POLITICAL ORIENTATION, MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND WORKPLACE

INCIVILITY DURING THE 2012 AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which employees' election season consumption of political media affects their perception and instigation of politically-motivated workplace incivility. Participants ($N = 895$; 81.2% White) enrolled a multi-wave longitudinal survey during the 2012 U.S. Presidential election and completed measures of political orientation, workplace incivility, and media consumption.

Providing mixed support for our hypotheses, results indicated that consumption of pro-attitudinal political media was related to out-group mistreatment only for more conservative employees. Consumption of counter-attitudinal political media, on the other hand, was predictive of in-group mistreatment for both liberal and conservative employees. We discuss these findings in light of emerging research on political orientation as an important social identity and the unique and unstable social positions of political groups during elections.

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INTRODUCTION

"An election is a moral horror, as bad as a battle except for the blood; a mud bath for every soul concerned in it. You know very well that it will not be fought on principle." --Franklyn, in George Bernard Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*

The workplace is an environment where employees often have little control over with whom they interact, and may therefore find themselves engaged in political conversations with others (e.g., coworkers, supervisors) whose political opinions are divergent from their own (Mutz & Mondak, 2006). One possible consequence of the seeping of national politics into the office is that it may facilitate workplace incivility among employees. Andersson and Pearson (1999) defined *workplace incivility* as "low intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard of others" (p. 457). Examples of incivility in the workplace include condescending comments, making jokes at another's expense, and excluding a coworker from professional camaraderie. Over a decade of research shows that such behavior relates to declines in targets' physical, psychological, and occupational well-being, which in turn can prove costly to organizations (see Pearson & Porath, 2009, for a review). However, we still know little about the etiology of workplace incivility and the conditions under which it is most likely to occur.

In the present study, we theorize that the salience of social identities in the larger societal context affects how incivility is perceived and instigated in the workplace. Specifically, we examine the extent to which political orientation may have influenced

the occurrence of politically-motivated workplace incivility in the context of the 2012 United States Presidential election. We argue that a national political election is a social event that heightens the salience of individuals' political identities creating an ideal situation for investigating the relationship between political identity and politically-based incivility in the workplace. In addition, we posit how political media consumption during the election influences employees' perceptions and instigation of workplace incivility from and toward political out-group members. While a number of studies have suggested that individuals seek out reinforcing ideological messages in the media landscape, none have examined consequences of selective exposure with regard to interpersonal workplace interactions. Finally, we also examine how employees' political orientation and political media consumption combine to affect their perceptions of being the target of workplace incivility and their likelihood of instigating uncivil behavior toward others at work. We connect social identity (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), selective exposure (Stroud, 2008), and incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina, 2008) theories to propose how ideologically-reinforcing media consumption may heighten political social identity and accentuate social categorization based on political affiliation, resulting in politically-motivated incivility in the workplace.

This work contributes to the growing workplace mistreatment literature in several important ways. First, we examine selective incivility as an outlet for politically-motivated conflict. While a number of studies have examined incivility as rooted in racial (e.g. Kern & Grandey, 2009) or gender (e.g. Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013; Leskinen, Cortina, & Kabat, 2011; Miner, Settles, Pratt-Hyatt,

& Brady, 2012) bias, the present study is perhaps the first to assess incivility based on political identity. Second, we consider the possibility that outside events, such as political elections, may heighten relatively latent social identities that may predicate workplace incivility. Third, previous research has failed to investigate any possible relationship between the media landscape and incivility. Indeed, employees do not shut down when they leave the workplace at the end of the workday. By examining how non-work activities (e.g. media consumption) affect workplace incivility, we can begin to more fully address the underlying bases for subtle workplace mistreatment.

Social Identity, Identity Threat, and Incivility

Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) proposes that individuals engage in a categorization process by which they designate themselves and others as members or nonmembers of social groups using salient individual characteristics, such race, gender, or even political orientation. Through this process, individuals maximize in-group/out-group differences such that in-group members are perceived and treated positively and out-group members are perceived and treated negatively. According to SIT, intergroup threat is a primary motivation for the negative treatment of out-group members. *Intergroup threat* refers to perceived obstacles to a group's status, power, identity, or values (Morrison, Fast, & Ybarra, 2009; Rouhana & Fiske, 1995). When threatened in this way, individuals are motivated to treat dissimilar others negatively in order to feel good about the self and maintain a positive self-identity.

We posit that feelings of intergroup threat may be especially likely during an election. Most obviously, an election provides an opportunity for one political group or ideology to take political power from another political group or ideology. The prospect of losing power, or being denied the chance to gain power, is likely to induce feelings of intergroup threat. Interactions with coworkers of differing political orientations may further induce feelings of intergroup threat which may motivate individuals to mistreat political out-group members as a means of protecting positive self-perceptions. Research shows clear links between political party affiliation, feelings of threat, and experiences of intergroup conflict (Rouhana & Fiske, 1995), severity of aggression (McCann, 2008), and the endorsement of negative differential treatment (Morrison et al., 2009). Some researchers argue that political social identities may even drive large-scale societal conflict and violence (Hohne, 2006), and are more strongly associated with out-group maltreatment than are religious or national identities (Gallagher, 1989).

Andersson and Pearson (1999) also theorized that perceived threats to identity are likely to lead to amplified aggression. When an individual perceives a threat to his/her social identity, feelings of anger, loss of face, and even a desire for revenge may result. Seeking revenge may serve to express and reaffirm the value of the challenged identity and restore perceptions of self-worth. Andersson and Pearson (1999) propose that such a situation sets the stage for spiraling incivility, wherein an employee perceives a coworker's behavior as uncivil and responds in kind by instigating uncivil behavior toward the perceived perpetrator. As this cycle continues, such behavior may become

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increasingly aggressive, eventually escalating into more severe forms of workplace mistreatment.

Experimental work also supports the notion that threats to social identity may lead to identity-based retaliation. Using an online computer communication paradigm, Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, and Grasselli (2003) found that male participants sexually harassed female virtual partners more when exposed to gender identity threats. This finding was especially true for highly gender-identified males, whose gender identification was enhanced by engaging in the harassment. Petriglieri (2011) argues that derogating the identity of the source may allow individuals to minimize the potential harm of the threat. These findings suggest that social identity plays an important role in interpersonal mistreatment. In the election context, threats to political identity may spawn behavior that similarly disparages the political identities of out-group members.

Cortina (2008) elaborated on Andersson and Pearson's (1999) incivility theory by proposing that incivility may represent covert microaggressions in the workplace. According to selective incivility theory, employees engage in uncivil behaviors when there is a plausible, non-prejudiced rationale for such conduct (Brief et al., 1995, 1997, 2000; James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001; McConahay, 1986; McConahay & Hough, 1976). In this framework, uncivil workplace behavior allows employees a means to mistreat coworkers in a way that makes intent ambiguous. This ambiguity offers perpetrators a means to oppress, harass, or otherwise discriminate against disfavored groups in a way that is "under the radar" and minimizes the probability of being punished. Selective incivility, therefore, may offer employees a mechanism to disparage

coworkers' political beliefs and reaffirm one's own. On the basis of this previous research and theory, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Employees perceive more incivility from coworkers with an opposing political orientation such that a) more conservative employees report more incivility from liberal coworkers and, b) more liberal employees report more incivility from conservative coworkers.

Hypothesis 2: Employees instigate more incivility toward coworkers with an opposing political orientation such that a) more conservative employees instigate more incivility toward liberal coworkers and b) more liberal employees instigate more incivility toward conservative coworkers.

