

Observing Workplace Incivility Towards Women: The Roles of Target Reactions, Actor Motives, and Actor-Target Relationships

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Abstract The current study conceptualized observer reactions to uncivil behavior towards women as an ethical behavior and examined three factors (target reaction, actor motive, and actor-target relationship) that influence these reactions. Two vignette studies with women and men undergraduate and graduate students in western Switzerland were conducted. Study 1 ($N=148$) was a written vignette study that assessed how the reaction of female targets to incivility and the motives of actors influenced observer reactions. Results showed that a female target's reaction influenced observers' evaluations of the harm caused by an uncivil incident, and that an actor's motive affected observers' assessments of the necessity to intervene. Study 2 ($N=81$) was a video vignette study that assessed the effects of the reactions by female targets to incivility and the relationship between the target and the actor on observer reactions. We found that female targets' reactions influenced observers' evaluations of harm and the perceived necessity to intervene. Furthermore, the effect of a female target's reaction on observers' evaluations of harm was moderated by the relationship between the actor and the target: a female target who laughed at the uncivil behavior was perceived as less harmed, when she and the actor had a personal relationship than when they had a professional relationship. When the female target reacted hurt or neutrally, actor-target relationship did not affect observers' evaluations of harm. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for theory and practice.

Keywords Discrimination · Harassment · Incivility · Misogyny · Observer intervention · Third-party reactions

Introduction

“I recently saw an incident between our female administrative assistant and two male senior architects. The secretary asked a question to one senior architect, but he pretended not to listen to her. When she insisted, he told her not to bother him. Then the other senior architect said in a very loud and sarcastic way, ‘Wow, even the secretary of our office seems to believe that she has power and authority.’ It was really unpleasant for everybody around, and the administrative assistant walked off upset. Neither I nor my other colleagues did anything; we just continued working.” (Female employee, summer 2011)

In many workplaces, women are the primary targets of uncivil behaviors such as rude and discourteous remarks and men are the primary actors. These findings have been observed in studies conducted amongst US employees (Cortina et al. 2001; Miner and Eischeid 2012; Pearson and Porath 2009). Uncivil behaviors are not only indicative of a poisoned work environment, but also result in stress and health problems (e.g., for meta-analytic evidence, see Chan et al. 2008), as indicated by past studies with US employees and MBA students in the U.S. (Cortina and Magley 2009; Lim et al. 2008; Porath and Pearson 2012). The targeted women often respond passively (Knapp et al. 1997), and therefore interventions by others are necessary to curb such behaviors (Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly 2005). However, such interventions are relatively rare, as suggested by studies with US college students (e.g. Cunningham et al. 2012), despite their potentially healing effect on the targets and their contribution to an atmosphere of respect.

The purpose of this article is to foster understanding about observer reactions and their role in stopping anti-female incivility in the workplace. We conducted two vignette studies depicting an incident of anti-female mistreatment with

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undergraduate and graduate students at a university in western Switzerland. Our main research questions were concerned with three factors that may shape observer reactions towards such incidents: (1) the reactions of female targets to incivility who might express the harm done to them or not; (2) the motives of actors that might vary in their maliciousness; and (3) the relationship between the target and the actor: they might have not only a professional but also a personal relationship. Study 1 was a written vignette study on the effects of female targets' reactions and the male actors' motives on the dependent variables observers' evaluations of target harm and the necessity to intervene. Study 2 was a video vignette study that examined effects of female targets' reactions and actor-target relationships on the same dependent variables. We used multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and follow-up univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the hypotheses.

Our research contributes to the nascent literature on observer reactions to workplace mistreatment of women that have so far been mostly conducted with US college students and US employees. (e.g. Benavides-Espinoza and Cunningham 2010a, b; Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly 2005; Bowes-Sperry and Powell 1999; Cunningham et al. 2012; Miner and Eischeid 2012). Specifically, the importance of our paper lies in (1) the examination of previously untested aspects of the observer intervention model by Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005), (2) the conceptualization of observer intervention against anti-female incivility as a moral imperative and ethical conduct, and (3) the constructive replication of past U.S. findings in a Swiss context. While past empirical research (for a review, see Barak 1997) do not suggest conclusive effects of cultural context, and results from Wasti et al.'s (2000) study on the cross-generalizability of sexual harassment with employees from the United States and Turkey indicated that "the detrimental outcomes of harassment on women transcend cultural differences" (p. 777), replication across cultures is an important empirical contribution as it ascertains the robustness of effects, showing whether they are culturally invariant or not.

The Swiss Context of Gender Perceptions and Mistreatment of Women

Statistics on Gender Equality

Statistics indicate a complex and ambivalent pattern of gender equality in Switzerland (Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland, FSOS 2013). Legal advances have been made (e.g., legislation for equal rights of men and women in 1981), and Switzerland has one of the highest female economic activity rates in Europe (FSOS 2013). However, existing social infrastructures (e.g. school hours, short maternity leave, limited access to childcare) make it difficult to achieve gender equality. For example, Swiss women earn 18.4 % less than

their male counterparts, of which 37.6 % are attributed to discrimination (FSOS 2013). Moreover, only 41.5 % of Swiss women have full-time jobs and Swiss women are more frequently employed in lower positions than are Swiss men (FSOS 2013).

Perceptual Data on Gender Equality

The World Values Survey (as cited in Kelso et al. 2012) suggests more gender egalitarian values in Switzerland than in the United States but lower ones than in other Western European countries. Swiss women and men appeared to be equally supportive of gender equality with minor and insignificant regional differences. In a survey study with over 1,100 Swiss participants between the ages of 36–55 in Switzerland, Swiss women and men expressed similar attitudes on gender equality issues such as quotas and equal opportunities, parental status and career advancement, part-time work and job sharing, and mentoring (Kelso et al. 2012). However, notable differences existed in their perceptions of gender barriers in the workplace, such that 27 % of Swiss women, compared to 61 % of Swiss men, did not believe that gender barriers existed to women advancing to upper management.

Data on Sexual Harassment

Ducret and Fehlmann (1993) found, in a sample of 556 Swiss women, that 59 % had felt sexually harassed in the workplace in the last 2 years and 72 % had felt sexually harassed at least once in their professional careers. In Strub and Schär Moser's (2008) telephone study with 2,020 Swiss employees, 54.8 % of women admitted to being exposed to a potentially harassing behavior at least once in their professional careers compared to 48.6 % of men.

