Race and workplace discrimination

The mediating role of cyber incivility and interpersonal incivility

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Abstract

Purpose – Drawing upon theories of modern discrimination, the present study focuses on cyber incivility and interpersonal incivility as mechanisms through which race leads to perceived discrimination. Participants included 408 full-time working adults who responded to an online survey. The results indicate that Non-White employees experience subtle forms of discrimination through the use of e-mail, which accentuate the need for organizations to eradicate workplace mistreatment so that their employees can avoid the adverse outcomes associated with experiencing cyber incivility. The purpose of this paper is to extend the understanding of selective incivility and concludes with directions for future research and practical implications.

Design/methodology/approach – Participants included 408 full-time working adults who responded to the survey online.

Findings – The results indicate that race was indirectly associated with discrimination through cyber incivility. The results indicate that Non-White employees experience subtle forms of discrimination through the use of technology and cyber space which accentuate the need for organizations to eradicate workplace incivility so that their employees can evade the adverse outcomes associated with experiencing incivility at work.

Research limitations/implications – This study extends the understanding of selective incivility and concludes with directions for future research and practical implications.

Originality/value – This paper is the first to explore the relationship between race, cyber incivility and discrimination.

Keywords Workplace incivility, Perceived discrimination, Modern racism, Cyber incivility,
Interpersonal incivility, Racial minority

Paper type Research paper

Racial minorities bring unique and varying lived experiences to their work environments. This creates diversity within an organization and leads to higher market share, productivity (Hambrick *et al.*, 1996) as well as increased innovation and creativity (Hoever *et al.*, 2012). Despite the positive aspects of diversity, there are also difficulties that may arise. More specifically, when individuals of diverse backgrounds are put together there may be distrust, acrimony and schisms, which make the exchange of information and ideas difficult (Hambrick *et al.*, 1996). Furthermore, when minorities are asked to share their personal experiences at work, they share that discrimination is still a problem in their organizations (Smith and Joseph, 2010).

Research on racial discrimination in the USA indicates individuals of color are, in fact, experiencing unfair treatment at work. A recent report from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) indicates that nearly 34 percent of the 84, 254 charges that were filed in 2017 were due to racial discrimination in the workplace. Of these charges, 25,000 were filed by African-Americans. There was a total of $76.9m in monetary benefits that were paid to plaintiffs of racial discrimination in 2017. Comparatively, only about 10 percent of Caucasians experience similar treatment (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2017);

thus, racial disparities are still apparent across many organizations in the USA (Cortina, 2008). Hence, employees of color and Caucasian are having drastically different experiences in the workplace.

The EEOC defines racial discrimination as "treating someone (an applicant or employee) unfavorably because he/she is of a certain race or because of personal characteristics associated with race" (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2017). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the premise of sex, race, color, national origin and religion in an employment context, which includes selection, termination, compensation and supplemental benefits to name a few. Despite significant progress over the last 50 years, there has been very little improvement when it comes to racial discrimination in the workplace (e.g. Quillan *et al.*, 2017). A recent report from the Kaiser Family Foundation/CNN indicates that 53 percent of Blacks have experienced unfair treatment because of ethnicity in places such as their work in the past 30 days compared to only 15 percent of Whites reporting similar issues (DiJulio *et al.*, 2015). While the data are clear that racial discrimination is prevalent in the US what is less obvious is the way in which racial bias manifests in the workplace.

Recent research on modern manifestations of discrimination suggests that racism has taken on a new more covert form (Cortina *et al.*, 2011). According to modern discrimination theory, modern racists are those who have resentment and biases toward minorities, which drives them to engage in discriminatory actions in concealed and obscure methods (Brief *et al.*, 2000; Cortina *et al.*, 2011; Swim *et al.*, 1995). Accordingly, modern racism has become ambiguous in content to the extent that expressions are enacted as subtle displays of discrimination (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000; Cortina, 2008). Behaviors that are associated with modern racism are not unlawful and, thus are dismissed as insignificant (Avery *et al.*, 2018). However, research on modern manifestations of discrimination shows there are deleterious effects on individuals at work.

Cortina's (2008) theory of selective incivility as subtle modern discrimination in organizations, underscores the notion that expressions of racism more than ever have become much subtler in form. The overarching argument regarding selective incivility is that workplace incivility is not targeted to all people at the same rate. More specifically, workplace incivility is defined as "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others" (Andersson and Pearson, 1999, p. 457). The theory of selective incivility argues that workplace incivility can be engaged by selectively presenting a contemporary manifestation of bias that targets and isolates individuals based on their gender and ethnicity (Cortina, 2008). Furthermore, these types of interactions keep the targeted employees from experiencing healthy interpersonal interactions at work (Cortina *et al.*, 2011). In fact, Cortina *et al.* (2011) found that ethnic women reported experiencing high levels of workplace incivility, which in turn was associated with their intentions to leave the organization. This evidence suggests that people of color may perceive higher levels of mistreatment at work.

