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More than just shying away from conflict: The relationship between social anxiety and workplace incivility

Jocelyn Brown, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Finegan, Joan, *The University of Western Ontario*
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Abstract

For individuals who experience social anxiety, the workplace presents unique obstacles as they fear the social interactions. In particular, these individuals may struggle with workplace incivility. This study used questionnaires and vignettes to determine if the severity of social anxiety is related to heightened reports of social anxiety in their own workplace as well as increased negative valence associated with incivility events. In addition, the influence of various forms of self-efficacy and social support at work was measured. It was found that social anxiety increased reports of incivility at work. Self-efficacy had a nonsignificant influence and social support at work had the opposite impact than expected, leading to more increased reporting of incivility when feeling supported. The findings relating to emotional reactions were contrary to expectations, with social anxiety increasing positive reactions to incivility. Social support at work had a nonsignificant impact on this relationship while self-efficacy improved reactions further. Though there were contradictions between this finding and past research, this study supports the idea that social anxiety influences perceptions of incivility at work in some way. It appears that severity of social anxiety leads to increased experiences of incivility from workplace interactions, which could lead to a variety of job-related and personal issues.

Keywords: Workplace Incivility, Social Anxiety, Self-Efficacy, Social Support

Lay Summary

Social anxiety is one of the most common mental health issues in North America, with large percentages of the population being clinically diagnosed or dealing with symptoms. Unique challenges exist for individuals with social anxiety at work with up to 75% of employees with social anxiety feeling impaired at work. Due to this, it is essential to improve our understanding of the relationships social anxiety has with various work factors. We investigated how social anxiety influences the perceived frequency of workplace incivility and emotional reactions to these events. Incivility is a specific form of workplace mistreatment that is less severe and typically has unclear intentionality. Virtually all employees have dealt with incivility at some point in their career and many experience it daily. Incivility negatively influences the workplace and the people within it. In this study, I also considered how social support at work and self-efficacy could influence the results.

To investigate the relationship between social anxiety and perceptions of workplace incivility, participants completed questionnaires and watched workplace social interactions through a variety of videos showcasing positive, negative, and uncivil workplace interactions. The participants were asked to place themselves in the situation and rate how it made them feel. To determine how frequently incivility was experienced, participants were asked to reflect on their own work throughout the past year and discuss how often they experienced specific examples of incivility.

As expected, severity of social anxiety led to increased reports of incivility in their own workplace. Though their self-efficacy had no influence on this relationship, increased social support was related to more frequently experiencing incivility. Assessing the emotions elicited by the social events caused me to conclude that the participants reported more positive emotions

when they were more socially anxious. Self-efficacy increased this positive reaction, though social support had no impact. This finding was contrary to expectations based on previous research and further replications are necessary. Through this research, we have identified that individuals with social anxiety may face increased mistreatment at work through this incivility.

Mom, Dad, Vixie and Nate, you have always been there for me. I am so thankful for my lovely grandmothers as well, who have always supported me in my academic endeavors and beyond. My family's support and encouragement have brought me to where I am. Thank you for being there to remind me to slow down throughout this process as well and to push me through when I needed it. My friends also deserve an indescribable amount of gratitude. Thank you for the hours' worth of phone calls and the in-person support when COVID and distance allowed. Having people who have always been there to motivate me to work and have fun along the way is something I am so thankful for. Without my friends, I would not be who or where I am today.

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The modern age is noted by many to be a time where rude behaviour is incredibly

common (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). The mistreatment faced in daily life ranges from implicit

rudeness to more volatile actions such as physical aggression. Poor interpersonal experiences

such as this are detrimental to mental and physical health regardless of their intensity. Some

examples of these are presented by Hershcovis and Barling (2010) who discuss studies linking

experiences of maltreatment to stress, decreased well-being, and negative emotions. Research

into how people experience mistreatment is increasingly necessary as the need for civility rises to

meet the demands of the current world (Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

With mistreatment becoming increasingly common on a global scale, the impact of it

carries over into situations at work. According the World Health Organization (1994), over 30%

of an adult's life is spent at work. As a result of this, care must be given to avoid instances which

negatively impact an employee's social, psychological, and physical health. It is essential to

better understand instances of workplace mistreatment as they present great costs to

organizations and the people within them (Porath & Pearson, 2009). Though workplace

mistreatment presents in a wide variety of ways, employees are most commonly the victim of

subtle mistreatments (Cortina et al., 2013).

Andersson and Pearson (1999) note that people tend to expect actions will be

reciprocated. For example, helpfulness occurs with an expectation that the recipient will return

the favour. As a result of this, employees who treat each other with respect hope to receive

similar treatment. Any mistreatment experienced would be deemed a violation of interpersonal

social norms. Montgomery et al. (2004) stated that social norms are dictated by the cultural

beliefs of the organization and the individuals who work within it. It is apparent that an organizational culture that demands respect and civil actions typically achieves this (Schilpzand et al., 2016). While workers may struggle to adapt to this change when implemented, it has been shown that instances of incivility decrease the longer the norm is in place (Estes & Wang, 2008). In an organizational culture which does not maintain respectful social norms, individuals' lack of a sense of respect at work could lead to negative impacts at both the organizational and individual level (Roter, 2019).

This thesis investigated workplace incivility. Specifically, it aims to bridge a gap in research by identifying how social anxiety influences an individual's perceived experience of incivility. Social anxiety is defined as a fear of social interactions that might leave the individual open to scrutiny from others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; APA). Individual differences relating to demographic and personality characteristics have been linked by numerous authors to social anxiety (Cortina et al., 2001; Cortina et al., 2013; Milan et al., 2009; Montgomery et al., 2004; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Social anxiety is a particularly vulnerable personal characteristic as workplace mistreatment is linked with other mental health issues (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Estes & Wang, 2008; Dyck, 2017). Despite this, to my knowledge, no research exists investigating the experiences that socially anxious individuals have in relation to incivility. This study aims to fill this gap. This research additionally considered two reoccurring variables in both social anxiety and incivility literature, self-efficacy and social support, as potential mediating and moderating factors.

Incivility

Incivility represents one of many antisocial behaviours in the workplace that deviate from social norms. It aligns with other hostile acts in many ways, encompassing behaviours that are

insensitive and disrespectful (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; McCarthy, 2016). There are two characteristics that distinguish incivility from other instances of maltreatment, however. First, the intention of the instigator who behaves uncivilly is ambiguous (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2001; Milam et al., 2009; Cortina et al., 2013). In other words, the instigator may or may not intend to cause harm despite the negative impact the behaviour can have. The lack of clarity has been stated to be an essential distinction between incivility and other forms mistreatment. Despite this, ambiguous intent is rarely, if ever, measured or manipulated in incivility research perhaps because it is difficult to do. Second, the actions are typically viewed as less severe than things such as physical aggression as incivility presents as a more covert form of mistreatment (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al., 2013; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Thus, it differs from other forms of maltreatment based on intensity and intention. Incivility often occurs as a subtle interaction (Montgomery et al., 2004). Severity is simpler to manipulate and as a result is seen as a key factor of incivility.

Defining incivility is essential (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; McCarthy, 2016; Roter, 2019). In research, it is thought that the lack of a consistent definition can influence the interpretation of results. This paper used the definition of incivility provided by Andersson and Pearson (1999). These behaviours violate norms thus putting others at risk of mistreatment. These social interactions typically have less clear intentions. They are negative due to the potential impact on the victim (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), and are considered low-intensity deviance (Caza & Cortina, 2007).

Prevalence of Incivility

For both researchers and citizens, it is a shared consensus that experiencing disrespect is a fairly universal experience (Estes & Wang, 2008; McCarthy, 2016). While the incidence of

incivility varies greatly across studies and samples, it is still nonetheless prevalent. Andersson and Pearson (1999) believe these behaviours to be far more common than more intense negative actions. Daily reports of incivility range from 10% to 25% (Pearson & Porath, 2004; Pearson & Porath, 2005). Percentages of employees who have dealt with incivility weekly range from 20 to 60% (Pearson & Porath, 2004; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Porath, 2012; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Outside of defined timestamps, virtually all employees report experiencing incivility within previous years or their lifetime (Cortina et al., 2001; Schilpzand et al., 2016; Shandwick, Tate & KRC Research, 2016).

Incivility Research

Civility researchers work to answer nuanced questions about workplace conduct and deviance (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). In this field, researchers investigate antecedents, processes, correlates, and outcomes relating to incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Over two decades after Andersson and Pearson's (1999) seminal work, incivility is a globally investigated area (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Within incivility research, there are three areas identified by Schilpzand et al. (2016): Experienced, witnessed, and instigated. Experienced incivility is the most frequently researched area and the area investigated within this paper. This type of incivility describes a situation where the individual is the target or victim of incivility. That is, the target is the one who experiences the direct repercussions of the action. McCarthy (2016) states that frequency is a common way to measure incivility. That is, respondents are asked to estimate how often they have experienced incivility. Other research focuses on the instigator of the behaviour or those who witness incivility while not being directly targeted.

No consensus exists regarding a theoretical foundation for incivility (Schilpzand et al., 2016). Theories that have been put forth include Social Exchange Theory (Cameron & Webster,

2011) and Psychological Contract Theory (Levinson et al., 1962). These two theories use the existence of agreed upon social actions as support for behavioural expectations. Other researchers have explained target reactions to incivility using the Transactional Model of Stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). This involves multiple appraisals of the stressor and the resources available to cope.

In general, it is known that counterproductive behaviours can be harmful (Robinson, 2008). Beattie and Griffin (2014) state that like any other workplace stressor, incivility takes its toll on the target. This happens even though the instigator might not be acting with malice. Incivility is not an isolated circumstance and can escalate (Cortina et al., 2001; Beattie & Griffin, 2014). In fact, Andersson and Pearson's (1999) introductory paper on incivility investigated incivility spirals. They described these as reactive behaviours performed by the target in reaction to the negative affect they felt following the uncivil incident. The intensity of the behaviours increases until eventually someone faces serious consequences. This spiral is thought to occur because of damage to identity, feelings of anger and desire to get revenge.

Incivility leads to issues on both organizational and individual levels (Cortina et al., 2001; Robinson, 2008; Roter, 2019). These problems can involve job-related, psychological, and somatic outcomes. One of the main reasons for this is that incivility creates an environment of perceived unfairness (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). The effect of incivility is widespread and reaches more than just the instigator and target (Estes & Wang, 2008). This environment causes dysfunction and greatly threatens the organization's productivity. A few examples of the negative outcomes which arise from incivility include decreased organizational commitment, increased absenteeism, and diminished task performance (Montgomery et al., 2004; Estes & Wang, 2008). The occurrence of incivility is also incredibly detrimental to the social atmosphere of a

workplace, leading to hostility and decreased organizational citizenship behaviour (Estes and

Wang, 2008).

The harm to employees due to incivility can be debilitating (Cortina et al., 2001; Estes &

Wang, 2008; McCarthy, 2016). Incivility is related to decreases in the mental and physical health

of employees (Oore et al., 2010). In addition, its occurrence is linked to many negative work-

related outcomes. The influence of incivility is long lasting. Even if incivility occurs as a

standalone event, it is not uncommon for targets to ruminate about incivility (Cortina et al., 2001;

Estes & Wang, 2008). This occupies their time making it difficult to focus on tasks.

Estes and Wang (2008) believe that a major factor influencing this rumination is the

increase in cognitive and affective load that the target experiences. Productivity decreases as the

target becomes distracted from their work (Cortina et al., 2013). A variety of detrimental

outcomes relate to incidents of incivility at work. In a meta-analysis, Hershcovis and Barling

(2010) noted that incivility influences job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Cortina et

al. (2001) also found that incivility can decrease job satisfaction by up to 16%. Rates of job

stress and satisfaction with factors of work such as interpersonal relationships, pay, and benefits

are negatively impacted as frequency of incivility increases (Cortina et al., 2001; Miner et al.,

2012). Incivility has additionally been linked to decreases in self-esteem, well-being, and

motivation (Estes & Wang, 2008; Robinson, 2008; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; McCarthy,

2016; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Roter (2019) noted that an individual's affect is damaged by

incivility. For example, targets of incivility might feel heightened anger or revenge responses

(Andersson & Pearson, 1999).

Antecedents of Incivility

As a result of the possible devastation that incivility might cause, researchers continue to work to better understand why and how it is occurring. Through research on incivility, workplaces might acquire useful insight which allows them to create primary interventions. Preventative measures which focus on training employees about dealing with incivility and avoiding acting uncivilly could be more beneficial than reacting to these behaviours and their impact.