We are not aware of Swiss data on observer reactions to the mistreatment of women in the workplace. In a small sample of employees from two Swiss information technology firms in Switzerland, both women and men, however, reported that women should be responsible for overcoming gender discrimination on their own (Kelan 2009).

Research on Observer Intervention Against Workplace Mistreatment of Women

Concept of Incivility Against Women

Incivility against women is one form of mistreatment of women in the workplace. Andersson and Pearson (1999) defined 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 for others" (1999, p. 457). Incivility specifically targeted towards

women (referred to by Cunningham et al. 2012, as misogyny) is a special case of sexual harassment (e.g., Gelfand et al. 1995), namely, relatively subtle behavior that contributes to a hostile work environment.

Concept of Observer Intervention

In Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly’s model (2005), observers are referred to as individuals who have witnessed incidents of sexual harassment, and interventions are broadly referred to as helping behaviors towards the target and/or the organization. Observer intervention and helping behaviors can contribute to ensuring the human right of respectful treatment and reducing discrimination against women, and hence, have an ethical dimension (see, for example, Petersen and Dietz 2008; Treviño and Nelson 2003). In fact, Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly’s (2005) observer intervention model is similar to ethical behavior and decision making stage models (e.g. Ferrell et al. 1989; Rest 1986) that proceed through phases such as problem recognition, evaluation, intention to act, decision and behavior.

Process of Observer Intervention

Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) theorized observer intervention as a stepwise process from assessing the necessity to intervene to observer responsibility to observer actions, focusing on *how* observers decide on intervention behaviors. They acknowledged, however, that observer intervention might not consistently follow the rational script of their model. Ryan and Wessel (2011), in a sample of university students at a university in the Midwestern United States, found that antecedents of observer interventions directly affected later steps rather than indirectly through preceding steps. Hence, we examine the direct impact of our predictors (target reaction, actor motive, and actor-target relationship) on observers’ evaluations of harm and the necessity to intervene.

Motivations for Observer Intervention

Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) viewed the desire to help as a dominant motive (for a similar argument, see Skarlicki and Kulik 2005), while also acknowledging that observers might act out of self-interest. The desire to help often stems from a moral imperative, a judgment of a situation as a moral issue in which the treatment of humans with respect and dignity becomes salient (e.g., O’Reilly and Aquino 2011). Jones (1991) noted that moral imperatives are contingent on situational factors, such as how harmful an event is and how much an agent is motivated to cause harm. Bowes-Sperry and Powell (1999) found that witnesses of sexual harassment were more likely to express intentions to intervene the more they judged these incidents as a moral issue. Because of the crucial roles of the harm done to targets and the maliciousness of actor’s motives

on observers’ for judgements of incidents as constituting a moral imperative, we focused on these variables by manipulating target reaction (how much harm a target expresses) and actor motive (how malicious an actor’s motives are). Moreover, we examined the existence of a personal actor-target relationship as a potential boundary condition for observer intervention. Below we present hypotheses for each of the three predictors: target reaction, actor motive, and actor-target relationship.

Target Reaction: The Expression of Harm

Target reaction is our focal independent variable. It refers to the conduct of targets in incivility incidents, which may vary considerably. Target reaction ranges from passive reactions (e.g., ignoring an incident) to active reactions, such as laughing an incident off, crying in response to it, or retaliating against the actor. Examining the influence of target reactions helps to understand the ethicality of observer reactions: if observers only intervene when targets are hurt, it suggests that observers are concerned with stopping the harm that is done. If observers were to intervene independent of the target’s reaction, these observers are likely motivated by the principle of stopping inappropriate behavior.

Conceptually, from an observer’s point of view, a target’s reaction provides information about an incident, for example, notably about the magnitude of negative consequences to the target and possibly also about the target’s acceptance of observer intervention (Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly 2005). Both theoretical arguments (Skarlicki and Kulik 2005) and empirical research (Bowes-Sperry and Powell 1999) indicate a positive effect of harm expressed by the target in response to incivility on observers’ perceptions of a moral imperative. This moral imperative, in turn, motivates reactions to the uncivil treatment of women. While the above arguments refer to a U.S. context, we did not expect this effect to be different in our Swiss sample. That humans should not be mistreated is a universal human value across cultures and religions (e.g. Kinnier et al. 2000), although its interpretation varies. Stated differently, people generally feel more desire to help the more another person expresses hurt.

We operationalized the expression of harm as a target’s reaction of amusement or emotional hurt (in the second study, we also included a neutral condition). We focused on these relatively milder reactions, as the literature (e.g. Knapp et al. 1997) suggests that most targets respond passively. In sum, as reviewed above, observers are affected by the harm that they see another person experiencing. This perception of harm triggers a moral imperative to help this person and ultimately motivates an intervention against the observed mistreatment (e.g., Skarlicki and Kulik 2005). Thus, we hypothesize for Studies 1 and 2:

Hypothesis 1: Target reaction influences observers’ evaluations of target harm (Hypothesis 1a) and the

necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 1b), such that the evaluation of harm to the target and the necessity to intervene are higher when the target reacts hurt than when the target reacts amused or neutrally.

Actor Motivation

Actor motivation refers to the degree to which the actor's motives stem from maliciousness. Malice refers to the "intent to commit an unlawful act or cause harm without legal justification or excuse" (Malice n.d.). The more observers perceive the actor's action as being motivated by a justifiable or reasonable excuse, the less they attribute responsibility to actors (Cushman 2008) and the less negatively they evaluate incidents (Skarlicki and Kulik 2005). Then, as the actor is judged as less "evil" in his intentions, the incident is less likely to invoke a moral imperative (Jones 1991) that stimulates observer intervention behaviour. Evidence for this argument comes, for example, from justice research: harm-doers who provide a reason for harming someone receive reduced punishments (e.g. Felson and Ribner 1981). We expect that these arguments are viable also in a Swiss cultural context. Albeit cultural differences exist in the extent to which people view others as basically malicious or not (Maznevski et al. 2002) and the extent to which people trust others (e.g., World Values Survey, Inglehart et al. 1998), these differences are fairly small between the United States and Switzerland and, hence, should not be observable in observer interventions in reaction to actors' motives.