Much of the work on selective incivility examines the target's experiences with face-to-face interpersonal mistreatment. While some studies address incivility in cyber space, it is often within overall incivility and not viewed as a distinct phenomenon separate from interpersonal mistreatment (see Kabat-Farr *et al.*, 2018). Hence, little is known about the ways selective incivility is expressed through internet channels, cyber space, or e-mail. E-mail is often the primary mode for communication at work (Park *et al.*, 2018), as such, more than 60 percent of the US workforce report using the internet and/or e-mail in the workplace (Madden and Jones, 2008). In addition, due to the introduction of smartphones and wireless internet access, e-mail communication is ubiquitous in the workplace; thus, employees are expected to quickly respond to work-related e-mails inside and outside of work (Park *et al.*, 2011).

The fast-paced nature of e-mail communications often feels impersonal and lends itself to incivility because people argue and/or assume they do not have time to be "nice" (Pearson and Porath, 2005). Furthermore, there is an assumption that impersonal interactions do not require the common courtesies used in interpersonal communication (Pearson and Porath, 2005). This is exacerbated by the lack of immediate clarification when a uncivil e-mail is received (Lim and Teo, 2009). These aforementioned assumptions surrounding online communications may provide a veil for modern discrimination to manifest itself as cyber incivility. In a study on cyber incivility, Park *et al.* (2018) found that 34 percent of study respondents indicated receiving one to three uncivil e-mails per work day, an additional 2 percent reported receiving over five rude e-mails in a work day. Employees who reported receiving disrespectful e-mails such as all caps (interpreted as yelling), rude or unkind words in e-mails, dismissive e-mails or having their e-mails ignored are experiencing cyber incivility (Lim and Teo, 2009). We contend that in addition to interpersonal incivility, cyber incivility is another way that modern forms of discrimination manifest in the workplace.

Thus, the goal of the current article is to explore the influence of race on selective incivility, and discrimination. More specifically, we investigate two forms of selective incivility, cyber incivility and interpersonal incivility. For the purpose of this paper, we refer to interpersonal incivility when there is person-to-person contact between individuals. Alternatively, we investigate cyber incivility as selective mistreatment that manifests, namely, e-mail. By examining both forms of mistreatment, we extend existing research on selective incivility as a modern form of racial discrimination. This paper contributes to our understanding of race, cyber incivility and discrimination by investigating an understudied, nevertheless significant form of mistreatment at work and provides an explanation into the way in which discrimination is experienced at work.

Theory and hypothesis development
Racial identity and discrimination
Social identity and categorization theories (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) assert that individuals have diverse identities that place them into markedly different groups. The recognition of the distinguishable groups creates categories that give way to individuals to be placed in either the in-group or out-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Consequently, the social categorization of people into in-groups and out-groups can give way to discrimination against out-group members, because in-group members have a preference for members of their group and maintain a positive self-concept due to their in-group social identity. Furthermore, the more strongly a person connects with or identifies as belonging to a particular social group, the more central it becomes to their overall identity (Gacilo *et al.*, 2018). That central identity guides the self-concept, actions and social perceptions (Cameron, 2004; Ng, 2014). One such social group that is often quite significant is race primarily due to social interactions and context, which surround the concept of race and racial identity (Randel, 2002). In other words, race often impacts perceptions and interactions due to the complicated racial history that exists within the USA (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000).

Race is a visible and permanent characteristic and provides a strong basis for social identification and/or categorization (Alderfer and Smith, 1982; Gonzalez and DeNisi, 2009). Those who strongly identify with a social group, where this identity is central to their self-concept, will be more likely to recognize behaviors and/or practices that are detrimental to the groups well-being (Ng *et al.*, 2012). The resulting discrimination and bias is contingent upon the relative power and social status of the in-group and out-group. In this view, people of color experience discrimination because they are considered out-group members who

occupy positions with less status and power. Hence, employees whose central identity is strongly attached to a racial minority group will perceive more discrimination:

H1. Racial minority status will be positively related to perceived discrimination.

Modern racism theory and incivility

Within the USA, minority groups have the most salient racial identities and have historically experienced the most discrimination (Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Gonzalez, 2000; Triana *et al.*, 2015). Thus, racial minorities tend to experience discrimination more frequently than White Americans. Because racial minorities experience more discrimination whether overt or subtle, they are also more attuned to the negative effects of subtle discrimination in a variety forms, whether that is virtually or interpersonally, compared to White employees.