From this research, a few important findings have been reported. Firstly, researchers stress that the organization provides influential context and circumstances that change the incidence rate of incivility. Second, incivility is a phenomenon that happens in a variety of fields (McCarthy, 2016; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Researchers like Beattie and Griffin (2014) note its presence in both corporate and field settings. Yet, many organizations are unaware of its prevalence and impact (Estes & Wang, 2008).

In the modern workplace, there is increased complexity due to things such as globalization and reliance on digital communication. The added complexity leads to added interpersonal complications making socializing at work more difficult, thus putting employees at risk of experiencing stress and incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Estes & Wang, 2008; Roter, 2019). Incivility is related to the degree of stress in the workplace. Roter (2019) stated that burnout due to stress increases the likelihood of incivility. Finally, it is apparent that employees may partake in uncivil behaviours if it is modelled by authority figures at work. Unfortunately, those in power may utilize incivility to their advantage as a management technique (Estes & Wang, 2008). In doing this, they set a precedent for others in the organization to act disrespectfully (Roter, 2019).

In addition to the characteristics of the organization, situational characteristics and individual differences interact to dictate one's incivility experience (Robinson, 2008; Beattie & Griffin, 2014). Since the early 2000s, many researchers have examined individual differences in incivility. Cortina et al. (2001) investigated demographic characteristics as potential factors relating to incivility and found that there were gender differences. Specifically, women were more likely to report incivility than men (Cortina et al., 2001; Montgomery et al., 2004; Cortina et al., 2013).

Researchers have continued to examine other factors that influence incivility. In addition to gender, race has been found to be related to the uncivil interactions such that those of minority status report higher incidence (Cortina et al., 2013; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Research into demographic characteristics has additionally found that individuals with mental illness or disabilities experience mistreatment at a higher rate in the workplace (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Estes & Wang, 2008; Dyck, 2017). Roter (2019) stresses that the heightened incivility experiences greatly influence the perceptions of organizational justice.

Milam et al. (2009) looked at the relation between the Five Factor Model of personality and experienced incivility. They found that low agreeableness and high neuroticism based on both self and other reports increased reported experiences of incivility. Agreeable individuals are deemed trusting and warm while individuals high in neuroticism are characterized by worrying, nervousness, and insecurity. Beattie and Griffin (2014) continued to investigate the connection between neuroticism and incivility. They found that individuals higher in neuroticism experienced more incivility and speculated that this trait could be causing them to evaluate situations as more negative than others. While few authors have investigated how traits play a role in incivility, it is clear traits have a role to play (Schilpzand et al., 2016). This is relevant to

the current study as atypical reports of neuroticism and agreeableness are characteristic of social

anxiety.

Reactions to Incivility

One of the ways in which personal characteristics influence incivility is through

perceptions (Estes & Wang, 2008; Robinson, 2008). Montgomery et al. (2004) state that in

mistreatment events, perceptions often misalign between parties. The ambiguity surrounding

incivility makes interpretation of the situation essential in understanding the impact it may have.

What matters to the victim of incivility is how they experience the interaction. The impact

relating to incivility comes from their perception and reaction.

There are a variety of ways for a person experiencing incivility to deal with it. Like any

social interaction, incivility involves actions and reactions. The coping techniques that

individuals facing incivility use vary and are situation specific (Beattie & Griffin, 2014). These

techniques can be dictated by the severity of the event or how blame is attributed. The reaction

may also be dependent on who the instigator and the target are as well as their relationship

(Schilpzand et al., 2016). With that said, there are patterns that emerge. The most common

reaction to incivility was avoidance of the perpetrator, with 72% of the respondents in Beattie

and Griffin's (2014) work using this method. Cortina et al. (2002) stated that many overcome

incivility using techniques other than direct confrontation. Though less common, reacting

negatively towards the instigator occurs in 43% of cases (Beattie and Griffin, 2014). Targets

might act out leading to a negative impact on the workplace (Beattie & Griffin, 2014; Schilpzand

et al., 2016). The chosen reaction is thought to be partially connected to personality traits

(Andersson and Pearson, 1999). For example, aggression following incivility has been related to

high neuroticism and low agreeableness (Taylor & Kluemper, 2012).

Incivility warrants attention to improve the employee experience (Estes & Wang, 2008). It is apparent that individual differences impact how people perceive and experience incivility in the workplace. Individuals within certain groups deal with greater effects of incivility so understanding their experience could better inform workplace interventions. To further develop research on the experiences of individuals with disabilities at work completed by authors such as Hoel and Cooper (2000), this research investigated how mental health impacts victimization from incivility at work. In particular, it aimed to better understand how social anxiety relates to reports of incivility.

Social Anxiety

As previously mentioned, social anxiety represents a phobia of social interactions and evaluation by others (APA, 2013). Clinical social anxiety is common, affecting between seven to 13% of North Americans (APA, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2015). Situations that provoke social anxiety include casual social interactions, being observed, or performing for an audience. Ultimately, this anxiety has roots in the fear of being viewed negatively. People with social anxiety either avoid social situations entirely or endure them with increased stress as a result of their fears (APA, 2013). This causes impairment in various areas of social and occupational functioning.

Typical shyness can be distinguished from social anxiety (APA, 2013; Miers, Blöte, & Westenberg, 2010). Shyness might negatively impact the individual in social interactions, though it is not detrimental to their daily function. The clinical representation of social anxiety, identified through diagnosis, of social anxiety follows strict criteria. Individuals with non-clinical social anxiety may experience intense distress despite lacking a formal diagnosis (Blöte et al.,

2015). For individuals with both clinical and subclinical experiences of social anxiety, there are

evident consequences in their life.

   With most phobias, people can simply avoid the target of the phobia. However, with

social anxiety, avoidance of social situations is difficult if an individual wants to maintain a

typical life. This causes many with social anxiety to endure high distress. To counter these

feelings, individuals with social anxiety engage in a number of coping behaviours. These

behaviours are commonly internal processes which they expect to save them (Clark, 2001).

Additionally, behaviours may include physical actions such as removing themselves from

situations to avoid scrutiny or avoiding eye contact. Unfortunately, these actions often negatively

impact the individual and further their social difficulties. According to Zellars (2007) and Clark

(2001), the elicited behaviours are often maladaptive and influence how they are perceived by

others.

Situation Processing in Individuals with Social Anxiety

   Social anxiety is characterized by self-centered attention (Mufson et al., 2015; Spurr &

Stopa, 2002; Zellars, 2007). This internal focus has a negative impact on individuals. In social

situations, especially when a threat is perceived, socially anxious individuals shift their attention

inwards to monitor themselves (Clark, 2001). While doing this, they are incredibly self-critical

and negatively exaggerate their behaviour (Spurr & Stopa, 2002; Woody, 1996). Due to their

anxiety, they are unable to remove their personal biases from the reality of the situation. They

have assumptions about social situations, including higher than normal performance standards,

conditional beliefs about consequences of their actions, and unconditional negative beliefs about

themselves (Clark, 2001; Spurr & Stopa, 2002). Individuals with social anxiety fabricate a public

image of themselves with this internally focused information. This image may not reflect how external observers view them and emphasizes many of their fears, further enabling their anxiety.

As mentioned, a critical aspect of social anxiety is a fear of social settings. Social interactions involve interpretation of interpersonal contact. Those who are socially anxious have interpretation biases that exist only for social situations (Spurr & Stopa, 2002; Voncken et al., 2003; Zellars, 2007; Mufson et al., 2015). As mentioned, those with social anxiety focus on themselves and potential social threats (Zellars, 2007). This altered focus negatively impacts their processing ability and causes issues with memory and understanding of events (Clark, 2001). Hampel et al. (2011) reiterate this, stating that their anxiety causes decreased social understanding that skews their perceptions. Regardless of the cause, it is acknowledged that these biases change how those with social anxiety interact with their social world and perceive themselves.

Some social interactions, such as being ridiculed by a superior, have a seemingly clear impact. Others, such as receiving a reminder that a deadline is upcoming, are more ambiguous. Before, during, and after social situations, individuals must infer the intention and meaning of the other individual's behaviour (Zellars, 2007). For individuals with social anxiety, interpretation of all events presents difficulties. Events which have a negative connotation, such as being reprimanded, are catastrophized by the individual (Clark, 2001; Voncken et al., 2003). These feed into the internal focus spiral, causing them to consider how their wrongful actions caused the event and what they might do to improve. Their shifted focus leads to inattention or coping behaviours changing how they act.

One explanation as to why people with social anxiety tend to misinterpret social situations is their belief in exaggerated consequences of missing a danger cue (Voncken et al.,

2003; Zellars, 2007). Various studies have investigated how individuals with social anxiety interpret social cues. It is apparent that socially anxious individuals are more likely to identify negative cues or reactions in social situations, even when they are not present (Lundh & Öst, 1996; Veljaca & Rapee, 1998; Gilboa-Schechtman, Foa, & Amir, 1999; Voncken et al., 2003). In ambiguous situations, those with social phobia struggle to understand the actions of those around them. As a result, they ruminate on the experience and create a negative narrative (Clark, 2001; Voncken et al., 2003; Mufson et al., 2015). Some scholars have even found that social anxiety causes individuals to interpret objectively positive events as negative (Zellars, 2007).

The Impact of Social Anxiety in Employment

For a variety of reasons, those with social phobia experience dysfunction in their daily life (Roth et al., 2002). Their avoidance behaviours impact what they choose to do and their abilities in specific tasks (Helsley, 2008). Some examples include avoiding public speaking, how they interact with authority figures, or complete group tasks during which they are observed. This limits their willingness to experiment and bolster their skills further, putting them at a disadvantage. Various authors, including Himle et al. (2014) and Roth et al. (2002), note that social anxiety is linked with impaired social skills that influence how social events transpire. In all their actions, those with social anxiety aim to minimize social interactions or to avoid the scrutiny they fear. As a result, they struggle to communicate (Mather et al., 2010). This can be in public situations, though even casual conversations are poorer for those with social phobia (Roth et al., 2002; Miers et al., 2010). This causes difficulties in workplaces where interaction is crucial.

Purposeful activities that include social interaction, such as school or work, present unique obstacles for individuals with social anxiety (Pörhölä et al., 2019). In fact, many

individuals with social anxiety feel impaired by their issues. Mather et al. (2010) surveyed

military employees and determined that 39.5 to 74.8% felt impaired at work to varying degrees.

In another study, Turner et al. (1986) found that 90% of those who suffered from social anxiety

were negatively impacted at work. Decreased productivity and performance issues are not

uncommon (Himle et al., 2014). These deficits might result from a fear of career-related tasks or

inhibited interactions with coworkers or supervisors (Mather et al., 2010; Porhola et al., 2019).

At work, those with social anxiety particularly struggle with interactions with authority

figures or potential critics. They struggle with others observing them as they work (Bruch et al.,

2003). Such situations create the possibility of scrutiny which could otherwise be avoided. When

ridiculed, individuals with social anxiety lack the ability to effectively process the situation or

respond. Zellars (2007) states that their phobia causes a clear lack assertiveness and fear of

speaking up in a conflict.

The effect of social anxiety influences acquiring jobs. When searching for jobs, their

options are more limited compared to individuals who do not suffer from social anxiety. Their

ideal would be to attain a job with limited social interaction to allow for avoidance without

detriment (Bruch et al., 2003). Himle et al. (2014) noted that individuals with social anxiety are

at a disadvantage even before applying, as they have diminished educational attainment.

Additionally, they lack interview skills, training, and experience. All these factors lead to

decreased stability in careers and increased unemployment for those with social anxiety (Bruch

et al., 2013; Himle et al., 2014). Despite their unique challenges, it is important to help

individuals with social anxiety in the workplace. As the most common anxiety disorder and one

of the most common mental illnesses in North America, it is inevitable that many employers will

have socially anxious employees.

Incivility Experiences for Individuals with Social Anxiety

While no specific research has yet focused on social anxiety, other research suggests that social anxiety will influence how incivility is experienced. Past research by Beattie and Griffin (2014) found that individuals with high levels of neuroticism reported more incivility at work. Like social anxiety, neuroticism is linked with avoidance, nervousness, and insecurity. Additionally, incivility is linked with victim introversion and low self-efficacy which are characteristic of social anxiety (De Clercq et al., 2009). Individuals privately assess the treatment that they receive at work and determine if it was deserved. For individuals with social anxiety, their self-focused attention and poor self-esteem could lead to a false narrative surrounding the nature of the incivility. Additionally, the ambiguity is difficult to handle as they lack event processing skills.