Media, Selective Exposure, and Social Identity Salience

In addition to examining the relationships between political orientation and the perception and instigation of politically-motivated workplace incivility, we also investigate the extent to which political media consumption moderates these relations. We propose that employees may be more likely to perceive and instigate political-motivated incivility at work the more they consume politically-based television media. Specifically, we posit that employees will be more likely to perceive incivility from and instigate incivility toward political out-group members the more they watch media consistent with their political ideology. Such material, we maintain, will make differences between political groups salient and therefore especially threatening to one's own political identity.

Previous research supports the proposition that media consumption influences a wide variety of psychological variables including aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) and political behavior (Graber, 2002). In particular, as individuals consume television media, they internalize the messages communicated by such media and come to perceive them as valid and realistic (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). When television consumption is consistent and intense, these messages/representations become readily mentally available in turn influencing real-world perceptions (Shrum & O'Guinn, 1993). In the case of American political media, we propose that cable news networks communicate messages to their audiences that make political social identities increasingly salient. In other words, as individuals consume political media, they are likely to internalize the political messages communicated by television networks which in turn influences social categorization of self and others into political in- and out-groups.

A number of studies have documented that certain media outlets are linked with ideological biases that stem from political identities. Using an experimental design, Turner (2007) presented individuals with a news story attributed to either Fox News or CNN. Turner showed that the network attribution served as an ideological signal to the viewer, and stories attributed to Fox News were seen as more conservative while stories attributed to CNN were deemed more liberal. This effect was most pronounced for individuals with strong political beliefs. Similarly, Weatherly, Petros, Christopherson, and Haugen (2007) found that headlines taken from CNN were rated as significantly more liberal than those taken from Fox News. Groeling (2008) showed that during the

presidencies of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, Fox News tended to report more

positive news in tracking polls for the Republican (Bush) and more negative news for

the Democrat (Clinton), with the reverse pattern for ABC, CBS, and NBC. Morris and

Francia (2010) used content analysis to examine bias during the 2004 national party

conventions, finding that Fox News's coverage was more favorable to the Republican

Party than the Democratic Party, while CNN's coverage was more impartial. Together,

this research suggests that people perceive some television media outlets to have

political leanings, with Fox News perceived as being more favorable toward Republican

and conservative ideologies whereas other outlets (i.e., CNN, ABC, CBS, and NBC) are

perceived to be more positive toward Democrats and liberal ideologies.

As options for media consumption have multiplied, individuals must choose

among a variety of media outlets, many of which are overtly partisan (Chalif, 2011).

Selective exposure theory posits that individuals' beliefs guide their media selections

such that perspectives that confirm existing beliefs are sought out and those that

challenge such beliefs are avoided (Stroud, 2008). In the case of national politics, this

logic suggests that conservatives seek out conservative news outlets that reinforce

conservative beliefs and liberals seek out liberal news outlets that reinforce liberal

beliefs, in turn increasing the saliency of political orientation as a social category.

Consistent with selective exposure theory, research suggests that individuals seek

out mass communications that reinforce their political predispositions. For example,

polling data from the 2012 election cycle indicates ideological differences between

viewers of the three major cable news outlets. According to the Pew Research Center's

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2012 News Consumption Survey, Fox News viewers' self-reported political orientations were 60% conservative, 23% moderate, and 10% liberal; MSNBC viewers were 32% conservative, 23% moderate, and 36% liberal; and CNN viewers were 32% conservative, 30% moderate, and 30% liberal. For comparison purposes, the overall sample was 35% conservative, 34% moderate, and 22% liberal. Fox News' and MSNBC's most popular shows demonstrated an even more ideological divide. Viewers of Fox News' "O'Reilly Factor" were 69% conservative, 16% moderate, and 8% liberal, while viewers of MSNBC's "Maddow" were 7% conservative, 31% moderate, and 57% liberal (Pew Research Center, 2012). Chalif (2011) also found that liberals report watching more MSNBC than conservatives and conservatives watch more Fox News than do liberals.

Morris (2007) analyzed data from the Pew Research Center during the 2004 presidential election campaign and found that Fox News viewers have a distinct set (i.e., more conservative) of political attitudes, distinct voting behavior patterns, and differing perceptions of political reality from the rest of the television news audience. Morris further demonstrated that watching Fox News as a primary news source is significantly associated with a tendency to subscribe to negative stereotypes of Democratic leaders and to reject negative stereotypes of Republican leaders. Polling data from the 2010 midterm election further showed that Fox News viewers were angrier with Washington, more likely to vote for Republican candidates, and were more enthusiastic about voting than viewers of other networks. Fox News viewers also tended to be older, male, upper to upper-middle class, and Republican (Thee-Brenan, 2010).

Researchers argue that the "echo chamber" political news environment also reinforces the social identities upon which the media selection is based, making differences between political groups salient (Stroud, 2008) leading to increasingly polarizing political conflicts (Chalif, 2011; Mutz, 2006; Sunstein, 2001). As such, the more individuals consume political media consonant with their existing political ideologies, the more their political social identity should become salient in turn leading to increased social categorization of political in- and out-group members and amplified feelings or intergroup threat. These increased feelings of threat, we propose, increase the likelihood of both perceiving politically-motivated uncivil treatment from political out-group members and instigating incivility toward them. Based on these ideas, we make the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Political media consumption moderates the relationship between political orientation and perceptions of incivility such that a) more conservative employees perceive more incivility from liberal coworkers the more they watch conservative news media (Fox News Channel) and, b) more liberal employees perceive more incivility from conservative coworkers the more they watch liberal news media (CNN and MSNBC).

Hypothesis 4: Political media consumption moderates the relationship between political orientation and instigated incivility such that a) more conservative employees instigate more incivility toward liberal coworkers the more they watch conservative news media (Fox News Channel) and, b) more liberal

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employees instigate more incivility toward conservative coworkers the more they

watch more liberal news media (CNN and MSNBC).

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Participants included a national sample of employees who were recruited via Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (www.MTurk.com) to participate in an online two-time longitudinal survey study concerning "Workplace Politics." Mechanical Turk (MTurk) has been shown to be an inexpensive, high-quality source for survey data (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). For the present study, the first survey was administered one month prior to the U.S. presidential election held on November 4, 2012, with a subsequent administration during election week. At the end of the first administration, participants were asked to provide an email address so they could be contacted for the second administration. Participants were compensated $1.50 for completing the first survey and $1 for completing the second.

One-thousand five-hundred eighty participants completed the first administration of the survey and 895 completed the second (for a 56.6% response rate at Time 2). Participants who completed only T1 of the study were compared to participants who completed both T1 and T2 on a variety of demographic and work-related variables. Participants who completed both administrations tended to be older ($M_{T1\&T2}$ = 32.8 years; M_{T1only} = 29.1 years; t = -5.51, p< .01), and more educated ($M_{T1\&T2}$ = 3.12; M_{T1only} = 3.00; t = -6.54, p< .01). With regard to the variables of interest in the present study, participants who completed both administrations and those who completed only the first administration did not significantly differ in political orientation or consumption of the three major cable news channels. However, participants who completed both

administrations tended to perceive less workplace incivility from both conservative ($M_{T1\&T2} = 1.21$; $M_{T1only} = 1.34$; $t = 4.19$, $p < .01$) and liberal ($M_{T1\&T2} = 1.13$; $M_{T1only} = 1.27$, $t = 4.92$, $p < .01$) coworkers as well as report significantly less instigation of incivility toward conservative ($M_{T1\&T2} = 1.10$; $M_{T1only} = 1.21$, $t = 4.43$, $p < .01$) and liberal ($M_{T1\&T2} = 1.08$; $M_{T1only} = 1.19$, $t = 4.47$, $p < .01$) coworkers at T1. Only those participants who completed all elements of both surveys were included in the present study.