Modern racism theory contends that "old-fashioned" overt racism has become more modern and taken on the form of subtle, rationalized indirect bigotry (Brief *et al.*, 2000; Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000). According to McConahay (1986), modern racism operates under these tenets: minorities can compete in the marketplace; therefore, discrimination is no longer a problem; minorities are unwelcomed in certain contexts because of their unreasonable demands for work and equal treatment; and minorities are undeservingly receiving concessions and gains, which results in being given a privileged status. Hence, what minorities are pressing for and seeking are unfair. These tenets are underscored by: the belief they are not racist or prejudiced but supported with empirical facts and racism is bad (McConahay, 1986).

However, people who are modern racists still hold negative biases and prejudices toward minority groups but are unable to enact them in an overt manner. Therefore, these individuals must be within "a context in which there is a plausible, nonprejudiced explanation for what might be considered prejudiced behavior" (McConahay, 1986, p. 100). These plausible explanations are used to rationalize prejudiced behaviors and give license to modern racists to act on their racial biases (Brief *et al.*, 2000). In essence, when the biases behind the behavior are not easily recognizable, and if a negative reaction can be explained by something other than race, modern racists will practice discriminatory behavior (Cortina, 2008; Cortina *et al.*, 2011). This behavior is viewed as workplace incivility or more specifically, selective incivility (Cortina, 2008).

Workplace incivility

Workplace incivility is unique from other forms of mistreatment because it is ambiguous in nature and goes against organizational standards for reciprocal respect (Andersson and Pearson, 1999; Pearson and Porath, 2005). For example, this would include behaviors that are characteristically rude such as gossiping about a colleague, interrupting a coworker while he or she is talking, sending a coworker an e-mail in all caps and/or not responding to an e-mail request in a timely manner. While the intent to harm is dubious, what is clear is that incivility at work exists. Park *et al.* (2018) argued there are certain behaviors that cross all boundaries of mistreatment, meaning there is no ambiguity regarding whether the behavior is deviant or not (e.g. yelling, using caps in e-mails, physical aggression).

Extant research on workplace incivility indicates that there are a host of negative implications associated with experiencing mistreatment at work. Workplace incivility has been related to high stress, lower job satisfaction (Lim *et al.*, 2008), and greater turnover intentions (Cortina *et al.*, 2011). Researchers have also linked workplace incivility to increased organizational costs. For instance, experiencing incivility at work leads to lower psychological well-being (Penney and Spector, 2005), which in turn can influence employee performance by reducing productivity (Andersson *et al.*, 2001; Sliter *et al.*, 2010) and subsequently lead to employee turnover (Cortina, 2008).

Selective incivility
Cortina (2008) theorized that incivility is not a one-size fits all experience for those targeted with interpersonal mistreatment. She unpacked how individuals who are low-status (i.e. African-American women) at work are more vulnerable to experience incivility at disproportionate rates compared to high-status individuals (i.e. Caucasian males). Using a multilevel theoretical framework, Cortina (2008) argues that various forces converge to influence whether a person is mistreated at work and the conditions under which an individual will experience selective incivility. At the societal level, she argues that institutionalized racism and sexism, power disparities and unequal social standing can explain the differential incivility experiences. At the organizational level, Cortina (2008) argues that issues related to leadership, policies and social norms within the work context can influence incivility experiences. Lastly, at the individual level, she argues that individual differences influence whether an individual is impacted by selective incivility.

In sum, theories of modern discrimination underscore Cortina's (2008) theory of selective incivility such that in-group favoritism, unconscious bias, need for power and dominance and systemic discrimination among top organizational leaders help to explain why racial minorities are more likely to be targeted with incivility at disproportionate rates. In other words, minority employees may be more at risk of selective incivility in the workplace than their white counterparts (Berdahl and Moore, 2006; Cortina *et al.*, 2011). We contend that selective incivility may take distinct forms: selective interpersonal incivility and selective cyber incivility.

Selective interpersonal incivility is mistreatment that occurs within face-to-face interactions. From an interpersonal interaction perspective, this selective incivility may include ignoring, interrupting or failing to engage minority employees (Cortina, 2008). In addition, from a job performance perspective it could include questioning judgment and/or authority over an area an employee is responsible for, withholding necessary information, requiring unnecessary oversight of work and failing to acknowledge good performance (Cortina, 2008). Consistent with modern racism theory, these behaviors can be rationalized with plausible explanations, which camouflage racial biases that exist. Hence, modern racists may use selective interpersonal incivility, to act on their negative feelings toward minorities.

Cyber incivility can be viewed as an additional type of mistreatment that occurs in the workplace (Giumetti *et al.*, 2012). This form of incivility often appears due to the lack of "norms of civility," which guide interpersonal interactions that are less explicit or lacking in regard to online communications (McLeod *et al.*, 1997). More specifically, online communications are text-based and lack the rate of speech, pitch, body language and tone of face-to-face communication (Giumetti *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, accuracy and shared understanding may be elusive in online communications because interpretation is required without situational and/or nonverbal cues, which signal when clarification is needed (Byron, 2008; Friedman and Currall, 2003). Finally, unlike face-to-face interactions, online communications provide a sense of "perceived" anonymity because individuals are physically removed from the target of their incivility (Giumetti *et al.*, 2012). In essence, online communication is perceived to be impersonal and does not require the same social nuance of interpersonal communications (Pearson and Porath, 2005). Hence, consistent with modern racism theory, the environment of cyber communications provides opportunities for plausible explanations and rationalizations for prejudicial behavior in interpersonal interactions.

