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Assessing the Connection Between Students' Justice Experience and Perceptions of Faculty Incivility in Higher Education

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Introduction

Incivility is defined as an interpersonal misconduct involving disregard for others and a violation of norms of respect (Andersson and Pearson 1999). This phenomenon has been extensively investigated in workplaces (Pearson et al. 2000; Pearson and Porath 2005). However, only a few studies have focused their attention on the academic setting, investigating both student and faculty general incivilities (Bjorklund and Rehling 2010; Marchiondo et al. 2010).

While previous studies' theoretical framework was mainly informed by organizational and psychosocial theories (Pearson et al. 2000; Pearson and Porath 2005), this study suggests viewing incivility through the lens of justice psychology, which examines individual justice concerns (Mikula 2005). According to this theory, in order to understand psychological processes, individual experiences should be considered alongside objective environmental conditions (Bronfenbrenner 1977). Drawing on justice psychology, the way students intuitive percept, process and evaluate their teachers' just behavior is seen as a key component of several learning-setting-specific constructs (Taylor 1962).

In addition, based on the assumption that the processing of environmental stimuli depends on individual-level factors (Warr and Knapper 1968), the role of the belief in a just world (BJW) will be also addressed. The BJW (Lerner 1965) has been recently shown as a major personal predictor of students' experience of their teachers' just behavior (Alt 2014a, b; Peter and Dalbert 2010). The BJW enables the individuals interpreting the events of their lives in a meaningful way. Thus, they are more inclined to feel that others treat them justly, and in the

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context of the classroom setting—they tend to evaluate their teachers' behavior towards them personally to be just.

Because justice is seen as a key component in evaluating the students' experience of their psychosocial learning environment, this study main hypothesis is that students' positive evaluation of their teachers' just behavior, informed by their personal BJW, will be negatively connected to the perception of their teachers' behavior as uncivil.

The current study thus attempts at providing initial empirical information about the association between students' individual justice experience and experiences of incivility, specifically, faculty incivility (FI). In order to achieve this aim, a mix-method approach was applied to map features of FI, construct and validate a new scale for measuring these features, for the first time, in higher education settings. Moreover, the psychological constructs of teachers' just behavior and BJW have been chosen as criterion variables in order to further assess construct validity of the new scale, and to give further insights into possible associations between the examined constructs.

Theoretical Framework

Faculty Incivility

Incivility has been defined by Andersson and Pearson (1999, p. 455) as "acting with disregard for others in the workplace in violation of workplace norms of respect. Workplace norms are norms of the community of which one is part while at work, consisting of basic moral standards and others that have arisen out of the tradition of that community".

While ideal moral standards may be upheld in both social and psychological contexts of work environments (Motowildo et al. 1997; Organ 1988, 1997; Phillips and Smith 2003), norms of disrespect, rudeness and lack of consideration towards others in work environments are generally reflected through the concept of incivility (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Pearson and Porath 2005; Porath and Erez 2007).

Incivility is considered by the majority of researchers to be a subtle form of interpersonal misconduct, compared with other high-intensity behaviors, such as bullying or aggression (Andersson and Pearson 1999), yet it is more prevalent in nature. Evidence of its pervasiveness can be found in a report published recently by the Israeli Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor (Peperman and Bar-Zuri 2012). In a survey conducted among 1120 Israeli workers, 55.4 % reported being exposed to different levels of interpersonal misconduct. Although their report does not distinguish between different manifestations of interpersonal misconduct, it is also clear in light of other data that incivility constitutes a social and organizational challenge (Pearson et al. 2000; Pearson and Porath 2005).

Recently, incivility researchers have embraced a wider perspective by expanding their studies, beyond the classic dyadic relationship between peers and managers, to include customers such as patients and direct care staff in hospital settings (Hutton and Gates 2008). Moreover, as academic institutes share some characteristics with organizations (Marchiondo et al. 2010), other researchers have shifted the focus of incivility to the academic setting, investigating both student and faculty incivilities (Caza and Cortina 2007; Chory-Assad and Paulsel 2004; Clark 2008b; Marchiondo et al. 2010).