The final sample was 54.7% female (n = 490), 44.5% male (n = 398), with 0.8% not indicating their sex (n = 7). Ethnically, 81.2% (n = 727) of the sample identified as White, 9.9% as Asian (n = 89), 6.1% as Black (n = 55), 6.0% as Hispanic (n = 54), 1.6% as Native American (n = 14), 0.6% as Middle Eastern or Arab (n = 5), 1.6% (n = 14) as Native American, and 1.0% as (n = 9) "other." The final sample had an average age of 32.8 years ($SD = 10.73$) and had been working at their current job for 5.8 years ($SD = 6.94$). Forty percent of employees worked in organizations with 50 or fewer employees (n = 356), while 60.2% (n = 539) worked in larger organizations. The sample was relatively well-educated: 40.0% (n = 358) had bachelors' degrees, 36.4% (n = 326) had completed at least some college, 13.5% (n = 121) held advanced degrees, 8.6% (n = 77) were high school graduates, 1.0% (n = 9) reported some high school, and 0.1% (n = 1) reported not attending high school. Socioeconomically, 40.6% identified as middle class (n = 363), 29.1% (n = 260) as lower-middle class, 12.2% (n = 109) as lower class, 9.3% (n = 83) as upper-middle class, 6.7% (n = 60) as poor, 1.1% (n = 10) identifying as lower-upper class, and 1.0% (n = 9) as upper class. A majority of respondents (65.2%, n

= 583) reported annual household incomes below $60,000 per year, while 90.2% (n = 806) report annual household incomes below $100,000 per year.

Politically speaking, the sample tended to be liberal, with 28.6% (n = 256) identifying as "liberal," 19.0% as "slightly liberal," 18.0% as "moderate, middle of the road," 12.7% (n = 114) "extremely liberal," 11.7% (n = 105) as "slightly conservative," 7.6% (n = 68) as "conservative," and 2.3% (n = 21) as "extremely conservative." The sample also tended to be Democratic, with 48.6% (n = 435) identifying with the Democratic Party, 16.9% (n = 151) identifying with the Republican Party, 30.7% identifying as Independent, and 3.8% (n = 34) declining to answer.

Measures

   Perceived workplace incivility from conservatives and liberals. Individual perceptions of workplace incivility were assessed using two 11-item versions of the Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS; Caza & Cortina, 2007; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001). The two scales included identical items with the exception of the political orientation of the instigator. For example, participants were asked how often in the past 30 days a coworker they knew to be conservative (liberal) engaged in behaviors such as "put you down or been condescending to you," "made insulting or disrespectful remarks to you," and "accused you of stupidity or incompetence" using a 0 (*never*) to 3 (*frequently*) response scale. In order to specifically identify workplace incivility perceived to be motivated by political orientation, we included "because of your political beliefs" at the end of each item. Perceived workplace incivility was assessed at both T1 and T2.

Instigated workplace incivility toward conservatives and liberals. To assess

politically-motivated instigated workplace incivility, two 11-item scales based on the

WIS asked participants to self-report how often in the past 30 days they engaged in the

behaviors described above on a 0 (*never*) to 3 (*frequently*) response scale. Once again, to

specifically identify politically motivated uncivil behavior, we asked how often

participants instigated uncivil behavior toward coworkers "because of his/her political

beliefs." Instigated workplace incivility was assessed at both T1 and T2.

Political orientation. Consistent with Jost (2006), a one-item self-report item

assessed participants' political orientation. The item stated "Where would you place

yourself on this scale?" Response choices included *Extremely Liberal*, *Liberal*, *Slightly

Liberal*, *Moderate/Middle-of-the-road*, *Slightly Conservative*, *Conservative*, *Extremely

Conservative*, and *I don't know/haven't thought about it*. This variable was recoded so

that the last option was removed (103 participants). Political orientation was assessed at

T1.

Political media television consumption. To assess how much political media

television participants were exposed to during the election, we asked them to report

information about their TV viewing habits. Specifically, we asked participants "In the

past month, how many hours in the average week did you spend watching/listening to

the following news sources?" Nine different sources were offered; for purposes of the

present study we focus on three sources considered to be primarily politically-based: Fox

News Channel (FNC), MSNBC, and CNN (Stanley, 2006). Response options ranged

from 1 (*None*) to 8 (*11+*). Political media consumption was assessed at T1.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations and scale reliabilities for all variables in this study. Because of the high correlations between the incivility variables, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on all 44 incivility items to confirm that participants differentially perceived/instigated incivility from/toward conservatives and liberals. Four models were compared at each time point: a one-factor model in which all 44 incivility items loaded on one higher-order incivility factor; a two-factor model representing perceived and instigated incivility; a two-factor model representing conservative-related and liberal-related incivility; and a four-factor model representing perceived incivility from conservatives, perceived incivility from liberals, instigated incivility toward conservatives, and instigated incivility toward liberals. At T1, the four-factor model ($\chi^2(896) = 8785.25$, CFI = .82, SRMR = .05) demonstrated significantly better fit than the one-factor model ($\chi^2(902) = 20370.88$, CFI = .55, SRMR = .12, $\Delta\chi^2 = 11585.63$, $p < .001$), the two-factor perceived/instigated model ($\chi^2(901) = 15984.17$, CFI = .65, SRMR = .10, $\Delta\chi^2 = 7198.92$, $p < .001$), and the two-factor liberal/conservative model ($\chi^2(901) = 17160.31$, CFI = .62, SRMR = .12, $\Delta\chi^2 = 8375.06$, $p < .001$). At T2, the four-factor model ($\chi^2(896) = 10534.19$, CFI = .76, SRMR = .06) demonstrated significantly better fit than the one-factor model ($\chi^2(902) = 17376.10$, CFI = .58, SRMR = .10, $\Delta\chi^2 = 6841.91$, $p < .001$), the two-factor perceived/instigated model ($\chi^2(901) = 14662.15$, CFI = .65, SRMR = .10, $\Delta\chi^2 = 4127.96$, $p < .001$), and the two-factor liberal/conservative model ($\chi^2(901) = 15328.57$, CFI = .63, SRMR = .10, $\Delta\chi^2 = 4794.38$, $p < .001$).

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Correlational analyses examining the relationships between political orientation

at Time 1 and perceived and instigated incivility at Time 1 and 2 were conducted to test

Hypotheses 1 and 2 (see Table 1). Supporting Hypothesis 1, political orientation (with

higher scorers representing more conservatism) at Time 1 was positively related to

perceived incivility from liberal coworkers at Time 1 ($r = .14$, $p < .01$) and Time 2 ($r =$

.14, $p < .01$) and negatively related to perceived incivility from conservative coworkers at

Time 1 ($r = -.05$, $p < .05$) and Time 2 ($r = -.09$, $p < .01$). The results for instigated

incivility (Hypothesis 2) were mixed. Supporting Hypothesis 2a, political orientation

was positively related to instigated incivility toward liberal coworkers at Time 1 ($r = .07$,