We assert that studying interpersonal and cyber incivility separately is important for several reasons. First, previous research has established that people of color disproportionately experience incivility at work (Cortina *et al.*, 2011), thus supporting Cortina's (2008) theory of

selective incivility. We contend it is important to investigate whether similar effects will hold for race and selective cyber incivility and whether such interactions are perceived as discriminatory. Second, given the reliance on the internet for communication in the workplace it is important for scholars to examine modes of computer mediated communication and how individuals can target low-status individuals with incivility at higher rates compared to interpersonal face-to-face incivility. In this way, individuals who are prone to enact incivility may likely be motivated to engage in cyber incivility as a passive form of workplace mistreatment. Last, unpacking the various manifestations of incivility, under the two manifestations, interpersonal and cyber, will uncover a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which mistreatment is enacted in the workplace.

In many ways, the workplace is a suitable context for the enactment of subtle discrimination. Research has demonstrated that workplace incivility is especially likely to be directed at marginalized group members, such as people of color (Cortina *et al.*, 2011). In this way, racial minorities compared to Whites will perceive various forms of incivility as discrimination. We further argue that cyber incivility is one mechanism through which subtle acts of rudeness are presented which give way to people of color to report higher rates of cyber and interpersonal incivility compared to non-racial minorities.

Previous empirical research has associated cyber incivility to decreased well-being, turnover cognitions, decreased job satisfaction and deviant behavior at work (Giumetti *et al.*, 2012; Lim and Teo, 2009). Furthermore, while cyber incivility may be through electronic communications, it could be argued that similar to interpersonal incivility, racial minorities may experience higher levels of cyber incivility. Therefore, we hypothesize:

H2. Racial minority status will be positively related to cyber incivility experiences.

H2a. Racial minority status will be positively related to interpersonal incivility experiences.

Cyber and interpersonal incivility as a mediator between race and perceived discrimination. Additionally, we expect cyber incivility and interpersonal incivility to mediate the relationship between race and discrimination. Modern racism theory argues that overt manifestations of discrimination have declined, and covert forms are increasing (McConahay, 1986). We proposed that racial minorities are often the target of workplace discrimination. Furthermore, they are more likely to experience cyber incivility and interpersonal incivility in their work context. Due to racial minorities experiences with racially targeted cyber and interpersonal incivility at work, they should be more likely to perceive discrimination at work. Thus, we propose that cyber incivility and interpersonal incivility will mediate the relationship between race and discrimination.

This proposition is consistent with Cortina's (2008) theory of selective incivility, which explains that incivility can serve as a form of modern discrimination. We assert that members of devalued social groups (e.g. people of color) are more likely to report being the target of incivility. As mentioned earlier, racial minorities are more likely to experience subtle mistreatment at work (Cortina, 2008) such as being the target of discourteous behavior that is characterized by ambiguous intent, lower quality interactions and rude e-mails to name a few. Selective incivility is based on motives that underlie interpersonal discrimination (Hebl *et al.*, 2002). Hence, providing insight into why racial subgroups are more likely to perceive incivility at disproportionate rates compared to non-racial minorities. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

H3. Cyber incivility will mediate the relationship between racial minority status and perceived discrimination.

H3a. Interpersonal incivility will mediate the relationship between racial minority status and perceived discrimination.

Methods

Participants and procedure

Our data were captured from 450 participants in the USA. The respondents were from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online crowdsourcing outlet which is increasingly used in empirical studies (Mason and Suri, 2012). Research has demonstrated the MTurk population to be representative and trustworthy (Buhrmester *et al.*, 2011; Paolacci *et al.*, 2010), thus making it a viable data collection methodology accepted by top journals in the field (e.g. *Academy of Management Journal*, Chua, 2013). Quality-check questions were included throughout the survey to ensure that participants engaged in sufficient effort responding. The study participants were instructed to complete a self-report questionnaire. The survey was anonymous. We excluded 42 participants due to missing data. Our final sample was 408 participants. The sample was 52 percent male and 48 percent of the sample had a four-year college degree. The sample was on average 34 years old. The sample was a 73 percent Caucasian, the remaining individuals included 42 African-Americans, 31 Asian Pacific Islander, 27 Latino and 8 Native Americans. Because of the small number of individuals in each of the Non-White categories, those employees were collapsed into a category called "Non-White" and compared to Caucasians in all analyses. For this reason, all analyses regarding race essentially compares two groups of employees white and Non-White.