Only a handful of studies have provided definitions of incivility in the academic arena. Berger (2000) defined incivility as a "speech or action that is disrespectful or rude" (p. 446).

While Berger focused on the characteristics of incivility, Feldmann (2001) emphasized the outcome of the uncivil encounter and defined it as "any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere" (p. 137). These two broad definitions permit the inclusion of almost any form of mistreatment under the construct of academic incivility. Under such a wide theoretical umbrella, Clark (2008b) included a variety of uncivil acts ranging from misuse of cell-phones to manifestations of physical harm. In contrast, other researchers suggested a narrower definition, based on Andersson and Pearson's (1999) organizational incivility definition, addressing only specific instantiations of academic incivilities, such as insults, disrespectful remarks, hostile looks or sneers (Caza and Cortina 2007).

Academic incivility researchers have generally grouped incivilities into two categories. The first category includes serious incivilities, such as personal comments or verbal attacks against faculty or classmates; the second category pertains to more subtle incivilities, such as sleeping in class (Knepp 2012). These two categories were previously identified by Berger (2000), who classified them as passive and active incivilities. Nevertheless, it should be pointed that to date, there has been no empirical evidence in the academic incivility literature for the existence of these dimensions; neither is there any measurement scale aimed at validating this two-facet construct.

While the majority of academic incivility studies have focused on uncivil encounters perpetrated by students (AlKandari 2011; Swinney et al. 2010; Bjorklund and Rehling 2010), few have dealt with uncivil behaviors conducted by both faculty members and students (Caza and Cortina 2007) or by faculty members only (Marchiondo et al. 2010). The most known survey used to measure incivilities in the academic field is the incivility in nursing education survey (INE), which is oriented towards testing uncivil behaviors in nursing education (Clark et al. 2009). The INE includes both qualitative and quantitative sections aimed at measuring both faculty and student uncivil behaviors. The student incivility section consists of three distinct dimensions: Classroom disruptive behaviors, disrespect towards others, and general disinterest in class. The faculty incivility section consists of three different dimensions: General uncivil behaviors such as exerting superiority over others; classroom management issues such as arriving late to class; and flexibility issues (e.g., deviating from a course syllabus). However, these profound dimensions, neither reflect nor corroborate the active (serious) vs. passive (less serious or subtle) theoretical academic incivility structure (Berger 2000; Knepp 2012).

Additional gaps between theory and empirical research can be found in previous attempts at mapping and measuring academic incivility. First, the majority of studies have focused on incivility mainly in nursing education programs (Clark 2008a, b; Marchiondo et al. 2010). Only a few researchers have tested incivility in diverse programs. For example, Swinney et al. (2010) compared the perceptions of accounting faculty to the perceptions of cross-disciplinary faculty, relating to both the definition of student actions as incivility and the occurrence of incivility. Second, to the authors' knowledge, most of the studies concerning academic incivility have been qualitative in nature (Clark 2007, 2008a), descriptive (Clark 2008b; Clark et al. 2013) or theoretical (Berger 2000; Feldmann 2001). Only a few have tested the relationship between incivility and its outcomes using a quantitative methodology as in the case of Caza and Cortina (2007). In their study structural equation analyses were used to measure the connections between targets' perceptions of incivility, psychological distress, dissatisfaction with and disengagement from the academic institution, and performance decline.