We operationalized actor motivation by characterizing the actor as either a long-time sexist, or as a recent target of reverse discrimination. On the basis of the above reviewed arguments that actors' motives affect the perception of a moral imperative to intervene against this actor (e.g., Cushman 2008), we expected that observers would view an incident as causing less harm to a female target and would find it less necessary to intervene when the actor was a victim of reverse discrimination. We hypothesize for Study 1:

Hypothesis 2: Actor motivation influences observers' evaluations of target harm (Hypothesis 2a) and necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 2b) such that the evaluation of target harm and the necessity to intervene are lower when the actor has been a victim of reverse discrimination than when the actor is a sexist.

Actor-Target Relationship

We conceptualize actor-target relationship as whether an actor and a target have a personal relationship or not (above and beyond the professional connection by working in the same

organization). In the literature on bystander intervention, scholars have argued and shown that third parties are less likely to intervene in interactions among people in a personal relationship (Levine 1999; Shotland and Straw 1976).

Levine (1999), in his case study of the James Bulger crime in the United Kingdom, theorized that the phenomenon of non-intervention in personal relationships had normative roots. That is, social consensus prescribes non-interference in personal relationships and conflicts (see also Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly 2005; O'Leary-Kelly et al. 2004). Even if observers know the people involved, this normative social consensus remains strong (Levine 1999). Stated differently, observers assume that in personal relationships, there is another meaningful explanation to the incident (e.g. an inside joke). In contrast, in incidents where the target and actor do not appear to have a personal relationship, this assumption of a background story is less likely and observers are more confident in their judgements.

The empirical evidence for the effects of actor-target relationships on observer intervention is considerable. For example, Shotland and Straw (1976), in a sample of university students in the United States, found that male–female dyadic interactions invoked automatic categorizations, such that aggressive incidents between a man and a woman in a personal relationship were evaluated as less harmful than were the same incidents outside such a relationship. Related evidence for this argument comes from research on police interventions in cases of violence against women. Police interventions were less frequent when targets were known to have personal relations with harassers than when harassers were strangers, an effect found across cultures in survey studies with police samples in the United States (e.g., Felson and Ackerman 2001) and Spain (e.g. Gracia et al. 2008), and in vignette studies conducted with undergraduate student samples in the United Kingdom (e.g. Sheridan et al. 2003).

We suggest that theory and research about relationship effects on observer intervention also apply to observing incivility towards women. Whether an incident, such as an uncivil one against a woman, is associated with a moral imperative for action is also affected by social consensus about which type of behavior is appropriate in which type of situation (Jones 1991). As discussed above, in the case of personal relationships, there is consensus that one ought *not* intervene. This phenomenon should also hold up in a Swiss context. The categorization of male and female private relationships and the social consensus of non-interference are more prevalent in individualistic cultures, and both Switzerland and the United States are highly individualistic cultures (Hofstede 2001).

We operationalized actor-target relationship as either a purely professional relationship between a male actor and a female target or as both a professional and personal relationship. As reviewed above, (1) perceptions of harm are lower in conflicts between male and female dyads in personal

relationships and (2) social consensus prescribes non-intervention in other people's matters (Shotland and Straw 1976; Levine 1999). Hence, we expected that observers' evaluations of target harm and the necessity to intervene would decrease when the actor and the target had a personal relationship (as compared to when they did not have such a relationship). We formulate for Study 2:

Hypothesis 3: Actor-target relationship influences observers' evaluations of target harm (Hypothesis 3a) and necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 3b), such that evaluations of target harm and the necessity to intervene are lower when there is a personal actor-target relationship compared to when there is no such relationship.

The Interaction of Target Reaction and Actor-Target Relationship

In addition to the above hypothesized direct effects of target reaction, actor motive, and actor-target relationship, the moral-imperative argument also implies that an actor-target relationship serves as a boundary condition for the effects of target action on observer reactions. A moral imperative for intervention is more likely to exist, when male actors and female targets have only a professional relationship than when they also have a personal relationship. Therefore, the effects of factors that influence the moral evaluation of an incident, including the amount of harm inflicted on somebody, should vary as a function of whether the incident involves an actor and a target who have a personal relationship or not. If they do have a personal relationship, observers should perceive less harm and less of a need to intervene in response to target reactions. Empirically, this boundary condition translates into a moderating effect of actor-target relationship on the effect of target reaction on observer evaluations of target harm and observer necessity to intervene. We hypothesize for Study 2:

Hypothesis 4: The effects of target reaction on observers' evaluations of target harm (Hypothesis 4a) and the necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 4b) are moderated by actor-target relationship, such that these effects are weaker when the actor and the target have a personal relationship (compared to the absence of such a relationship).

Summary

We focus on two key aspects of Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly's (2005) model of observer intervention (observers' perceptions of harm to the target and their judgement about the necessity to intervene) from an ethical perspective.

Specifically, we predict that (1) target reaction influences women and men observers' evaluations of target harm (Hypothesis 1a) and the necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 1b), (2) actor motivation also influences women and men observers' evaluation of target harm (Hypothesis 2a) and necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 2b), (3) actor-target relationship influences women and men observers' evaluations of target harm (Hypothesis 3a) and necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 3b), and (4) the effects of target reaction on women and men observers' evaluation of target harm (Hypothesis 4a) and the necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 4b) are moderated by actor-target relationship.

In addition, we explored the effects of observer gender in light of mixed findings in past studies with U.S. samples (e.g. Baker et al. 1990; Benavides-Espinoza and Cunningham 2010b; Cunningham et al. 2012; Miner-Rubino and Cortina 2007; Wiener and Hurt 2000). As outlined below, we examined these hypotheses in two vignette studies with students at a university in western Switzerland. We examined the impact of our independent variables (target reaction, actor motive, actor-target relationship, and participant gender) on our dependent variables (target harm and the necessity to intervene) by conducting MANOVAs and follow-up ANOVAs for each study. Below, we report the methods and results of two studies designed to test the above hypotheses.

Study 1

Study 1 served to test Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b. Given the nascent state of empirical research on observer interventions against the mistreatment of women, we decided to use an experimental design to ensure internal validity. Consistent with a majority of past research (e.g., Benavides-Espinoza and Cunningham 2010a, b; Bowes-Sperry and Powell 1999), we used vignettes in which participants assumed the role of a colleague who observed uncivil conduct. Vignettes are useful for examining basic psychological processes (Greenberg and Eskew 1993) and controlling the detrimental effects of negative events (such as incivility towards women) on participants.

