

Exploring Subordinate Incivility

Rhea Stronach, Camilla Holmvall

Workplace incivility is defined as low-intensity deviant behaviour with ambiguous intent to harm the recipient, involving acting rudely or discourteously without regard for others and in violation of workplace norms for respectful social interactions (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Compared to supervisors and coworkers, subordinates are the most understudied source of incivility (e.g., Han et al., 2021). Preliminary differences in incidence (Lim & Lee, 2011; Yao et al., 2022) and impact (Lim & Lee, 2011) of subordinate incivility relative to other sources may reflect that current incivility scales (e.g., Cortina et al., 2001; Martin & Hine, 2005) are not capturing subordinate behaviours considered uncivil by leaders; one might expect the reporting relationship between leaders and their subordinates to influence what behaviours leaders consider uncivil in these interactions (e.g., Wilson & Holmvall, 2013).

Thus, our mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) study gathered $n = 171$ incidents of subordinate incivility from $n = 67$ leaders (31 men, 36 women). Our preliminary results revealed approximately 40 behaviours (many unique to the leadership context) that we tentatively grouped under four overarching global themes: *Challenging Authority* (e.g., responding to the leader in a rude, disrespectful tone after being assigned work tasks, questioning the leader's competence in front of others), *Communication Issues* (e.g., using non-hostile, unprofessional language at work, failing to update the leader on important work circumstances), *Lack of Conscientious Behaviour* (e.g., not following the leader's direction/instructions, failure to follow formal workplace policies and/or procedures), and *Disrespectful Acts Toward Coworkers* (e.g., behaviour that is unprofessional, rude, or discourteous to the leader's other subordinates, failing to work as a collaborative team member). Our results suggest that subordinate incivility carries unique behaviours not captured in current incivility scales. In future work, we will use these behaviours to inform the development and evaluation of a new subordinate incivility measurement tool.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Rhea Stronach (Student Principal Investigator) at Rhea.Boettcher@smu.ca or Camilla Holmvall (Faculty Supervisor) at Camilla.Holmvall@smu.ca