$p < .01$) and Time 2 ($r = .06$, $p < .05$), but was unrelated to instigated incivility toward

conservative coworkers at either Time 1 ($r = .01$, ns) or Time 2 ($r = -.03$, ns), failing to

support Hypothesis 2b.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliabilities for all study variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. T2 Incivility from Conservatives	1.20	0.46	(.93)											
2. T2 Incivility from Liberals	1.12	0.33	.55**	(.93)										
3. T2 Incivility to Conservatives	2.09	0.57	.60**	.63**	(.92)									
4. T2 Incivility to Liberals	2.05	0.56	.47**	.75**	.78**	(.94)								
5. T1 Incivility from Conservatives[a]	1.27	0.60	.61**	.38**	.51**	.47**	(.95)							
6. T1 Incivility from Liberals[a]	1.20	0.55	.36**	.52**	.45**	.56**	.67**	(.97)						
7. T1 Incivility to Conservatives[a]	1.15	0.47	.36**	.41**	.51**	.54**	.72**	.70**	(.96)					
8. T1 Incivility To Liberals[a]	1.13	0.45	.32**	.44**	.45**	.55**	.65**	.75**	.89**	(.97)				
9. Political Beliefs[b]	3.27	1.58	−.09**	.14**	−.03	.06*	−.05*	.14**	.01	.07**	(.90)			
10. T1 CNN[c]	2.51	1.77	.10**	.07*	.08*	.09**	.16**	.14**	.20**	.20**	−.02	(.67)		
11. T1 Fox News[c]	2.14	1.66	.05	.21**	.11**	.17**	.13**	.21**	.20**	.24**	.37**	.34**	(.65)	
12. T1 MSNBC[c]	2.07	1.55	.15**	.10**	.15**	.13**	.19**	.16**	.21**	.20**	−.12**	.52**	.27**	(.75)

Note. $* p < .05$, $** p < .01$. [a]Control variables. [b]1 = *Extremely Liberal, 7 = Extremely Conservative.*[c]1 = *None*, 8 = *11+ hours/week*. Scale reliabilities (alphas for variables 1-8, test-retest for 9-12) are along the diagonal.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that political media television consumption would moderate the relationship between political orientation and perceived incivility at Time 2 and Hypothesis 4 predicted that political media consumption would moderate the relationship between political orientation and instigated incivility at Time 2. To test Hypotheses 3 and 4, we conducted a series of hierarchical moderated regression analyses in which the control variable (perceived or instigated incivility at Time 1 depending on the analysis) was entered on the first step, political orientation and political media consumption (FNC, MSNBC, or CNN) were entered in the second step, and the two-way political orientation $\times$ media consumption (e.g., political orientation $\times$ FNC consumption) was entered in the third step. To correct for multicollinearity that often accompanies testing moderating relationships, we centered the political orientation and media consumption variables before computing interaction terms multiplicatively (Aiken & West, 1991). The criterion variables in the analyses were perceived and instigated workplace incivility from/toward conservatives or liberals at Time 2. Tables 2-5 summarize the results of these analyses.

Table 2

Summary of hierarchical regression analyses predicting incivility from liberals

Variable	R	ΔR^2	B	SE	β
Fox News					
Step 1	.53	--			
T1 Incivility from Liberals			.42	.02	.53**
Step 2	.55	.02			
Political Orientation			.01	.01	.03
Fox News Channel (FNC)			.02	.01	.12**
Step 3	.55	.00			
Political Orientation × FNC			.01	.00	.05
MSNBC					
Step 1	.53	--			
T1 Incivility from Liberals			.42	.02	.53**
Step 2	.54	.01			
Political Orientation			.02	.01	.09**
MSNBC			.01	.01	.05
Step 3	.54	.01			
Political Orientation × MSNBC			.01	.00	.08**
CNN					
Step 1	.53	--			
T1 Incivility from Liberals			.42	.02	.53**
Step 2	.54	.01			
Political Orientation			.02	.01	.08**
CNN			.01	.01	.03
Step 3	.54	.00			
Political Orientation × CNN			.01	.00	.04

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$. T1 = Time 1.

Table 3

Summary of hierarchical regression analyses predicting incivility from conservatives

Variable	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE	β
Fox News					
Step 1	.36	--			
T1 Incivility from Conservatives			.52	.02	.60**
Step 2	.36	.00			
Political Orientation			-.01	.01	-.04
Fox News Channel (FNC)			.01	.01	.02
Step 3	.37	.00			
Political Orientation × FNC			.01	.00	.04
MSNBC					
Step 1	.37	--			
T1 Incivility from Conservatives			.52	.02	.61**
Step 2	.37	.00			
Political Orientation			-.01	.01	-.03
MSNBC			.01	.01	.04
Step 3	.37	.00			
Political Orientation × MSNBC			.01	.01	.05*
CNN					
Step 1	.37	--			
T1 Incivility from Conservatives			.53	.02	.61**
Step 2	.37	.00			
Political Orientation			-.01	.01	-.03
CNN			.01	.01	.05*
Step 3	.38	.01			
Political Orientation × CNN			.01	.00	.05*

Note. *p< .05; **p < .01. T1 = Time 1.

Table 4

Summary of hierarchical regression analyses predicting incivility toward liberals

Variable	R	ΔR^2	B	SE	β
Fox News					
Step 1	.55	--			
T1 Incivility to Liberals			.94	.05	.55**
Step 2	.56	.00			
Political Orientation			.01	.01	.01
Fox News Channel (FNC)			.03	.01	.07*
Step 3	.56	.00			
Political Orientation × FNC			.03	.01	.00
MSNBC					
Step 1	.55	--			
T1 Incivility to Liberals			.94	.05	.55**
Step 2	.56	.01			
Political Orientation			.02	.01	.05
MSNBC			.02	.01	.06*
Step 3	.56	.01			
Political Orientation ×			.02	.01	.09**
CNN					
Step 1	.55	--			
T1 Incivility to Liberals			.93	.05	.55**
Step 2	.55	.00			
Political Orientation			.02	.01	.05
CNN			.01	.01	.02
Step 3	.55	.00			
Political Orientation × CNN			.01	.01	.06*

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$. T1 = Time 1.

Table 5

Summary of hierarchical regression analyses predicting incivility toward conservatives

| Variable	R	ΔR^2	B	SE	β
Fox News					
Step 1	.53	--			
T1 Incivility to Conservatives			.87	.05	.53**
Step 2	.53	.00			
Political Orientation			-.01	.01	-.02
Fox News Channel (FNC)			.02	.01	.05
Step 3	.53	.00			
Political Orientation × FNC			-.01	.01	-.03
MSNBC					
Step 1	.52	--			
T1 Incivility to Conservatives			.87	.05	.52**
Step 2	.53	.00			
Political Orientation			.01	.01	.01
MSNBC			.02	.01	.06*
Step 3	.53	.01			
Political Orientation × MSNBC			.02	.01	.07**
CNN					
Step 1	.51	--			
T1 Incivility to Conservatives			.86	.05	.51**
Step 2	.51	.00			
Political Orientation			.00	.01	.01
CNN			.00	.01	.00
Step 3	.52	.01			
Political Orientation × CNN			.02	.01	.07**

Note. *p< .05; **p < .01. T1 = Time 1.

Hypothesis 3a predicted that more conservative participants would report more incivility from liberal coworkers the more they watched conservative television media (FNC). As shown in Table 2, there was a significant main effect for FNC consumption on perceived incivility from liberals; the more participants (regardless of political orientation) watched FNC the more they reported being the target of incivility from liberal coworkers. These results provide partial support for Hypothesis 3a; conservative television media consumption moderated the relationship between political orientation and perceived incivility from liberal coworkers for more conservative participants; however, this effect also held for more liberal employees.

