[0.03, 0.46]	.07	[-0.00, 0.23]	.29***
WB	Age	.01	[0.00, 0.02]				.01	[0.00, 0.02]			
	Gender	.04	[-0.25, 0.33]				.05	[-0.23, 0.32]			
	Tenure	.00	[-0.02, 0.03]				.02	[-0.01, 0.05]			
	EWI	-.54**	[-0.95, -0.13]				-.37	[-0.75, 0.00]			
	Transformational	.14	[-0.12, 0.40]	.01	[-0.01, 0.07]		-.17	[-0.49, 0.15]	.03	[-0.01, 0.15]	
	Transactional	-.07	[-0.34, 0.19]	-.01	[-0.09, 0.02]		-.18	[-0.46, 0.10]	-.02	[-0.15, 0.01]	
	Interaction	.22***	[0.09, 0.35]				.19**	[0.07, 0.32]			
Passive	-.19	[-0.55, 0.17]	-.07 _{low}	[-0.27, 0.00]	.23***	-.24	[-0.63, 0.14]	-.02 _{low}	[-0.21, 0.06]	.34***	
								.01 _{average}	[-0.01, 0.18]		
								.09 _{high}	[-0.00, 0.30]		

Note. Low, average, and high subscripts indicate the conditional indirect effects of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior at low (1 SD below the mean), average, and high (1 SD above the mean) levels of passive leadership, respectively. The effects of the predictors on the mediating variable (EWI) are reported in Table 3. EWI = experienced workplace incivility; WB = withdrawal behavior; Interaction = Passive Leadership x Experienced Workplace Incivility.

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

Table 4. Study 2 scale means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Age	39.85	8.80	—											
2 Gender	0.69	0.46	-.12	—										
3 Tenure	6.81	5.37	.52**	-.08	—									
4 Transformational	5.06	1.08	.12	.11	-.02	—								
5 Transactional	4.96	0.99	.09	.14*	-.05	.86**	—							
6 Passive	3.41	1.20	-.18*	.15*	-.01	-.04	-.03	—						
7 EWI	2.50	1.32	-.13	.17*	-.08	-.17*	-.16*	.62**	—					
8 Transformational ^a	5.05	1.10	.11	.14*	-.04	.73**	.67**	-.01	-.05	—				
9 Transactional ^a	4.96	1.01	.11	.15*	-.06	.67**	.70**	.02	-.04	.87**	—			
10 Passive ^a	3.41	1.21	-.12	.12	.01	-.01	.00	.89**	.59**	-.02	.00	—		
11 BI ^a	2.49	1.43	-.09	.19**	-.06	-.01	-.02	.66**	.79**	-.05	-.03	.68**	—	
12 Withdrawal ^a	2.46	1.39	-.10	.23**	-.10	-.06	-.07	.55**	.73**	-.08	-.04	.55**	.81**	—

Note. *n* = 210. Values in parentheses are internal consistency reliability estimates. EWI = experienced workplace incivility; BI = behavioral incivility.
^aCoworker-reported data.
 ***p* < .01, **p* < .05.

and coworker-reported leadership behaviors and coworker reports of behavioral incivility. In this study, we focused on peer reports to help limit the possibility that the results obtained in Study 1 may have been an artifact of the particular measurement approach used (i.e., supervisor reports). Moreover, we specifically sought to include peer reports of behavioral incivility in this research because some scholars have suggested that peers may have greater insight into negative behaviors of their coworkers that might be purposely hidden from supervisors or that otherwise occur outside of the view of management (Fox, Spector, Goh, Bruursema, & Kessler 2012; Latham & Mann, 2006).