Measures

Race. Race was capture by asking survey participants to note their race at the end of the survey. Race was coded as White = 0 and Non-White = 1.

Interpersonal incivility. Workplace incivility was measured using the Workplace Incivility Scale developed by Cortina *et al.* (2001). The scale measured the frequency of participants' experiences of disrespectful or rude behaviors from superiors or colleagues within the last six months. Sample items for interpersonal incivility included, "Your superior or coworker put you down or was condescending to you," and "Your superior or coworker ignored or excluded you from professional camaraderie." The scale consisted of seven items and responses were scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from (1) hardly ever to (4) frequently.

Cyber incivility. Cyber incivility was measured using an adapted scale based on Lim and Teo (2009). The scale was adapted by selecting items that solely focused on cyber interaction between parties. Any items that mirrored the interpersonal incivility scale were not included in the survey. The scale consisted of five items and responses were scored on a four-point Likert scale ranging from (1) hardly ever to (4) frequently. Sample items for cyber incivility included, "Sent you e-mails using a rude and discourteous tone," and "Used ALL CAPS to shout at you through e-mail."

Perceived discrimination. Perceived discrimination was measured using nine items from James *et al.*'s (1994) Workplace Prejudice/Discrimination Inventory. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). Sample items include "At work I felt socially isolated because of my race" and "At work people of color receive fewer opportunities."

When assessing the measures, a marker variable test was conducted to assess bias within the dataset. The marker variable was impression management, specifically ingratiation dimension (Bolino and Turnley, 1999). While this marker variable was not ideal, it was chosen using the parameters suggested by Richardson *et al.* (2009). More specifically, the variable has a low correlation or no correlation with the other constructs of interest (Richardson *et al.*, 2009). Based on our marker variable test, it is less likely that the relationships between constructs are due to common method bias.

Control variables
More recent research has explored target characteristics of incivility such as general personality traits (e.g. agreeableness, neuroticism) and organizational ranking and power (Cortina and Magley, 2009; Milam *et al.*, 2009). Given existing research that highlights the role of demographic variables and individual differences that are related to incivility (Pearson *et al.*, 2000; Penney and Spector, 2005), and to reduce the possibility that these factors will impact our findings, we controlled for two factors. First, organizational tenure ("How many years and months have you worked at the same organization?") has been shown to be a determinant of employee job satisfaction (Dobrow Riza *et al.*, 2015) which can influence the extent to which individuals perceive cyber and interpersonal incivility. Second, mood/affect was measured using an abbreviated eight-item version (e.g. Zellars *et al.*, 2002) of Watson *et al.* (1988).

Analysis
Following Fornell and Larcker (1981), we compared the AVE for each construct to the shared variance between constructs. When the AVE for each construct was greater than the shared variance between each construct, discriminant validity is assumed. To calculate AVE, we averaged each indicator's factor loadings, and all corresponding squared loadings as well. To establish discriminant validity between interpersonal incivility and cyber incivility, items were dropped due to cross-loadings, low factor loadings. This resulted in a four-item scale for interpersonal incivility and a three-item scale for cyber incivility. See the Table I for factor loadings and final scale. Once this was completed, all AVE values were obtained (cyber incivility (AVE) = 0.57; interpersonal incivility (AVE) = 0.57; discrimination (AVE) = 0.58). Each of the AVE values were

		Factor loadings	Cyber incivility
Interpersonal incivility			Cross loading
Int1[a]	Put you down or was condescending to you	0.412	0.449
Int2	Paid little attention to your statement showed little interest in your opinion	0.937	
Int3[b]	Made demeaning or derogatory remarks about you		0.755
Int4[b]	Addressed you in unprofessional terms, either publicly or privately	0.372	0.507
Int5	Ignored or excluded you from professional camaraderie	0.826	
Int6	Doubted your judgment on a matter over which you have responsibility	0.858	
Int7[b]	Made unwanted attempts to draw you in to a discussion of personal matters	0.221	0.546
		Factor loadings	Interpersonal incivility
Cyber incivility			Cross loading
Cyb1	Sent you e-mails using a rude and discourteous tone	0.832	
Cyb2	Used ALL CAPS to shout at you through e-mail	0.971	
Cyb3[c]	Not replied to your e-mail at all	0.614	
Cyb4	Used e-mail to say negative things about you that he/she wouldn't say to you face-to-face	0.973	
Cyb5[c]	Ignored a request (e.g. schedule a meeting) that you made through e-mail	0.663	

Notes: [a]Item kept due to theoretical relevance; [b]item dropped due to high cross-loading; [c]item dropped to establish discriminant validity

Table I.
Interpersonal incivility and cyber incivility factor loadings and final scale

greater than the correlations between the constructs. Hence, discriminant validity
was assumed.

