Explaining Incivility in the Workplace: The Effects of Personality and Culture

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Abstract

This study examines individual and cultural antecedents of incivility in the workplace, using a sample of MBAs and EMBAs from Taiwan and the United States. We predicted that individual achievement orientation would enhance incivility, based on Dollard's frustration aggression hypothesis, and that those who were higher in direct conflict self-efficacy (i.e., beliefs in one's skills in managing direct conflict) would be higher in incivility. These predictions were supported. We also predicted, and found, that collectivism orientation constrains these main effects, so that for those high in collectivism, the impact of achievement orientation and direct conflict self-efficacy is weak or nonexistent. Implications for conflict management are discussed.

Workplace incivility has recently received much attention from organization researchers (e.g., Anderson & Pearson, 1999; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Penney & Spector, 2005). Defined as ''low intensity deviance behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target'' (Anderson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457), incivility is characterized by rudeness and disregard for others. Compared with aggression and violent behavior, incivility is less intense and less transparent in intent, but more prevalent in organizations (Pearson, Anderson, & Porath, 2000). Incivility itself may decrease productivity and job satisfaction (Lim & Cortina, 2005; Penney & Spector, 2005). More seriously, it can be a precursor of much more aggressive and violent acts (Anderson & Pearson, 1999; Neuman & Baron, 1997; Pearson et al., 2000). The empirical evidence of incivility so far, however, has been exclusively focused on Western samples, which account for roughly 27% of humankind (Triandis, 1994). Given important differences between Westerners and others, especially

on cultural orientations such as individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1994), it is important to examine predictors of incivility using samples with a broader range of cultural orientations.

In this article, we argue that culture, as a shared system of norms that guides beliefs, feelings, and behaviors (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), plays a key role in regulating incivility. We examine the causes of incivility using samples with different cultural orientations and provide a culturally informed theoretical framework for thinking about incivility. Specifically, we want to contribute to the literature by examining whether a collectivism orientation constrains incivility behaviors. Our attempt is important because, with globalization, the chance that managers interact with managers from other cultures is more likely than before. Knowledge about the effects of culture on incivil behavior will help people avoid misunderstandings in international business that can lead to conflict escalation (e.g., Morris et al., 1998; Pearson et al., 2000). Although this study does not directly examine incivility between members of different cultures, knowledge about the effects of cultural orientations may help guide those who do meet with people with different cultural orientations.

In addition, previous studies have mainly focused on the consequences of incivility, while few have focused on its antecedents. This article takes a meso-level paradigm (e.g., Hackman, 2003; House, Rousseau, & Thomashunt, 1995), linking macro and micro concepts to build an integrated framework to explore the antecedents of incivility. We attempt to explore this linkage by using cultural orientation as macro-level (societal) concepts and dispositional factors as micro-level (individual) concepts. This process is similar to the interactional psychology perspective (Lewin, 1936), in which both individual factors and contextual factors combine to influence behavior. In the present article, besides cultural orientations, we propose two individual-level antecedents of incivility. The first is *achievement orientation*, i.e., the strength of individual's motivation to achieve. We suggest that existing evidence concerning the frustration–aggression hypothesis (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Spector, 1975, 1997) is valid in examining the relationship between achievement orientation and incivility. That is, if people have a goal and are blocked from reaching that objective, the experience of frustration should lead to incivility.

The second individual factor we examine is the *direct conflict self-efficacy*, i.e., a person's self-efficacy regarding direct confrontations in conflict resolution. A person's direct conflict self-efficacy may lead that person to act on desires to be uncivil. Drawing on Bandura's (1986, Wood & Bandura, 1989) social cognitive theory, we propose that a person's judgment of personal capabilities in handling conflict directly and the strength of that belief will intensify incivility behaviors. The second purpose of present study is to test whether these two individual-level factors (achievement orientation and direct conflict self-efficacy) have an impact on incivility. Moreover, we attempt to test a culture orientation × individual differences interaction model, hypothesizing that a collectivism orientation mitigates the impacts of individual factors on incivility. Figure 1 presents an overview of our hypothesized model. We tested our hypotheses by conducting a survey with a sample of 268 MBAs and EMBAs at universities in Taiwan and the United States.
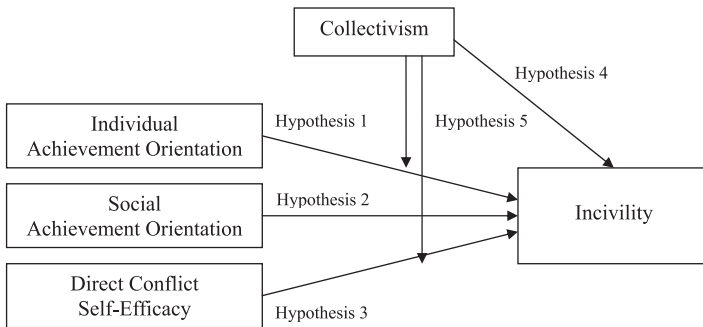
Figure 1. The hypothesized model.

