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An Eye for an Eye? A Meta-Analysis of Negative Reciprocity in Organizations

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Most models of negative workplace behaviors (NWB) are individual in nature, focusing on individual attitudes (e.g., satisfaction) and general workplace perceptions (e.g., procedural justice) that motivate NWB. Less commonly considered are explorations of relationally based negative workplace behaviors—how NWB from Party A is related to reciprocation of NWB from Party B. Based on 2 competing conceptualizations in the literature, that behavior is reciprocated "in-kind" in an eye for an eye exchange or that behavior tends to escalate or spiral over time, we develop a framework for negative reciprocity that considers NWB in terms of severity, activity, and target. This framework addresses (a) whether Party A's NWB is associated with behavior of a similar or greater level (i.e., activity and severity) from Party B; and (b) whether Party B's reciprocating behavior is directed back at Party A (i.e., direct) or transferred onto others (i.e., displaced). We meta-analytically test these relationships with 246 independent samples (N = 96,930) and find strongest support for relationships indicating that NWB from Party A is largely returned in-kind, followed closely by relationships indicative of escalation. We also found that as the frequency of Party A's NWB increases, so too does the frequency of reciprocity behavior of equal levels. Surprisingly, differences related to the target of the behavior as well as differences based on whether the data were cross-sectional or longitudinal were generally negligible.

Keywords: negative workplace behaviors, negative reciprocity, social exchange theory, meta-analysis

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In the past two decades, widespread attention has been devoted to the dark side of employee behavior. Employees engage in a multitude of negative behaviors, such as bullying, harassment, and counterproductive work behavior, that reduce employee productivity and harm organizational culture (Dunlop & Lee, 2004; Griffin, O'Leary-Kelly, & Collins, 1998; Vardi & Wiener, 1996). These deleterious effects have driven researchers to devote considerable effort to examining antecedents and consequences of dysfunctional or negative behavior in the workplace, hereafter referred to as negative workplace behavior (NWB; Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017). Multiple theoretical frameworks articulate mechanisms through which individual and attitudinal variables relate to different types of NWB (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003; Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008; Martinko, Gundlach, & Douglas, 2002; Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005; Spector & Fox, 2005; Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone, & Duffy, 2008). However, these paradigms are largely individually based in that they focus on the traits, attitudes, and experiences relating to a focal individual's NWB.

Alternative relationally based theories concentrate on behavioral exchange where one's negative workplace behavior is linked to another's negative response (e.g., incivility spirals, Andersson & Pearson, 1999; revenge/retaliation, Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001, 2006; Folger & Skarlicki, 2005; Lian, Brown, et al., 2014). These relational, or social interactionist, perspectives focus on negative behavior reciprocated between individuals; here, the logic is that NWB often involves and affects multiple parties and is best

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understood by outlining the social context in which it occurs. Yet, the literature contains conflicting ideas about the shape these exchanges take. On one hand, foundational texts on negative reciprocity rest on the idea of "an eye for an eye," that negative behavior will be returned in-kind (e.g., Gouldner, 1960; Helm, Bonoma, & Tedeschi, 1972). The primary rationale is that equity concerns exert a powerful force on human decision-making (e.g., Bolton & Ockenfels, 2000; Fehr & Schmidt, 1999), such that the behavior exchanged should be as similar as possible to the initiating action (i.e., homeomorphic reciprocity; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Lyons & Scott, 2012). On the other hand, some theoretical frameworks propose that negative behaviors escalate in intensity, or spiral, over time (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Baron & Neuman, 1996; Folger & Skarlicki, 1998; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a). Here, the primary rationale is that the accumulation of lower-intensity negative events lead to a "tipping point" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) or the buildup of "interpersonal heat" (Folger & Skarlicki, 1998) that eventually results in more intense retaliatory behavior. The degree to which each of these approaches accurately describes exchanges of negative workplace behaviors has not, to our knowledge, been formally tested, and critical questions remain with regard to how exchanges of negative behavior between individuals in the workplace differ with regard to their valence (i.e., severity and activity) and targets.