When dealing with an instigator, it is highly unlikely that anxious individuals will confront them regarding their actions. Burke et al. (2014) indicate this is potential problematic, as incivility continues when unaddressed. They found that when respectful communication occurs at work, civility is the norm. As mentioned, individuals with social anxiety struggle with communication. Observers can view their behaviour as disrespectful. This impacts how others perceive or treat them, potentially leading to uncivil actions (Milam et al., 2009). As a result of this, it is likely that individuals with social anxiety are targets to continuous incivility due to the way others perceive them and their avoidance of conflict.

Helsley (2008) notes that their anxiety can be diminished through exposure. Additionally, skills training presents another avenue to reduce the impact that social anxiety has on individuals. One way that this is done is through improving their self-efficacy. This works to replace the falsified image with evidence of their capabilities. It is possible that self-efficacy

could influence the predicted relationship between incivility and social anxiety as a result of their changed perception.

Self-Efficacy

Though it is likely that individuals with social anxiety are more susceptible to incivility, it is possible that self-efficacy might mitigate the relationship between the two variables. Self-efficacy is described by Bandura (1977) as an individual's beliefs surrounding one's ability to execute tasks required to manage anticipated situations. Self-efficacy can be applied in a variety of areas including education and work. This thesis specifically focused on occupational self-efficacy as well as social workplace self-efficacy. Occupational self-efficacy is an employee's belief that they can successfully complete job-related tasks (Rigotti et al., 2008). The presence of this belief is beneficial because it helps in reaching goals, acts as a protective factor, and improves the individual's ability to take on stressors (Fide et al, 2018). Self-efficacy presents itself in a variety of ways. While it is possible to look at holistically, researchers like Fida et al. (2018) recommend considering it as a situation-specific construct.

Social self-efficacy is defined by Leary and Atherton (1986) as one's belief in the ability to succeed in social interactions. In a work context, this might include small talk with coworkers or team projects. Self-efficacy, whether social or general, is negatively related to social anxiety (Leary & Atherson, 1986). There are a variety of reasons for these relationships. Bandura (1977) states that people who attribute outcomes to their own behaviours but lack the resources to feel they successfully completed the task will have lower self-efficacy. For those with social anxiety, it is typical to place blame on themselves for the issues that they face. Self-efficacy is also negatively linked to anxious states as it can be partially influenced by emotional arousal, which is high with the presence of anxiety (Leary & Atherson, 1986).

More evidence that self-efficacy and social anxiety are related can be seen in self-efficacy treatments to assist those with social anxiety (Leary & Atherton, 1986; Spurr & Stopa, 2002). Self-efficacy is believed to improve individuals' self-confidence about their abilities and effectively reduces their fabricated external viewpoints (Bandura, 1977). In fact, self-efficacy is especially beneficial for those with social anxiety due to its influence in changing behaviours caused by fear or desire for avoidance. With low self-efficacy, individuals tend to cope through avoidance rather than facing the situation. As social anxiety is characterized by either avoidance or endurance with distress, self-efficacy interventions are thought to assist them in handling situations more effectively.

Experienced incivility has also been found to be influenced by self-efficacy. Though less research exists in this area, Leary and Atherson (1986) speculate that ambiguous interactions decrease self-efficacy. Individuals are less capable predicting their own ability in the situation as a result of the uncertainty. Notably, there are two studies which investigate the links between incivility and self-efficacy. De Clercq et al. (2018) found that low self-efficacy was characteristic of those who fall victim to incivility. In addition, Fida et al. (2018) investigated how self-efficacy influenced occurrences incivility and burnout based on their ability to cope at work. They determined that self-efficacy was correlated with frequency of incivility experienced from coworkers and supervisors. They noted that those with high self-efficacy have lower perceptions of incivility frequency.

Social Support

This present study includes social support as a moderator due to its influence on both incivility and social anxiety. Social support includes receiving sympathy, validation, confirmation of moral or factual accuracy, and direct assistance that an individual gets from

those around them (Frese, 1999). Social support involves the presence of helpful relationships

with people who are caring (Panayiotou & Karekla, 2012). It can describe things such as a

person's social network, the support they are receiving, or even the support they perceive to have

gotten from those around them (Panayiotou & Karekla, 2012).

Social support is thought to be beneficial as it provides a sense of belongingness in the

group which helps the individual deal with adversity (Frese, 1999). There are two ways in which

social support influences these relationships according to Miner et al. (2012). The first is by

helping to diminish the impact of the event. When they feel supported, people are likely to place

less weight on the event and shift their focus onto other events. The second is by providing a

resource to deal with the stress following the event. Social support can be found through

different sources: organizational, co-worker, or supervisor support. Previous studies (e.g., Duffy

et al., 2003) note that emotional support works to mitigate the relationship between workplace

mistreatment and negative outcomes. Similarly, Miner et al. (2012) found that social support

negates the impact of incivility on employees. Sakuri and Jex (2012) found that supervisor social

support diminished the negative emotions experienced in connection to incivility.

In general, social support is a common coping mechanism for the vast majority of

individuals (Panayiotou & Karekla, 2012). According to Frese (1999), the buffering effect of

social support is especially influential for those with social anxiety. They noted that

psychological dysfunction is notably higher when social support is low. Similarly, Panayiotou

and Karekla (2012) determined that having social support diminishes the negative relationship

between stress and negative outcomes for individuals who are anxious. In the face of incivility,

those with social anxiety might be capable of focusing on their good relationships rather than

ambiguous interactions with coworkers. Additionally, it gives an avenue for the individual to

unpack the situation and utilize other's perspectives to overcome the experience.

Current Study

The presented research aimed to better understand the influence that social anxiety has on

the incivility in the workplace. The evidence presented thus far suggests that social anxiety has

an impact on the perceived frequency incivility and emotions elicited by the interaction. It is

anticipated that those who are more socially anxious will report more workplace incivility. Since

incivility is a minor form of mistreatment, the victims are required to process seemingly unclear

social cues and information to determine the meaning of the social interaction. As individuals

with social anxiety often struggle with perceptions, it is thought that they will more frequently

view events as uncivil. That said, those with higher workplace or social self-efficacy may be

more likely to be able to process the information more easily and consequently be less likely to

view the interactions as uncivil. In addition, it is possible that perceived social support within

the organization might assist in reducing the negative interpretations individuals with social

anxiety might have. To answer this question, participants were surveyed about their own

experiences in the workplace.

Hypothesis One: Individuals with increased social anxiety will report increased

incidence of workplace incivility compared to those with low social anxiety.

Hypothesis 1a: Occupational self-efficacy will mediate this relationship such that the

relationship between severity of social anxiety and perceived frequency of incivility will change

if the individual has high workplace self-efficacy (Figure One).

Hypothesis 1b: Social self-efficacy will mediate this relationship such that the relationship between severity of social anxiety and perceived frequency of incivility will change if the individual has high social self-efficacy (Figure One).

Hypothesis 1c: Social support will moderate this relationship such that the relationship between severity of social anxiety and perceived frequency of incivility will change if the individual has high social support (Figure Two).

Hypothesis one aimed to identify how often incivility is viewed by individuals with social anxiety in their workplace. Hypothesis two investigated perceptions of their situation. As mentioned, those with social anxiety often catastrophize their social experiences (Clark, 2001; Voncken et al., 2003; Mufson et al., 2015). This carries over into even positive interactions as their anxiety leads to unwarranted worrying (Zellars, 2007). Their internalized focus and negative expectations lead them to misinterpret situations. As a result, even cases of minor mistreatment or positive events will likely lead to them having more negative emotional reactions. To explore this possibility, participants were asked to rate video vignettes of both uncivil and positive events. I predict that individuals with social anxiety will have different perceptions of the same situations as a result of their aforementioned issues than those lower in social anxiety.

Hypothesis Two: Individuals with increased social anxiety will rate incivility events more negatively than individuals without social anxiety.

Hypothesis 2a: Occupational self-efficacy will mediate the relationship such that the relationship between the severity of social anxiety and their emotional reaction to incivility will change if the individual has high workplace self-efficacy (Figure Three).

Hypothesis 2b: Social self-efficacy will mediate the relationship such that that the relationship between the severity of social anxiety and their emotional reaction to incivility will change if the individual has high social self-efficacy (Figure Three).

Hypothesis 2c: Social support will moderate this relationship such that that the relationship between the severity of social anxiety and their emotional reaction to incivility will change if the individual has high social support (Figure Four).

Method

Participants

To achieve a representative sample of the North American working population, participants were required to be over 18 years old and to have had previous or current employment experience in North America. Data was collected from 400 participants. As a result of failed attention checks 43 participants' data was removed prior to analysis. Details of this process are found below. The final sample size was 357 participants. One hundred and nine participants identified as female and 233 identified as male. Fifteen participants left this question blank. The average age of the participants was 35.32 (SD= 9.95). The majority of the sample identified as White or Caucasian (74%); other participants identified as African American or Black (6%), Indigenous (1%), Asian (6%), Hispanic or Latinx (3%), Middle Eastern (1%), and European (2%). From those who specified, 14 different areas of employment were represented across multiple levels of the organizational hierarchy. Complete demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Measures

Social Anxiety.

To measure severity of social anxiety, participants completed the Social Phobia Inventory (SPIN; Connor et al., 2000). This scale is shown in Appendix A. This questionnaire consists of 17 items which assess various components of social anxiety including physiological symptoms, fear, and avoidance. The SPIN contains items such as "Talking to strangers scares me" and "I would do anything to avoid being criticized". Participants are asked to rate each item using a five-point Likert-type scale from zero "Not at All" to four "Extremely". In clinical studies, individuals with social anxiety are expected to get a score of at least 19 with a maximum score of 68. This score could indicate a mild illness. In this sample, scores ranged from zero to 67 out of a possible 68 with concentration in middle, showing low to moderate social anxiety ($M = 39.73$, $SD = 14.75$). This scale had excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.95$).

Self-Efficacy.

Occupational self-efficacy was measured using Rigotti et al.'s Short Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale (2008). This scale consists of six questions rated on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from one (not at all true) to six (completely true). Sample items included "Whatever comes my way in my job, I can usually handle". The Cronbach α for this scale was 0.82.

The Workplace Social Self-Efficacy Inventory (WSSE-I) by Fan et al. (2013) was used to assess social self-efficacy. Twenty-two workplace social tasks were presented, and participants were asked to rate, how confident they were they could complete a given task on a scale from zero (no confidence) to 100 (complete confidence). Sample items included "How confident are you in engaging in small talk with your coworkers prior to a staff meeting" and "How confident are you asking coworkers to help you on a work project?". The self-efficacy scales are shown in Appendix B. The Cronbach's α for this scale is 0.96.

Social Support.

This study used Macdonald and Levy's (2016) Social Support at Work (SSW) measure to investigate the emotional and instrumental support received by an individual at work. This scale focuses on the support received from co-workers and supervisors, rather than family or friends. Participants are asked to rate how much social support they received from coworkers and supervisors on n a scale from one (never) to five (all the time). Although MacDonald and Levy (2016) found this scale to have high reliability with an α values of 0.86, this sample had a notably lower result (α = 0.65). The SSW is shown in Appendix C.

Workplace Incivility

The Workplace Incivility Scale (WIS) created by Cortina et al. (2001) was used to assess incivility (Appendix D). The WIS asks respondents to rate how frequently they experienced various events on a scale from one (never) to five (many times). For example, participants were asked if they have experienced someone giving them an unwarranted low rating in an evaluation or making jokes at their expense in the past year. This scale had good reliability (α = 0.94).

Vignettes

Videos displaying social interactions were created for this study. Following the research design of Amir et al (2005), we created eight videos to examine how individuals with social anxiety interpret four positive and four uncivil social events. The scenes were primarily recorded from a first-person point of view to help participants place themselves in the interaction. The only exceptions were two recordings which took place on a video conference software to demonstrate a virtual interaction or digital meetings. These scenes feature each speaker on the screen when they are speaking and the person receiving incivility off screen. Based on the recommendation of Evans et al. (2015), incivility examples came from research to ensure a

connection to the intended theme. Examples came from Johnson and Indvik (2001), Miner et al.