Experience of Teachers' Justice

Peter and Dalbert (2010) contend that the individual perception of the teachers' just (hereinafter: TJ) behavior could act as a potential personal predictor of the class climate experience. The connection between the TJ factor and the perceived class climate has been examined for the first time in Peter and Dalbert's study on academic-track students from secondary schools in Germany. Class climate was assessed in terms of two second-order dimensions: Classroom climate (e.g., willingness to learn) and student climate (e.g., community). Results of multilevel analyses have confirmed their hypothesis by showing that students who evaluated their teachers' behavior towards them personally as just have also evaluated the class climate more positively. In the field of higher education, Alt (2014a) assessed the connection between the perception of the learning environment, tendency towards academic cheating neutralization and individual experience of teachers' just behavior. Path analysis results have shown that students who evaluated their teachers' behavior towards them personally as just, held a more positive evaluation of the learning environment, and were less inclined towards academic cheating neutralization. As uncivil behavior is associated with the perceived learning environment (Feldmann 2001), it seems worthwhile to examine the relationship between perceptions of TJ and FI.

The Belief in a Just World

Information processing models emphasize on personal perceptual processes as key features of the processing of environmental stimuli (e.g., Warr and Knapper 1968). Drawing on this theory, investigating the role of personality characteristics, like the belief in a just world (BJW), is crucial to understand the individual's perception of his/her experiences.

The BJW has been shown as a major predictor of students' experience of their TJ behavior and the class climate (Alt 2014a, b; Peter and Dalbert 2010). Lerner (1965) posits that people need to believe in a just world where people generally get what they deserve and deserve what they get. This belief allows people to perceive their surroundings as stable and orderly. Therefore, the BJW compels individuals to behave justly in order to maintain a just world. Lerner (1977, 1980) maintains that the individual subjectively considers whether his or her behavior has been paid off. An important source for such consideration is the perceived consequences of social behaviors. If people who behaved according to the social normative expectations are rewarded with a good fortune as perceived by the observer, and bad things happen to people who violated those norms, the individual will have 'evidence' that the world is just, and will be motivated to act in an honest way.

Dalbert (2001) indicates three important adaptive functions of the BJW: First, the BJW functions as a mechanism which compels the individuals to behave justly, and to be motivated to achieve their goals by just means (Hafer 2000). Second, high believers in a just world tend to place more trust in others (Dzuka and Dalbert 2007). Last function of the BJW is the *assimilation*, which refers to the BJW ability to help individuals interpreting the events of their life in a meaningful way and thus to evaluate personal experiences as more just (Peter and Dalbert 2010).

In the field of school environments, Peter and Dalbert (2010) found that students with a strong BJW tended to evaluate their teachers' behavior towards them personally to be more just and the climate of their class to be more positive. Furthermore, the experience of TJ partly mediated the BJW's impact on the climate evaluations. Thus, a strong BJW seems to function as a personal resource for students, explaining significant parts of their individual experiences of both TJ and class climate at school.

With regard to higher education settings, Alt (2014a) found that personal BJW has a potential to enhance positive perceptions of the learning environment mainly through positive experiences of the TJ behavior. However, the connection between BJW, TJ behavior and the perceived interpersonal misconduct in higher education settings is yet to be explored.

The Present Study

Based on the literature presented above, the first aim of this study is mapping features of actual FI features as perceived by students, constructing and validating a new scale for measuring those features. Second aim is to comprehensively assess perceived FI as a function of an individual experience of the TJ behavior. In this context, the personal BJW potential in enhancing the experienced TJ behavior will be assessed. The following research hypotheses for the second aim were formulated as:

(*H1*) Students' evaluation of their teachers' behavior towards them personally to be just will be negatively connected to their FI perception. Based on the theory surveyed above, an effort will be made to assess this connection with regard to active and passive FI features.

(*H2*) Due to its importance in explaining assimilation processes, the students' personal BJW is expected to positively predict the experienced TJ behavior.

Background variables such as gender, age and socio-economic status (SES), will be also addressed in this research to examine their potential effect on the measured variables. Figure 1 demonstrates the theoretical structure of the proposed framework.