The purpose of this article is to employ a relational perspective (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Aquino et al., 2001; Folger & Skarlicki, 2005; Gouldner, 1960) in conducting a comprehensive meta-analysis of the most widespread constructs measuring NWB. More specifically, our focus is on behavioral exchanges of NWB *between* individuals in interpersonal relationships. Although multiple meta-analyses have examined the relationship between various forms of NWB (e.g., Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Carpenter & Berry, 2017; Chan, Lam, Chow, & Cheung, 2008; Dalal, 2005; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007), conclusions about the nature of the relationship of NWB explicitly between individuals in behavioral exchanges are somewhat limited (cf. Hershcovis & Barling, 2010b, and meta-analyses on abusive supervision, e.g., Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017; Zhang & Liao, 2015). In other words, the estimates may not generalize because they are based on effect sizes drawn from both *intra*personal and *inter*personal relationships. For example, the corrected value of the relationship between counterproductive work behavior directed at individuals and counterproductive work behavior directed at the organization has been estimated to be between .60 to .70 ($\rho = .62$ Berry et al., 2007; $\rho = .70$ Dalal, 2005), yet it is unclear whether this value reflects the relationship for a single individual engaging in both behaviors (i.e., *intra*personal relationship), or the relationship for different individuals engaging in each behavior separately (i.e., *inter*personal relationship). The current meta-analysis focuses exclusively on interpersonal exchange of NWB, or negative behaviors between separate individuals.

The strength of this relational approach is that it enables us to test conflicting theoretical rationales for whether negative behavior from one individual, Party A, is returned with negative behavior of equal or greater valence from another individual, Party B. To do so, we categorize NWB and negative reciprocity constructs on a number of key dimensions commonly used to distinguish forms of negative behavior in the workplace. We first examine the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity in terms of valence as operationalized by (a) the severity of the behavior and (b) how active as opposed to how passive the behavior is. We define severity across three categories: minor, moderate, severe; and activity across three categories: passive, balanced, active. We then go on to explore the target of the negative reciprocity, whether it is directly reciprocated or displaced onto other targets. This evidence is necessary in determining whether individuals do, in fact, respond with an eye for an eye, or whether NWB will beget a more intense response, making spirals of negative exchanges more likely. In sum, this study provides a necessary clarification regarding exchanges of NWB between individuals and provides important implications for future measurement and theoretical understanding of the relational contexts in which individuals make decisions to enact or reciprocate NWB.

The overarching framework used to define relational contexts for negative reciprocity in the present paper is social exchange theory, which describes various social and relational contexts that govern interpersonal transactions or exchanges (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Rupp, 2008; Emerson, 1976). Below we discuss the two key components of these exchanges, NWB (from Party A) and negative reciprocation (from Party B), followed by our specific research questions.

NWB and Negative Reciprocity in Organizations

We define NWB as behaviors which breach wider societal standards for acceptable behavior and harm the organization, its members, or both (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; LaGrange, Ferraro, & Supancic, 1992; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). This broad definition captures a wide range of negative behaviors of varying intensity ranging from incivility (e.g., Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001) to workplace violence (e.g., Rogers & Kelloway, 1997). Moreover, the breadth of the definition is critical in the current framework because it allows us to differentiate and contrast valence (i.e., severity and activity) in the exchange of NWB between individuals. We address and define these distinctions further in the section on the dimensions of NWB below.

According to the norm of reciprocity, people tend to repay good-with-good (i.e., positive reciprocity) and bad-with-bad (i.e., negative reciprocity; Gouldner, 1960). Negative reciprocity contains a "sentiment of retaliation" (Gouldner, 1960, p. 172) in response to an instigating NWB or "sparking event" (Bies & Tripp, 1996, p. 20) that structures social systems and exchanges between people (Gächter & Herrmann, 2009). Gouldner (1960) defines negative reciprocity as "retaliation where the emphasis is placed not on the return of benefits but on the return of injuries" (p. 172). Thus, negative reciprocation occurs when NWB from Party A is reciprocated with NWB from Party B. Based on the underlying social exchange perspective, NWB will furnish the motivation to respond in order to restore equity or right a perceived harm (Tripp, 2001). Research shows that people reciprocate directly when treated badly (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997), react to negative workplace behaviors of others that they are exposed to (Meindl & Lerner, 1983; Wang, Galinsky, & Murnighan, 2009), and reciprocate experiences they have had onto others (Baker, 2012). Employees repay ill treatment in a multitude of ways such as by resisting organizational authorities (Lawrence & Robinson, 2007), engaging in counterproductive work behavior

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(Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007), being absent from work (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2008), or engaging in violence (Baron, Neuman, & Geddes, 1999).