Literature Review

Incivility and Its Antecedents

Workplace incivility, as mistreatment in social interaction, is characterized by rudeness, discourtesy, or displaying a lack of regard for others in the workplace (Anderson & Pearson, 1999). Examples of incivility include making nasty and demeaning comments to others, cutting people off while speaking, and undermining one's credibility in front of others (Pearson et al., 2000).

Incivility is associated with (but different from) some existing constructs, such as aggression, violence, and counterproductive workplace behavior (CWB) (Anderson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson et al., 2000; Penney & Spector, 2005). *Aggression* is any form of behavior directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1989). While the intent and the target of aggression are clear, incivility is ambiguous in both respects. For example, ignoring others is a type of incivility. When one ignores others, the ignorance can be perceived differently from the eyes of the instigator, the target, or observers so that the intent and the target of such an uncivil behavior are ambiguous. *Violence* is physical aggression with high intensity (Baron & Neuman, 1996). Compared with violence, incivility is much less intensive, and the intent to harm is not transparent. Incivility overlaps with CWB to some extent, but the intent of CWB is more transparent than incivility. Counterproductive workplace behavior refers to behavior by employees that harms an organization or its members (Spector & Fox, 2002), including acts such as theft, sabotage, verbal abuse, withholding of effort, lying, refusing to cooperate, and physical assault. In addition, CWB includes both intensive (e.g., theft and sabotage) and less intensive (e.g., withholding of effort) behaviors whereas workplace incivility refers only to mistreatment with low intensity by actors in a workplace.

Since incivility, compared with other related behaviors, is more prevalent and may be the precursor to more aggressive behaviors (Anderson & Pearson, 1999), scholars have paid much attention to the consequences of incivility, including counterproductive work

behavior (e.g., Penney & Spector, 2005), or how incivility escalates (e.g., Pearson et al., 2000). However, the antecedents of incivility have received little empirical investigation. In this article, we explore what leads to incivility. Specifically, we propose that the *Frustration–Aggression Hypothesis* (FAH; Dollard et al., 1939) is a useful framework in the investigation.

According to FAH, if people have a goal and are blocked from reaching that objective, the experience of frustration often leads to aggression. Although the FAH focuses on aggression as one way to act out in response to frustration, it is quite likely that frustration could lead to similar, albeit milder, reactions. In other words, aggression is one important response to frustration, but others are likely to occur, too (Chen & Spector, 1992; Fox & Spector, 1999). Specifically, it is likely that one who feels frustration will behave more uncivilly than one who does not (Spector, 1975, 1997; Worchel, 1974). In the present study, we propose to extend the FAH to examine incivility.

Many empirical studies have provided support for the FAH (see a recent review by Berkowitz, 1989). For example, Worchel's (1974) study found that when subjects were given the opportunity to act aggressively against the experimenter, those who had experienced frustration (i.e., the elimination of behavioral freedom) were more aggressive than those who had not. Kulik and Brown (1979) reported that among the subjects who were rejected by the experimental confederates, those who *expected* a high success rate tended to exhibit more aggressive behaviors (i.e., slamming down the phone, making harsh comments, etc.) than those whose expectations were lower.

Organization researchers have introduced FAH to examine organizational phenomena (Spector, 1975, 1997), including CWB (Fox & Spector, 1999) and organizational aggression (Chen & Spector, 1992). Compared with original FAH, which mainly focuses on situational cues or events, recent organizational FA theories have made two significant improvements. One is that affective mediators (such as anger) are included to explain why frustration events may lead to aggression behaviors (e.g., Fox & Spector, 1999). The other is that dispositional factors (rather than only frustration stressors) have been examined as antecedents of frustration and aggression as well. It has been found that people with high levels of trait anger, trait anxiety (Fox & Spector, 1999), and negative affectivity (Penney & Spector, 2005) were more likely to feel frustration and to take aggressive behavioral responses.

In the present article, we investigate the antecedents of incivility by using the framework of FAH, but from a different perspective. We expect that both cultural orientation and dispositional factors (e.g., the strength of achievement orientation of individuals and direct conflict self-efficacy) can also result in higher or lower levels of frustration. Building on the FAH, we argue in the next sections that cultural orientation, dispositional factors, and their interactions influence workplace incivility.

Achievement Orientation and Incivility

Many Western scholars have suggested that people vary in terms of how strongly they hold individual goals. The classical studies conducted by McClelland and colleagues (e.g., McClelland, 1961; McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953), for instance, asserted that a person's propensity to strive for personal excellence largely accounts for

his or her success. Based on this work, we define *individual achievement orientation* as the intent to achieve goals that are mainly self-focused. What is the implication of individual achievement orientation on incivility? We suggest that given that all people are likely to have some goals blocked, those who have a stronger focus on individual achievement goals are more likely to experience frustration than those with weaker goals. For example, in social psychology (Weaver & Brickman, 1974) and consumer psychology (e.g., Oliver, 1977), it has been robustly found that expectancy impacts satisfaction through a disconfirmation process (Expectancy–Disconfirmation Framework). Generally, people with high expectations are more likely to feel dissatisfaction because it is more difficult in those cases for outcomes to match expectation levels (e.g., negative disconfirmation). In the literature on negotiation and conflict, researchers have found that high expectations before negotiation result in less satisfaction with negotiation outcomes (Oliver, Balakrishna, & Barry, 1994). Moreover, people who focused too much on their own interests (individualists or competitors) were less likely to cooperate (De Dreu & Van Lange, 1995) and more likely to take revenge (Raver & O'Reilly, 2006) than people who focused on others' interests (i.e., are prosocial). All of these empirical findings indicate that high level of individual achievement orientation is likely to enhance frustration and thus incivility. Based on these findings, we propose that:

Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of individual achievement orientation are associated with higher levels of incivility.

Based on a review of the need for achievement literature, Yu and Yang (1994) propose that previous motivation literature mainly focuses on individual-oriented achievement motivation while neglecting *social-oriented achievement motivation*. Social achievement orientation is defined as the intent to achieve goals that are focused on enhancing one's position in a social unit, such as gaining status and influence or building close relationships with peers (cf. Chulef, Read, & Walsh, 2001; Yu & Yang, 1994). According to Yu and Yang (1994), people with social goals contain in them an awareness of others and how those others view themselves. Given this concern, it is unlikely that highly social-goal-oriented individuals will express their frustration in the form of incivility; awareness of others' views of oneself inherently limits one's tendency to act in an uncivil way when goals are frustrated (Bond, 2004; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). This dynamic may explain why people who focus on others' interests (prosocial) were more likely to cooperate with others (De Dreu & Van Lange, 1995) and less likely to seek revenge (Raver & O'Reilly, 2006) than people who focus on their own interests (individualists or competitors). If you have high social goals (so that you are inherently concerned for others and how they view you) uncivil behaviors are constrained even in competitive situations like negotiations. These findings imply that people with a high social achievement orientation are less likely to engage in incivility because it is an ineffective way to achieve those social goals. Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis 2: Higher levels of social achievement orientation are associated with lower levels of incivility.

Direct Conflict Self-Efficacy and Incivility

A second individual factor that may affect incivility is the degree to which an individual feels skilled at engaging in direct conflict, which is called direct conflict self-efficacy. Conflicts may be resolved directly or indirectly (Morris et al., 1998; Rahim, 1983). Here we focus on self-efficacy about dealing with conflict directly.

Bandura (1986) defines self-efficacy as ''a judgment of one's capability to accomplish a certain level of performance'' (p. 391). According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1991; Wood & Bandura, 1989), an individual characterized by high self-efficacy concerning a specific behavior would be highly confident of his or her ability to successfully engage in the behavior, and hence would be more likely to pursue that behavior even while facing difficulties. Specifically, when dealing with conflict, an individual who has a sense that s/he is good at being direct at managing conflict may persist in taking actions that are direct and assertive. For her or him, such direct actions are expected to be effective even though, for others, those same actions may be perceived as uncivil or discourteous. In the child development literature, for example, it has been found that children who feel more efficacious about performing physically and verbally aggressive behaviors were more aggressive than their peers (e.g., Crick & Dodge, 1994).

In summary, if people believe that they are skilled at confronting others directly, they will engage in more incivility than those who have little faith in their skills at managing conflict directly. Incivility follows one's expectations that one can effectively act out one's frustrations. Thus, those who think that they are more skilled at managing conflict directly are more likely to be uncivil. We propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Higher direct conflict self-efficacy is associated with higher levels of incivility.

Culture and Incivility

So far, we have discussed two individual-level antecedents of incivility. We now consider the main and moderating effects that culture could have on incivility. There have been very few cross-cultural studies of organizational aggression, but cross-cultural comparative studies on children and adolescents have shown significant East-West differences regarding people's self-regulation and emotional expressions (see a review by Bergeron & Schneider, 2005). Cheah and Rubin (2004), for instance, found that Chinese mothers endorsed child socialization goals that focus on instilling long-term values and group-focused collectivistic ideals. By contrast, European/American mothers embraced the immediate psychological state of the child. Additionally, Zahn-Waxler, Friedman, Cole, and Mizuta (1996) found that American mothers showed more encouragement of children's emotional expressivity than Japanese mothers did, and as a result the American children exhibited more aggressive behavior and regulated emotion less than Japanese children. These studies indicated that culture, as a shared system of norms, impacts self-regulation and emotional expressions. In addition, not all cultural contexts allow people to be uncivil to the same extent. Given the same uncivil behavior, different cultures may respond in distinct ways.