Although not predicted, MSNBC consumption was also related to perceptions of incivility from liberal coworkers. As shown in Table 2, there was a significant main effect for political orientation that was qualified by a significant political orientation $\times$ MSNBC consumption interaction on perceived incivility from liberals. To examine the nature of this relationship, the interaction was graphed (see Figure 1) and simple slope analyses were conducted using conditional values for political orientation that were calculated to be 1 *SD* above (representing conservatives) and 1 *SD* below (representing liberals) the mean (Aiken & West, 1991). Results revealed that more conservative participants perceived higher levels of incivility from liberal coworkers the more they consumed MSNBC, while MSNBC consumption was unrelated to liberals' perceptions of incivility from liberal coworkers.
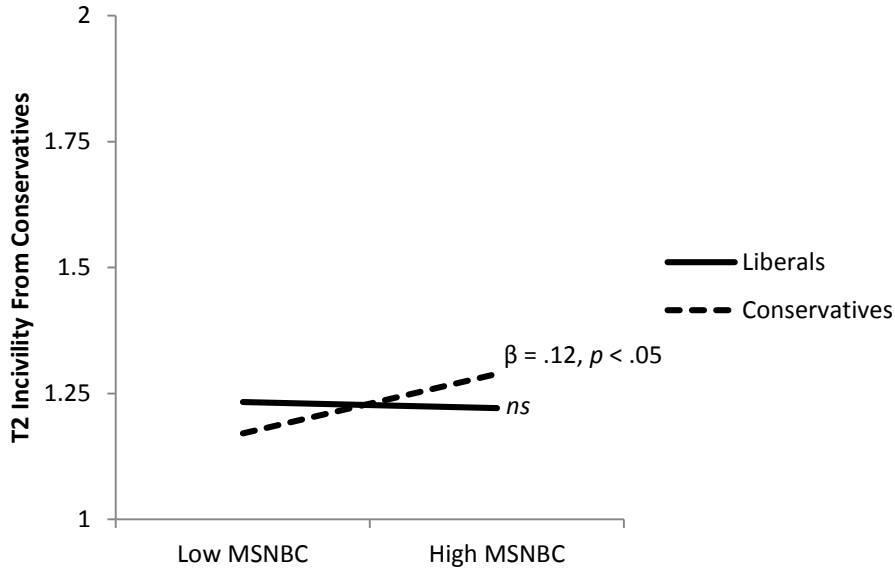
Figure 1

Moderation effect of MSNBC consumption at Time 1 on perceived incivility from liberals at Time 2
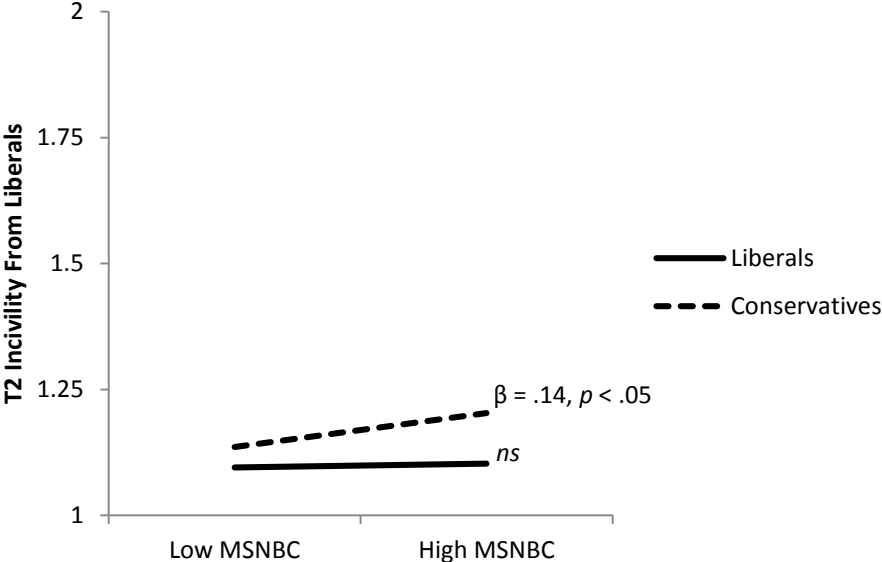
Hypothesis 3b predicted that more liberal participants would perceive more incivility from conservative coworkers the more they watched liberal news media (MSNBC and CNN). Contrary to our hypothesis, results indicated that more conservative, rather than more liberal, employees perceived more incivility from conservative coworkers as they watched liberal news networks. As shown in Table 3, there was a significant two-way interaction for political orientation and MSNBC consumption on perceived incivility from conservatives. Simple slope analyses revealed that conservative employees perceived higher levels of incivility from conservative coworkers the more they watched MSNBC, while MSNBC consumption was not related to perceived incivility from conservative coworkers for liberal employees (Figure 2).In addition to a significant main effect for CNN consumption, there was a significant two-way interaction between political orientation and CNN consumption on perceived incivility from conservatives (see Table 3). Simple slope analyses revealed that more conservative employees reported higher levels of incivility from conservative coworkers the more they watched CNN; however, CNN consumption did not affect liberals' perceptions of incivility from conservative coworkers (see Figure 3). Thus, Hypothesis 3b was not supported.
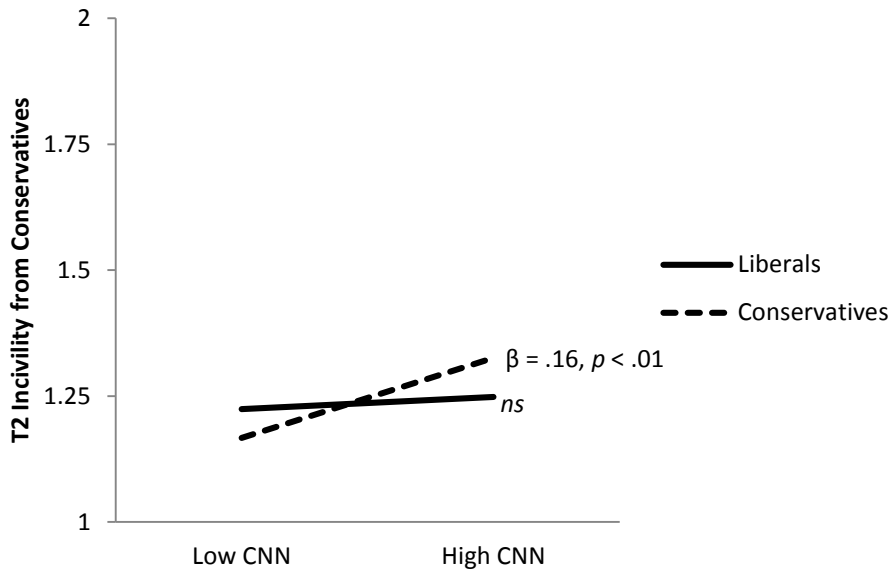
Figure 2

Moderation effect of MSNBC consumption at Time 1 on perceived incivility from conservatives at Time 2

Figure 3

Moderation effect of CNN consumption at Time 1 on perceived incivility from conservatives at Time 2

Hypothesis 4 posited that political media consumption would moderate the relationship between political orientation and instigated workplace incivility at Time 2. Tables 4 and 5 summarize the analyses examining political orientation, media consumption, and instigated incivility toward conservative and liberal coworkers, respectively. Hypothesis 4a predicted that more conservative participants would instigate more incivility toward liberal coworkers the more they watched conservative news media (FNC). As shown in Table 4,there was a significant main effect for FNC consumption on instigated incivility toward liberal coworkers; the more participants (regardless of political orientation) consumed FNC media the more they reported instigating incivility toward liberal coworkers, providing partial support for Hypothesis 4a.