Method

Participants

At a university in the western region of Switzerland, we recruited 168 participants (85 women, 82 men; mean age = 23.32, $SD = 6.27$, range: 17–57) to complete an online written vignette study. For the sake of a homogenous sample, participants over the age of 30 were removed, and the final sample size was 148 students (71 women, 77 men; mean age = 22.10, $SD = 3.17$, range: 17–29). At this university, it is common to

start a 2-year master's program immediately after finishing a 3-year bachelor's program (Bilan enquêtes BAMA 2012), and, hence, the differences between undergraduate and graduate students are largely reduced to differences in tenure and age. For example, both undergraduate and graduate students often have work experience, as it is common to take part-time jobs and/or to work as an intern (Bilan enquêtes BAMA 2012).

Participation was anonymous and participants were recruited using the online recruitment system ORSEE (Greiner 2004), which manages the random recruitment and selection of participants out of a large pool. The participant pool consists of students who voluntarily register for it and who receive monetary reimbursement for study participation. Additionally, participants were recruited by word-of-mouth and poster advertisements in and around the university. Table 1 summarizes participant characteristics by gender and age.

Procedure and Measures

Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (Target Reaction: crying vs. laughing) \times 2 (Actor Motive: sexist vs. victim of reverse discrimination) between-subjects factorial design. The dependent variables were evaluation of target harm and the necessity to intervene.

The first page of the materials was a consent form informing participants that they would take part in a study on "reactions to workplace conflicts." Participants were told to assume the role of a brand manager in a marketing department and to observe a situation between two colleagues. In this situation, a male manager (Peter) speaks rudely to a female administrative assistant (Linda) by making a general comment about how female employees are not professional at work and asking her whether she actually gets any real work done. There was also a third person who does not speak but whom Linda is speaking to before Peter rudely interrupts Linda. The scenarios were identical except for the experimental manipulations. To manipulate target reaction, Linda reacts by walking back to her office with tears in her eyes, or by laughing and seemingly taking the comment as a joke. To manipulate actor motive, Peter is described as either a long-time sexist who regularly makes comments against women, or a recent victim of reverse discrimination who was bypassed for a big

promotion, as the company, in its effort to promote diversity, promoted a female colleague instead. The online instructions emphasized the importance of reading the scenario carefully and that afterwards, participants would answer questions on their reactions to the scenario (assessed on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). These questions included two dependent variable measures (described in more detail below) as well as manipulation checks and demographic information.

Target Harm We used six items to assess observers' evaluations of target harm: "Linda is stressed by Peter's comments", "Linda is hurt because of Peter's comments", "Linda's well-being is negatively affected by Peter's comments", "Linda's self-esteem seems to be damaged by Peter's comments", "Linda copes well with Peter's comments", and "Linda is in control of the situation." We reverse-scored the last two items and computed the unweighted average of the items to create a single index of target harm ($\alpha=.90$). The scale mean was 4.67 ($SD=1.53$).

Necessity to Intervene Three items served as a measure of the necessity to intervene: (1) "As an observer and colleague, I feel compelled to do something about the situation", (2) "Something should be done about this situation"; and (3) "I mind my own business and do not get involved." We reverse-scored the third item and computed the unweighted average of the items to create a single index of necessity to intervene ($\alpha=.72$). The scale mean was 4.78 ($SD=1.20$).

Results

Manipulation Check

Four manipulation check items showed that the independent variables had their intended effects. Participants in the target crying condition assessed Linda as more upset and less amused about Peter's comments ($M=6.01$, $SD=1.44$, and $M=1.50$, $SD=1.02$, respectively) than did participants in the target-laughing condition ($M=1.78$, $SD=1.25$, and $M=5.78$, $SD=1.46$, respectively), $F(1, 113)=269.47$, $p<.001$, and $F(1, 113)=339.15$, $p<.001$, respectively.

Furthermore, participants in the actor-sexist condition assessed Peter as more sexist ($M=6.14$, $SD=1.14$) and less of a victim of past reverse discrimination ($M=2.24$, $SD=1.58$) than did participants in the actor-victim condition ($M=3.06$, $SD=1.76$, and $M=5.52$, $SD=1.68$, respectively), $F(1, 155)=261.70$, $p<.05$, and $F(1, 155)=297.08$, $p<.001$, respectively.

Descriptives and Main Analysis

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and the number of women and men in each experimental cell. Across cells,

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of the sample in Study 1 ($N=148$)

Gender			Women	Men	Overall
Age	Late 10s	$N(\%)$	16 (10.8)	26 (17.5)	42 (28.4)
	Early 20s	$N(\%)$	29 (19.6)	22 (14.9)	51 (34.5)
	Mid 20s	$N(\%)$	20 (13.5)	21 (14.2)	41 (27.7)
	Late 20s	$N(\%)$	6 (4.1)	8 (5.4)	14 (9.4)
	Overall	$N(\%)$	71 (48)	77 (52)	148 (100)

Table 2 Study 1 means and standard deviations of target harm and necessity to intervene by target reaction and actor motive

Target reaction	Actor motive	Gender	N	Target harm		Necessity to intervene	
				M	SD	M	SD
Cries	Sexist	Women	22	5.67	.71	5.12	1.26
		Men	22	6.00	.79	4.94	1.25
		Overall	44	5.84	.76	5.05	1.24
	Victim	Women	17	5.81	.64	4.48	.86
		Men	18	5.93	.62	4.61	1.20
		Overall	35	5.87	.63	4.55	1.04
Laughs	Sexist	Women	16	3.63	1.30	5.13	1.50
		Men	22	3.68	.91	4.67	1.08
		Overall	38	3.66	1.07	4.86	1.27
	Victim	Women	16	3.01	.81	4.75	1.19
		Men	15	3.31	1.35	4.36	1.21
		Overall	31	3.15	1.09	4.56	1.20