Method

First Research Aim

A mixed qualitative and quantitative research method, applied in two phases, was used to address the first research aim. Creswell (2007) emphasized the superiority of a

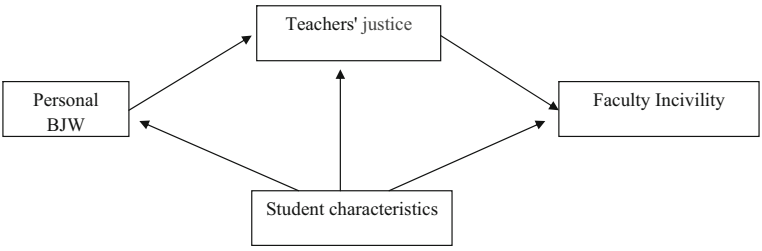

Fig. 1 Model 1. The theoretical structure of the proposed framework

mixed-method research design in exploratory research. This method builds upon the synergy that exists between the qualitative-quantitative research continuum, thus allowing to reinforce construct validity and to expand the understanding of an explored phenomenon.

Phase 1 - Participants, Material Gathering and Analysis Procedure

The first phase was aimed at gathering and analyzing FI as described by students, in order to learn about actual instantiations of this theoretical concept. This phase used the inductive approach to analyze the gathered materials in order to identify meaningful categories (Merton 1968; Strauss 1987).

Phase 1 included 100 undergraduate third-year social-science students from one major college in Israel, (20 % male students 80 % female students). Participants were asked to describe an incivility incident, they were involved in or witnessed in college. The students' observations were analyzed by two raters; all are experts in the research area of incivility and moral education. Inter-rater Cohen's Kappa (k) reliability (Cohen 1960), which is commonly assessed in psychological research, was used. The raters were asked to categorize the students' observation reports. The k values were interpreted as follows, $k<0.20$ poor agreement; $0.21<k<0.40$ fair agreement; $0.41<k<0.60$ moderate agreement; $0.61<k<0.80$ good agreement; $0.81<k<1.00$ very good agreement. Results of $0.61<k<1$ were considered acceptable for the purposes of the current study. The students' descriptions were formulated as short items by the experts.

Phase 2: Participants and Analysis Procedure

Phase 2 was used to assess construct validity and internal consistency of the developed questionnaire (hereinafter*:* The Perceived Faculty Incivility Scale [PFIS]). A principal component analysis followed by a Varimax rotation was used to corroborate the stability of the *PFIS* structure, as found in Phase 1 (eigenvalue>1.00; item loadings>.30).

Data for the analysis were gathered from 744 undergraduate students (17.7 % males and 82.3 % females) from two major colleges located in the Northern Galilee: 40.4 % from college A, and 59.6 % from college B, of whom 39.6 % were Jewish students, 12.1 % Christian students, 37.6 % Muslim students, and 10.7 % Druze students, with a mean age of 24.4 (SD=4.9) years. The participants' distribution regarding the year of study was: 18 % first-year students, 55 % second-year students and 27 % third-year students. Based on the report of The Central Bureau of Statistics (2011) and The Council for Higher Education (2009) in Israel, the gender and ethnicity breakdown of Northern Galilee college students, majoring mainly in social science studies, is 20 % males and 80 % females of whom 40 % Jews, 55 % Muslims, and 5 % belonging to other religions, thus the current study's sample represents, to some extent, the gender and ethnicity breakdown of regional colleges located in the Northern Galilee. The participants' faculty enrollment breakdown was as follows: Education – 51 %, Criminology – 8 %, Sociology – 11 %, Management - 10 %, Economics – 11 %, Behavioral Sciences – 1 %, Political Sciences – 3 %, Engineering – 2 %, Tourism – 2 % and Communication – 1 %.

Second Research Aim

In order to test the postulated connections between students' FI perceptions, perceived TJ behavior and personal BJW, the following additional scales were used. The information was gathered from the above-described 744-student sample.

Student Characteristics

Data were gathered using a questionnaire aimed at assessing the student's cultural group, gender, age, socioeconomic status, year of study and current education achievements. Students' socioeconomic status (SES) was assessed by the father's educational attainment (FEA) and the mother's educational attainment (MEA), both defined on a six-level scale: 0 = *lack of education*, 1 = *elementary school*, 2 = *high school*, 3 = *BA degree*, 4 = *MA degree*, 5 = *doctoral degree*. Another SES factor was the participants' report on their economic condition (EC), defined on a six-level scale: from 1 = *extremely difficult* to 6 = *comfortable, no financial worries*. Finally, students' current education achievements were measured by their self-reported grade point average (GPA).