(2012), and Roter (2019). Brief descriptions of each video are in Appendix E.

To ensure the videos were perceived as intended, subject matter experts reviewed the

content to determine construct validity. Videos depicting positive scenarios were rated as more

positive ($M = 5.88$, $SD = 1.04$) on average than those depicting incivility ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.87$;

$t(46) = -8.01$, 95% CI [-2.76, -1.65], $p < 0.001$). Videos showing incivility were additionally

rated as more uncivil ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.27$) compared to positive videos ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 1.10$;

$t(46) = 7.52$, 95% CI [1.89, 3.28], $p < 0.001$). A repeated measures ANOVA of these scores again

yielded significant variation, $F(7, 2422) = 10.9$, $p < .001$. A post hoc Tukey test showed that not

all incivility events differed significantly from positive events, however. Notably, two positive

videos show similarities with incivility events. Results are shown in Table 2 and descriptive

statistics for these results are shown in Table 3.

All scenes depicted work situations and actors played coworkers or supervisors as it is

common practice to use relatable stories (Hughes, 2008). Participants viewed all eight videos.

Though videos depicting positive events were shown to assess potential discrepancies in

reactions, the focus of this thesis is ultimately the incivility events. Like Amir et al (2005),

participants were asked to place themselves in the situation and to rate how they would feel in

that situation on a seven-point Likert-scale ranging from -3 (very negative emotion) to +3 (very

positive emotion).

Procedure

Recruitment occurred through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, an online participant pool.

Participants were invited to complete the study if they were over 18, lived in North America and

had work experience. Participants read the informed consent document (see Appendix F). If

respondents agreed to participate, online testing began through Amazon's Mechanical Turk.

Participants' first task was to watch and respond to the eight videos, which were presented in

random order. The videos were presented first so that their responses were not biased by

completing the questionnaire. Following this, the SPIN (Connor et al., 2000), OSS-Short (Rigotti

et al., 2008), WSSE-I (Fan et al., 2013), SSW (MacDonald & Levy, 2016), and WIS (Cortina et

al., 2001) were presented in random order. Finally, participants were asked for demographic

information. At the completion of the study, respondents received a letter describing the purpose

of the study (see Appendix G). All participants were given $1 USD for completion of the study.

The certificate of ethics approval for this study can be found in Appendix H.

Participant responses was assessed to identify careless respondents. Data was manually

reviewed, and answers were flagged if deemed unacceptable. Each Likert-type scale had a forced

choice item which asked the participants to select a specific answer. These forced choice options

were placed in each scale based on an item chosen by a random number generator. In addition,

unapplicable written answers for demographic information were noted. If a participant had at

least 3 answers that implied careless responding, their data was removed.

Results

Factor analyses to assess the properties of the video vignettes were conduced using the

Jamovi project (2021) software. The majority of the analyses were conducted using IBM's SPSS

Statistics 27.0 and Process Marco Version 3 (Hayes, 2017). Multiple linear regression analyses

with relevant mediators and moderators were completed to understand how social anxiety relates

to perceptions of incivility. For hypothesis one, a regression analysis was conducted using

incivility as the dependent variable and social anxiety is the independent variable. Process Macro

was used to assess the mediation effect of occupational and social self-efficacy separately. A

moderation analysis looked at the impact of social support at work. Similar analyses were also conducted to test hypothesis two, which investigated the relation between social anxiety and reactions to social interactions.

Prior to analysis, data was reviewed for distribution and outliers at the recommendation of Warner (2013). The data was additionally assessed to review attention checks throughout. Demographic data was determined to have a nonsignificant impact on the result; thus, it was not controlled for in the analysis. A correlation matrix for all tests used is shown in Table 4.

Social Anxiety and Reported Frequency of Incivility

Results relating to hypothesis one are shown in Table 5. A linear regression analysis was done to examine the influence that social anxiety has on perceived frequency of incivility at work. The average score across the WIS was 3.27 (SD= 1.22). As the regression analysis shows, social anxiety significantly predicted the frequency at which employees report experiencing incivility ($\beta = 0.80$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.06], $t(283) = 22.53$, $p < 0.01$, accounting for a significant portion of the variance in incivility reports, $R^2 = 0.64$, $F(1, 283) = 507.59$, $p < .001$. The effect size suggests high practical significance ($f^2 = 0.80$). These results support the prediction that increased levels of social anxiety relate to perceived frequency of incivility such that individuals with heightened social anxiety perceive incivility more often.

Workplace self-efficacy was assessed as a potential mediator in this relationship. It was determined that social anxiety did not predict workplace self-efficacy, $B = -0.005$, SE= 0.0049, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.05], $\beta = -0.01$, $R^2 = 0.10$, $p = 0.29$ and that workplace self-efficacy did not predict perceived frequency of incivility at work, $B = 0.06$, SE= 0.08, 95% CI [-0.09, 0.21], $\beta = 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.48$, $p = 0.41$. Social anxiety had a significant direct effect on frequency reports after controlling for workplace self-efficacy, $B = 0.04$, SE= 0.005, 95% CI [0.3, 0.05], $\beta = 0.04$, p

< .001. The results do not support the mediation hypotheses, showing that severity of social

anxiety relates to perceived frequency of incivility without an impact of workplace self-efficacy.

Social anxiety did predict social self-efficacy significantly B = -0.29, SE= 0.08, 95% CI [

-0.45, -0.12], β = -0.27, R^2 = 0.20, p < 0.008, but it did not predict reported frequency of

incivility, B = -0.03, SE= 0.04, 95% CI [-0.45, -0.12], β = 0.05, R^2 = 0.48, p = .46. After

controlling for social self-efficacy, social anxiety remained a significant predictor of the

frequency of incivility, B = 0.04, SE= 0.05, 95% CI [0.03, 0.05], β = 0.04, p < 0.001. These

results have medium to large effect sizes which come from the direct effect. As a result, the

mediation hypothesis is rejected indicating that social anxiety impacts frequency of incivility

reports without a meaningful impact of social self-efficacy, B = 0.04, SE= 0.05, 95%CI [0.03,

0.05], β = 0.04, p < 0.001.

Finally, a moderated regression analysis was completed to assess the influence that social

support at work had on the relationship between social anxiety and reported frequency of

incivility. The interaction between social anxiety and social support at work was found to be

statistically significant (β = 0.02, 95% CI [0.01, 0.03], p < .004). In addition, social support at

work moderated the relationship between social anxiety and reported frequency of incivility

(ΔR^2 = 0.03, F (3, 131) = 8.86, p < .04). This relationship is shown in Figure 5.

Social Anxiety and Rating of Incivility Events

<u>Manipulation Check of Videos</u>.   To verify the psychometric value of the video

vignettes, a confirmatory factor analysis was completed. It was predicted that there would be two

factors, Positive and Incivil, with four items in each. There was a significant Chi-square value,

χ^2((99.3, N = 357), p < 0.001). The comparative fit index (CFI) was additionally slightly lower

than desired (0.87) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was greater than

the academic standard (0.11, 95% CI [0.09, 0.13]). Despite these indices of mediocre fit, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) indicated a good fit (0.06). Based on these values, the two-factor solution for the video vignettes was not a perfect fit

Main Analyses: The same procedure was followed to investigate how level of social anxiety related to interpretation of the vignettes showcasing incivility. Results from the regression analyses are shown in Table 6. The analysis showed social anxiety significantly influenced the ratings employees gave uncivil situation ($\beta = 0.27$, 95% CI [0.01, 0.03], $t(327) = 4.24$, $p < 0.01$. Contrary to expectations, this finding indicates that individuals with increased social anxiety viewed incivility situations more positively than others. Social anxiety is also responsible for a significant portion of the variance in incivility reports, $R^2 = 0.27$, $F(1, 237) = 18.01$, $p < .001$. This result fails to support the hypothesis. The effect size suggests minimal practical significance ($f^2 = 0.27$).

Workplace self-efficacy was assessed as a potential mediator in this relationship. It was determined that social anxiety did not significantly predict workplace self-efficacy, B = -0.005, SE= 0.0049, 95% CI: [-.02, .01], $\beta = -0.09$, $R^2 = 0.10$, $p = .29$, but workplace self-efficacy significantly predicted ratings of incivility situations (B = 0.54, SE= 0.09, 95% CI: [0.01, 0.03], $\beta = 0.46$, $R^2 = 0.34$, $p < .001$). The effect sizes for this indirect effect were medium to large. Social anxiety maintained a direct effect on employee perceptions of uncivil situations after controlling for workplace self-efficacy as a potential mediator (B = 0.02, SE= 0.05, 95% CI: [0.01, 0.03], $\beta = 0.02$, $p < .021$). This result supports a partial mediation, such that both social anxiety and workplace self-efficacy influence how individuals interpret workplace incivility. Workplace self-efficacy accounts for increased positive perceptions.

Social anxiety significantly predicted social self-efficacy, (B = -0.29, SE= 0.08, 95% CI

[-0.45, -0.12], β = -0.28, R^2 = 0.19, p < .008), and social self-efficacy significantly predicted

interpretations of incivility events, (B = 0.02, SE= 0.06, 95% CI [0.01, 0.04], β = 0.37, R^2 = 0.25

p < .001). The results have medium to large significance based on the effect sizes. The direct

effect between social anxiety and interpretation of incivility events remained significant after

controlling for this mediation, B = 0.02, SE= 0.06, 95% CI [0.01, 0.03], β = 0.02, p < .005. This

indicates there is a partial mediation, such that social anxiety influences social self-efficacy

which impacts perceptions of events. Social anxiety also has a direct effect making individuals

view the events more positively.

A moderation analysis was conducted to investigate how social support at work

influenced the relationship between social anxiety and reactions to incivility events. The

interaction between social anxiety and social support at work was not significant, (β = 0.01, 95%

CI [0.01, 0.03], p < .06). This result shows that social support at work does not influence how

participants view incivility events (ΔR^2 = 0.02, F (3, 131) = 3.53, p = .06).

The fact that socially anxious individuals were more likely to view uncivil events more

positively was surprising. To see if this positivity bias generalized to other perceptions, an

exploratory analysis of the ratings of the positive videos was conducted. The analysis showed

social anxiety significantly influenced the ratings employees gave positive situations as well (β =

0.18, 95% CI [0.05, 0.02], t(355) = 38.46, p < 0.01. Despite previous research indicating

otherwise, individuals with increased social anxiety viewed positive situations more positively

than others as well. Not unexpectedly, social anxiety is also responsible for a significant portion

of the variance in incivility reports, R^2 = 0.03, F (1, 355) = 12.21, p < .001. Effect size suggests

minimal practical significance (f^2 = 0.18).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the relationship between social anxiety and perceptions of workplace incivility. A key finding of this research is that individuals with social anxiety experience incivility more frequently than their counterparts. This is evident based on the relationship between social anxiety and reported incivility. Based on the reports, social anxiety is linked to heightened feelings of being discredited or undermined by their co-workers or supervisors. This relationship was additionally moderated by social support at work, though the directionally was the opposite of what was expected. It was found that social support at work made those who felt supported experience increased incivility. Contrary to predictions, neither workplace self-efficacy nor social self-efficacy mediated perceptions of incivility relative to social anxiety in their own workplace.

Interestingly, the results were quite different when respondents watched incivility videos. In this case, increased social anxiety was surprisingly related to more positive reactions for both positive and uncivil events. These results go against the hypothesis that incivility events are viewed more negatively based on severity of socially anxiety. As expected, self-efficacy played a role such that the relation between social anxiety and the perception of uncivil events was partially mediated by workplace self-efficacy and fully mediated by social self-efficacy. Contrary to what literature may suggest, social support at work had little impact on how individuals interpreted these vignettes. The measure of social support used in this study primarily focused on support from authority figures and looked at general support for work tasks. Yet support from authority figures might be problematic for individuals with social anxiety who tend to fear authority figures. As a result of this fear, they may be unwilling to go to them with issues relating to ambiguous interactions such as incivility. In addition, the survey did not measure social

support for social interactions specifically. While an individual feels comfortable turning to others for support relating to work task, this could not translate to every area of work life. As socially anxious individuals feel they are to blame for social blunders, they might not feel comfortable turning to others, especially authority figures.