To determine the dimensionality and internal consistency of the self-reported variables,
we tested a three-factor model representing the variables in the study using confirmatory
factor analysis in AMOS 22. Appropriate factor fit was evaluated using several traditional
fit indexes, including a chi-square statistic over degrees of freedom (X^2/df), comparative fit
index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error
approximation (RMSEA). Fit index values were compared to recommended criteria for
acceptable fit (i.e. X^2/df < 5, CFI > 0.95, SRMR < 0.08, RMSEA < 0.05; Hu and Bentler, 1999;
Little, 2013). Overall, the three-factor model showed adequate fit (X^2/df $= 374.06$, $p < 0.001$,
CFI $= 0.93$, SRMR $= 0.05$, and RMSEA $= 0.09$), and all indicators loaded on three factors
(standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.78 to 0.91, $p < 0.001$).

Means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations are presented in Table II. A few
things about the sample are worth mentioning. On average, Non-White individuals reported
more perceived discrimination ($n = 108$, $M = 2.43$, SE $= 0.09$), than white individuals
($n = 300$, $M = 2.13$, SE $= 0.04$). This difference, -0.30, BC 95%, IC $[-0.49, -0.10]$ was
significant ($t(-3.02) = 155.72$, $p = 0.00$). This finding indicates that, on average, racial
minorities reported experiencing some level of discrimination at work.

To test the direct effect of race on discrimination and the mediating role of cyber and
interpersonal incivility, mediation analyses were conducted in SPSS 23.0 using PROCESS
extension procedures and models as described by Hayes (2017). Specifically, data were
inputted into PROCESS Model 4 with 95% corrected confidence intervals and 5000 bootstrap
iterations while requesting heteroscedasticity-consistent standard errors. Consistent with the
H1, racial minority status was positively associated with discrimination ($b = 0.27$, $p = 0.02$).
We did find support for *H2*, which indicates that racial minority status was positively
associated with cyber incivility ($b = 0.22$, $p = 0.00$). However, we did not find support for *H2a*
regarding the positive relationship between racial minority status and interpersonal incivility
($b = 0.12$, $p = 0.06$). We found, consistent with *H3*, that the relationship between racial
minority and discrimination was mediated by cyber incivility (point estimate: 0.11, 95% CI
[0.02 to 0.22]). However, the relationship between racial minority and discrimination was not
mediated by interpersonal incivility (point estimate: 0.05, 95% CI $[-0.01$ to 0.12]). Thus, we did
not find support for *H3a* (see Table III) (Figure 1).

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of race on selective incivility
experiences and discrimination. As expected, Non-White individuals reported experiencing
higher rates of discrimination at work compared to white individuals. This finding is
consistent with the EEOC's findings that over 50 percent of black people have reported
experiencing discriminatory behavior in the recent past. Hence, racial minorities are exposed to

Variable	α	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Negative affect	0.74	2.05	1.17	(0.97)						
2. Org tenure	–	2.56	0.95	−0.01						
3. Gender	–	0.48	0.50	0.00	0.03					
4. Race	–	0.25	0.43	0.07	02	−0.11*				
5. Cyber incivility	0.88	1.51	0.67	0.24**	−0.02	−0.13**	0.16**	(0.88)		
6. Interpersonal incivility	0.89	1.65	0.67	0.21**	−0.02	−0.04	0.09**	0.78**	(0.89)	
7. Perceived discrimination	0.88	2.20	0.80	0.23**	−0.07	−0.02	0.17**	0.62**	0.63**	(0.83)

Notes: $n = 408$. Cronbach's α is in the parenthesis along the diagonal; race was coded as White $= 0$ and Non-White $= 1$; Gender was coded as male $= 0$ and female $= 1$. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

Table II.
Means, standard
deviations and
intercorrelations
among
study variables

discrimination at higher rates. Furthermore, they are also more likely to experience incivility within the workplace (Cortina *et al.*, 2011). Consequently, people of color are more prepared to identify interactions, situations and/or actions that are unfavorable due to their race.

Interestingly, racial minorities are more likely to perceive cyber incivility at work, as well as, discrimination. While discrimination has a clear intent behind the behavior, the decided goals behind the different forms of selective incivility are ambiguous. Despite this clear difference, cyber incivility is experienced at higher levels by people of color. These findings support the argument that selective incivility in all its forms may be a modern subtler form of discrimination. The findings of this study extend the research on selective incivility by investigating an additional distinct manifestation of selective incivility. Further, this research underscores a central proposition of Cortina's (2008) theory of selective incivility, such that people of color experience more uncivil treatment compared to non-minorities. More specifically, the current work demonstrates that people of color not only encounter selective interpersonal incivility, in fact they are also confronted with a different type selective mistreatment – selective cyber incivility.