Underlying these findings are core differences in cultural assumptions. Markus and Kitayama (1991) focused on the distinction between *independent and interdependent* self-concepts. They proposed that Chinese people, who define themselves as members of a group, have a holistic worldview and an interdependent self-concept. Chinese tend to believe that roles, relationships with others, and situations constrain human behavior. Conversely, American people, who define themselves as independent individuals, have an analytic worldview. They presume that personal preferences and dispositions shape social behavior. Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (1995) proposed similar concepts of *collectivism* and *individualism* to differentiate cultures in terms of the nature of the relationship between the individual and the group in the society. As Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988) noted, ''an essential attribute of collectivist cultures is that individuals may be induced to subordinate their personal goals to the goals of some collective … and much of the behavior of individuals may concern goals that are consistent with the goals of this ingroup … in individualist cultures demands by ingroups on individual contributions are highly segmented'' (p. 324). As a consequence of these distinct self-concepts, people with a high level of collectivism are more attentive to others' needs than those with a low level of collectivism. A recent study conducted by Liu, Raymond, and Chi (2005) reported that Chinese (collectivists) were more influenced by an opening offer made by their negotiation partners because they are more attentive to the needs and interests of others. Similarly, in a survey of managers in U.S., China, Philippines, and India, Morris et al. (1998) found that American managers rely more on a competing style because they value individual achievement more highly.

Based on these findings, we propose that those who are more strongly oriented to collectivism will engage in greater self-regulation (including emotional expression) and thus will be less likely to act in an uncivil manner. We should point out that, while individualism and collectivism are related constructs (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Triandis, 1995), we choose to focus on collectivism in this study because we believe that it is a collectivism orientation that constrains incivility, which is our main concern. Specifically, those with a high level of collectivism (with a more interdependent view of self) are more attentive to the concerns of other parties and thus more likely to perceive a higher possibility of social sanctions by others if they choose to adopt uncivil actions to achieve goals. By contrast, people with a low level of collectivism are less attentive to the concerns of other parties, and thus less likely to perceive a lower possibility of social sanctions for incivility when pursuing personal goals. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 4: Higher collectivism is associated with lower levels of incivility.

Culture as a Moderator

Since collectivism is expected to constrain the free display of individual preferences, we propose that collectivism not only exerts a main effect on incivility but also moderates the relationships between dispositional factors and incivility that we proposed earlier. Recent studies on cross-cultural conflict management styles have provided preliminary

evidence of our prediction. Friedman, Chi, and Liu (2006), in a scenario study, compared Chinese managers with American managers in terms of their conflict avoiding tendencies. They found that compared with American managers, Chinese managers had higher tendencies to avoid conflict, and such tendencies were explained by the higher expectations that direct conflict would hurt the relationship with the other party, and by greater concern for the other party among Chinese. Therefore, collectivists with a strong individual achievement orientation will not translate frustration into incivility due to a high concern for other people and greater expectations that being uncivil will hurt relationships with others. As a result, among those high in collectivism, individuals' high goal orientation or high self-efficacy in resolving conflict directly will not translate into incivility since those people are constrained by felt social norms against direct confrontations. Instead, they will either seek alternatives for conflict resolution or choose to avoid confrontations. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 5: Collectivism will lessen the relationships between individual achievement orientation and incivility and between direct conflict self-efficacy and incivility.

Method

Sample

We conducted a survey in Taiwan and in the United States. We used subjects from these two locations in order to increase the variance of collectivism (e.g., Gelfand & Realo, 1999), because former studies have shown that Taiwanese are more collectivistic than Americans (Hofstede, 1980). The participants were MBA and EMBA students. MBA students in the U.S. usually have at least three to five years of work experience, while MBA students in Taiwan tend to have recently graduated from universities. Thus, we only included EMBA students in the Taiwanese sample, while the American sample included both executive and regular MBA students. There were 268 respondents in our final sample, among which 120 subjects (44.8%) came from the United States, and 148 (55.2%) came from Taiwan. Respondents in the two samples had a similar level of organizational rank and similar educational backgrounds (see Table 1). The average age of participants in the U.S. was 31.6 years, and 37.3 years in Taiwan. The overall average

Table 1
Demographic Information of the Two Samples

		Age	Gender (female = 1)	Rank	Experience	Valid N
American	M	31.61	.26	3.15	2.87	120
	SD	6.75	.44	1.11	1.32	
Taiwanese	M	37.32	.43	3.14	3.91	148
	SD	7.49	.50	1.51	1.27	
Total	M	34.76	.35	3.14	3.44	268
	SD	7.70	.48	1.35	1.39	

age was 34.8 years. 74.2 percent of American respondents were male, whereas 56.8 percent of Taiwanese participants were male. Overall, 64.6 percent of respondents were males. The median work experience of the American sample was 7–10 years, whereas that of the Taiwanese sample was 11–13 years. Due to these differences, we controlled age, gender, and working experience in our later analyses. The subjects were asked to fill out a questionnaire that contained the following scales: Incivility, Individual and Social Achievement Orientation, Direct Conflict Self-Efficacy, and Collectivism.

Measures

Except for the scale for Direct Conflict Self-Efficacy, we used measures from previous studies. The English scales were translated into Chinese by the standard back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1980). We list our measures in the Appendix.