The findings presented are consistent with the hypothesis that individuals with social anxiety report incivility more frequently in their workplace. This finding is supported by previous research, such as that of Voncken et al. (2003) and Zellars (2007), which states that the fear of potentially missing a social threat heightens awareness of potentially negative interactions. Social events are almost always seen as threatening as a result of social anxiety. Socially anxious individuals fail to have neutral interpretations and instead believe they are being threatened (Beard & Amir, 2008). As ambiguous events like incivility typically lack the context necessary to diminish social anxiety, individuals with social anxiety will likely view the event as a potential threat.

These biases of social anxious individuals may operate through heightened memory of the events. Clark (2001) notes that both memory and comprehension of events are impacted by the presence of social anxiety. The literature indicates that memory biases can exist as a result of post-event processing; something social anxious individuals do frequently (Brozovich & Heimberg, 2008). Social anxiety increases social stress which often results in panic following social interactions. Badra et al. (2017) state that the social anxiety is linked to more negative imagery of events. While those without social anxiety are able to dismiss events that might seem insignificant, socially anxious individuals cannot. They are likely to fixate on that event and spiral. Once an event is deemed potentially threatening, it becomes a tool to support the false realities that social anxiety so often creates. Social anxiety is related to biased interpretations of

social situations. The biases that socially anxious individuals have allow for the maintenance of their anxiety (Beard & Amir, 2008).

Social Anxiety and Perception of Incivility Vignettes

While past researchers, such as Chen et al. (2019) and Haller et al. (2015), found that socially anxious individuals will view all social interactions more negatively than others, the present study shows increased social anxiety is associated with more positive perspectives. This finding is contrary to the literature. Indeed Chen et al. (2020) goes as far as to state that socially anxious individuals are less likely to interpret any social event as positive. Staugaard's (2010) findings also contradict those of the current study, stating that both clinical and subclinical cases of social anxiety are related to heightened perceptions of social threat. When individuals with social anxiety identify an interaction as positive, it occurs less frequently than it does for individuals without social anxiety (Kashdan & Steger, 2006).

Despite these contrary findings, this research supports the idea that individuals with social anxiety process events differently. Researchers have repeatedly found that social anxiety is related to an interpretation bias and there is typically some sort of emotion tied to it. This inability to accurately process social interactions is a root cause of the development and maintenance of social anxiety (Badra et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2019). It is believed impact that social anxiety has on interpretations is related to associated symptoms. It is uncommon for individuals who are socially anxiety to view social events as benign or neutral. It is possible that individuals with social anxiety struggle to identify relevant information necessary to make an accurate assessment of the event, so they resort to their own biases (Haller et al., 2015). Their cognitive patterns lead them to create narratives about events. These are most often negative, as they catastrophize the social interactions and believe the worst about how they are interpreted.

The rationale behind positive interpretations is less clear and has not been discussed in any prior literature. The current study presents a novel finding such that socially anxious individuals have a positive interpretation bias of workplace social events.

There are a variety of explanations for this. Some authors have argued that methodological differences, including the types of stimuli, have led to inconsistent findings in previous research. Haller et al. (2015) state that little is known about the ecological validity of the stimuli used commonly in interpretation bias work. Opinions differ regarding the best type of stimuli. According to Chen et al. (2020), some say that written stimuli are more descriptive while others think they are not truly threatening for individuals with social anxiety. The results of studies using written stimulus tend to have more consistent results as rich context is created through narrative building. Videos additionally allow for a large effect size as they provide details. Yet in the present study, the results using the vignettes had a small effect-size, indicating that there could be methodological problems with the videos.

It is possible that the vignettes might not have made the participants feel the need to protect themselves. Staugaard (2010) states that non-interactive stimuli are easier to perceive as safe as responses are not necessary, even when that is not the intention. We put in our best effort to create videos that immersed the participant through first-person perspectives. In addition, participants were encouraged to picture themselves in the scenario. Despite this, they likely felt safe while taking part in this interaction. The video was presented to them on a screen and had a definitive ending. Even if it caused short-term discomfort, participants might have viewed the study as safe enough to not trigger defense mechanisms common in social anxiety. This explanation is supported by the fact that socially anxious people struggle to have positive interpretations when their resources for coping are overwhelmed (Kashdan & Steger, 2006).

Those participating might have simply not felt anxious during the task and accordingly viewed events positively. In the future, I would recommend researchers ensure successful manipulations based on the affects tied to their vignettes. Video vignettes have been deemed to be a great tool for social research, so further work involving a variety of professions and realistic locations could aid researchers in achieving valid results.

It is important to replicate this research due to the unexpected results. If replicated, however, the current findings could be due to a positive bias held by individuals with social anxiety. Perhaps they were attempting to avoid viewing the event as negative in an attempt to minimize the associated bad feelings. Negative events are draining and require a significant cognitive effort to overcome. According to Kashdan and Steger (2006), socially anxious individuals have a natural desire to avoid negativity due to these emotions. This can be seen through literal avoidance. Through suppressing their own emotions, they can protect themselves against feelings of anxiety. The vignettes presenting hypothetical interactions provided the participants with the opportunity to create their own narrative.

Another explanation for these findings has to do with social desirability. Social anxiety involves constant self-consciousness. These individuals strive to conceal their anxiety behaviours, or simply avoid acting all together, to avoid embarrassment. As a result of this, social desirability bias could have influenced the results of this study. If the individuals believed they were safe due to the nature of the study design, their priority might have shifted to compensating for the social anxiety that they typically feel. Their mindset participating in the vignette portion of the study might have been centered around answering the way they felt the average person would. As individuals with social anxiety are commonly incapable of having neutral

interpretations, this could have skewed their answers positively as they avoided looking scared by expressing negative emotions.

Social Anxiety and Reports of Incivility

An interesting conundrum in the study is that the results almost contradict one another. I found that individuals with social anxiety often experienced incivility in their own workplace but viewed an artificial workplace positively. One explanation as to why socially anxious individuals report more incidence of incivility involves rumination. Rumination encompasses negative repetitive thinking (Badra et al., 2017) and can involve negative self-perceptions, adverse feelings, or regrets of the past. Brozovich et al. (2015) and Badra et al. (2017) note that unproductive worry after an event is characteristic of social anxiety. In fact, it is believed that socially anxious people have a better memory of events they deem threatening. The heightened incidence of incivility found in this study could be due to the fact that individuals had the time to ruminate, or that they simply held onto the memories of the events. In contrast, the vignettes required an immediate answer with no post-event processing. Yet such processing is a noted mediator between social anxiety and interpretation bias, such that the biases are amplified after the event occurs due to the individual's internal dialogue.

In addition, it is worth noting that social support at work had the opposite impact than expected. In the vignette studies, social support at work had a nonsignificant impact on the results. In hindsight, this is understandable, as the participants were not in a position to actively reach out to their support system in order to mitigate their emotions. This activity relied on their emotions at the time, not in their workplace. Interestingly, when the frequency of incivility was examined, support at work was linked to increased perceptions of incivility. It might be that when one experiences a lot of incivility, one reaches out to others for social support.

The impact of self-efficacy on these relationships was also inconsistent. While the frequency measure found that heightened incivility was related to increased reports of incivility, the vignettes found that individuals with social anxiety are more likely to view incivility interactions positively. This latter finding is contrary to much of the existing literature, which typically finds self-efficacy minimizes the impact of social anxiety. Our finding relating to the emotional valance of social events was consistent with this, finding that self-efficacy made reactions more positive. This indicates that the impact of social anxiety might have been mitigated when individuals had higher self-efficacy. It was deemed to be primarily non-significant when considering real life events through the frequency reports, however. This could possibly be due to the fact that the vignettes depicted how individuals would hypothetically feel, whereas the frequency measure asked about events that already happened. Heightened self-efficacy likely allows for individuals to feel that they could handle situation but when actually faced with the interaction, the impact of social anxiety might be more dominant and minimize the positive effects of self-efficacy.

Limitations

As is plausible for many studies conducted during this time, this study was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and responses. Firstly, it is important to note the impact that COVID-19 had on mental health and illness. According to a meta-analysis by Wu et al. (2021), many mental health issues, including heightened anxiety, are on the rise around the world. Morrissette (2021) states that social exposure is essential for the treatment of social anxiety, and lockdowns positively reinforced their desire to avoid social situations. In other words, going to work might be the only social interaction people with social anxiety typically had. Though lockdowns

reduced exposure to social situations, this could paradoxically increase their social anxiety when interactions are necessary.

As a study that intended to examine incivility in the workplace for individuals with social anxiety, the shift from in-person to remote workplaces during the pandemic is worth considering. Incivility, like many social interactions, shifts when the environment does. Researchers like Roter (2019) and McCarthy (2016) mention electronic incivility as a distinct type of mistreatment. This can involve incomplete answers or a lack of a responses in electronic communication. Even past research investigating virtual incivility might not represent the virtual workplace today, as organizations who were ill-prepared for remote work were forced to quickly adapt roles and responsibilities. This could impact how individuals with social anxiety experience incivility at work today. Though the WIS by Cortina et al. (2001) is a commonly used and psychometrically strong measure, it is not necessarily representative of remote interactions. As the WIS considers incivility in the past year, this survey might not be indicative of work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Future studies should ensure that the workplace incivility situations assessed are realistic based on the workplace's circumstances at the time.

Additionally, the creation of study materials was restricted by essential COVID-19 safety measures. The ecological validity of the video vignettes was likely reduced due to limitations of filming locations and access to trained actors. This might be a cause of the low power for the videos. Previous research by Chen et al. (2020) implies that videos vignettes tend to garner a large effect size, as they provide context for a variety of senses. It is also important to remember that although the results from this study with the videos were statistically significant, they were not practically significant.

The moderation analyses might have been negatively impacted due to low power as well. Similarly, the reliability of the measure of social support in this study was less than desirable. MacDonald and Levy's (2016) shortened the original scale by Bosma et al (1997) from a six-item measure of social support in the workplace to a four-item one. Though they report good reliability with the shortened scale, the reliability in this study was low. As mentioned by Tavakol and Dennick (2011), low alpha can be the result of using too few items. Additionally, the topic of these questions is noteworthy. The two items removed measured support experienced thanks to co-workers and colleagues. Three of the four remaining questions focused on perceived support from supervisors. Yet, individuals with social anxiety tend to struggle with authority figures. As a result, they might not to feel supported by these individuals.

Implications

Despite the aforementioned limitations, these results have potential implications to improve the experiences of employees with social anxiety. As previously mentioned, social anxiety is a debilitating experience that can range from minor to life altering and from short-term to long-term. A key finding of this study is that individual with social anxiety tend to fall victim to incivility in the workplace more often than their colleagues. The evidence of this study, in combination with the mentioned literature, implies that individuals with social anxiety might have interpretation biases in their own workplaces. These biases could be the reason they report experiencing incivility more often. The literature surrounding social anxiety has long focused on altering these biases to manage symptoms.

Therapy techniques such as cognitive behavioural therapy have been recommended to modify these biases (Brozovich et al., 2014). According to Chen et al. (2020), approaches which aim to change perceptions are effective interventions to minimize the symptoms of social

anxiety. Through training methods which provide individuals with social anxiety with tools to modify their perceptions, social fear can be decreased. The work of Beard and Amir (2008) confirms this as they found that social anxiety decreased after even one session and these sessions could have long-term self-image benefits.

Though these studies do not specifically focus on the workplace, these interventions provide a solution for dealing with incivility in the workplace. Beard and Amir (2008) state they work to increase the incidence of benign interpretations rather than threatening ones. The literature indicates that social anxiety causes heightened perceptions of threats, even in ambiguous or positive situations. The current findings indicate that individuals with social anxiety are increasingly victim of incivility events. Developing interventions to aid socially anxious individuals in not catastrophizing ambiguity would allow for better workplace experiences. By modifying these biases, the individual can experience less fear in real life (Badra et al., 2017).

Although this study found support for increased incivility in the workplace, it failed to support the hypothesis surrounding negative interpretations of incivility events. In fact, the opposite was found. The past literature implies that individuals with social anxiety view all events, include positive ones, as negative. This study found that increases in social anxiety were related to more positive perceptions of both uncivil and positive events. Replication studies are recommended with strengthened methods to assess the validity of the current findings.