Throughout the rest of this article, we describe NWB as the initiating behavior performed by one party (i.e., Party A) and negative reciprocity as a negative behavior performed in reciprocation by another party (i.e., Party B). Table 1 contains definitions of the main constructs that comprise NWB and negative reciprocity included in the present meta-analysis.

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Dimensions of NWB and Negative Reciprocity

Researchers have noted that distinguishing between various types of NWB is challenging because of the inconsistent overlap

Table 1
Comparison of Construct Definitions and Categorization for Negative Workplace Behaviors

Construct	Author	Definition	NWB	NR	Other terms	Severity	Activity
Abusive supervision	Tepper (2000)	The extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact	✓	✓	Negative/destructive supervisor behavior, supervisor undermining, negative leader behavior	Moderate	Balanced
Antisocial behavior	Robinson and O'Leary-Kelley (1998)	Negative behaviors that have the potential to cause harm to individuals and/or the property of an organization	✓	✓		Severe	Balanced
Avoidance	Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, and Dubois (1997)	Avoiding the perpetrator or context in which abuse or harassment occurs		✓		Minor	Passive
Bullying	Notelaers and Einarsen, (2008)	Negative and aggressive behaviors at work primarily of a psychological nature, with the effect of humiliating, intimidating, frightening or punishing the target	✓	✓		Moderate	Balanced
Contract breach	Morrison and Robinson (1997)	When an organization does not fulfill promised obligations	✓			Minor	Passive
Counterproductive work behavior	Bennett and Robinson (2000)	Voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in so doing, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members, or both	✓	✓	Anticitizenship behavior, production deviance, property deviance, sabotage, theft	CWBO: Moderate CWBI: Moderate	CWBO: Balanced CWBI: Active
Harassment	Bowling and Beehr (2006)	Interpersonal behavior aimed at intentionally harming another employee in the workplace	✓			Severe	Active
Harassment (sexual/ethnic)	Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997)/Schneider, Hitlan, and Radhakrishnan (2000)	Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that occurs in the workplace/threatening verbal conduct or exclusionary behavior that has an ethnic component and is directed at a target because of his or her ethnicity	✓		Sexual harassment, sexual aggression, gender harassment, racial harassment, ethnic harassment	Severe	Active
Incivility	Blau and Andersson (2005)	Low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect	✓	✓	Gossiping, Workplace hostility, Interpersonal transgressions, Personal mistreatment, Undermining	Minor	Passive
Interpersonal Conflict	Jehn (1995)	Interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, which typically includes tension, animosity, and annoyance among members within a group	✓	✓	Relationship conflict	Moderate	Active
Retaliation	Skarlicki and Folger (1997)	Negative behaviors used to punish the organization and its representatives in response to perceived unfairness		✓	Resistance, confrontation	Minor	Passive
Victimization	Aquino and Lamertz (2004)	Having been the target of emotionally, psychologically, or physically injurious actions by another organizational member with whom the target has an ongoing relationship	✓			Moderate	Balanced
Violence	Baron and Neuman (1996)	Effort to inflict harm on others through violent physical assault	✓	✓		Severe	Active
Withdrawal	Hanisch and Hulin (1990)	Set of behaviors dissatisfied individuals enact to avoid the work situation; they are those behaviors designed to avoid participation in dissatisfying work situations		✓	Absenteeism, turnover, neglect, problem drinking	Minor	Passive
Workplace aggression	Neuman and Baron (1997)	Efforts by individuals to harm others with whom they work, or have worked, or the organizations in which they are presently, or were previously, employed	✓	✓	Coworker abuse, relational aggression, interpersonal aggression	Severe	Balanced
Workplace Ostracism	Ferris, Brown, Berry, and Lian (2008)	The experience of being rejected, excluded, ignored, or isolated	✓	✓	Exclusion	Minor	Passive