Incivility

We measured incivility by using one subscale of Roger and Nesshoever's (1987) Emotional Control Questionnaire (ECQ). Compared with existing scales, such as the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001), this emotional control measure is more general. Since our sample came from different organizations, it was not easy to specify particular instances of workplace incivility, as is needed for Cortina et al.'s WIS measure. A better approach given our sample was to use a more general measure of uncivil behavior. In addition, this ECQ scale has been validated by a cross-cultural sample (Roger, Banda, Lee, & Olason, 2001). The measure has 11 items. Each item assesses tendencies to be uncivil. Examples include "If someone pushed me, I would push back," and, "I've been involved in many fights or arguments." Respondents reported whether the items were true or false. The responses were coded '1' and '0' with the former indicating an uncivil act while the latter rejection of an uncivil act. We checked the internal consistency of the scale and found that one item ("*If I see someone pushing into a queue (line) ahead of me I usually just ignore it.*") reduced reliability for the scale. Therefore, we discarded that item. The Cronbach's Alpha for the remaining ten items was .70.

Individual and Social Achievement Orientation

We measured individual and social achievement orientation by using the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS; Schwartz, 1994). The SVS questionnaire has been translated into Chinese and has obtained an acceptable level of reliability (Egri & Ralston, 2004). Respondents were asked to indicate how important each value was to them personally on a 9-point scale ranging from −1 to 7. The score "−1" indicated that the item was "opposed to my values," a score "0" indicated "not important," and 7 indicated "supreme importance." One section of the SVS is called "power," and it includes components that are mostly about social self-enhancement, such as "social recognition," "preserve public image," and "social power." The SVS also includes a section called "achievement," which includes components that are mostly about individual self-enhancement, such as "ambitious," "successful," "intelligent," and "capable." However,

one item, i.e., "influential," did not fit conceptually or empirically. Conceptually, "influential" is part of Schwartz' achievement scale, but this item reflects social standing more than individual achievement; empirically, a factor analysis showed that this item loaded on the social power subscale. Therefore, we included this item in the social achievement orientation scale (SAO), but not in the individual achievement orientation scale (IAO) (see Appendix for the items of the scales). A CFA showed that the resulting two-factor model fits the data (CFI = .92, NNFI = .88, RMSEA = .08, χ^2 = 58.67, df = 19) significantly better than a one factor model (CFI = .76, NNFI = .66, RMSEA = .15, χ^2 = 135.62, df = 20). The Cronbach's Alphas of IAO and SAO were .71 and .73 in our study.

Direct Conflict Self-Efficacy
We developed a three-item scale to measure how skillful people perceive themselves to be in resolving conflict directly, such as, "I have confidence in my ability to approach conflict directly." We used Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A higher score indicates a higher degree of perceived efficacy of approaching conflict directly. The Cronbach's Alpha for this scale was .77.

Collectivism
There are many measures of collectivism (Oyserman et al., 2002). We decided to use Triandis's (1996) scale to measure collectivism because it captures many domains in social life, such as harmony, duty to group, and advice seeking (Oyserman et al., 2002) and it has been validated in different cultures (e.g., Gelfand & Realo, 1999; Xie, Roy, & Chen, 2006). There are 14 items. Examples include, "I would sacrifice an activity that I enjoy very much if my family did not approve of it," and, "It is important to me to maintain harmony within my group." We used 7-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). A higher score indicates a higher degree of perceived collectivism of the respondent. We checked the internal consistency of the scale and discovered that one item (*"It annoys me if I have to sacrifice activities that I enjoy to help others."*) did not fit with the rest. Excluding this item could significantly improve the Alpha value from .61 to .70. Therefore, we deleted the item to improve the Alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's Alpha was .70.

Results

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, and scale reliabilities for all variables. From Table 2, we can see that the correlations between incivility and most other variables (except for SAO and collectivism) were all significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). Specifically, both individual achievement orientation (.23, $p < .001$) and conflict self-efficacy (.45, $p < .001$) were positively related to incivility. Moreover, we conducted a t-test between the Taiwanese and the American samples to examine the difference in the mean score of collectivism. Results showed that the Taiwanese respondents reported higher levels of collectivism than their American counterparts ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 0.68$ for the Taiwanese sample; $M = 4.96$, $SD = 0.59$ for the American sample, $t(266) = 2.10$, $p < .05$). This result was consistent with the earlier

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Reliabilities, and Correlations

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Age	34.76	7.70	–									
2	Gender	0.35	0.48	−.16	–								
3	Rank	3.14	1.35	.45	−.43	–							
4	Experience	3.44	1.39	.85	−.17	.43	–						
5	Location	0.55	0.50	.37	.18	−.01	.37	–					
6	IAO	5.69	0.87	.04	−.05	.25	.02	−.17	(.71)				
7	SAO	4.45	1.30	.15	0	.14	.17	.39	.34	(.73)			
8	Efficacy	4.77	1.27	−.02	−.28	.32	−.01	−.38	.26	−.02	(.77)		
9	Collectivism	5.04	0.64	.17	−.14	.11	.22	.13	.24	.17	−.01	(.70)	
10	Incivility	0.39	0.25	−.14	−.23	.15	−.13	−.37	.23	−.02	.45	−.11	(.70)

Notes: 1. IAO: Individual achievement orientation.