Future research could additionally expand upon the findings of this study by investigating potential roots of this interpretation bias. Although not the focus of this study, the relationship between social anxiety and incivility could be influenced by attribution bias. Those who have social anxiety are thought to be more self-focused. Some authors, like Spurr and Stopa (2002)

believe this could influence their perceptions of events and allow them to omit parts of the

context. As a result, individuals with social anxiety seem to take responsibility for negative

situations that arise (Arkin et al., 1980; Achmin et al., 2016; Haller et al., 2015). Perhaps their

negative beliefs about themselves and their social skills lead them to believe they are instigators

despite being victims in reality. This bias provides individuals with a reason to have negative

perceptions of the self and the social interactions had at work, thus attaching negative valance to

ambiguous interactions. Beattie and Griffin (2014) note that coping techniques are situation

specific and can be dictated by how blame is attributed. It would be valuable to research if this

attribution bias occurs in ambiguous situations, particularly workplace incivility, in order to

improve coping and build interventions.

Conclusion

In summary, this study is a first step integrating two lines of research that have not been

directly linked to our knowledge. As a factor that notably influences perceptions of social events,

especially those that are ambiguous, social anxiety seemed to be a natural predictor of perceived

incivility. It was predicted that the biases held by individuals with social anxiety would make

them view incivility events at work more negatively. Though there were contradictions between

the current findings and past research, this study supports the idea that social anxiety influences

perceptions of incivility at work in some way. Employees with social anxiety fall victim to

incivility more frequently than others, perhaps making the workplace a less welcoming

environment in their eyes. Statistics Canada (2015) reports social anxiety to be one of the most

common anxiety disorders and mental illnesses in Canada; it is essential to improve the

experiences of those with incivility in the workplace in order to accommodate their needs.

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    well-being: Vol. 6. Exploring the work and non-work interface (p. 1–33). Elsevier

    Science/JAI Press.

Figure 1
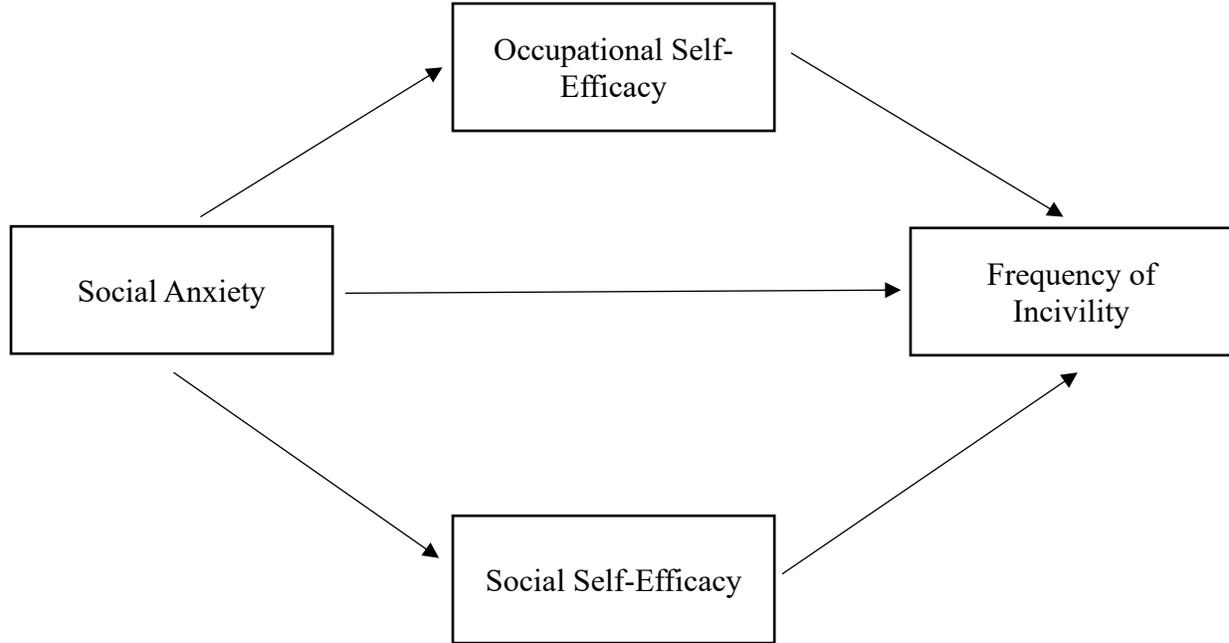
Figure 1. A model describing the relationships between social anxiety and frequency of incivility

as described by Hypothesis 1. It is predicted that social anxiety will have a direct relationship on

the frequency of incivility reported. In addition, it is anticipated that this relationship will be

mediated by self-efficacy. The mediation as described by Hypothesis 1a involving occupational

self-efficacy is shown. In addition, Hypothesis 1b representing the mediation effect of social self-

efficacy is presented.

Figure 2
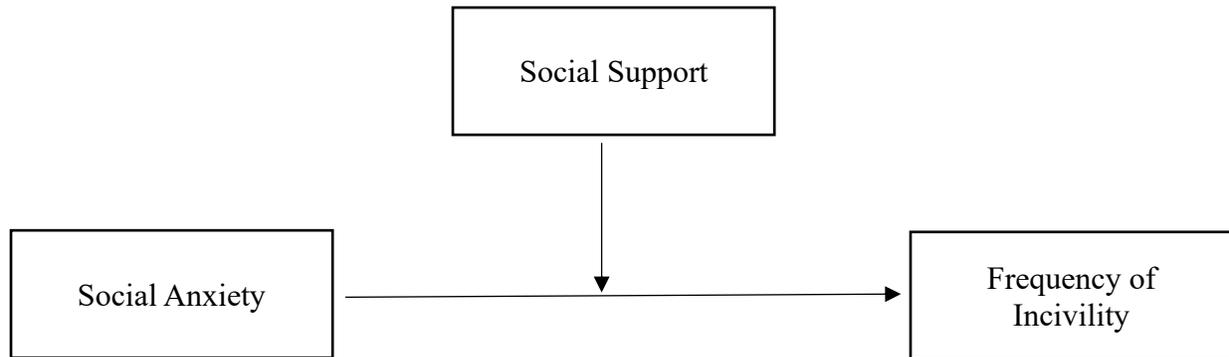
Figure 2. A model describing the relationship between social anxiety, frequency of incivility, and social support as described by Hypothesis 1c. It is predicted that social anxiety will have a direct relationship on the frequency of incivility reported. In addition, it is anticipated that this relationship will be moderated by social support.

Figure 3
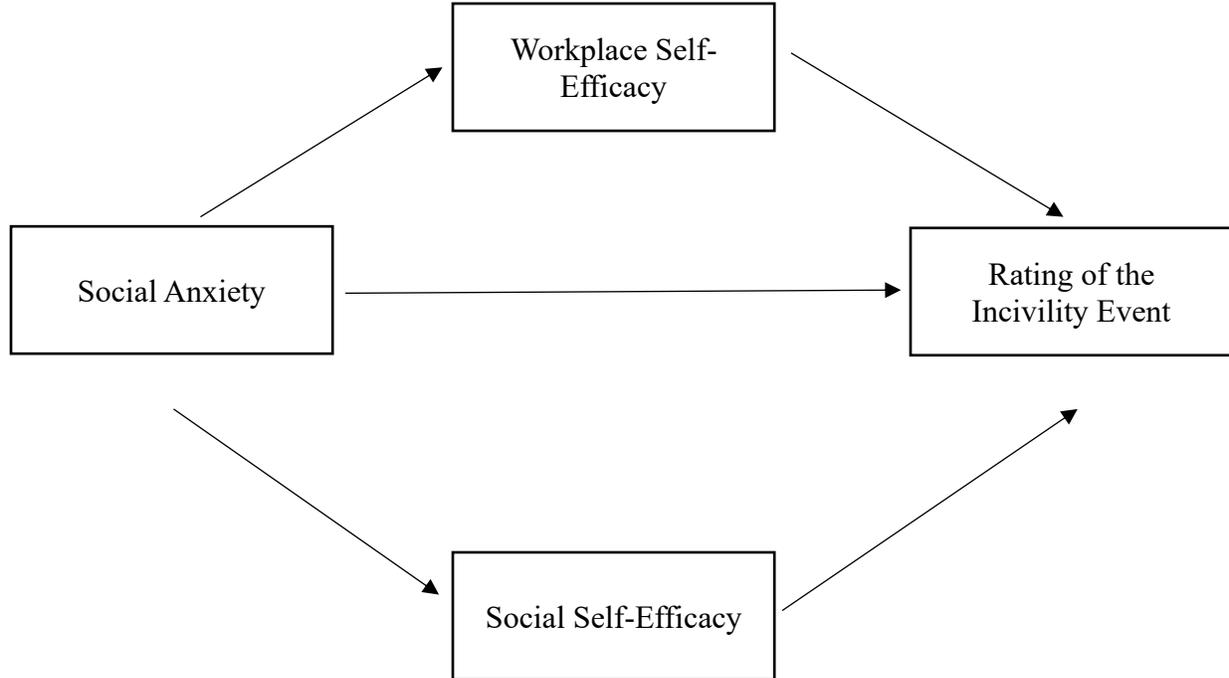
Figure 3. A model describing the relationships between social anxiety and emotional ratings of incivility as described by Hypothesis 2. It is predicted that social anxiety will have a direct relationship on the emotions involved with incivility events. In addition, it is anticipated that this relationship will be mediated by self-efficacy. The mediation as described by Hypothesis 2a involving occupational self-efficacy is shown. In addition, Hypothesis 2b representing the mediation effect of social self-efficacy is presented.