Note. Checkmarks indicate that the construct reported in primary studies appears as negative workplace behavior (NWB), negative reciprocity (NR) behavior, or both; CWBO = organizationally-directed counterproductive work behavior; CWBI = interpersonally-directed counterproductive work behavior.

and content space measured by constructs with different labels but similar scale items (i.e., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Carpenter & Berry, 2017; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Hershcovis, 2011). A consistent suggestion is that the field should focus on integration and synthesis of constructs, rather than differentiation, in order to effectively advance theory related to forms of NWB (Aquino & Thau, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011). As such, we take an integrative approach in defining themes between constructs so they can be examined in a manner that advances theory related to negative interactions in the workplace. Drawing from Buss's (1961) and Baron and Neuman's (1996) seminal works on aggression, theories of incivility (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and social exchange (Cropanzano et al., 2017), and the voluminous literature on counterproductive work behavior (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Robinson & Bennett, 1995, 1997), we identified three critical dimensions in differentiating between types of NWB: severity, activity, and targets. First, NWB is most often differentiated based on its level of severity or intensity, ranging from minor (less intense, verbal) to severe (more intense, physical; Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Barling, 1996; Buss, 1961; Hershcovis, 2011; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Second, NWB is differentiated based on the level of activity represented in the behavior, ranging from passive to active (Buss, 1961; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Neuman & Baron, 1997). Third, NWB is differentiated based on target, referring to behavior that is directed at focal individuals or displaced onto other targets (Buss, 1961; Marcus-Newhall, Pedersen, Carlson, & Miller, 2000), or demarcating between individual and organizational targets (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Buss, 1961; Robinson & Bennett, 1995, 1997; Spector & Fox, 2005). Below, we consider each dimension in more detail.

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Severity

Robinson and Bennett's (1995) seminal work proposed that one of two distinguishing features of counterproductive work behaviors was the seriousness or harmfulness of the acts, which they refer to as "minor versus serious deviance" (p. 561). Similarly, incivility is distinguished from other constructs because it is defined as "low-intensity" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina & Magley, 2009; Pearson et al., 2005). Pearson et al. (2005) elaborate on the concept of low intensity as behavior that is "of lower magnitude of force, lower negative charge" (p. 1401) as compared with constructs such as workplace violence (Baron & Neuman, 1996). Thus, an important characteristic in differentiating NWB is through levels of *severity*, or the amount of harm the behavior inflicts onto the target.

At the low end of the severity dimension, minor NWB (often referred to as low-intensity behaviors; Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Cortina et al., 2001; Robinson & Bennett, 1995) do limited harm to individuals or the organization and are captured by constructs such as incivility. In the middle of the severity dimension are moderately severe behaviors that are more harmful because they are more overt or openly negative, such as bullying or broadly defined deviance. It is important to capture a midpoint on the severity dimension because many constructs assessing NWB purposefully include both minor and severe elements and would thus be categorized as moderately severe overall. For example, the scale measuring organizationally directed counterproductive work behaviors purposely contains items capturing a range of variables including both lowered effort at work (minor) and stealing from the organization (severe; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Finally, the high end of the severity dimension reflects behaviors that are serious and blatantly harmful to individuals or to an organization, such as aggression and physical violence (Buss, 1961, 1963). These behaviors are categorized as such due to the substantive amount of harm they inflict.