Study 2 Methodology

Participants and procedure

Participants were recruited using the Study Response Project (SRP) hosted at Syracuse University. This service is used widely by organizational scholars (e.g., Judge, Ilies, & Scott, 2006; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007; Wallace & Chen, 2005). SRP panelists were prescreened to find individuals willing to recruit a coworker (with the same direct supervisor) to participate. A total of 328 potential (165 coworker dyads) respondents were identified and sent links to the online survey. A total of 289 individuals completed the survey, and we were able to connect 135 matching dyads ($n = 270$). However, 44 respondents did not work for the same supervisor as their coworker, and we identified 16 careless responders. These responders were screened, leaving a final sample of 210 employees (105 dyads) from a variety of occupations. The average respondent was male (69%), 39.9 years of age (range = 22–66 years), with 6.8 years' job tenure (range = 0.50–38 years). IP addresses, job titles, and employer names were collected to help ensure data integrity (e.g., Judge, Scott, & Ilies, 2006). Each participant received a \$5 electronic gift card to Amazon.com.

Measures

All of the Study 2 measures were identical to the items used in Study 1, with the exception that peers (rather than supervisors) reported on the employees' behavioral incivility and supervisors' leadership behavior. Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and scale reliabilities are presented in Table 4.

Study 2 Results

As mentioned earlier, we assessed employee and coworker reports of their managers' leadership behaviors. The results of our analyses were nearly identical across these data sources. Accordingly, we describe the results of employee-reported leadership behavior in the following space and present results for both data sources in Table 5. We tested a simple mediated model (Model 4) using PROCESS for SPSS (Hayes, 2012b). Consistent with Hypothesis 1, there was a robust positive relationship between experienced and behavioral incivility, controlling for age, gender, tenure, transformational leadership, and transactional leadership. In support of Hypotheses 2a and 2b, the results suggested that passive leadership was significantly and positively related to experienced incivility and behavioral incivility. Additionally, bootstrapped analyses suggested that passive leadership had a significant indirect effect on behavioral incivility ($b_1 = .47$, 95% CI [0.34, 0.60]) through experienced incivility. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was also supported. Next, we tested a conditional process model (Model 74; Hayes, 2012b) that included passive leadership as a moderator of the mediator (experienced incivility) to outcome (behavioral incivility) relationship. Together, the variables accounted for 70% of the variance in behavioral incivility ($R^2 = .70$, $F(8, 200) = 56.90$, $p < .001$). Consistent with Hypothesis 4, there was a significant interaction between passive

Table 5. Study 2 conditional mediated regression analyses involving behavioral incivility.

Dependent variable	Predictor	Employee-reported leadership					Coworker-reported leadership				
		<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i> ₁	95% CI ₁	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i> ₁	95% CI ₁	<i>R</i> ²
EWI	Age	.01	[-0.01, 0.03]				.00	[-0.02, 0.02]			
	Gender	.29	[-0.02, 0.60]				.30	[-0.03, 0.62]			
	Tenure	-.03	[-0.06, 0.00]				-.02	[-0.05, 0.01]			
	Transformational	-.11	[-0.37, 0.14]				-.02	[-0.28, 0.24]			
	Transactional	-.12	[-0.39, 0.16]				-.07	[-0.36, 0.22]			
	Passive	.67***	[0.55, 0.79]			.43***	.63***	[0.51, 0.75]			.38***
BI	Age	.01	[-0.01, 0.02]				.01	[-0.01, 0.02]			
	Gender	.10	[-0.15, 0.35]				.17	[-0.08, 0.41]			
	Tenure	-.01	[-0.03, 0.02]				-.01	[-0.03, 0.01]			
	EWI	.70***	[0.59, 0.81]				.64***	[0.53, 0.74]			
	Transformational	.12	[-0.08, 0.33]	-.08	[-0.28, 0.07]		-.04	[-0.23, 0.16]	-.01	[-0.18, 0.16]	
	Transactional	.00	[-0.22, 0.22]	-.08	[-0.24, 0.10]		.01	[-0.21, 0.22]	-.04	[-0.20, 0.14]	
Passive	.32***	[0.19, 0.44]	.47	[0.34, 0.60]	.68***	.39***	[0.28, 0.51]	.40	[0.29, 0.53]	.71***	
BI	Age	.01	[-0.01, 0.02]				.01	[-0.01, 0.02]			
	Gender	.12	[-0.13, 0.36]				.19	[-0.04, 0.43]			
	Tenure	-.01	[-0.03, 0.02]				-.01	[-0.03, 0.01]			
	EWI	.63***	[0.50, 0.76]				.52***	[0.41, 0.64]			
	Transformational	.10	[-0.11, 0.30]	-.13	[-0.27, -0.01]		-.10	[-0.29, 0.09]	-.04	[-0.15, 0.06]	
	Transactional	-.05	[-0.27, 0.18]	-.13	[-0.28, 0.00]		-.04	[-0.25, 0.17]	-.03	[-0.16, 0.07]	
Interaction	.07*	[0.00, 0.13]				.12***	[0.06, 0.17]				
Passive	.32***	[0.20, 0.44]	.37 _{low}	[0.20, 0.52]	.70***	.39***	[0.28, 0.50]	.24 _{low}	[0.12, 0.40]	.73***	
			.42 _{average}	[0.29, 0.55]				.33 _{average}	[0.23, 0.46]		
			.47 _{high}	[0.36, 0.59]				.42 _{high}	[0.31, 0.53]		