The Personal Belief in a Just World Scale

This scale was designed by Dalbert (1999) to capture the intuitive conviction that, overall, events in one's life are just. This six-point Likert-style format scale (from 1 = *I totally disagree* to 6 = *I totally agree*) consisted of seven items, for example, 'I am usually treated fairly' (Overall Cronbach's alpha for seven items equals to .91).

The Teachers' Justice Scale

This scale (Dalbert and Stoeber 2002) is used to measure adolescent students' perception of their teachers' just behavior towards them personally. This six-point Likert-style format scale (from 1 = *I totally disagree* to 6 = *I totally agree*) originally included 10 items, for example, 'My teachers generally treat me fairly'. In this study, three items which are less related to college settings (e.g., 'My grades are often based on my behavior rather than on my achievements'), have been excluded from the original 10-item questionnaire. (Overall Cronbach's alpha for seven items equals to .95).

This study used the Hebrew version of the questionnaires (Alt 2014a).

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered by research assistants to the participants in the classroom in which they studied without the instructor being present. The purpose of the study was explained as examining students' perception of their teachers. Prior to obtaining participants' consent it was specified that the questionnaire was anonymous and that no pressure would be applied should they choose to return the questionnaire unfilled or incomplete. The *PFIS* was counterbalanced for protection against order effects. Background items were given last. Debriefing information was sent to the participants on the completion of the study via the academic institutions' websites and

face-to-face presentations, in which they could raise questions. Finally, participants were assured that no specific identifying information about the courses would be processed.

Findings

First Research Aim

Phase 1. Qualitative Study Results

This phase was aimed at gathering and analyzing FI experiences as perceived by students. Four meaningful categories have emerged from the analysis:

1. Passive FI towards a group of students, for example, ignoring students' questions during lectures.
2. Passive FI towards an individual refers to teachers being unavailable to the student or inattentive to his/her problems.
3. Active FI towards a group of students, for example, the teacher expresses anger in response to students who express difficulties in following or understanding a lecture.
4. Active FI towards an individual refers to activities, such as offensive comments used by the teacher towards a student.

In order to develop a questionnaire to assess FI as perceived by students, the students' descriptions were formulated as short items. For example, the following description of incivility was phrased as "the teacher yells at you as a response to misunderstanding" (item 24 *active incivility,* as shown in Table 1):

> During class, we were asked to present our essays. When I started reading it, the teacher shouted at me in front of the class. She claimed that I have failed to understand the basic instructions on how to prepare the essay. I was insulted. As I had been diagnosed with ADHD, I might not have heard properly or paid enough attention to the instructions. I was humiliated by this aggressive woman. I left the class feeling sick at heart.

The participants were asked to report on the frequency of FI occurrences. Each item was given a Likert-type score ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *nearly always*. Consequently, a 27-item scale was submitted to 30 undergraduate students in order to assess the clarity of the items; however no changes were made because the pilot group participants reported no problems regarding the clarity of the scale's items. The scale items were originally generated in Hebrew, and were translated into English, and back-translated by professional editors, for the purpose of this paper.