Considered within a negative reciprocity framework, when an individual (Party A) engages in NWB, the severity of that NWB can range from minor, to moderate, to severe. Congruently, when an individual (Party B) negatively reciprocates NWB, the severity of the action can range from minor, to moderate, to severe. As noted above, the high value individuals place on equity suggests Party B will reciprocate Party A's negative behavior with a negative response. However, there are conflicting theories as to the nature of the negative reciprocation. Both social exchange theory and equity theory would suggest that NWB will be reciprocated at a level of similar severity or intensity. Lyons and Scott (2012) refer to this exchange of behaviors of similar valence as homeomorphic reciprocity. In contrast, a key component of incivility spirals (Andersson & Pearson, 1999) and the popcorn model of aggression (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997) is that that not only will negative behaviors be exchanged, but that that they will become more severe, or escalate in intensity. Some research even suggests that in certain circumstances individuals may de-escalate, responding to negative workplace behaviors with more minor behaviors, as when employees with lower status absorb or react less aggressively to negative behaviors from higher-status individuals, presumably due to the projected risks of reciprocation (Aquino, Lewis, & Bradfield, 1999; Cortina & Magley, 2009; Porath & Pearson, 2012). Thus, it is possible that with a moderately severe NWB, the negative reciprocity may take the form of a minor NWB (de-escalation), a moderately severe NWB (tit-for-tat), or a severe NWB (escalation). Our approach examines the severity of NWB from both parties in the exchange relationship to test the strength of various relationships.

Research Question 1: Does severity moderate the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity?

Activity

In both Buss's (1961) and, more recently, Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, and Hall's (2017) theorizing, the extent to which NWB is active versus passive is crucial to understanding response behaviors. Indeed, though Buss discussed the significance of this delineation some time ago, Cropanzano et al. (2017) point out that the extent to which NWB is considered active versus passive has been "historically neglected" (p. 19). Further, the authors suggest that social exchange theory would be meaningfully extended by incorporating explicit rationale about the activity of behavior. We seek to engage with both Buss (1961) and Cropanzano et al. (2017) by examining NWB in terms of *activity*, which ranges from active and overtly negative behavior to passive withholding of behavior.

At the low end of the activity dimension, passive behavior refers to withholding, or not engaging in, a relevant behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Passive behaviors include withdrawal behaviors such as putting in little effort at work or absence from work. Buss (1961) refers to the low end of the continuum as "passive resis-

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tance." He noted, specifically for negative reciprocity behaviors, that passive behavior "avoids counterattack" and is strategic because it is often, "more difficult to detect and retaliate against" (p. 8). At the midpoint of the activity dimension are balanced behaviors which include both active and passive elements; for example, antisocial behaviors include griping with coworkers or criticizing others, actions that can be either subtle or overt but fall short of vigorous demonstration of dysfunctional behavior. At the high end of the activity dimension, active behavior involves direct harm, such as sabotage, assault, or other aggressive, forceful, and hostile behaviors that are often more physical in nature (Buss, 1961).

Both the norm of reciprocity and social exchange theory suggest negative behavior will be actively reciprocated, as expressed in exhortations of "an eye for an eye" (e.g., Gouldner, 1960), or when Hershcovis et al. (2007) remark that "aggression begets aggression" (p. 27). This is consistent across studies on NWB that propose and measure active behaviors such as gossip, theft, harassment, and physical violence (e.g., Baron & Neuman, 1996; Bunk & Magley, 2013; Greenberg & Barling, 1996; Wang, Liao, Zhan, & Shi, 2011b). For example, someone harassed by his or her boss may reciprocate with active insubordination (Harvey, Harris, Gillis, & Martinko, 2014) or aggression (Lian, Ferris, Morrison, & Brown, 2014). However, negative behavior can also be reciprocated through forms of passivity, such as lack of effort, withdrawal, and absenteeism. Thus, within this passive dimension of reciprocity, rather than actively reciprocating via negative response, individuals instead reciprocate by withholding something desirable, such as information or effort. Withdrawal allows a target to negatively reciprocate less visibly, a tactic reflective of peoples' tendencies to avoid confrontation and conflict when possible (e.g., Buss, 1961; Dijkstra, De Dreu, Evers, & van Dierendonck, 2009). Thus, it is possible that with a balanced form of NWB, negative reciprocity may take the form of a passive reciprocation (de-escalation), a balanced reciprocation (equal valence), or an active reciprocation (escalation).