SAO: Social achievement orientation.

Efficacy: Direct conflict self-efficacy.

2. Correlation coefficients greater than .12, are significant at the .05 level, two-tailed. Those greater than .15 are significant at the .01 level. Those greater than .21 are significant at the .001 level.

3. For gender, Male = 0, Female = 1.

4. For location, U.S. = 0, Taiwan = 1.

5. Figures in the parentheses in diagonal are Alpha coefficients.

literature, which suggests that Chinese people on average are more collectivistic than Americans (e.g., Hofstede, 1980). In addition, we found that Taiwanese respondents reported less incivility than their American counterparts ($M = .30$, $SD = .23$ for the Taiwanese sample; $M = .49$, $SD = .22$ for the American sample, $t(266) = 6.52$, $p < .01$).

Since most variables were significantly related with incivility, we added controls for these variables when testing our hypotheses. Moreover, in order to control potential multicollinearity problems, we centered variables before putting them into regressions (Aiken & West, 1991). Table 3 shows the results of our regression analyses. We input variables in three steps. In the first step we input control variables (i.e., age, gender, rank of position in organizations, total years of work experience, and location). Results showed that gender exerted a negative effect on incivility (model 1, $\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$), which means that the incivility scores for males were significantly higher than those for females. The adjusted R squared for model 1 was .15 ($F = 10.14$, $p < .001$).

In the second step (model 2), we added independent variables, i.e., individual achievement orientation, social achievement orientation, direct conflict self-efficacy, and collectivism orientation. The adjusted R squared increased from .15 to .25. The change of R squared was .11 ($F = 9.21$, $p < .001$). The beta coefficient of individual achievement orientation for incivility was significantly positive ($\beta = .13$, $p < .01$) and so was that of direct conflict self-efficacy for incivility ($\beta = .31$, $p < .001$), providing support for Hypotheses 1 and 3. At the same time, the coefficient for social achievement orientation was not significant ($\beta = .03$, n.s.). So Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Moreover, we found a significant negative beta coefficient of collectivism orientation for incivility

Table 3
Regression Models Predicting Incivility

Predictor variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	−.17	−.12	−.17
Gender (Female = 1)	−.14*	−.14*	−.17**
Rank	.12	.00	−.01
Experience	.06	.04	.06
Location (Taiwan = 1)	−.29***	−.16*	−.12*
IAO		.13**	.11*
SAO		.03	.02
Efficacy		.31***	.35***
Collectivism		−.11*	−.11*
IAO × Collectivism			−.09*
Efficacy × Collectivism			−.14**
Adj R^2	.15	.25	.28
R^2 change	.17***	.11***	.03**
F change	10.14***	9.21***	4.98**
Overall F for equation	10.14***	10.46***	9.75***

Notes: 1. IAO: Individual achievement orientation. SAO: Social achievement orientation. Efficacy: Direct conflict self-efficacy.
2. Variables were centered in regressions; all coefficients reported were standardized coefficients.
3. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.
4. Controls are reported two-tailed; others are reported one-tailed.

($\beta = -.11$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the prediction that collectivism orientation is negatively related with incivility (Hypotheses 4) was also supported.

Next we input the interaction terms into the regression (model 3 in Table 3). Adjusted R squared significantly increased .03 ($F = 4.98$, $p < .01$). Both the interaction term between individual achievement orientation and collectivism orientation ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .05$) and that between direct conflict self-efficacy and collectivism orientation ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .01$) were significant. Figure 2 and Figure 3 describe the effects of these interactions, using points plotted at one standard deviation above and below the means for each variable (Aiken & West, 1991). Figure 2 shows that only among those who had low collectivism scores did individual achievement orientation relate positively to incivility. Similarly, Figure 3 shows that the relationship between direct conflict self-efficacy and incivility was lower for those with high collectivism scores than those with low scores. These results indicated that collectivism orientation dampens the relationships of both individual achievement orientation and direct conflict self-efficacy with incivility, providing support to Hypothesis 5.