Figure 4

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │                     │
                    │   Social Support    │
                    │                     │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                              │
                              │
                              ▼
┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │              │  Rating of Incivility│
│   Social Anxiety    │─────────────▶│        Event         │
│                     │              │                     │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
```
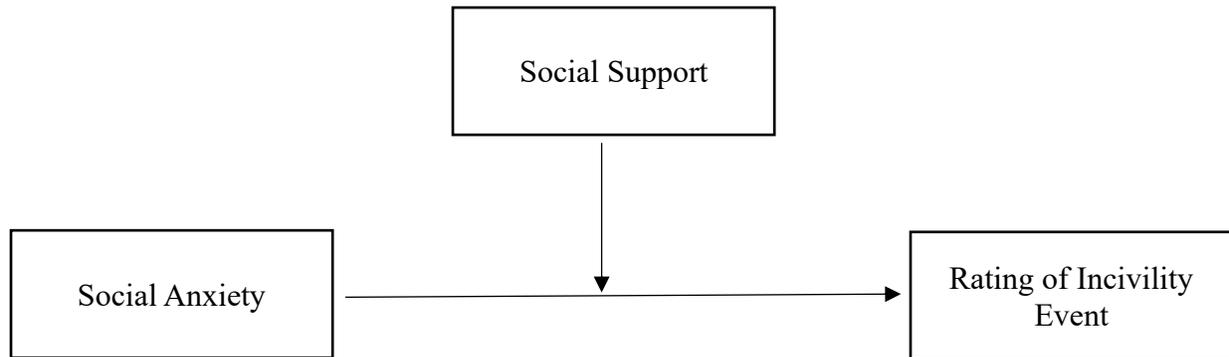
Figure 4. A model describing the relationship between social anxiety, emotional rating of the

incivility event, and social support as described by Hypothesis 2c. It is predicted that social

anxiety will have a direct relationship on the rating the event receives. In addition, it is

anticipated that this relationship will be moderated by social support.

Figure 5
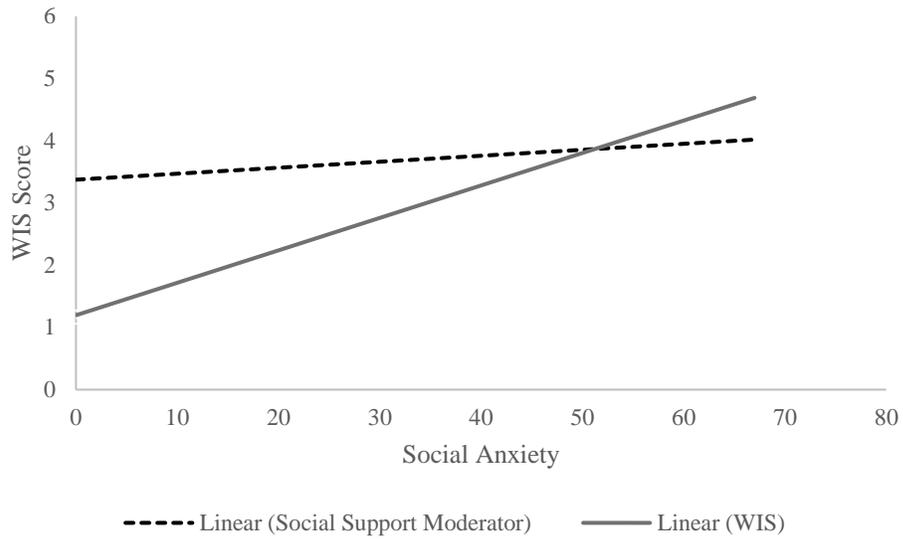
*Figure 5.* Moderation graph showcasing the relationship between social anxiety and perceived frequency of incivility as it is moderated by social support at work.

Table 1

Demographic Information

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age		357	35.32	9.95
Gender	Male	236		
	Female	119		
	Unspecified	2		
Racial/Ethnic Identity	White/Caucasian	266		
	African American/Black	23		
	Indigenous	4		
	Asian	21		
	Hispanic/Latinx	12		
	Middle Eastern	3		
	European	2		
Education	High School Diploma	12		
	Some College/University	14		
	Community College	1		
	Associates Degree	5		
	Bachelor's degree	253		
	Some post-graduate/professional	6		
	Post-graduate/Professional	66		
Area of Employment	Technology	79		
	Food	2		
	Manufacturing	7		
	Retail/Sales	14		
	Health	8		
	Education	5		
	Business	41		
	Legal	5		
	Real Estate	1		
	Communication	2		
	Esthetics	1		
	Construction	4		
	Engineering	6		
	Hospitality	2		
Management	Management	33		
	Not Management	206		

Table 2

ANOVA and post-hoc Analyses for Video Vignettes

| | Comparison | | | | | |
Condition	Condition	Mean Difference	SE	df	t	pTukey
Positive 1	Positive 2	-0.16	0.08	346	-2.04	0.46
	Positive 3	-0.36	0.08	346	-4.80	<0.001***
	Positive 4	0.00	0.08	346	0.04	1.00
	Incivility 1	0.05	0.07	346	0.70	1.00
	Incivility 2	0.21	0.08	346	2.85	0.09
	Incivility 3	0.15	0.07	346	2.12	0.40
	Incivility 4	0.10	0.07	346	1.43	0.84
Positive 2	Positive 3	-0.20	0.08	346	-2.53	0.19
	Positive 4	0.17	0.07	346	2.44	0.22
	Incivility 1	0.22	0.08	346	2.59	0.16
	Incivility 2	0.38	0.10	346	3.89	0.003**
	Incivility 3	0.32	0.09	346	3.42	0.02**
	Incivility 4	0.27	0.08	346	3.24	0.03**
Positive 3	Positive 4	0.36	0.07	346	4.87	<0.001***
	Incivility 1	0.41	0.08	346	5.47	<0.001***
	Incivility 2	0.58	0.09	346	6.39	<0.001***
	Incivility 3	0.51	0.08	346	4.48	<0.001***
	Incivility 4	0.46	0.08	346	5.53	<0.001***
Positive 4	Incivility 1	0.05	0.08	346	0.64	1.00
	Incivility 2	0.21	0.09	346	2.45	0.22
	Incivility 3	0.15	0.08	346	1.79	0.63
	Incivility 4	0.10	0.08	346	1.30	0.90
Incivility 1	Incivility 2	0.16	0.08	346	2.15	0.39
	Incivility 3	0.10	0.07	346	1.35	0.88
	Incivility 4	0.05	0.08	346	0.69	1.00
Incivility 2	Incivility 3	-0.06	0.08	346	-0.84	0.99
	Incivility 4	-0.11	0.08	346	-1.46	0.83
Incivility 3	Incivility 4	-0.05	0.08	346	-0.61	1.00

* 0.05 > p
** 0.01 > p
*** 0.001 > p

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Ratings of Incivility Events

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Video 1	355	5.13	1.25
Video 2	357	4.96	1.34
Video 3	357	5.01	1.34
Video 4	357	5.07	1.28

Table 4

Correlation Matrix for Test Scores

	SA	OSE	SSE	SSW	WIS	Vignettes
Social Anxiety (SA)	1.00					
Occupational Self-Efficacy (OSE)	0.14	1.00				
Social Self-Efficacy (SSE)	0.02	0.56	1.00			
Social Support (SSW)	0.23	0.70	0.55	1.00		
WIS	0.80	0.19	0.09	0.25	1.00	
Vignettes	0.32	0.48	0.38	0.52	0.37	1.00

Table 5

Regression Statistics for Frequency of Incivility

	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Social Anxiety	0.77	0.02	0.05	0.06	<0.001*
Mediation – Occupational Self-Efficacy	-0.01	0.00	-0.02	0.05	0.29
Mediation – Social Self-Efficacy	-0.29	0.08	-0.45	-0.12	0.0007*
Moderation – Social Support	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.0035*

*Significant Findings

Table 6

Regression Statistics for Ratings of Incivility Events

	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Social Anxiety	0.27	0.00	0.01	0.02	<0.001*
Mediation – Occupational Self-Efficacy	0.16	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.0021*
Mediation – Social Self-Efficacy	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.03	0.005*
Moderation – Social Support	0.01	0.01	-0.00	0.03	0.06

Appendix A
SPIN (Connor et al., 2000)

Instructions: Read each question and possible answers carefully. Please note you must read all items carefully. Providing accurate answers is important.

1.	I am afraid of people in authority	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
2.	I am bothered by blushing in front of people.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
3.	Parties and social events scare me.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
4.	I avoid talking to people that I don't know.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
5.	Choose 4 to indicate you understand this state.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
6.	Being criticized scares me a lot	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
7.	I avoid doing things or speaking to people for fear of embarrassment.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
8.	Sweating in front of people causes me distress.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
9.	I avoid going to parties.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
10.	I avoid activities in which I am the centre of attention.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
11.	Talking to strangers scares me.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
12.	I avoid having to give speeches.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
13.	I would give anything to avoid being criticized.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
14.	Heart palpitations bother me when I am around people.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
15.	I am afraid of doing things when people might be watching.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
16.	Being embarrassed or looking stupid are among my worst fears.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
17.	I avoid speaking to anyone in authority.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)
18.	Trembling or shaking in front of others is distressing to me.	(Not At All) 0	1	2	3	4 (Extremely)

Appendix B
OSS-Short (Rigotti et al., 2008)

1. Please select 5 as the answer. (Not true at all)   1   2   3   4   5   6   (Completely True)

2. I can remain calm when facing difficulties in my job because I can rely on my abilities. (Not true at all)   1   2   3   4   5   6   (Completely True)

3. When I am confronted with a problem in my job, I can usually find several solutions (Not true at all)   1   2   3   4   5   6   (Completely True)

4. Whatever comes my way in my job, I can usually handle it (Not true at all)   1   2   3   4   5   6   (Completely True)

5. My past experiences in my job have prepared me well for my occupational future. (Not true at all)   1   2   3   4   5   6   (Completely True)

6. I meet the goals that I set for myself in my job. (Not true at all)   1   2   3   4   5   6   (Completely True)

7. I feel prepared for most of the demands in my job. (Not true at all)   1   2   3   4   5   6   (Completely True)

WSSE-I (Fan et al., 2013)

Instructions: Take the time to read each question and answer honestly. Please take the time to understand the rating scale as providing accurate answers is important. You must rate your confidence level in each task on a 100-point scale (0 = "no confidence"; 50 = "moderate confidence"; 100 = "complete confidence".

How confident are you in…

1. Inviting your coworkers to an office birthday party for your coworkers? _____
2. Participating in a holiday gift exchange with your coworkers? _____
3. Taking part in group lunches or dinners with your coworkers? _____
4. Engaging in small talks with your coworkers prior to a staff meeting? _____
5. Participating in a game night with your coworkers? _____
6. Socializing with your supervisors at a company function? _____
7. Presenting to a group of potential clients? _____
8. Presenting the results of your current work project to your colleagues at a staff meeting? _____
9. Expressing your opinions at a staff meeting? _____
10. Facilitating a group discussion in your work unit? _____
11. Making a presentation on behalf of your company to a large audience at a professional conference? _____
12. Presenting a work project at a management meeting where your supervisor and other managers attend? _____
13. Please write 12 as your answer in this textbox. _____
14. Approaching your supervisor regarding your unfair performance appraisal without creating tension with them? _____
15. Asking your supervisor for feedback regarding your performance on a recently completed project? _____
16. Refusing your supervisor's request for you to work overtime on a day when you have a prior engagement? _____
17. Saying no to a colleague's request for help on a project when you do not have time without damaging your relationship? _____
18. Giving negative performance feedback to a coworker without frustrating them? _____
19. Taking your coworker to lunch to offer them support when you notice they are frustrated about a project? _____
20. Asking coworkers to help you on a work project? _____
21. Seeking help from your supervisor when you are having difficulty completing a task? _____
22. Asking for help from a coworker when you have a fast-approaching deadline at work? _____
23. Offering help to a coworker who appears overwhelmed by a project they are working on? _____

*Questions 1 to 6 represent a social gather, 7 to 12 represent performing in a public context, 14 to 18 represent conflict management and 19 to 23 representing seeking/offering help.

Appendix C
SSW (Macdonald & Levy, 2016)

Instructions: Read each question and possible answers carefully. Please note you must read all items carefully. Providing accurate answers is important.

1. How often are your co-workers willing to listen to your work-related problems?   (Never)   1 2 3 4 5   (All the time)

2. How often do you get the information you need from your supervisor(s)?   (Never)   1 2 3 4 5   (All the time)

3. How often do you get support from your immediate supervisor?   (Never)   1 2 3 4 5   (All the time)

4. How often is your immediate supervisor willing to listen to you about work-related problems?   (Never)   1 2 3 4 5   (All the time)

Appendix D
WIS

Instructions: Read each question and possible answers carefully. Please note you must read all items carefully. Providing accurate answers is important.

During the <u>past year</u>, were you ever in a situation in which any of your supervisors or co-workers…?

1.	Paid little attention to your statements or showed little interest in your opinions	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
2.	Doubted your judgement on a matter over which you had responsibility.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
3.	Addressed you in the unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
4.	Gave you hostile looks, snares, or sneers.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
5.	Interrupted or "spoke over" you.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
6.	Rated you lower than you deserved on an evaluation.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
7.	Please choose 2.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
8.	Yelled, shouted, or swore at you.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
9.	Made insulting or disrespectful remarks about you.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
10.	Ignored you or failed to speak to you (e.g., gave you the "silent treatment").	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
11.	Accused you of incompetence.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
12.	Targeted you with anger outbursts or "temper tantrums"	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)
13.	Made jokes at your expense.	(Never)	1 2 3 4 5 (Many times)

Appendix E
Scripts

Instructions: Please watch each video carefully and imagine this is your point of view. Place yourself in the situation.

Question: Please rate how this video made you feel.

Standard Orientation	Very Negative emotion	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	Very Positive Emotion

Positive

1. Contributions received positively: During a coworker's presentation, you provide them with some constructive feedback. They acknowledge that you are presenting good feedback and that they appreciate and will try to implement.

Person 1 – "Okay, so now that you guys have heard the proposal. I want to hear everyone's feedback. Anything is appreciated!!"

Person 2 – "All of the content was really good! Nice work on the project, Alex!"

Person 1 – "Thank you!"

Person 2 – "The one comment I can think of now is to slow down a little as you go. It seemed a bit rushed. If I think of anything else, I can send it your way."

Person 1 – "Yeah, I get that!! I'll try to slow it down. Does anyone else have anything to add?"

Actor – "I have something that might help."

Person 1 – Awesome! What is it?

Actor – "You did a good job with the slides but I think you go through the recommendations in a way that is a bit complicated. It might just be me, but the clients do not know a lot about it. Might be worth going through it in more common language instead of technical terms? What do you think?"

Person 1 – I can totally see where you're coming from!! That is actually a great comment, I'd

been worried about that myself. Thanks so much for the feedback everyone.

2. Inclusion: Your co-workers are going to a social event after work. A coworker finds you

    in the lunchroom to remind you of an email they sent and invite you again.

Standing in the kitchen with a cup of coffee

Person walks in

Person - "Good afternoon!! Did you see my email?"

Actor – "Hi! No I didn't, have been in meetings all day"

Person – "Oh no problem! I'm just planning a happy hour and wanted to make sure everyone

hears about it."

Actor – "That sounds fun! When were you thinking?"

Person – Thursday after work, does that work for you?