Research Question 2: Does activity moderate the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity?

Target

The third dimension important in distinguishing patterns of reciprocity in organizations concerns the target of the behavior. Research on NWB generally considers behavior as directed either toward individuals or toward the organization (e.g., Bennett & Robinson, 2000). However, within our framework of negative reciprocity this delineation is less descriptive. What is more important, in terms of social exchange, is whether the reciprocity is directed back at the instigator or displaced onto a separate target. Interestingly, whether the target of the reciprocation constitutes direct or displaced behavior is rarely considered outright. For example, many studies propose that being the target of NWB results in the target perpetuating the same or similar action in response (e.g., targets of bullying will in turn instigate bullying, Gallus, Bunk, Matthews, Barnes-Farrell, & Magley, 2014; targets of aggression will become aggressors, Glomb & Liao, 2003; targets of incivility will grow uncivil, Hauge, Skogstad, & Einarsen, 2009). However, what is unclear from these studies is whether the response behavior (i.e., negative reciprocity), is directed at the instigator, at others besides the instigator, or possibly at both. As an illustration, if an employee was subjected to incivility from a coworker, that employee could be uncivil back to that coworker, the employee could be uncivil to others and *not* the instigating coworker, or the employee could be uncivil to both the instigator and to others. The murkiness as to the targets of negative reciprocity constitutes a significant obstacle in understanding the exact nature of the social exchange of negative behavior between parties.

Social exchange is based on the premise that individuals' exchange relationships are intertwined with and supported by broader social structures, but in many cases the exchange is examined primarily at the dyadic level (Cropanzano & Rupp, 2008). As such, conceptualizations of negative reciprocity primarily occur between the offender and the offended. However, an individual may be emotionally primed to reciprocate (e.g., Buss, 1963; Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939), but choose to redirect their behavior toward someone besides the instigator, a process sometimes referred to as response generalization (Buss, 1961; Miller, 1948). The rationale in this approach is that individuals discriminate between targets of NWB based on whether the target is capable of retaliation. For example, if the target of negative reciprocity is someone in an authority position, direct or active responses may be inhibited because of perceived likelihood of punishment (Buss, 1961). Displacing negative reciprocity onto another target discharges the physiological tension related to experiencing NWB while protecting the actor from punishment or further retaliation.

Importantly, both interpersonally and organizationally directed behaviors are subsumed within this broader categorization for targets. For example, interpersonally directed counterproductive work behavior can represent a direct response to bullying if it is directed at the source of the bullying behavior, or it can be displaced onto coworkers or family members who did not initiate the NWB. We also note that there are a few specific areas in which the target of the negative reciprocity is defined, such as in displaced aggression (e.g., Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000; Melburgm & Tedeschi, 1989), supervisor-directed counterproductive work behaviors in studies of abusive supervision (e.g., Liu, Kwan, Wu, & Wu, 2010), and in some studies on trickle-down effects (e.g., Mawritz, Mayer, Hoobler, Wayne, & Marinova, 2012; Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009), but these studies are in the minority. Therefore, important questions remain about the strength of the relationship between reciprocity that directly targets the instigator or is displaced onto another target.

Research Question 3: Does the target (direct vs. displaced) of the negative reciprocity moderate the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity?

Frequency of NWB and Negative Reciprocity

Above we presented a framework proposing that tests of reciprocity could be done through examining effect sizes of behaviors of differing valence (i.e., severity and activity). However, these ideas are not prescriptionist as to what it means to be responding in-kind or through escalation of behavior. In addition to comparing effect sizes, it is also expedient to examine the base rates of NWB.