Discussion

Workplace incivility has become a growing concern for both scholars and practitioners (Anderson & Pearson, 1999; Marks, 1996; Pearson et al., 2000; Penney & Spector,
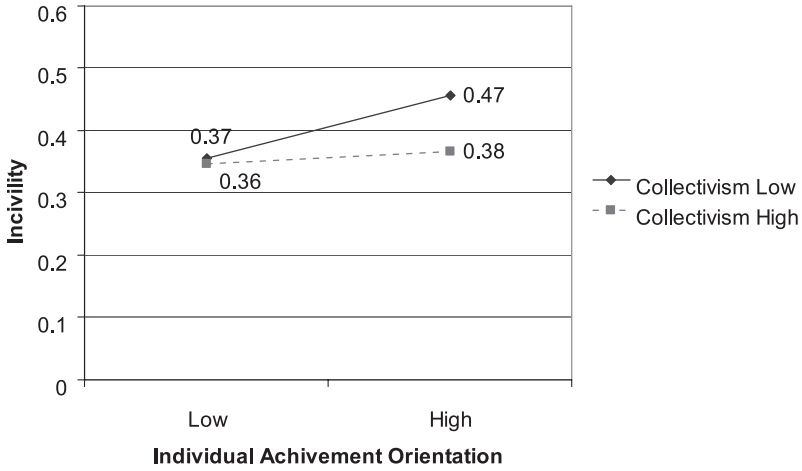
Figure 2. The interaction effect of individual achievement orientation and collectivism on incivility.
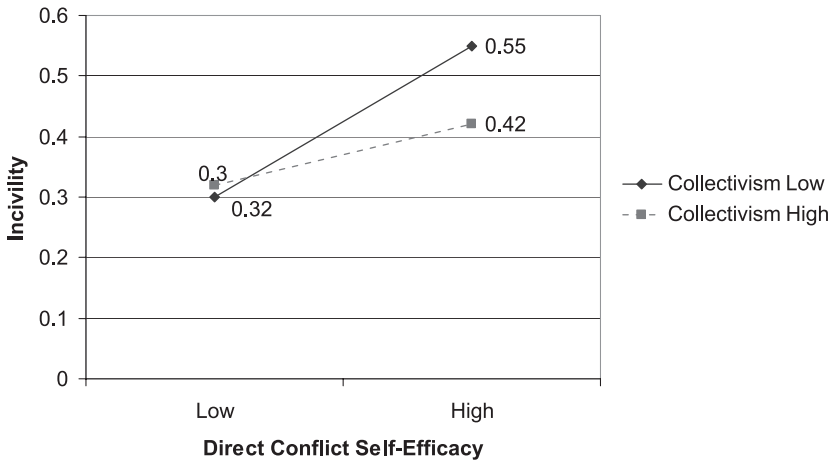

Figure 3. The interaction effect of direct conflict self-efficacy and collectivism on incivility.

2005). Given that incivility may escalate into more severe aggression (Pearson et al., 2000) and that incivility has a negative impact on the workplace (Lim & Cortina, 2005), it is important to identify the antecedents of incivility. We have extended incivility research by examining how culture and dispositional factors interact to affect incivility. Our data from the United States and Taiwan generally supported our culturally informed meso-level model.

   In terms of dispositional factors, we found that individual achievement orientation, defined as the intent to achieve goals that are mainly self-focused, was positively related

with incivility (Hypothesis 1). Such a finding is consistent with the prediction of the frustration–aggression hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939), which suggests that individual achievement orientation may heighten goal expectations, raising the chance that those goals can be blocked or frustrated, thus producing incivility. We extend the frustration-aggression hypothesis by looking at achievement orientation as a dispositional factor that may impact incivility (cf. Fox & Spector, 1999).

This finding raises a dilemma for organizations. One the one hand, there seems to be a consensus among scholars and practitioners that an individual achievement orientation or personal motivation plays a key role in employees' performance (e.g., O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994) so that organizations prefer recruiting candidates with a high individual achievement orientation (see a recent review by Hough & Oswald, 2000). On the other hand, our finding suggests that people with a high individual achievement orientation may be likely to behave uncivilly. Interestingly, another finding in the present study suggests a potential solution to this dilemma—a collectivism orientation may dampen the relationship between individual achievement orientation and incivility (discussed below). Therefore, it would benefit organizations to recruit employees with both a high individual achievement orientation and a high collectivism orientation, or to try to balance a high individual achievement orientation with an organization-wide culture that instills a respect for others in the organization.

The effects of a social achievement orientation were quite different than those of an individual achievement orientation. While we did not find the predicted negative effect of social achievement on incivility (Hypothesis 2), this noneffect may still indicate that a social achievement orientation does dampen the drive towards incivility that would otherwise exist for those high in achievement orientation. That is, while a social achievement orientation did not reduce incivility, the social focus did seem to bring the impact of achievement orientation down from a very significant one (for individual achievement orientation) to a noneffect (for social achievement orientation). Thus, the effects of social achievement orientation that we documented may reflect the counter effects of "social" (reducing incivility) and "achievement orientation" (increasing frustration and incivility).

Our predicted positive effect of direct conflict self-efficacy on incivility (Hypothesis 3) was also supported by out data. Such a finding lends support to our inference based on Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1991; Wood & Bandura, 1989): when one is confident of his or her ability to deal with conflict directly, one is more likely to be aggressive, assertive, or uncivil. We can see from this how organizational environments high in uncivil behavior amplify those behaviors among organizational members. Those organizations where norms allow for open expression of hostility are likely therefore to provide members with more experience using direct approaches to conflict, building direct conflict self-efficacy, and thus generating more incivility. In a way this pattern may not be bad — if all parties feel that they are equally skilled in direct conflict — but it may not be helpful when subgroups within an organization have different conflict norms (and thus different levels of mean direct conflict self-efficacy) so that some hold back while others act in ways that might be seen as uncivil. An even broader application of this idea is that we can expect cross-cultural differences in direct conflict self-efficacy, such that those in the West feel that they are skilled and capable in direct

conflict, while those in the East have less experience in this approach to conflict (e.g., Brett, 2001; Morris et al., 1998).