Although not predicted, there was also a significant main effect for MSNBC consumption on incivility toward liberal coworkers such that the more participants watched MSNBC the more they instigated incivility toward liberals at work (Table 4). This main effect was qualified by a significant two-way interaction between political orientation and MSNBC consumption. Simple slope analyses revealed that conservative employees who consumed more MSNBC were more likely to instigate incivility toward liberal coworkers, while more liberal employees were no more likely (see Figure 4). In addition, a significant two-way interaction between political orientation and CNN consumption revealed that more conservative employees' CNN consumption predicted instigated incivility toward liberal coworkers, while more liberal employees were no more likely (see Figure 5).
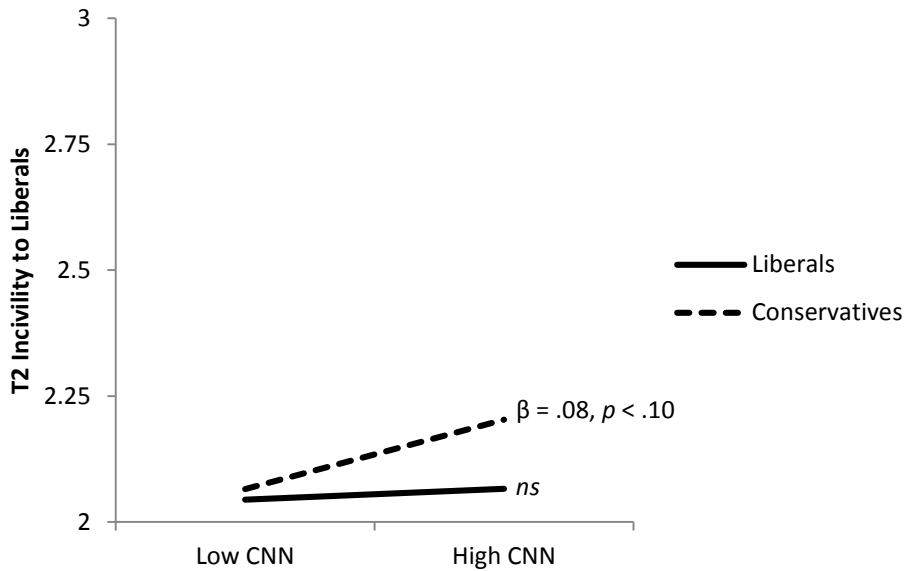
Figure 4

Moderation effect of MSNBC consumption at Time 1 on instigated incivility toward liberals at Time 2
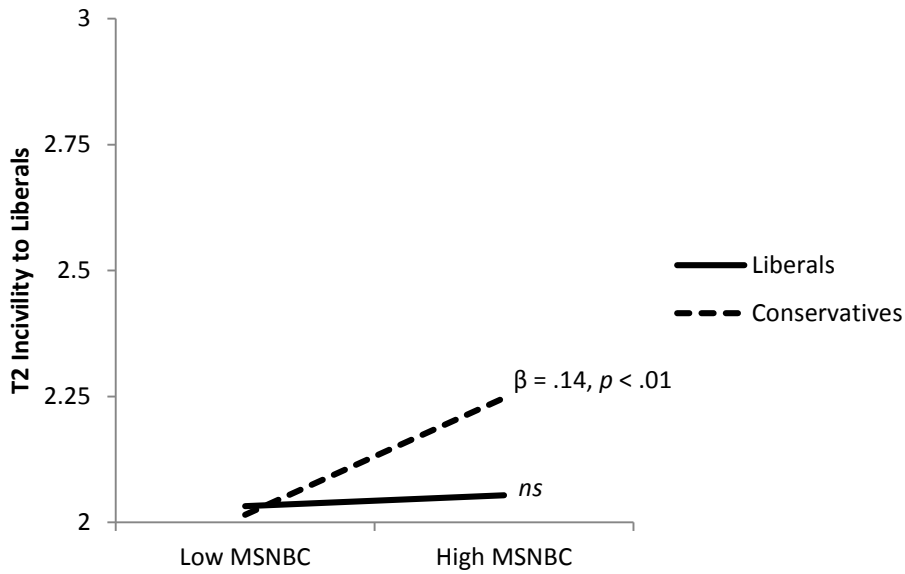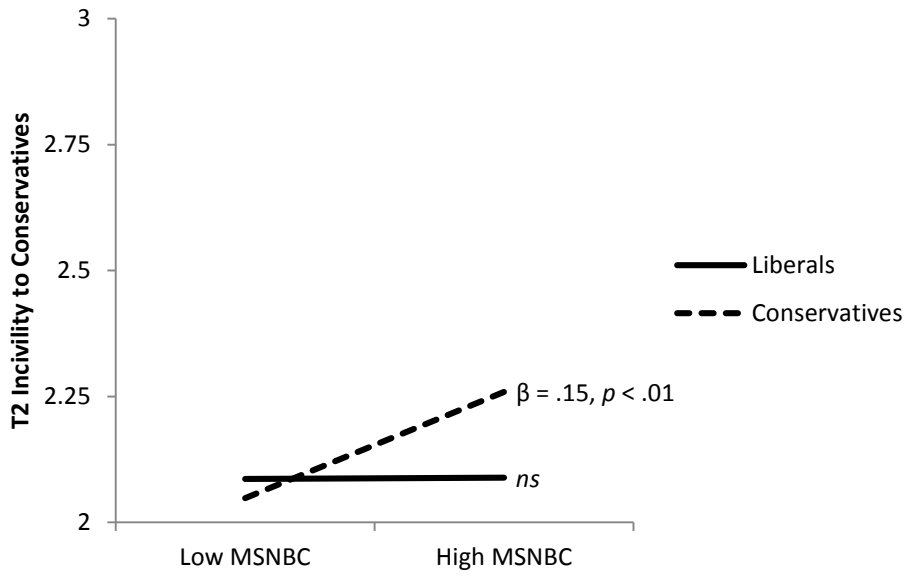

Figure 5

Moderation effect of CNN consumption at Time 1 on instigated incivility toward liberals at Time 2

Finally, Hypothesis 4b predicted that more liberal employees would instigate more incivility toward conservative coworkers they more they watched liberal news media (MSNBC and CNN). As shown in Table 5, there was a significant main effect for MSNBC consumption which was qualified by a significant two-way interaction between political orientation and MSNBC consumption on instigated incivility toward conservative coworkers. Simple slope analyses revealed that more conservative employees' MSNBC consumption was significantly related to instigated incivility toward conservative coworkers, but MSNBC consumption was not related to instigated incivility toward conservatives for more liberal employees (see Figure 6). Similarly, a significant two-way interaction for political orientation and CNN consumption revealed that for more conservative employees, CNN consumption was significantly related to instigated incivility toward conservative coworkers, while for more liberal employees CNN consumption was not predictive on instigated incivility toward conservatives (see Figure 7). Thus, Hypothesis 4b was not supported.
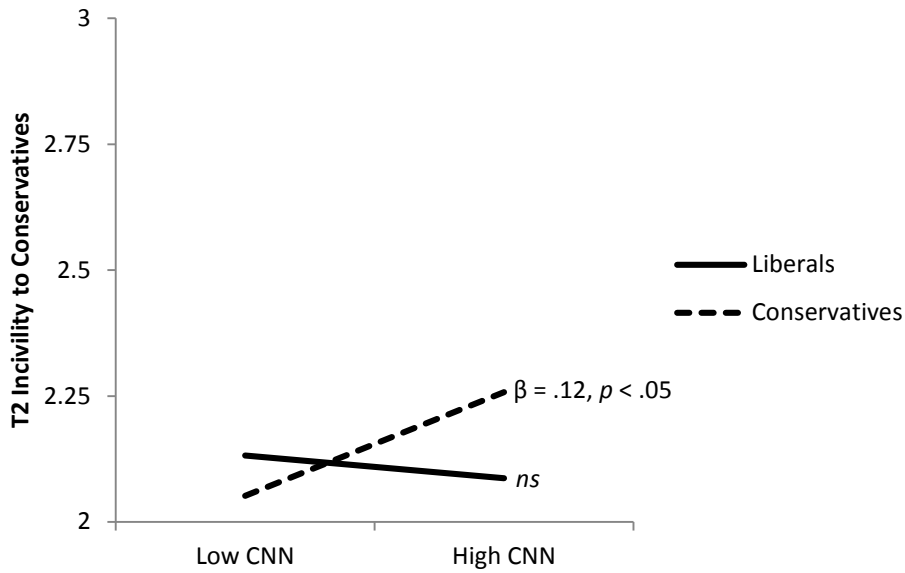
Figure 6