Target harm and necessity to intervene measured on scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

there were between 16 to 22 women and between 15 to 22 men. The two dependent variables did not correlate significantly, $r=.09$, $p=.23$ and variance of inflation factors (VIF) did not exceed 1.00 for the three independent variables. As a test of the hypotheses that target reaction and actor motive affected observers' evaluations of target harm (Hypotheses 1a, 2a) and observers' perceptions of the necessity to intervene (Hypotheses 1b, 2b), we conducted analyses of variance. An initial 2 (Target Reaction: crying vs. laughing) \times 2 (Actor Motive: sexist vs. victim) \times 2 (Participant Gender: female vs. male) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on target harm and the necessity to intervene while controlling for participant age. Significant MANOVA main effects were found for target reaction, Pillai's trace=.65, $F(1, 138)=126.81$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.65$, and actor motive, Pillai's trace=3.09, $F(1, 138)=3.09$, $p<.05$, partial $\eta^2=.04$ but not for participant gender, Pillai's trace=1.69, $F(1, 138)=1.69$, $p=.19$, partial $\eta^2=.02$. Additionally, there were no significant MANOVA interaction effects of target reaction \times actor motive, Pillai's trace=.02, $F(1, 138)=1.61$, $p=.20$, partial $\eta^2=.02$, target reaction \times participant gender, Pillai's trace=.01, $F(1, 138)=.01$, $p=.53$, partial $\eta^2=.01$, actor-motive \times participant gender, Pillai's trace=.001, $F(1, 138)=0.09$, $p=.91$, partial $\eta^2=.001$, and target reaction \times actor motive \times participant gender, Pillai's trace=.01, $F(1, 138)=.34$, $p=.71$, partial $\eta^2=.01$. Furthermore, participant age, our control variable, was not significantly related to target harm and the necessity to intervene, $F(2, 138)=0.79$, $p=.92$, partial $\eta^2=.001$.

To further investigate the significant MANOVA effects for our Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b, we, as reported next, ran follow-up ANOVAs on each dependent variable (see Table 3).

Target Reaction

Hypothesis 1a predicted that a target's reaction affect observer's evaluations of target harm. In support of this hypothesis, participants in the target-crying condition perceived higher harm to the target ($M=5.84$, $SD=.76$) than did participants in the target-laughing condition ($M=3.66$, $SD=1.08$), $F(1, 139)=253.65$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.65$. We did not find support for Hypothesis 1b that a target's reaction would also predict a higher necessity to intervene, ($M=5.04$, $SD=1.24$, in the target-crying condition, $M=4.86$, $SD=1.27$ in the target-laughing condition), $F(1, 139)=.17$, $p=.68$, partial $\eta^2=.001$.

Actor Motive

Hypothesis 2a, that actor motive would predict evaluations of target harm, was not supported ($M=4.83$, $SD=1.42$, in the actor-sexist condition, and $M=4.59$, $SD=1.62$, in the actor-victim condition), $F(1, 139)=2.42$, $p=.12$, partial $\eta^2=.017$.

Hypothesis 2b predicted that the less malicious the actor motive would be the less observers would perceive the necessity to intervene. As hypothesized, participants in the actor-sexist condition viewed it as more necessary to intervene ($M=4.96$, $SD=1.25$) than did participants in the actor-victim condition, ($M=4.55$, $SD=1.20$), $F(1, 139)=4.46$, $p<.05$, partial $\eta^2=.031$.

Study 1 Discussion

Study 1 showed that observers of an anti-female incivility incident evaluated the harm to the target differently as a function of the target's reaction (Hypothesis 1a), although the uncivil behavior of the actor was identical. As expected, when a woman cried (compared to when she reacted amused) observers perceived more harm to the target. Moreover, when

Table 3 Study 1 results of the univariate analyses of variance on target harm and necessity to intervene

Effect	SS	df	MS	F	p
Target harm					
Age	.014	1	.014	.02	.90
Target reaction	201.15	1	201.15	253.65	.00***
Actor motive	2.00	1	2.00	1.77	.19
Participant gender	1.46	1	1.46	2.42	.12
Target reaction × actor motive	2.45	1	2.45	2.96	.10
Target reaction × participant gender	.03	1	.03	.03	.86
Actor motive × participant gender	.003	1	.003	.003	.95
Target reaction × actor motive × participant gender	.47	1	.47	.56	.45
Error	115.16	139	.83		
Necessity to intervene					
Age	.19	1	.19	.13	.72
Target reaction	.24	1	.24	.17	.68
Actor motive	6.50	1	6.50	4.46	.04*
Participant gender	1.79	1	1.79	1.23	.27
Target reaction × actor motive	.18	1	.18	.12	.73
Target reaction × participant gender	1.54	1	1.54	1.06	.31
Actor motive × participant gender	.27	1	.27	.18	.73
Target reaction × actor motive × participant gender	.11	1	.11	.07	.79
Error	202.56	139	1.46		

$n = 168$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$,
*** $p < .001$

the actor was a sexist, observers reported a higher necessity of intervention as compared to when the actor was a victim of reverse discrimination (Hypothesis 2b). However, actor motive did not affect observers' evaluations of harm done to the target (Hypothesis 2a). Thus, the maliciousness of actor motives did not spill over onto assessments of harm to the target. Participants might have kept their evaluations of the actor separate from those of the target. This rather analytical approach (i.e., the cognitive separation of the evaluations of the actor and the target) by our participants might have been, at least partially, caused by the use of a vignette.

Below we report Study 2, which is a constructive replication of Study 1 as we again manipulated our focal variable of target reaction but did so using a video vignette to increase realism. Further, Study 2 was an extension of Study 1, as we added actor-target relationship as an independent variable.

Study 2

Method

Design and Participants

At the same university as in Study 1, we recruited a new sample of 86 undergraduate and graduate students (30 women, 53 men, three participants did not indicate their gender; mean age=21.73, $SD = 3.29$, range: 18–36) for a laboratory study. Again, participants over the age of 30 were removed,

and the final sample size was 81 participants (28 women, 53 men; mean age=21.43, $SD = 2.68$, range: 18–29). As in Study 1, participants were recruited using the online recruitment system ORSEE (Greiner 2004). Participants were randomly assigned to one cell in a 3 (Target Reaction: crying vs. neutral vs. laughing) × 2 (Perceived Actor-Target Relationship: personal vs. professional only) factorial between-subjects design. The dependent variables were target harm and necessity to intervene. Table 4 summarizes participant characteristics by gender and age.

Procedure and Measures

The scenario used in Study 2 was highly similar to that of Study 1 with one noticeable exception: in Study 2, the scenario was acted out in a video clip. We hired actors and videographers to create the videos for each cell of the experimental design. As in Study 1, the scenario involved a third person whose role was to be the person that the female target

Table 4 Demographic characteristics of the sample in Study 2 ($N = 81$)

Gender	Women	Men	Overall
Age			
Late 10s	N(%)	7 (8.6)	11 (13.6)
Early 20s	N(%)	13 (16.1)	31 (38.3)
Mid 20s	N(%)	6 (7.5)	9 (11)
Late 20s	N(%)	2 (2.45)	2 (2.45)
Overall	N(%)	28 (34.6)	53 (65.4)

speaks to before the male actor interrupts. Each video was identical (actors, uncivil incident, and length) with the exception of the target's reaction (upset vs. neutral vs. amused). In the upset reaction, the target is flustered and on the verge of bursting into tears. In the neutral reaction, the target keeps an even face and ignores the actor's comments. In the amused condition, the target shrugs off the actor's comments by laughing good-naturedly. All videos end with a close-up of the female target's immediate reaction after the male actor's uncivil behavior, before fading to black. We manipulated the actor-target relationship in the introductory text presented prior to the video clip by presenting the actor (Peter) and the target (Linda) as either colleagues who only knew each other professionally, or as good friends in the workplace.