Note. Low, average, and high subscripts indicate the conditional indirect effects of passive leadership on behavioral incivility at low (1 SD below the mean), average, and high (1 SD above the mean) levels of passive leadership, respectively. EWI = experienced workplace incivility; BI = behavioral incivility; Interaction = Passive Leadership × Experienced Workplace Incivility. ****p* < .001, ***p* < .01, **p* < .05.

leadership and experienced incivility ($b = .07$, $t(206) = 1.99$, $p < .05$). Results suggested that the indirect effect of passive leadership, through experienced incivility, was more robust at high ($b_1 = .47$, 95% CI [0.36, 0.59]) versus low levels of passive leadership ($b_1 = .37$, 95% CI [0.20, 0.52]).

Next, we conducted a simple slopes analysis to delineate the multiplicative effects of passive leadership and experienced incivility (controlling for employee demographics and transformational and transactional leadership). The interactive effects are depicted in Figure 3. First, employee-reported passive leadership had significant positive relationships with behavioral incivility ($b = .40$, $t(206) = 5.32$, $p < .001$), at high levels (+1 *SD*) of experienced incivility. Comparatively, the effect of passive leadership on behavioral incivility was weaker at low levels (−1 *SD*) of experienced incivility ($b = .23$, $t(206) = 3.06$, $p < .01$). With respect to coworker-reported leadership, we found a significant positive effect of passive leadership on behavioral incivility ($b = .55$, $t(206) = 8.10$, $p < .001$) at high levels of experienced incivility. In comparison, the effect of passive leadership on behavioral incivility ($b = .24$, $t(206) = 3.51$, $p < .01$) was weaker in conjunction with low experienced incivility.

Supplemental analyses

Subsequently, we repeated these analyses with withdrawal behavior as the outcome variable. First, as demonstrated in Table 4, the bivariate relationship between experienced incivility and behavioral withdrawal was positive and significant ($r = .73$, $p < .01$). The results of a simple process model indicated that passive leadership was positively associated with withdrawal behavior (see Table 6 for full results). Bootstrapped estimates suggested that passive