Moderation effect of MSNBC consumption at Time 1 on instigated incivility toward conservatives at Time 2

Figure 7

Moderation effect of CNN consumption at Time 1 on instigated incivility toward conservatives at Time 2

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In sum, Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted that employees would perceive and instigate, respectively, incivility from/toward coworkers with opposing political beliefs. Hypothesis 1 was fully supported, while Hypothesis 2 was supported for incivility directed toward liberal (2a) but not conservative (2b) coworkers. Hypotheses 3 and 4 predicted that the relationships between political orientation and perceived/instigated incivility would be moderated by political media consumption such that out-group mistreatment would be more severe as employees consumed pro-attitudinal media. Results provided partial support for Hypotheses 3a and 4a, as Fox News consumption was significantly related to perceived (3a) and instigated (4a) incivility from/toward liberals; however, these results held for employees regardless of political orientation. Hypotheses 3b and 4b were not supported, as MSNBC and CNN consumption were not related to perceived (3b) or instigated (4b) incivility from/toward conservatives for liberal employees. Contrary to hypotheses, consumption of MSNBC and CNN were related to perceived and instigated incivility from/toward conservative coworkers for conservative but not liberal employees.

DISCUSSION

The present study sought to investigate how social identities derived from the larger social context are related to the perception and instigation of selective incivility in the workplace. Specifically, we sought to examine how political identities are related to politically-motivated workplace incivility and explore the role political media consumption may play in attenuating or amplifying identity-based conflict like selective workplace incivility. We argued that identity-reinforcing messages would heighten the salience of political orientation as a relevant social category, in essence priming employees to engage in politically-motivated incivility in the workplace. Grounded in social identity (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), selective exposure (Stroud, 2008), and incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina, 2008) theories, our hypotheses predicted that employees' political orientations would be related to perceived (Hypothesis 1) and instigated (Hypothesis 2) political identity-based workplace incivility, and that the consumption of identity-reinforcing political news media would strengthen the relationship between political orientation and perceived (Hypothesis 3) and instigated (Hypothesis 4) incivility.

Based on social identity theory, we predicted that employees would engage in politically-motivated incivility in such a way that out-group members would be both perceived as uncivil (Hypothesis 1) and targeted for incivility (Hypothesis 2) on the basis of political identities. Hypothesis 1 was fully supported. More conservative employees perceived less incivility from their conservative colleagues and more from their liberal coworkers. Similarly, more liberal employees perceived more incivility form

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their conservative coworkers and less from their liberal colleagues. These relationships were consistent for both Time 1 and Time 2. Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. Hypothesis 2a predicted that conservative employees would instigate more incivility toward liberals than conservatives at work, which was supported at both Time 1 and Time 2. Hypothesis 2b, on the other hand, was not supported, as liberal employees did not instigate more incivility toward conservatives than liberal employees at either Time 1 or Time 2. While Hypotheses 1 and 2 were generally supported and consistent with social identity theory's predictions, it is noteworthy that political orientation was not predictive of instigated incivility toward conservative coworkers by either conservatives or liberals.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 predicted that the consumption of politically-oriented news media would moderate the predicted relationships between political orientation and politically-motivated incivility. Specifically, Hypothesis 3 predicted that the more employees consumed pro-attitudinal news media (Fox News for more conservative employees; MSNBC and CNN for more liberal employees), the more they would perceive incivility from coworkers with opposing political beliefs. Hypothesis 3a was partially supported: higher levels of Fox News consumption were related to perceived incivility from liberal coworkers for conservative employees; however, more liberal employees also reported higher levels of incivility from liberal coworkers as they watched more Fox News. Contrary to Hypothesis 3b, consumption of liberal network programming was not related to perceived incivility from conservative coworkers for liberal employees. Hypothesis 4 predicted that the more employees consumed pro-

attitudinal news media, the more they would instigate incivility toward coworkers with opposing political beliefs. Hypothesis 4a was partially supported: higher levels of Fox News consumption were related to instigated incivility toward liberal coworkers for conservative employees; however, more liberal employees also reported instigating more incivility toward liberal coworkers the more they watched Fox News. Contrary to Hypothesis 4b, consumption of liberal network programming was not related to instigated incivility toward conservative coworkers for liberal employees.

Overall, our findings showed 1) support for Hypothesis 1, as employees perceived more incivility from political out-groups, 2) mixed support for Hypothesis 2, as conservatives reported instigating more incivility toward liberals than did liberal employees, while liberals and conservatives reported instigating similar levels of incivility toward conservative coworkers, 3) mixed support for Hypotheses 3 and 4, as consumption of pro-attitudinal news media was related to perceptions and instigation of mistreatment of political out-group members only for more conservative employees who watch Fox News, and 4) consumption of counter-attitudinal news media was related to mistreatment of political in-group members for all employees for all news sources.

Our first finding provides support for the proposition that political orientation serves as a social category by which employees perceive interpersonal mistreatment. In general, more liberal employees perceived more incivility from conservative than liberal coworkers, and more conservative employees perceived more incivility from liberal than conservative coworkers. However, our second finding, that more conservative employees reported instigating incivility toward liberal coworkers, while more liberal

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employees did not report instigating incivility toward conservative coworkers, taken together with our finding that the consumption of pro-attitudinal news media was only related to mistreatment for more conservative employees who watch Fox News, indicate that more conservative employees may engage with political media and interact with coworkers in a different way than their liberal coworkers.

Alternatively, it may be the case that political orientation functions more as an individual difference than a basis for social categorization. According to recent research, political conservatism reflects an individual's need for certainty and threat reduction, while political liberalism is associated with a tolerance for uncertainty and threat (Jost, Blount, Pfeffer, & Hunyady, 2003; Jost, Glazer, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). Liberals advocate for change while conservatives resist it; liberals reject inequality while conservatives accept it. Conservatives prefer tradition, conformity, order, stability, traditional values, and hierarchy; liberals advocate for progress, rebelliousness, chaos, flexibility, feminism, and equality (Jost, Nosek, & Gosling, 2008). Consistent with our proposition that politically-motivated workplace incivility is predicated on perceptions of intergroup threat, conservatives may be more likely to instigate incivility toward liberal coworkers as a means of reducing such a threat. Additionally, we would expect Fox News to convey a perspective that reflects conservatives' need for certainty and threat reduction, heightening conservatives' perceptions of intergroup threat and in turn precipitating perceived and instigated incivility from/to liberals.