As in Study 1, the first page contained the consent form and informed participants of their role. After reading the experimental instructions and watching the video, participants responded to questions (on 7-point Likert-type scales) including the dependent variable measures, manipulation checks, and demographic information.

Target Harm We used the same measure as in Study 1. The internal reliability coefficient was .88, and the scale mean was 4.03 ($SD=1.48$).

Necessity to Intervene We again used three items, of which two were identical to the ones used in Study 1. We replaced the item "I mind my own business and do not get involved with the item "This is a situation that needs an external intervention." We computed the unweighted average of the items to create a single index of necessity to intervene ($\alpha=.73$). The scale mean was 4.27 ($SD=1.29$).

Results

Manipulation Check

The five manipulation check items indicated the effectiveness of the manipulations. Participants in the target-crying condition assessed Linda as more upset ($M=4.67$, $SD=2.24$) and less amused ($M=2.05$, $SD=1.32$) than did participants in the target-neutral condition ($M=2.00$, $SD=1.37$, and $M=1.75$, $SD=.95$) and participants in the target-laughing condition ($M=2.52$, $SD=2.11$, and $M=3.57$, $SD=1.99$), $F(2, 74)=13.16$, $p<.001$; $F(2, 74)=10.15$, $p<.001$, respectively. Participants in the target-neutral condition assessed Linda as less affected by Peter's comments ($M=5.87$, $SD=1.47$) than did participants in the target-crying condition ($M=2.38$, $SD=1.47$) and participants in the target-laughing condition ($M=4.19$, $SD=1.97$), $F(2, 74)=29.01$, $p<.001$.

Participants in the personal relationship condition assessed Linda and Peter as being closer ($M=4.49$, $SD=1.33$) and less

unacquainted ($M=3.20$, $SD=1.44$) than did participants in the professional relationship condition ($M=2.64$, $SD=1.52$, and $M=5.11$, $SD=1.69$), $F(1, 74)=29.89$, $p<.001$, and $F(1, 74)=25.87$, $p<.001$.

Descriptives and Main Analysis

Table 5 shows the means, standard deviations, and the numbers of women and men in each experimental cell. Within each of the six experimental cells, there were between five and six women and between five and 16 men with one exception: the randomization process led to only one woman in the target-crying and personal relationship cell. Due to the violation of having at least five observations per cell, we only included the main effect of gender in the MANOVA, which was possible as we had 28 female and 53 male participants. We, however, did not run interactions terms involving gender in the MANOVA. This statistical treatment of gender is also justified by the absence of explicit hypotheses for gender effects. As mentioned before, past research on observer intervention of sexual harassment has not consistently produced gender effects. The two dependent variables weakly correlated, $r=.23$, $p<.05$ and variance of inflation factors (VIF) were below 1.00 for the independent variables.

We had designed Study 2 to assess whether target reaction and actor-target relationship would influence evaluation of target harm (Hypotheses 1a, 3a) and the necessity to intervene (Hypotheses 1b, 3b), and whether actor-target relationship would moderate the association between target reaction and evaluation of target harm (Hypothesis 4a) and the necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 4b). A 3 (Target Reaction: crying vs. neutral vs. laughing) \times 2 (Actor-Target Relationship: personal vs. professional) multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on target harm and necessity to intervene, while including the main effect for participant gender and controlling for participant age. Similar to Study 1, participant gender did not have significant a MANOVA effect, Pillai's trace=.002, $F(2, 72)=.06$, $p=.94$, partial $\eta^2=.002$, and neither did participant age, Pillai's trace=.08, $F(2, 72)=3.19$, $p=.05$, partial $\eta^2=.08$. Target reaction had a significant MANOVA main effect, Pillai's trace=.57, $F(4, 146)=14.36$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.28$, but contrary to Hypotheses 3a and 3b, actor-target relationship did not have main effects on evaluation of target harm and necessity to intervene, Pillai's trace=.05, $F(2, 72)=1.70$, $p=.19$, partial $\eta^2=.05$. Consistent with Hypothesis 4, there was a significant interaction effect of Target Reaction and Actor-Target Relationship, Pillai's trace=.21, $F(4, 146)=4.23$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.10$.

Subsequently, we conducted univariate ANOVA tests on each dependent variable (see Table 6) in order to further examine the significant MANOVA effects for Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 4a and 4b. Results of these ANOVA tests are reported further below.

Table 5 Study 2 means and standard deviations of target harm and necessity to intervene by target reaction and actor-target relationship

Target reaction	Actor-target relationship	Gender	N	Target harm		Necessity to intervene	
				M	SD	M	SD
Cries	Personal	Women	1	5.17	–	4.33	–
		Men	10	5.65	.58	4.13	1.39
		Overall	11	5.60	.57	4.15	1.32
Professional	Women	5	5.87	.75	4.33	1.51	
		Men	5	5.77	.64	5.67	1.39
		Overall	10	5.82	.66	5.00	1.54
Neutral	Personal	Women	6	3.17	1.33	4.08	1.03
		Men	16	3.96	1.18	4.13	.99
		Overall	22	3.74	1.25	4.15	1.00
Professional	Women	6	3.22	.87	4.33	1.05	
		Men	9	3.59	.90	4.37	1.33
		Overall	15	3.12	.86	4.36	1.19
Laughs	Personal	Women	5	3.00	.92	4.26	1.07
		Men	8	2.38	.46	4.07	1.14
		Overall	13	2.62	.71	4.13	1.30
Professional	Women	5	4.86	1.86	4.07	1.34	
		Men	5	3.77	1.34	3.47	1.48
		Overall	10	4.31	1.63	3.77	1.37

Target harm and necessity to intervene and measured on scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