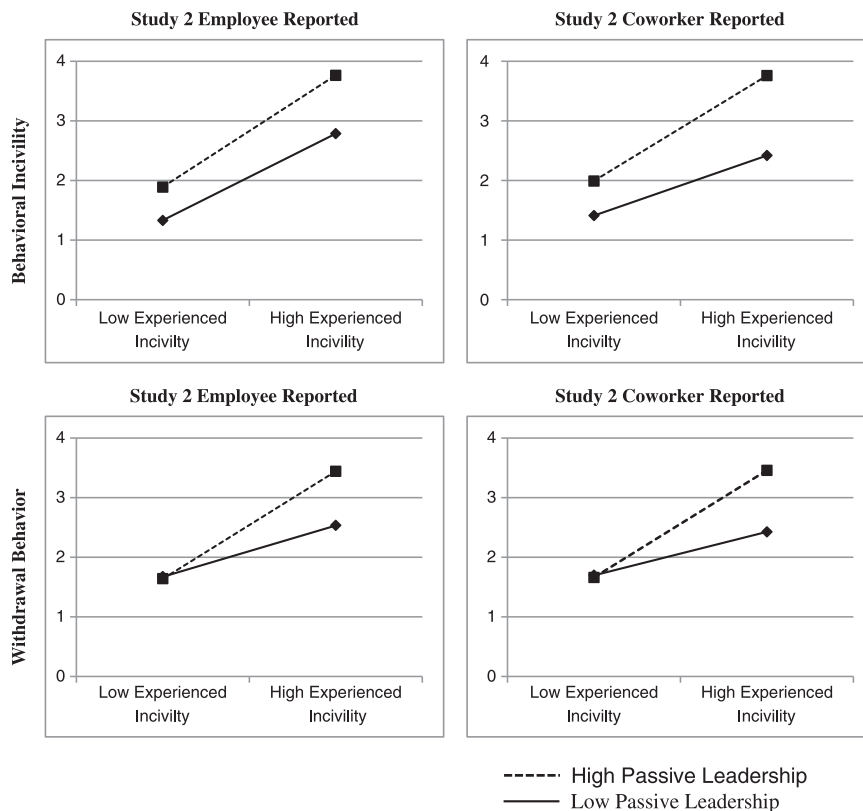


Figure 3. Interactive effects of passive leadership and experienced incivility on behavioral incivility and withdrawal behavior

leadership had a significant indirect effect on withdrawal behavior ($b_1 = .44$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.60]). Subsequently, we ran a conditional process model that included passive leadership as a moderator of the experienced incivility to behavioral incivility relationship. Together, the set of variables accounted for 60% of the variance in withdrawal behavior ($R^2 = .60$, $F(8, 197) = 36.82$, $p < .001$). There was a significant interaction between passive leadership and experienced incivility ($b = .15$, $t(205) = 3.95$, $p < .001$). Results suggested that the indirect effect of passive leadership, through experienced incivility, was more robust at high ($b_1 = .46$, 95% CI [0.34, 0.60]) versus low levels of passive leadership ($b_1 = .22$, 95% CI [0.09, 0.39]).

Lastly, we conducted a simple slopes analysis to delineate the multiplicative effects of passive leadership and experienced incivility (controlling for employee demographics and transformational and transactional leadership). The interactive effects are also depicted in Figure 3. First, employee-reported passive leadership had a significant positive relationship with withdrawal behavior ($b = .37$, $t(205) = 4.43$, $p < .001$), at high levels (+1 *SD*) of experienced incivility. The effect of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior was not significant at low levels of experienced incivility ($b = -.02$, $t(205) = -0.18$, *ns*). With respect to coworker-reported leadership, we found a significant positive effect of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior ($b = .42$, $t(205) = 5.37$, $p < .001$) at high levels of experienced incivility. In comparison, the effect of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior ($b = -.02$, $t(205) = -0.29$, *ns*) was weaker in conjunction with low experienced incivility.

Discussion

Findings from our research underscore the role of leadership in facilitating or impeding the spread of workplace incivility. More specifically, our findings suggest that passive leadership may impact workplace incivility in multiple ways. Passive leadership exerts a direct effect on employees' behavioral incivility as well as indirectly influences behavioral incivility through increasing the level of incivility that employees experience at work. Interestingly, passive leadership and experienced incivility also have multiplicative effects on behavioral incivility (Figures 2 and 3). As a result, the indirect passive leadership-behavioral incivility effect is conditional, such that stronger indirect effects occur at higher levels of passive leadership. Substantively, our results suggest that employees who work under a passive manager are more likely to encounter workplace incivility and behave in an uncivil manner themselves.

These findings help extend the scholarly understanding of the spiral framework by identifying an important situational factor (passive leadership) that contributes to the proliferation of incivility in workplaces. We demonstrated effects of passive leadership on incivility, while controlling for the effects of transformational and transactional leadership. Across both studies, only passive leadership yielded significant effects on experienced and behavioral incivility. The findings involving passive leadership are in keeping with research that suggests that negative social interactions may generally be more harmful than socially supportive interactions are helpful (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001).