Phase 2

The principal component analysis solution accounted for 42.22 % of the variance and yielded only two categories: *Passive incivility* and *active incivility*, thus the *group* vs. *individual* distinction in each of these factors was not corroborated as expected from the content analysis results (Phase 1). Six items were excluded from the scale (13, 15, 21, 22, 23, and 26) as

Table 1 The PFIS: factors, item descriptions and item loadings

Item description	Factor	
	Active FI Factor I	Passive FI Factor II
The teacher, 25. Mocks you as a response to your misunderstanding of the learning material	**.786**	
27. Talks to students derogatively during lectures	**.743**	
20. Addresses you with offensive personal comments	**.729**	
24. Yells at you as a response to misunderstanding	**.727**	
16. Makes offensive inclusions towards students during lectures	**.702**	
17. Expresses anger in response to students showing misunderstandings during a lecture	**.694**	
18. Is angry at you as a response to your misunderstanding of the learning material	**.671**	
23. Expresses reluctance to teach	.652	
15. Ignores your questions	.643	
19. Answers students rudely during lectures	**.631**	
21. Does not deal with the issues you raise	.626	
11. Addresses you derogatively	**.621**	
26. Is late to a personal meeting he/she sets with you	.572	
12. Makes demeaning remarks towards students who express difficulties understanding the learning material, during lectures	**.572**	
14. Uses offensive personal comments concerning your appearance	**.547**	
22. Regularly ignores your messages (e.g., email messages)	.516	
9. Discriminates students during lectures	**.474**	.301
13. Arrives in extreme lateness to his/her lectures (over 15 min lateness)	.409	
3. Ignores students' applications during lectures		**.700**
7. Ignores students' questions during lectures	.321	**.627**
2. Uses his/her personal cellular phone during lectures (e.g., answers phone calls/messages, reads or sends text messages)		**.613**
6. Ignores your personal scholastic difficulties		**.596**
5. Is not available for you during reception hours		**.565**
8. Gives you a negative personal feedback in an offending manner	**.430**	.497
4. Regularly dismisses class long before the end of the lesson		**.468**
1. Ignores your personal hardships (such as: illness or personal problems within the family)		**.440**
10. Arrives unprepared to his/her lectures	.371	**.395**

Note: Bold numbers represent items included in each factor

presented in Table 1. These items demonstrate salient factor loadings, however, based on the content analysis (Phase 1), their contents pertinent to the opposite realm of content, for example "the teacher expresses reluctance to teach" or "the teacher ignores your questions" refer to *passive incivility*, yet were shown to be related to the *active incivility* factor. Taken together, Factor I contained 13 items and appeared to represent *active incivility* (Cronbach's alpha equals to .90). Factor II contained eight items pertaining to *passive incivility* (Cronbach's alpha equals to .73).

Table 1 presents the *PFIS* factors, item descriptions (as derived from Phase 2) and item loadings. Convergent validity has been shown by a statistically significant positive Bivariate

correlation result between the *passive* and *active* sub-factors (r=.550, p<.01). The generally moderate correlation between the dimensions suggests that the factors are, to some extent, independent each from the other. A repeated-measures analysis indicated a significant difference between the factors ($F_{(1,\ 743)}$=423.70, p<.001, η_p^2=.363). The *passive incivility* mean score (M=1.95, SD=0.56) was significantly higher than the *active incivility* mean result (M=1.55, SD=0.58).

Second Research Aim

Structural equation modeling (SEM) (Bentler 2006) was employed to test the research hypotheses, and to further assess the construct validity of the *PFIS*, using a confirmatory factor analysis. Data used for the SEM were analyzed with the maximum likelihood method. Three fit indices were computed in order to evaluate the model fit: $\chi^2(df)$, (p>.05), *CFI* (>0.9), and *RMSEA* (<0.08).

The structural model (Fig. 2) refers to the combined measurement and path models. The measurement model includes the following factors: The faculty incivility (FI) general latent factor accompanied by two sub-factors: The active incivility latent variable with 13 observed variables, and the passive incivility latent variable with eight observed variables.

The path model was constructed as follows: Paths were specified between the latent factors of personal BJW, TJ and three student characteristic variables: GPA, EC and Cultural group (*Jewish students* = 1, *Non-Jewish students* = 2). The latter dummy variable was created due to insignificant differences between the non-Jewish groups (Muslim, Christian, and Druze) on the three dependent variables. The three student characteristic variables were entered into the analysis based on three regression analyses, in which the general FI, personal BJW, and TJ factors were entered as dependent variables (separately), and all the following student characteristic variables were entered to the analyses as independent variables: The student's cultural group, gender, age, year of study, FEA, MEA, EC, and GPA. The goodness of fit of the data to the model yielded to sufficient fit results (χ^2=2116.19, df=654, p=.000; CFI=.92; RMSEA=.05).