Target Reaction

Replicating our Study 1 finding and in support of Hypothesis 1a, target reaction significantly predicted evaluation of target harm, $F(2, 81)=34.97, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2=.49$. Further post-hoc analysis showed higher evaluations of harm ($p<.001$) for

Table 6 Study 2 results of the univariate analyses of variance on target harm and necessity to intervene

Effect	SS	df	MS	F	p
Target harm					
Age	.99	1	.99	.92	.34
Gender	.13	1	.13	.12	.73
Target reaction	75.75	2	37.88	34.97	.00***
Actor—target relationship	2.95	1	2.95	2.72	.10
Target reaction \times actor—target relationship	19.57	2	9.79	9.03	.00***
Error	79.07	73	1.08		
Necessity to intervene					
Age	8.92	1	8.92	6.05	.02 ^a
Gender	0.002	1	0.002	0.001	.98
Target reaction	10.64	2	5.32	3.61	.03*
Actor—target relationship	1.65	1	1.65	1.12	.29
Target reaction \times actor—target relationship	2.33	2	1.16	.79	.46
Error	107.64	73	1.48		

$n=81, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001$

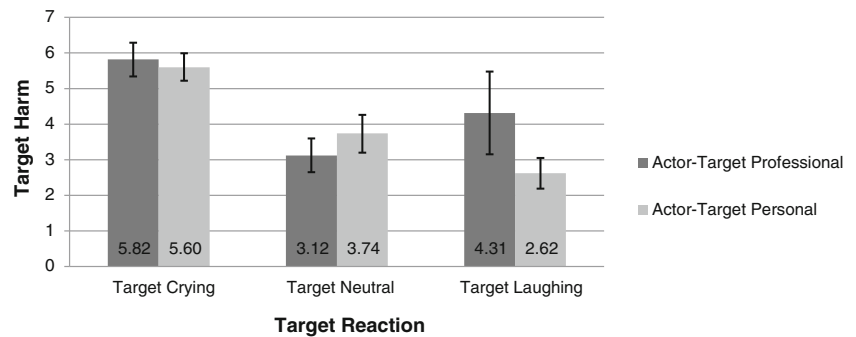
^aDid not have a significant MANOVA effect

participants in the target-crying condition ($M=5.71, SD=.60$), relative to participants in the target-neutral ($M=3.49, SD=1.12$) and target-laughing conditions ($M=3.35, SD=1.45$). Significant differences between the latter two conditions were not found. Hypothesis 1b, that target reaction would affect necessity to intervene was supported, $F(2, 81)=3.61, p=0.03$, partial $\eta^2=.09$. Post-hoc analysis showed marginally significant differences ($p<.10$) between participants in the target-laughing condition ($M=3.65, SD=1.30$) relative to participants in the target-crying ($M=4.56, SD=1.45$) and target-neutral conditions ($M=4.41, SD=1.05$). There were no significant differences between participants in the target-crying and target-neutral conditions.

Target Reaction \times Actor-Target Relationship

Finally, the test of the interaction hypotheses indicated support for Hypothesis 4a, which predicted that the more personal the actor-target relationship was, the weaker the association between target reaction and the evaluation of harm would be, $F(2, 81)=9.03, p<.01$, partial $\eta^2=.20$ (see Fig. 1). A follow-up analysis revealed that participants in the target-laughing condition provided highly significantly lower evaluations of harm, $F(1, 22)=11.41, p<.01$, in the personal-relationship condition ($M=2.62, SD=.71$) than they did in the professional-relationship condition ($M=4.31, SD=1.63$). However, neither participants in the target-neutral condition nor in the target-crying conditions gave significantly higher evaluations of target harm, $F(1, 37)=2.80, p=.11$ and $F(1, 20)=.62, p=.44$, respectively, in the personal-relationship

Fig. 1 Mean values of target harm as a function of target reaction and actor-target relationship



condition ($M=3.73$, $SD=1.22$, and $M=5.61$, $SD=.57$, respectively) than in the professional-relationship condition ($M=3.12$, $SD=.86$, and $M=5.82$, $SD=.66$, respectively).

However, Hypotheses 4b, which predicted that the more personal the actor-target relationship was, the weaker the influence of target reaction on necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 4b) would be, was not supported, $F(2, 81)=.79$, $p=.46$, partial $\eta^2=.02$.

Study 2 Discussion

The Study 2 finding that target reaction affected observers' evaluations of target harm (Hypothesis 1a) is a replication of the corresponding Study 1 finding. Additionally, unlike in Study 1, target reaction also marginally influenced observers' perceptions of the necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 1b), such that necessity to intervene decreased when female targets laughed off uncivil behavior. It might be that the use of a video vignette (as compared to a written vignette) moved the participants psychologically closer to the uncivil incident and may have raised their awareness that something should be done.

Actor-target relationship, however, did not have direct effects on observer reactions (H3a, H3b). Although the manipulation checks showed that the manipulation had the intended effect, it might not have been forceful enough. Target reaction and actor-target relationship, however, interacted to affect observers' evaluations of target harm (H4a) but not necessity to intervene. Actor-target relationship affected observers' evaluations of target harm only in the target-laughing condition, such that female targets were judged as less hurt when the target and the actor had a personal relationship than when they did not. It might be that, in the presence of a personal relationship, laughing was viewed as reflecting a positive relationship. In a merely professional relationship, in contrast, an amused reaction might be viewed as a more defensive response that disguises the actual harm done to the target.

General Discussion

Across two studies, we examined the effects of female targets' reactions to experiencing incivility, the motives of actors of

uncivil behavior, and actor-target relationships on the reactions of observers (i.e., third parties). First, we found that target reaction had consistent effects on observers' evaluations of harm to the target (Hypothesis 1a), but only inconsistent effects on the perceived necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 1b). Furthermore, in Study 2, the effect of target reaction on perceived harm to the target was moderated by actor-target relationship, such that observers perceived less harm to female targets who laughed at the uncivil incident towards them and who had a personal relationship with the actor than when they did not have such a relationship (Hypothesis 4a). Secondly, the actor's motives did not affect evaluations of target harm (Hypothesis 2a), but a sexist actor motive led observers to perceive a higher necessity to intervene (Hypothesis 2b). Finally, a personal actor-target relationship did not have direct effects on observer reactions (Hypothesis 3a and 3b).