Further, results from our supplemental analyses support the finding that experiencing incivility is positively related to employee withdrawal behaviors (Sliter et al., 2012). Our data also suggest a consistent direct, positive, effect of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior, across both Studies 1 and 2. Additionally, we found support for an interactive effect between passive leadership and experienced incivility; such that employees who experienced incivility and also worked under passive managers were significantly more likely to engage in withdrawal behaviors. Substantively, these supplemental findings provide further support for Andersson and Pearson's (1999) spiral framework by demonstrating the escalating effects of experiencing incivility. Chiefly, employees who experience incivility may answer not only by behaving with incivility toward coworkers but also by engaging in withdrawal behaviors that undermine organizational success. Taken together, these findings underscore both the deleterious impact of incivility on workers and workplaces and the need for managerial intervention to curb the escalation of responses to incivility.

Again, passive leadership is characterized by an underlying reticence to respond until a situation can no longer be ignored. The ambiguous and low-intensity nature of incivility likely contributes to passive managers' propensity to overlook, ignore, or altogether fail to recognize uncivil behavior. Because passive leaders may be less inclined to

Table 6. Study 2 supplemental analyses involving withdrawal behavior.

Dependent variable	Predictor	Employee-reported leadership					Coworker-reported leadership				
		<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i> _i	95% CI _i	<i>R</i> ²	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i> _i	95% CI _i	<i>R</i> ²
WB	Age	.01	[-0.01, 0.03]				.01	[-0.01, 0.03]			
	Gender	.30*	[0.02, 0.59]				.33*	[0.05, 0.62]			
	Tenure	-.01	[-0.04, 0.00]				-.01	[-0.04, 0.01]			
	EWI	.66***	[0.53, 0.79]				.64***	[0.52, 0.76]			
	Transformational	.11	[-0.12, 0.35]	-.07	[-0.23, 0.08]		-.16	[-0.39, 0.07]	-.03	[-0.19, 0.15]	
	Transactional	-.10	[-0.36, 0.15]	-.07	[-0.23, 0.10]		.10	[-0.15, 0.36]	-.04	[-0.21, 0.13]	
	Passive	.18**	[0.04, 0.32]	.44	[0.28, 0.60]	.57***	.20**	[0.07, 0.33]	.41	[0.27, 0.54]	.58***
WB	Age	.01	[-0.01, 0.03]				.01	[-0.01, 0.03]			
	Gender	.34*	[0.06, 0.62]				.36**	[0.09, 0.64]			
	Tenure	-.01	[-0.04, 0.01]				-.02	[-0.05, 0.01]			
	EWI	.00	[-0.35, 0.35]				-.09	[-0.41, 0.24]			
	Transformational	.05	[-0.18, 0.27]	-.09	[-0.24, 0.01]		-.25*	[-0.47, -0.02]	-.07	[-0.19, 0.04]	
	Transactional	-.20	[-0.45, 0.05]	-.14	[-0.26, -0.04]		.04	[-0.20, 0.29]	-.09	[-0.23, 0.03]	
	Interaction	.15***	[0.07, 0.22]				.16***	[0.10, 0.23]			
	Passive	-.19	[-0.41, 0.04]	.22 _{low}	[0.09, 0.39]	.60***	-.21	[-0.42, 0.00]	.18 _{low}	[0.05, 0.32]	.62***
			.34 _{average}	[0.23, 0.49]				.30 _{average}	[0.19, 0.44]		
			.46 _{high}	[0.34, 0.60]				.43 _{high}	[0.31, 0.57]		

Note. Low, average, and high subscripts indicate the conditional indirect effects of passive leadership on withdrawal behavior at low (1 SD below the mean), average, and high (1 SD above the mean) levels of passive leadership, respectively. The effects of the predictors on the mediating variable (EWI) are reported in Table 5. EWI = experienced workplace incivility; WB = withdrawal behavior; Interaction = Passive Leadership × Experienced Workplace Incivility.
 ****p* < .001, ***p* < .01, **p* < .05.