Actor – I think so!! I'll check my calendar. SOCIAL ANXIETY AND INCIVILITY 7

Person – Great! Let me know if it doesn't and we can work something out.

3. Helping: You inform one of your co-workers that you are extremely busy and concerned

    about getting all of your work done. They have some extra time, so they offer to assist

    you with completing your tasks.

Walking up to actor who is working at a desk

Person - "Hey, how have you been?"

Actor – Oh good. I just got asked to take on another project though so I'm feeling very

overwhelmed. I don't know how I'll get it all done

Person – "Do you want me to take some things off your plate?"

Actor – "Seriously?"

Person – "It would be no problem! I have a bit of a slow week anyway. What can I do to help you?"

Actor – "I just got sent edits for the report due Friday, the one from the meeting last week?"

Person – "Oh yeah I remember that!! I can definitely take those on"

4. Compliments: One of your co-workers informs you that you did a great job on your presentation and acknowledges your hard work.

Standing somewhere

Person walking over from somewhere else

Person – Oh hey! Just the person I've been looking for.

Actor – Yeah? Any reason?

Person – I just wanted to say great job on the presentation last week. It was so impressive!!

Actor – You think?

Person – Absolutely!! You put in so much work and it totally paid of.

Actor – Thanks! Means a lot.

Person – No problem!! Well, I have to get back to work.

Actor – See you!

Incivility

1. Exclusion from social event: While in the lunchroom, you hear a group of your coworkers laughing and chatting. They enter the room and tell you that they just had a great lunch together and tell you that you should try it yourself sometime. You were not invited to the lunch.

Individuals walk in chatting and laughing about the lunch they came from

Actor turns to doorway

P1:Oh hi! What's up?

Actor: I'm good, how are you guys?

P2: Oh my god, so good. We just went for lunch at the most amazing spot nearby. Their

menu was fantastic.

P1: Yeah, so great!! You're going to have to try it.

The group walks away, leaving the actor in the kitchen

2. Micromanagement: While working, you notice your boss standing over your shoulder.

    Though you try to continue working, you are aware of their presence. They state that they

    are remaining around to see what you are doing.

Actor sitting working at a desk

P1: Good morning everyone!

Office responds

P1: Hope you're ready for a big week!

Actor turns back to their work station

Shuffling of papers comes from behind them

They stop, and turn towards the noise

P1: Oh, don't mind me. Just checking what you're up to.

3. Underestimation of abilities: During a presentation that you are making, your boss

    continually asks you if you are sure that the information is right.

Actor is showing a slideshow for their manager

Actor: That is everything I have for the report, let me know if you have any feedback.

P1: Thank you for doing this! You're the only one could pull this off. I know you worked

hard.

P2: Yes, thank you. So you did the stats the way you were supposed to?

Actor: Ys, I did! I did exactly what you told me to do.

P2: We just need make sure everything is done properly.

Actor: Of course, I think everything is fine.

P2: Okay, this just cannot be messed up. It is very important.

4. Ignoring socially: You walk past two co-workers having a casual conversation. Rather than inviting you to join, they briefly greet you and return to their own conversation.

Two people have a conversation in the office kitchen

Actor enters the room, acknowledging the group talking

P1: Oh hi

P1 turns back to their conversation

Appendix F
Informed Consent

Project Title: The Influence of Individual Difference on Perceived Workplace Incivility

Principle Investigator:
Dr. Joan Finegan, PhD,
Department of Psychology,
University of Western Ontario

Co-Investigator:
Jocelyn Brown, MSc Student,
Department of Psychology,
University of Western Ontario

<u>**Letter of Information**</u>

My name is Jocelyn Brown and I am a graduate student studying Industrial Organizational Psychology at the University of Western Ontario, in London, Ontario, Canada working under the supervision of Dr. Joan Finegan. If you are over the age of 18 and have been or are currently employed in North America, I would like to invite you to participate in a study that explores workplace incivility. We are interested in finding out what factors make it harder or easier to handle rude and uncivil behaviour at work.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to watch eight short videos of people interacting in the workplace and to rate your reactions to the videos. You will also be asked questions about yourself and your experience with incivility and how you feel about social interactions. The survey should take approximately 25 minutes to complete, and as a token of our appreciation, you will receive $1.00 for your participation.

There are no known risks of participating in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your responses are completely confidential and anonymous. Even if you consent to participate, you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time, it will have no effect on your compensation. As this study is an anonymous online survey, once you have submitted your responses, they cannot be withdrawn.

While you may not directly benefit from participating in this study, our results could help improve workplace functioning, and increase employee and student well-being. Ultimately, your participation will provide a valuable contribution to scientific research and will assist in providing organizations with information that can be used to make work

Appendix G
Information Letter

Western 🛡️

DEBRIEFING FORM

Project Title: The Influence of Individual Differences on Perceived Workplace Incivility

Principal Investigator: Dr. Joan Finegan, University of Western Ontario
Co-Investigator: Jocelyn Brown, BSc, University of Western Ontario

Thank you for your participation in this study. This study is looking at people's experience of rude and uncivil behaviour in the workplace. Typically, experiencing such behaviour has negative effects on people, but not everyone experiences incivility the same way. In this study, we are interested in examining how the anxiety one feels when interacting with others influences their perceptions and interpretations of workplace incivility. We expect that people who are socially anxious will find the experience more upsetting than those who are not. Still, we expect there are other factors that will influence this relationship. For example, people who are confident about their ability to do their job or who have social support may be less effected by workplace incivility.

Here are some references if you would like to read more.

Beattie, L., & Griffin, B. (2014). Accounting for within-person differences in how people respond to daily incivility at work. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 87(3), 625–644. doi:10.1111/joop.12067
Cortina, L. M., Kabat-Farr, D., Leskinen, E. A., Huerta, M., & Magley, V. J. (2013). Selective incivility as modern discrimination in organizations: Evidence and impact. *Journal of Management, 39*(6), 1579–1605. doi:10.1177/0149206311418835
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doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2011.00891.x
Zellars, K. L. (2007). Social anxiety: An overlooked variable in the organizational stress literature. In P. L. Perrewé & D. C. Ganster (Eds.), *Research in occupational stress and well-being: Vol. 6. Exploring the work and non-work interface* (p. 1–33). Elsevier Science/JAI Press.

Just a reminder that all surveys are anonymous and all information provided is completely confidential. Although individual responses may be shared in open access repositories, there will be no way to identify respondents personally.

Appendix H
Ethics Approval

Western Research

Date: 13 April 2021

To: Joan Finegan

Project ID: 118581

Study Title: The Influence of Individual Differences on Perceived Workplace Incivility

Short Title: Workplace Incivility and Individual Differences

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: 07/May/2021

Date Approval Issued: 13/Apr/2021 15:17

REB Approval Expiry Date: 13/Apr/2022

_____

Dear Joan Finegan

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. **All other required institutional approvals and mandated training must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.**

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
0330 Appendices for Ethics	Online Survey	30/Mar/2021	1
0330 Debrief letter	Debriefing document	30/Mar/2021	1
0330 Invitation	Recruitment Materials	30/Mar/2021	1
0330 informed consent	Implied Consent/Assent	30/Mar/2021	1

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ms. Katelyn Harris , Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Curriculum Vitae
Jocelyn Brown

Education

MSc in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, *University of Western Ontario*	October 2021 (Forthcoming)

   · Thesis Topic: "More Than Just Shying Away From Conflict: The Relationship Between Social Anxiety and Workplace Incivility" supervised by Joan Finegan, PhD

Explore French Language Program, *Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières*	May 2021

   · Awarded a complete bursary to complete a 5-week French program

BSc (Honours) in Psychology, *Dalhousie University*	September 2014 to May 2019
Certificate in Disability Management, *Dalhousie University*	
Certificate in Intercultural Communication, *Dalhousie University*	

   · First-Class Honours
   · Thesis Title: "The Impact of Social Anxiety on Perceived Conflict-Handling Style in Negotiations" supervised by Debra Gilin-Oore, PhD

Visiting Student, Psychology, *Saint Mary's University*	September 2017 to April 2018
Exchange Student, Psychology, *University of Bath*	February 2017 to June 2017

   · Second-Class Honours: Upper Division

Academic and Teaching Experience

Marker, Organizational Behaviour, *The University of Western Ontario*	May 2021 to August 2021
Teaching Assistant, Research Methods and Statistical Analysis in Psychology, *The University of Western Ontario*	September 2020 to April 2021
Marker, Organizational Behaviour, *The University of Western Ontario*	May 2020 to August 2020
Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Psychology, *The University of Western Ontario*	September 2019 to April 2020
Marker, Systems Neuroscience, *Dalhousie University*	January 2018 to April 2018

Demonstrator (Undergraduate Teaching Assistant), Neuroscience Principles and Methods, *Dalhousie University*	September 2017 to December 2017

Research Experience

Research Lead, *Western Society of Graduate Students: Human Resources ad hoc Committee*	August 2020 to November 2020
MSc Student, *Joan Finegan's Lab at University of the Western Ontario*	September 2019 to August 2021
Reviewer, *Association of Psychological Science*	March 2020
Research Assistant, *Alison Konrad's Lab at Ivey Business School at the University of Western Ontario*	February 2020 to April 2021
Volunteer Research Assistant, *The Mood, Anxiety and Addiction Co-Morbidity Lab at Dalhousie University*	October 2016 to April 2019
Honours Student, *Debra Gilin Oore's Lab at Saint Mary's University*	May 2018 to April 2019

Presentations

Brown, J. & Finegan, J. (2022). *More than just shying away from conflict: The relationship between social anxiety and workplace incivility.* Poster presentation accepted to the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology. Glasgow, United Kingdom.	January 2022 (Forthcoming)
Brown, J. & Gilin Oore, D. (2019). *The Impact of Social Anxiety on Perceived Conflict-Handling Style in Negotiations*. Poster presentation completed at Science Atlantic – Psychology, Sackville, Canada.	May 2019
Brown, J. & Gilin Oore, D. (2019). *The Impact of Social Anxiety on Perceived Conflict-Handling Style in Negotiations*. Poster presentation completed at the 45th Graham Goddard Inhouse Conference, Halifax, Canada.	April 2019
Joyce, K. M., Good, K., Tibbo, P., **Brown, J**., & Stewart, S. H. (2018). *Addictive behaviours across the menstrual cycle: A systematic review.* Oral presentation completed at the Crossroads Interdisciplinary Health Research Conference, Halifax, Canada.	March 2019
Joyce, K. M., Good, K., Tibbo, P., **Brown, J**., & Stewart, S. H. (2018). *Addictive behaviours across the menstrual cycle: A systematic review.* Poster presentation completed at the Canadian	November 2018

Research Initiative in Substance Misuse symposium, Moncton, Canada.

Publications

Joyce, K. M., Good, K. P., Tibbo, P. G., **Brown, J**., & Stewart, S. H. (2021). Addictive behaviours across the menstrual cycle: A systematic review. *Archives of Women's Mental Health.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-020-01094-0	January 2021

Volunteer Experience

Member, *Western Society of Graduate Students: Executive Compensation Pilot Project Committee*	August 2020 to August 2021
Executive Representative, *Western Society of Graduate Students: Human Resources ad hoc Committee*	August 2020 to November 2020
Co-Chair, *Western Psychology Graduate Student Association*	August 2020 to August 2021
Vice President of Student Life, *Dalhousie Association of Psychology Students*	September 2018 to April 2019
Volunteer, *Canadian Research Initiative in Substance Misuse – Québec/Atlantic: Maritime Symposium.*	May 2018
Vice President of Communications, *Dalhousie Association of Psychology Students*	September 2015 to April 2016

Awards & Scholarships

Western Graduate Research Scholarship	2020
Western Graduate Research Scholarship	2019
Dalhousie Association of Psychology Students "Returning Student of the Year" Award	2019
Dalhousie Faculty of Science Dean's List	2016 to 2019
Dalhousie Association of Psychology Students "Newcomer of the Year" Award	2016
Dalhousie University Entrance Scholarship	2014

Certificates & Training

- Government of Canada: Gender-based Analysis Plus
- Work Wellness Institute: Supporting Disclosure of Mental Health Conditions in Evolving Workplaces
- Work Wellness Institute: Best Practices for Accommodating Mental Health Related Disabilities in the Workplace
- Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans
- University of Western Ontario's Teaching Assistant Training Program
- Western Library – Introduction to R

Memberships

- Previously a student member of the Association of Psychological Science January 2020 to December 2020