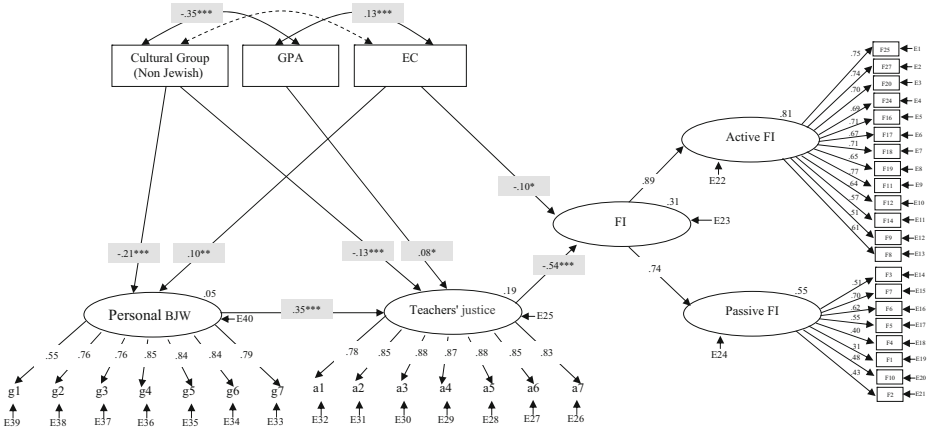

Fig. 2 The structural model, with standardised parameter estimates (N=744). Note: *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001. Insignificant coefficients are shown as dotted lines

The results showed a positive (low) significant coefficient between the personal BJW and TJ factors ($\beta=.35$, $p<.001$) and a negative (moderate) significant coefficient between the TJ and FI variables ($\beta=-.54$, $p<.001$).

Regarding the student characteristic variables, very low coefficient results were indicated. The non-Jewish group was negatively connected to the personal BJW ($\beta=-.21$, $p<.001$) and to the TJ ($\beta=-.13$, $p<.001$) variables. A positive low connection was indicated between the variables of GPA and TJ ($\beta=.08$, $p<.05$). Finally, the EC variable was positively connected to the personal BJW factor and negatively related to the FI variable; both coefficients were significant and low ($\beta=\pm.10$, $p<.05$).

The student characteristic variables together explained 1 %–5 % of the factors' variance. The personal BJW factor explained 18 % of the TJ factor variance, which in turn explained 30 % of the teachers' incivility variable variance.

An additional SEM analysis indicated that the connection between the TJ variable and the active FI sub-factor ($\beta=-.50$, $p<.001$) is, to some extent, higher than the connection found between the TJ variable and the passive FI sub-factor ($\beta=-.41$, $p<.001$) ($\chi^2=2301.89$ $df=655$, $p=.000$; CFI=.91; RMSEA=.05).

Discussion

The overarching goal of this study was to map features of FI as perceived by students, and to construct and validate a new scale for measuring those features. An additional goal was to measure the connections between FI features and two criterion variables of personal BJW and experienced TJ behavior, in order to further assess construct validity of the new scale.

First Research Aim

A mix-method approach was applied to construct and validate a new scale for measuring FI. The qualitative results foregrounded four categories: (1) Passive FI towards a group of students, (2) passive FI towards an individual (3) active FI towards a group of students, and (4) active FI towards an individual. This qualitative analysis was followed by an exploratory factor analysis, which revealed only two dimensions of passive and active FI. This result is consistent with the previous theoretical classification of passive vs. active incivility (Berger 2000; Knepp 2012), and elaborates the body of research by empirically testing the existence of these theoretical dimensions regarding FI.