actively promote workplace civility norms or interject when said norms are violated, organizations might realize benefits by evaluating leadership style during the managerial selection process and screening out candidates who are inclined to engage in passive leadership. Further, to help remove ambiguity surrounding when managerial intervention is appropriate, organizations would be well advised to establish a zero-tolerance policy for incivility and clarify the penalties for behaving with incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2013). Training programs aimed at clarifying behaviors that constitute incivility, how to recognize it, and how to best react may help encourage passive managers to intervene in the face of incivility. If a subordinate notifies his or her manager about an experienced incivility, any potential ambiguity that a manager might feel in deciding whether or how to respond is, in essence, eliminated. Managers would have a clear set of guidelines for recognizing and responding to incivility.

To underscore the severity of incivility and need for managerial intervention, incivility training should make clear the personal and organizational financial costs associated with workplace incivility. Managers should also be trained to effectively model incivility. Evidence suggests that at least 25% of employees who admitted to behaving uncivilly indicated they did so because they saw their managers behaving uncivilly. Porath and Pearson (2013, p. 118) note that as a starting point, managers should “turn off your iPhone during meetings, pay attention to questions, and follow up on promises.” Because leaders set the tone for acceptable workplace conduct, civil behavior should begin with the leader himself or herself.

It is conceivable that otherwise well-intentioned managers could mistakenly conclude that passive leadership is an effective management style. For instance, managers might wish to avoid being perceived as “micromanaging” their subordinates. Similarly, managers might understand that providing autonomy can foster motivation among employees (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Consequently, some managers might assume that a “hands-off” approach to leadership is beneficial. Organizations may benefit from efforts designed to help managers recognize that providing employee autonomy and demonstrating effective leadership are not mutually exclusive. For example, providing autonomy can be accomplished simply by allowing flexibility in how, or when, employees will accomplish particular work activities. The provision of autonomy does not conflict with core leadership duties such as providing developmental opportunities, setting goals, providing feedback, rewarding good performance, and resolving disputes. Thus, organizations may benefit from training managers to recognize the difference between job enrichment strategies (e.g., provision of autonomy) and passive leadership.

Finally, aside from leadership interventions, organizations may benefit from considering civility in their employee selection processes (Porath & Pearson, 2013). For instance, Zappos, a company widely regarded for fostering outstanding employee relationships, considers how job applicants behave toward the people that they encounter throughout the entirety of their visit. Otherwise, highly qualified individuals are eliminated from consideration if recruiters learn, for example, that an applicant was impolite to a Zappos shuttle bus driver (Neison, 2013). Additionally, assessing applicant values might aid in selection efforts. Findings from Holtz and Harold (2013) indicate that individuals with higher justice-related values (valuing treating others with dignity and respect) were significantly less likely to retaliate when treated unjustly. In a similar vein, employees who endorse values for civility and respectful treatment might be less likely to instigate or reciprocate incivility in the workplace.

Limitations and future directions

Although we feel this study has many insights to offer, our research focused on a single possible mediating mechanism. We hope that future research will build upon this study by identifying additional processes through which passive leadership affects behavioral incivility. For instance, it is possible that not receiving adequate levels of leadership is a source of stress for employees. When employees are stressed, they are more likely to act out with incivility (Spector, 1978). Thus, future research might model stress as an intervening mechanism through which passive leadership escalates workplace incivility. Second, a defining feature of incivility is ambiguity of intent. Because of this, intentionality must be inferred by targets and observers when making sense of an uncivil behavior. Investigations focused on the attributions that others make for workplace incivility would yield rich insights in

understanding why, when, and how workplace incivility affects targets and observers. Lastly, we allude to the potential of passive leaders to create environments in which incivility flourishes. However, our research focused on measurements at the individual level of analysis. Scholars suggest a general climate of informality contributes to the increased prevalence of incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). As such, research moving forward would benefit from studying the workplace climate as a mediating or moderating mechanism affecting incivility.