Looking at cultural orientation, we found that people with a high collectivism orientation are less likely to display uncivil behaviors than those with a low collectivism orientation (Hypothesis 4). This finding indicates that collectivism orientation has a restraining effect on incivility because it encourages people to take an interdependent view of social relations (Bond, 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This finding has important implications for practice. For example, when a manager from an individualistic culture (such as America) goes to work in a collectivistic culture (such as East Asia), he or she needs to be aware that there is less tolerance of uncivil behaviors than in individualistic cultures; what might be deemed acceptable behavior in individualistic cultures is likely to appear unacceptable in collectivist cultures. For the same reason, members of multinational teams also need to be aware of the different behavioral expectations of different cultures.

Finally, our findings provide evidence of a cultural attenuation effect on incivility: in cases where dispositional factors have a main effect amplifying incivility, these effects are diminished by a collectivism orientation. In other words, cultural orientation sets a boundary within which an individual achievement orientation or direct conflict self-efficacy may elicit incivility. Collectivistic cultures allow less room for frustrated goals or conflict self-efficacy to be expressed through uncivil behaviors. Because of this, the concern we discussed above — of the inherent tension between the positive effects of high individual achievement orientation and the negative effects of incivility that is produced — is less likely to occur in cultures where collectivism is generally high. That is, the need to be cautious about an excessive individual achievement orientation does not exist in collectivist cultures. In an odd twist, managers in collectivist cultures may be more free to unleash the beneficial powers of an individual achievement orientation than managers in individualistic cultures.

Underlying all of these findings is a pattern where concern for others constrains incivility. This shows up in the differential effect of individual and social goals on incivility, on the main effect of collectivism on incivility, and on the way in which collectivism dampens the effect of an individual goal orientation and conflict self-efficacy on incivility. In all cases, enhanced awareness of others reduces uncivil behaviors.

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite our findings, this study has several limitations. First, the definition of incivility may vary across cultures. Bond (2004), in one review article of aggression and culture, suggested that the reason why there were few cross-culture studies on aggression may be because different cultures have divergent definition of aggression. In our case, it is important to validate our measurement of incivility in both Chinese and American culture firsthand (cf. Farh, Earley, & Lin, 1997). However, if we assume that it is also meaningful to examine the degree to which people display the same set of behaviors, our study can be regarded as an important step for exploring cross-cultural differences.

Secondly, we collected data using the self-report method. There have been concerns about using self-report data to reach causal conclusions (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, &

Podsakoff, 2003). Especially, the incivility data were self-reported rather than other-reported, which may raise concerns about the accuracy of our incivility measure. We suggest using multiple sources to measure incivility in future research. Moreover, longitudinal methods or experimental manipulations will be helpful to establish the causality between incivility and antecedents proposed in the present study. Also, we did not examine the effects of immediate situations on incivility. Future studies need to consider these factors. Despite these constraints, this article presents a coherent image of the ways in which concern for how one is viewed by others may constrain incivility, providing insight into cultural differences in conflict management.

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Appendix: Items in Scales and Reliabilities of Subsample

Incivility (American, .62; Taiwanese, .69)

If someone pushed me, I would push back.
If I don't like a friend's new clothes, I say so.
I've been involved in many fights or arguments.
If a passing car splashes me, I shout at the driver.
If someone were to hit me, I would hit back.
If someone says something stupid, I tell them so.
Even when I'm angry I seldom use bad language. (R)
I'd rather concede an issue than get into an argument. (R)
If a friend borrows something and returns it dirty or damaged, I usually just keep quiet about it. (R)
If I'm badly served in a shop or restaurant I don't usually make a fuss. (R)

Individual Achievement Orientation (American, .69; Taiwanese, .72)

Successful (achieving goals)
Ambitious (hardworking, aspiring)
Intelligent (logical thinking)
Capable (competent, effective, efficient)

Social Achievement Orientation (American, .70; Taiwanese, .71)

Social recognition (respect, approval by others)
Preserving my public image (protecting my "face")
Social power (control over others, dominance)
Influential (having an impact on people and events)

Direct Conflict Self-Efficacy (American, .73; Taiwanese, .75)

I have little experience approaching disputes directly. (R)
I have confidence in my ability to approach the conflict directly.
I had a great deal of skill approaching conflicts directly.

Collectivism (American, .67; Taiwanese, .75)

I would do what would please my family, even if I detested that activity.
I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group.
We should keep our aging parents with us at home.
I would sacrifice an activity that I enjoy very much if my family did not approve of it.
Children should be taught to place duty before pleasure.
It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my group.
Self-sacrifice is a virtue.
The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.
If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.
If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means.
It is important to me to maintain harmony within my group.
I like sharing little things with my neighbors.
It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision.

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