While both cyber and interpersonal incivility have dubious motives, they have disparate impact on the relationship between race and discrimination. This may be due to the different mediums through which each behavior is enacted. Interactions that occur online elicit different behaviors and are interpreted differently than face to face communications (Giumetti *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, there is a lack of nonverbal cues (Byron, 2008) and normal social constraints on behavior are less salient thus making people less inhibited in online interactions (Suler, 2004). Hence, people are more likely to engage in uncivil behavior (Giumetti *et al.*, 2012) and show implicit biases toward minorities.

Regarding interpersonal incivility, the face-to-face nature of this social interaction provides the target with situational context and nonverbal cues to interpret the behavior. In addition, the person who is engaging in interpersonal incivility is able to clarify and correct his/her behavior if the social cues they receive show that their behavior is violating societal and/or organizational norms. This allows racial minorities to decipher between discrimination and general, non-race-based rudeness because of the social cues that provide context and allow

Hypothesized relationships	Standardized coefficient	SE	C.I.	p
H1. Racial minority status→Perceived discrimination	0.27	0.08	[0.09, 0.44]	0.02*
H2. Racial minority status→Cyber incivility	0.22	0.07	[0.06, 0.36]	0.00**
H2a. Racial minority status→Interpersonal incivility	0.12	0.08	[−0.03, 0.28]	0.12
H3. Racial minority status→Cyber incivility→Perceived discrimination	0.11	0.05	[0.02, 0.22]	–
H3a. Racial minority status→ Interpersonal incivility→Perceived discrimination	0.04	0.03	[−0.01, 0.12]	–
Notes: $n = 408$. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$				

Table III.
Results of
process model 4

Figure 1.
Race and incivility
experiences: a
mediation model
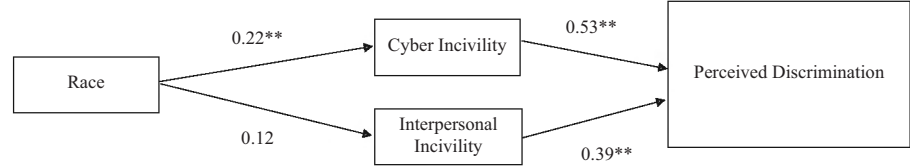
Notes: $n = 408$. **$p < 0.01$

them to determine the extent to which an implicit bias exists. In other words, the ability to interact face-to-face allows a person of color to decipher if someone is just being rude or if they are being discriminatory.

Study limitations and future research
A limitation of the current study was the use of an MTurk sample for the data collection. As noted by Messick (1989), this type of sample may reduce the ability to generalize study results, given that participants self-select to participate in the study. In this way, there are characteristic biases introduced to the sample. However, our study participants were employed adults, characterized by a range of occupations and came from multiple organizations.

Another limitation involves collapsing across racial groups. This is not an uncommon practice in the field, thus our decision to use this method is not completely inconsistent with past research. Although, scholars have suggested that when examining issues related to discrimination, it is best practice to consider each racial/demographic group individually in order to better understand the discrimination experiences that are unique to each group (Avery *et al.*, 2018; Ruggs *et al.*, 2013). However, previous work on discrimination has examined discrimination as either racial minority or non-racial minority, which is consistent with the current study. Often times the decision to collapse race into dichotomous groups is due to the lack racial diversity in a given sample. This practice follows with findings that are generalized across racial minority groups to deduce a shared experience among minorities as a whole. We underscore collapsing across race is a limitation of the current study. Ultimately, we report findings that are meaningful and useful to advance the work on selective incivility.

There are a number of pathways for exploration of incivility that will extend research related to the findings of our study. For example, exploring incivility through the theoretical lenses of intersectionality and double jeopardy may yield interesting findings. More specifically, Crenshaw (1991) argued that African-American women have unique experiences that may be attributed to occupying multiple and intersecting identities of race and gender. Similarly, Berdahl and Moore (2006) argued that individuals occupying multiple marginalized identities, such as women of color, face double jeopardy. That is, the disadvantages they experience are multiplicative due to race and gender. These perspectives suggest a need for nuanced understanding of how discrimination unfolds and manifests in the workplace. Thus, an intersectional analysis, examining the effects of race and gender simultaneously is important for understanding the differences between women of color compared to other groups to name a few.

Based on theories of intersectionality and double jeopardy, for the current study, we probed the dataset for race X gender effects in predicting cyber and interpersonal incivility. We did not find a significant interaction for race X gender on cyber incivility ($b = -0.27$, $p = 0.08$). While we did not find an effect the result is approaching significance. This suggests that there is potentially an effect that could be detected with a larger more diverse sample. Similarly, we did not find a significant interaction for race X gender on interpersonal incivility ($b = -0.17$, $p = 0.29$). Given our non-significant findings, future research should explore the interactive effects of gender and race in relation to incivility and perceived discrimination. Examining gender and race differences may provide insight into whether there are race differences in reports of perceived discrimination via cyber and interpersonal incivility, while giving insight to whether race differences vary by gender as well. Given the stereotypes ascribed to women and double jeopardy that affects personnel of color, the likelihood of being the target of incivility and experiencing discrimination could result in adverse work outcomes.