We should also note that the nature of our data does not allow for inferences of causality between experienced and behavioral incivility; thus, we do not examine the incivility spiral in the truest sense of the term. An incivility spiral is a social interaction between parties over time. To fully capture how this spiral is initiated and unfolds would require longitudinal investigations. Additionally, although we found strong support for our hypotheses across Studies 1 and 2, the magnitude of effects varied depending on data source. Not surprisingly, supervisors tended to rate themselves more favorably (e.g., less passive and more transformational) compared with subordinates. This has implications for the manner with which future research assesses leader behaviors. Namely, relying solely on leader reports of behaviors could lead to underestimation of effects or potentially spurious results.

As conceptualized by the full-range leadership model (Avolio, Sosik, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1997), we treat passive leadership as a form of ineffective leadership. However, we recognize that passive leadership might not be universally viewed as a negative leadership style. As mentioned earlier, it is possible that some passive leaders associate a more hands-off approach with providing their subordinates with autonomy. If employees similarly attribute their managers' passive style to attempts at providing autonomy, rather than apathy or incompetence, the negative effects of employing a passive leadership style might be mitigated. Moreover, it is possible that the negative effect of passive leadership has cultural contingencies. For instance, employees might be expected to react more negatively to passive leaders in cultures characterized by high power distance (compared with low power distance), where the boss is viewed as an ultimate authority figure and expected to take an active role in managing employees. The overwhelming majority of research on passive leadership has occurred in lower-power-distance cultures (e.g., the United States) and has to this point been associated with negative outcomes (e.g., lower satisfaction; DeRue et al., 2011). However, these negative effects might be exacerbated even further in higher-power-distance cultures (e.g., Japan). We recommend that future researchers explore culture factors that might moderate the effect of passive leadership on employee attitudes and behaviors.

Finally, there are myriad additional leader traits and behaviors that merit further investigation beyond the constructs examined in this article. For instance, abusive leadership has become a popular leadership construct, and research suggests that employees of abusive leaders are more apt to, themselves, behave badly (Mawritz, Mayer, Hoobler, Wayne, & Marinova, 2012). As another example, supervisors who display ethical leadership might help establish behavioral norms that would effectively deter the occurrence of workplace incivility. While there are certainly other possible avenues for exploration, as noted at the outset of this paper, our goal was to demonstrate effects of leader inaction (passive leadership). Given this is, to our knowledge, the first study to empirically link leadership to incivility, future research can build on our findings to fully elucidate the role of various leader behaviors, traits, and characteristics in facilitating or impeding workplace incivility.

This paper also has a number of strengths. As noted, this was the first empirical investigation to link leadership behavior to workplace incivility. We tested hypotheses across multiple studies that included employees from a wide range of occupations to enhance the generalizability of our results. Specifically, Studies 1 and 2 test the proposed hypotheses using multiple sources (employees, supervisors, and coworkers) of leadership data and integrate behavioral incivility across two data sources (supervisors and coworkers). Hypotheses were fully supported across all data sources. Further, we demonstrated effects of passive leadership while controlling for transformational and transactional leadership.

Conclusion

Workplace incivility has important consequences for individuals and costs organizations millions of dollars annually (Porath & Pearson, 2013). The results of this research suggest that incivility is more likely to occur under the

supervision of passive leaders. We, therefore, advocate the sentiments of previous scholars (e.g., Aasland, Skogstad, Notelaers, Nielsen, & Einarsen, 2010) that passive leadership should be considered a form of destructive leadership rather than simply the absence of constructive behavior. We encourage researchers to continue investigations into the effects of the full range of leadership behaviors (e.g., passive, ethical, and abusive) on the prevalence of workplace incivility to enhance our understanding of the factors that contribute to (or deter) the spread of incivility. Once incivility creeps into a workplace, it can spread like a virus. Without proper management intervention, uncivil behavior can quickly spiral throughout a workforce and ultimately impact an organization's bottom line.

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