These individual differences may also influence the salience of political identities in the workplace via employees' tendencies to reveal these identities to coworkers. Political orientation is an invisible characteristic that is revealed to others by words or actions. As such, individuals may choose to conceal or publicize their political identities in the workplace. Clair, Beatty, and Maclean (2005) theorize that the choice to conceal or reveal invisible identities is dependent on individual differences such as one's propensity toward risk taking. Given conservatives' tendencies toward certainty and threat reduction, it may be the case that they are less likely to reveal their political beliefs in the workplace. The decision to conceal invisible identities has been shown to have a negative impact on a variety of outcomes, including psychological strain and job attitudes (Ragins & Cornwall, 2001), less effective workplace relationships (Kronenberger, 1991; Schneider, 1987), poorer coworker relationships (Herek, 1996; Jones, Farina, Hastorf, Markus, Miller, & Scott, 1984), and limited networks and mentoring relationships (Day & Schoenrade, 1997). Therefore, it may be the case that politically-motivated incivility reflects the behavioral consequences of poorer workplace relationships resulting from the decision to conceal/reveal one's political beliefs at work.

Findings also showed a relationship between consumption of counter-attitudinal news media and incivility from and toward politically like-minded coworkers. While these findings were not predicted, they are consonant with emerging theory on social identity threat in organizations. When social identities are threatened, one option individuals have is to de-identify with the threatened social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In the organizational context, Petriglieri (2011) suggests that when employees

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experience identity threat, they may engage in a number of identity-protection responses, including seeking alternative available identities. When employees consume counter-attitudinal news media and find that their political identities are threatened, they may in turn engage in politically-motivated incivility toward in-group members as a way of distancing themselves from the threatened identity.

One final but not unimportant consideration in interpreting these findings is that President Obama, widely perceived as a liberal Democrat, won the election, while the conservative Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, lost. The two groups of interest in this study, liberals and conservatives, therefore, inhabited different social environments with regard to the distribution of political power at the time the study was conducted. On the one hand, liberals, vis-à-vis President Obama's incumbency and presumed imminent victory, retained political power, while conservatives lost the opportunity to gain power in the executive branch for another four years. Such an event in and of itself is likely to engender uncertainty and threat as described above. Over and above conservatives' natural inclination toward threat and uncertainty avoidance, it may be the case that conservatives simply felt the outcome of the election was unjust while liberals perceived it as fair. Consistent with Andersson and Pearson (1999), perceptions of interactional injustice are theorized to play a significant role in setting the stage for uncivil workplace interactions. Political media consumption may have served to only exacerbate such perceptions of injustice for conservatives, resulting in their increased perceptions and instigations of uncivil behavior toward coworkers.

Limitations and Future Research

The primary limitation of the present study is that as a correlational survey study, we were unable to directly manipulate the political orientation or media consumption of our participants. As a result, it is impossible to make any causal inferences concerning political orientation, political news consumption, and workplace incivility. Further, events within the election itself may have confounded our results. The election outcome, for example, resulted in increased political power for liberals (via President Obama's victory) and decreased power for conservatives. It is difficult within the confines of this study to determine whether the differential patterns of perceived and instigated incivility for liberals and conservatives were the result of individual differences (i.e., political orientation) between conservatives and liberals or rather the result of liberals gaining power and conservatives losing it. Future research ought to illuminate this distinction by studying politically-motivated incivility in other political elections, such as when liberals are expected to lose power and conservatives to gain it. If similar results to ours are found in an election context where conservatives gained political power, it would provide evidence for the individual difference hypothesis. On the other hand, should the results differ, findings may be the result of losses or gains of political power. Combined with partisan media heightening the salience of power imbalances, such power differences may be a driving force behind politically-motivated incivility.

An additional, related limitation of the current study is that it examines media consumption, political orientation, and politically-motivated workplace incivility during a single election in a single national context. Future work ought to expand these

investigations into a number of different cultural contexts. For example, elections held in other countries and cultures could yield promising insights into the stability of the phenomena observed in the present study. In addition to examining other cultures outside the United States, more local research could prove illuminating as well. National elections are hardly the only political events that make for water cooler talk at work. State and local elections are often as passionately contested as national ones if not more so. Given that the decisions made by local and state officials are more proximal to the lives and livelihoods of employees, political beliefs regarding state and local issues may be even more likely to motivate the social categorization of coworkers on the basis of political orientation and set the stage for even more politically-motivated incivility.

In addition, this study is limited in that it only examines the media consumption of three major television networks. Given the proliferation of non-television news sources, future research might examine how nontraditional media may increase the salience of political categories in the workplace. For example, internet sources such as The Huffington Post and The Drudge Report (with supposedly liberal and conservative perspectives, respectively) may do as much or more to inflame partisan conflict as television sources. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter provide a unique opportunity to examine the selective exposure hypothesis, as content is delivered in such a way as to be consonant with consumers' interests. For example, researchers could empirically test the proposition that the Facebook and Twitter feeds of users tend to match their political orientations via content analysis. If conservatives are exposed to more conservative media content, and liberals are exposed to more liberal content, via

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social media, consumption of social media may serve the same political identity accentuating function that cable new consumption serves in the present study. Because national cable networks tend to cover national news at the expense of local and state issues, consumption of other nontraditional media may prove especially germane to examining how politically-motivated incivility may arise in state and local election contexts.

Additionally, the representativeness (or lack thereof) of the MTurk sample may threaten the external validity of the results of the present study. While MTurk has been shown to provide high-quality data relative to convenience or college samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011), other data collection methods, such as Internet-based panels or national probability samples, are often more representative of the U.S. population at large than those procured via MTurk (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). In order to establish the robustness of the findings of this study, future work ought to employ a variety of sampling methods, especially national probability samples, to demonstrate that these findings are not sampling effects resulting from the use of MTurk.

Additional research might also focus on how media consumption differentially predicts in-group versus out-group incivility. According to our findings, in-group incivility was especially evident when individuals consumed counterattidunal news media while out-group incivility was associated with pro-attitudinal news media consumption. A fruitful possibility for future research would be to experimentally manipulate pro- and counter-attitudinal news consumption to determine whether such consumption elicits in-group or out-group incivility directly or whether individuals who

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choose to expose themselves to pro- or counter-attitudinal media are more natural targets or perpetrators of incivility toward coworkers who share (or not) their political beliefs.

Finally, future work could elaborate on these findings by extending them to other domains (such as gender-, race-, or class-based uncivil treatment). Media consumption likely accentuates the salience of social identities other than political orientation. Consumption of media that objectifies women, for example, may lead to gender-based mistreatment in the workplace, or consumption of media that reinforces racial stereotypes may lead to race-based mistreatment. The intersectionality of political identities with other social identities should also be carefully examined. Although not examined in the current study, it may well be that the identities of women or ethnic minority workers intersect with their political identities such that minority-liberal and minority-conservative experiences are palpably different from those of majority-liberals and majority-conservatives.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the roles of political orientation, media consumption, and larger social events in predicting selective workplace mistreatment. Findings generally supported our hypotheses that employees perceive and engage in politically-motivated workplace incivility, and that the consumption of political media plays a significant role in employees' perceptions and instigation of such behavior. According to our results, pro-attitudinal media consumption is related to more conservative employees' perceptions and instigation of mistreatment toward liberals, while more liberal employees were no more likely to perceive or instigate incivility toward conservatives. Counter-attitudinal media consumption, on the other hand, was predictive of employee mistreatment of coworkers who presumably share their political beliefs.

This study connects the growing literatures on political ideology and selective workplace incivility by positing that employee media consumption habits may play a substantive role in understanding the non-work etiologies of workplace conflict. Future work should build on our findings by examining political conflict at multiple levels (local and state elections) and media consumption from alternative outlets (talk radio, Internet news websites, social media). In addition, research should investigate how and why conservatives and liberals respond differentially to pro- and counter-attitudinal messaging.

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