Our study provided empirical evidence that incivility need not only occur interpersonally (face-to-face) but can, indeed, occur via cyber mechanisms. Future research can extend this current work by examining who is enacting cyber incivility. That is, whether cyber incivility is instigated more by people in positions of power, such as supervisors, and whether men

and women engage in different types of cyber incivility behavior, and the implications of the behavior. This would help us ascertain the source and function of cyber incivility, as well as, its impact arising from discrimination.

The future direction of this study might be to seek to better understand the underlying causes of why people are uncivil and why individuals respond differently. Researchers should explore perceptions by race and/or gender of systemic discrimination within organizations, and how this impacts uncivil behavior within organizations. Furthermore, what organizational policies and procedures contribute to systemic discrimination, and the increase or decrease in levels of interpersonal and/or cyber incivility experienced by people of color. In addition, drilling down on the individual differences of those behaving in an uncivil manner as well as those that experience uncivil behavior could prove productive.

Given the spiral nature of incivility, another area that warrants future study is exploring the contagion effect of incivility. Foulk *et al.* (2016) found that low-intensity behaviors such as rudeness can be contagious. We contend, the ambiguous intention of interpersonal incivility is likely to have a spillover effect to the extent that it becomes enacted as cyber incivility. Thus, future research should consider understanding how an uncivil interpersonal interaction can influence a cyber interaction, whether subsequently, as parallel mechanisms, or as an additive effect. Future research should also consider longitudinal designs for more nuanced views of these relationships, and to investigate these behaviors over a longer period of time (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000).

Practical implications
It is important to study workplace incivility as it can be a precursor to more violent or outward behavior at work (Andersson and Pearson, 1999). Incivility is negative and inappropriate, but it is on the lower end of workplace aggressive behaviors. Thus, this behavior is sometimes not as easy for observers to recognize and may fly under the radar. Furthermore, what one person may perceive to be uncivil behavior may not be viewed the same by others. While creating online communication etiquette policies may help curb cyber incivility, it will not address the underlying implicit biases that may exist. As companies are becoming increasingly diverse and with that comes the complexities of managing a multicultural work environment. Therefore, companies may need to take the next step and provide implicit bias training for employees to understand themselves and others (Burns *et al.*, 2017). A recent study found that training participants to associate Blacks with high (rather than low) motivation, achievement and education, "powerfully altered automatically activated associations; and stereotyping on an implicit measure was reduced substantially by practicing counterstereotypes" (Burns *et al.*, 2017, p. 108). However, while the results of the study showed increased association of Blacks to positive traits, there was no reduction in the application of negative stereotyping of Blacks (e.g. addicts, thieves or criminals).

Based on a short-term cognitive retraining, the findings from Burns *et al.* (2017) suggests that decreasing implicit bias through counterstereotype training may not lead to a decline in stereotype application. Given this finding, researchers should consider whether longitudinal counterstereotpying may be more effective in reducing stereotype application. Strategies for longitudinal training include positive and repeated exposure to out-group members (e.g. Blacks, women of color), which will reduce unconscious bias toward the group (Turner *et al.*, 2007) and will reinforce non-stereotypic associations and stereotypic responses. Further, long-term training research involving prolonged everyday experiences has practical importance (Lai *et al.*, 2016). For example, training that been successful in reducing implicit bias and stereotypes include, taking a semester-long class on prejudice and intergroup conflict (Rudman *et al.*, 2001), having a college roommate who is of a different race (Shook and Fazio, 2008) to name a few. These examples of field investigations best demonstrate how implicit associations are likely to change in real-world settings.

Additionally, the establishment of strong organizational norms for "civil" workplace behavior may be necessary. This will send a clear message to employees about what is expected of them regarding their interpersonal behavior toward others within the organization. In addition, the amount of incivility allowed within an organization is generally observed between employees and how they interact with one another. The cycle of experienced incivility and perpetrated incivility between employees can trickle out to other organizational relationships. Thus, eventually, this type of behavior could impact suppliers, customers or other key business relationships. As discovered, this negative behavior can influence the perception of discrimination that is experienced. This could ultimately result in counterproductive outcomes that influence the efficiency and effectiveness of organizations.

Conclusion
Our study, based on our review of the literature, provides the first test of the relationship between race and two forms of incivility. By investigating interpersonal and cyber incivility, we sought out to explore the ways in which people of color experience selective incivility. By doing so, we unpack how selective incivility occurs outside the lines of direct interpersonal interaction but also through e-mail. We are optimistic that our findings serve as a catalyst for extending research on selective incivility to include additional cyber modes of interaction and to further our understanding of how people of color perceive incivility as a manifestation of modern discrimination.

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