Theoretical Contribution

Testing the Observer Intervention model by Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005)

According to Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005), observers of mistreatment of women in the workplace first observe and evaluate an incident, then reflect whether an observer reaction is necessary before deciding whether and how they themselves should take action. When we consider our results in light of this model, they reveal a pattern of decreasing effects as observers move from evaluating an uncivil anti-female incident to reflecting about the necessity to act in response to it. Observers consistently saw more harm in the same incident when the female target actually expressed hurt by crying, but these effects did not consistently translate into perceptions that an intervention was necessary.

One of the contributions of our research is that it implies, so to speak, a leaky pipeline (i.e., weakening effects) for observer intervention from incident evaluation to necessity for action: just because observers recognize the harm to a female target, it does not mean that they see it necessary to take action. The finding of weakening effects is not inconsistent with the model of Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005), but has possibly been under-estimated. Concerns about negative

consequences from actually intervening might underlie the disconnection between assessments of harm done to a target and actions to curb this harm. Observing an incident is of relatively low cost to observers, in contrast to an actual behavioral intervention. This argument is consistent with the suggestion of Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) that observers only engage in cost-benefit analyses once they start considering behavioral interventions. Future research might address whether variables that affect these concerns (e.g., the presence/absence of effective corporate anti-harassment policies or the perceived cost of the intervention) moderate the effects of perceived harm on observer intervention.

Observer Intervention as a Moral Imperative

The model of Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly’s (2005) can be considered as a special case of an ethical decision making model. First, helping a female target in an incivility incident is a moral and ethical issue as it concerns the fundamental principle of treating others with respect and dignity. Second, both several models of ethical decision making (e.g., Rest 1986; Ferrell et al. 1989; Trevino 1986) and the observer intervention model of Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly assume a sequence of recognizing and evaluating a moral issue, establishing an intent to act, and actual moral behavior.

As mentioned earlier, a key issue is whether an uncivil incident towards a woman is not only recognized as a moral issue, but also as sufficiently severe to warrant intervention. Consistent with the arguments of Skarlicki and Kulik (2003, see also Jones 1991), we had argued that the amount of harm to a female target is a key factor in assessing whether an incident warrants an intervention due to moral reasons. Examining the influence of target reactions on observer interventions helps us to better understand the ethical nature of these interventions: if observers intervene regardless of the amount of harm expressed by a target, it is plausible to argue that they perceive the behavior of the actor alone as needing to be stopped. In other words, in that case the underlying ethical principle is that of stopping inappropriate conduct against women. If observers only intervene if the target expresses harm but not if the target does not do so (as they did in our research), they are likely primarily motivated to prevent harm to the target. However, they would not be motivated to stop inappropriate conduct against women as a matter of principle as they do not intervene when no harm is expressed.

Similarly, as with our focal variable target reaction, observers’ reactions to the maliciousness of the actor and to the relationship between the target and the actor also inform us about the ethical nature of their intervention. If observers intervene regardless of intentions of the actor or the relationships between the target and the actor, the underlying ethical principle is that of stopping inappropriate conduct against

women. If observers, however, intervene only when actors are malicious (as we found in our research), it is plausible to argue that the underlying ethical principle is that of stopping malicious behavior or normatively less acceptable behavior, but not that of generically wanting to stop inappropriate conduct against women.

Future research might benefit from our conceptualization of observer intervention as ethical conduct. Such a conceptualization opens the door to study observer intervention against anti-female incivility through the lens of ethical decision making models. These models, for example, provide numerous explanations for the disconnection between recognizing ethical issues and moving towards acting ethically. For example, costs and benefits can vary as a function of the organizational culture (Trevino 1986) which may punish or reward pro-female conduct in incivility incidents.

Practical Implications

We acknowledge that the experimental nature of our research and the use of vignettes suggest much care in drawing practical inferences. What we can say is that our participants reacted to the experimental conditions more consistently in their assessments of harm to the target than in their perception of the necessity to intervene. These results imply that training on interventions against incivility should particularly target the disconnection between recognizing incivility and intervening against it. We agree with Cunningham et al. (2012) who suggested making the moral implications of incivility against women a theme. In fact, an essential thrust in our research is the unethical nature of incivility against women and, thus, the conceptualization of observer intervention as moral and ethical behavior. We further add that morality ought to be raised separately for the different stages in the model of Bowes-Sperry and O’Leary-Kelly (2005) with the intent to enhance the consistency across these stages.

Additionally, the fact that target reactions can play a role in shaping observer intervention is important to both targets and observers of incivility against women. Our research indicates that the less negative target reactions are, the less observers react to incivility. Thus, if women are actually hurt by incivility and would appreciate an intervention by an observer, they should consider showing their hurt. In fact, we recommend that future research further evaluate how female targets of incivility can motivate observer intervention other than by direct requests for help. Observers, on the other hand, should distinguish between the harm of an uncivil incident to a particular female target and the severity of this incident independent of the target’s reaction. Through an absolutist ethical lens, incivility against women represents a clear violation of the principal right of fair treatment and necessitates an intervention, whether the target reacts hurt or not.

Limitations and Future Directions

One of our limitations is the presence of a third person in our scenarios, who did not react to the situation while it was happening. The rationale for including the third person was to make the scenario more realistic, and in both the written and video vignettes, the third person did not have an active role. The third person's inactivity might have led the participants to be affected by diffusion of responsibility (Darley and Latane 1968), potentially resulting in them not judging it necessary to intervene. Thus, critical directions for future research should address the effects of the presence of others on observer reactions to female mistreatment.

Additionally, our intent of establishing internal validity and, hence, the use of experimental laboratory designs, reduces our confidence in generalizing our findings to the field. Vignettes cannot fully illustrate the organizational context in which anti-female incivility occurs. In addition, as Ryan and Wessel (2011) similarly noted, young samples like ours (average ages of about 23 and 22 years respectively) on the one hand might have relatively liberal attitudes (possibly making them more likely to intervene), and on the other hand lack experience in intervening against anti-female incivility.

Conclusions

Observer interventions against anti-female incivility are potentially powerful means for reducing the mistreatment of women. Yet, as others have argued (e.g., Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly 2005; Cunningham et al. 2012) and our findings indicate, such interventions rarely occur. We contribute to the nascent literature by documenting that target reactions, actor motives, and actor-target relationships can influence observer perceptions of harm and should also trigger the necessity for intervention, but do so to a much lesser degree, if at all. In other words, we show that just because people perceive that harm is done to a female employee it does not mean that they come to her help. Future research, particularly by drawing on models of ethical behavior, should focus on this disconnection between observers' perceptions and their actions.

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