Nonetheless, the analysis has failed corroborating the four-dimension solution of the qualitative research result. A plausible explanation could be related to power differences between students and lecturers, especially in an uncivil climate. In such climate the power distance between lecturers and students is salient, therefore, it is possible that students could develop a horizontal solidarity with their classmates. Fajak and Haslam (1998) support this claim by stating that whenever the power distance among different status holders is prominent, solidarity among the powerless individuals is more likely to be generated and a sense of identification between the powerless individuals could emerge. Thus, it may be inferred that a student who is exposed to an uncivil behavior could tend perceiving it as a threat to his/her social identity, even when the uncivil behavior was not specifically directed towards him/her. That could mean that class members might conceive personal and collective uncivil behaviors in a close manner. Under such circumstances, it is plausible to assume that incivilities towards

the individual and incivilities towards the collective could pertain to a single underlying measurement construct (dimension) that accounts for variation in examinees' responses, as shown in the present study.

Second Research Aim

The second aim of the study was to empirically assess the theoretical model. It was hypothesized that students' personal BJW will predict the experienced TJ behavior, which in turn will be negatively connected to the perceived FI.

Path model results have corroborated the hypothesized connection, showing that students who evaluated their teachers' behavior towards them personally as just, have reported on less uncivil occurrences in the classroom. The personal BJW variable connection to the perceived FI was mediated by the TJ behavior factor.

Additional path results showed that the TJ variable is more negatively associated with the active FI sub-factor compared with the passive FI sub-factor. This could be explained by the previous indicated distinction between active (serious) and passive (subtle) incivilities (Knepp 2012). It could be inferred that students who evaluate their teachers' behavior towards them personally as just are less inclined to report on serious and intensive uncivil behavior of their teachers.

Regarding the BJW, this personal resource seems to enhance TJ experiences, according to the empirical model tested in this study. An explanation for this finding could be related to the assimilation function of the BJW. Students, who strongly endorsed personal BJW, were more able to interpret the social events occurred in their classes in a meaningful way, thus were inclined to evaluate their teachers' behavior towards them personally as just (Dalbert and Stoeber 2006), and consequently perceived their teachers' behavior as less uncivil.

Limitations, Implications and Future Directions

Some limitations of the present investigation and further directions for future research must be noted. First, this study was conducted in a single country and was limited to two regional colleges; therefore, the results cannot necessarily be generalized to students of other regions. Cross-cultural validation of the results is needed to substantiate these findings.

Second limitation concerns SEM analysis and the cross-sectional nature of the data which can prevent definitive statements about causality. Definitive proof of mediation will also require longitudinal data (Cole and Maxwell 2003). A longitudinal research rather than a cross-sectional design will be more suitable to sort out the connections between justice experiences and evaluations of academic incivility as experienced over time.

Third shortcoming is that all of our measures were self-report. Future research should employ diverse methods in assessing this research constructs, including different approaches to survey measurement as well as experimental and qualitative techniques. A triangulating methodological approach can lend more confidence to this study's findings.

Fourth, future research should also consider expanding the model tested here with additional variables that could be related to the perception of the teacher behavior, such as students' adjustment to college life and well-being (Brady-Amoon and Fuertes 2011).

Despite its limitations, the present study provides some initial evidence indicating that the individual perception of the TJ behavior, informed by personal BJW, can explain perceptions

of FI in higher education settings. Justice seems to be a valuable predictor of the students' experience of their learning environment in accordance with Taylor's (1962) theory.

From a methodological point of view, while previously used measures of FI, mainly focused on nursing education, have suffered from practical and theoretical limitations, this study presents a generic measure of FI. This novel scale is based on the theoretical distinction between passive and active incivilities, and aimed at assessing FI in various higher education settings. This study also highlights the advantages of using a mix-method approach in an exploratory educational research and its utility for theory development, as well as construction of scales.

From a theoretical point of view, this study elaborates on the information processing models by showing how personal perceptual processes could play as key features of the processing of environmental stimuli regarding FI in higher education settings.

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