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Gouldner (1960) notes that reciprocity is not merely present or absent but is instead "quantitatively variable" (p. 164). It is possible, for instance that the rate of harm exchanged between individuals is identical or equal, traded at a one-for-one rate. It is also possible for harms exchanged between individuals to be unequal with a one-for-many or many-for-one rate. This relationship can be examined empirically by considering fluctuations in the rate of NWB and in the rate of negative reciprocity behaviors. For example, a supervisor may demean a subordinate once without any negative behavioral response from that subordinate. Yet, as the rate of the supervisor's demeaning behavior increases, the subordinate may be increasingly likely to engage in some type of negative reciprocity. For example, Helm, Bonoma, and Tedeschi (1972) suggested that there is a certain level of frequency (a "tipping point") in NWB whereby individuals become exponentially aggressive in response. Thus, increasing the rate of NWB may increase the likelihood of negative reciprocity behaviors.

Given that NWB occurs at different rates in organizations, it is important to understand how the frequency of NWB relates to the rate of negative reciprocity behavior. In organizational settings where individuals are tightly embedded in social relationships, responding to others' negative behaviors is rarely a single act but instead involves continuous and prolonged exchanges of negative actions between individuals (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Baron & Neuman, 1996; Einarsen & Hoel, 2001; Leymann, 1990). If behavior in organizations is truly "an eye for an eye" then increased frequency of NWB should be related to increased frequency of negative reciprocation at the same level of severity or activity. For example, higher rates of incivility will be exchanged with higher rates of incivility in response. If behavior in organizations tends to spiral or escalate (i.e., "two eyes for an eye"), then increased behavior at one level will be more strongly associated with increased responses at another. For example, if higher rates of incivility are associated with higher rates of hostility or aggression.

Research Question 4: Does the frequency of NWB moderate the frequency of negative reciprocity at different levels of severity and activity?

Measurement Moderators

Several relevant measurement-related variables could potentially affect the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity. Critically, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of NWB studies are nonexperimental, a methodology which limits conclusions about the direction of effects (i.e., causality) and our understanding of instigating and reciprocating actions. For example, abusive supervision may lead to counterproductive work behavior, or conversely, counterproductive work behavior may lead to abusive supervision. It is also possible that effects in both directions point to a cycle of negative workplace behaviors (e.g., Lian, Ferris, et al., 2014). Yet, as noted by many theorists, harmful workplace behaviors are best understood as embedded within systems of causality, even when the causal nature of the interaction is not definitive (Aquino & Lamertz, 2004; Hershcovis, Reich, Parker, & Bozeman, 2012; Hershcovis et al., 2007). For negative reciprocity, one cannot draw conclusions about negative reciprocation without referencing a precipitating act. Because our focus in this work is on relationship-based interactions, behaviors must be categorized as instigating actions from Party A and reciprocating actions from Party B. Nonetheless, as we elaborate in the Method section, while we utilize the theoretically driven determinations made in the primary studies to guide our categorizations of instigating and reciprocating actions, we also seek to employ methods of analysis to provide support for this interpretation of directionality.

Although we recognize that no statistical model can prove causality, we assess two methodological moderators that may aid in establishing the soundness of causal arguments typically drawn from theoretical arguments and appropriate research designs. One criterion in determining causality is the demonstration that one variable precedes another in time. Although survey data is still confounded by possible omitted variables in such cases, authors generally employ a strategy of collecting longitudinal data to support temporal precedence and to reduce error associated with common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Therefore, if longitudinal studies have consistently lower correlations between NWB and negative reciprocity, this would provide evidence against causal precedence and point to methodological factors that consistently inflate correlations between NWB and negative reciprocity. Further, same-source bias is another potential source of inflation in the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity. Again, significant moderation between self-observer ratings of NWB and negative reciprocity would provide evidence against causal arguments as a significant moderation would indicate the presence of unmodeled error (Muller, Yzerbyt, & Judd, 2008; Pearl, 2012; VanderWeele & Vansteelandt, 2009).

Research Question 5: Do study-relevant variables including (a) longitudinal measurement and (b) rating source moderate the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity at different levels of severity and activity?

Method

Study Identification and Literature Search

Initially, relevant studies were identified by searching four databases: ABI Inform, Google Scholar, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, and PsycINFO, for published and unpublished research with applicable effect sizes through December of 2017. Our search included constructs broadly defined as deviant or negative behavior at work; we used various combinations of the following keywords: *harassment, sexual harassment, incivility, bullying, antisocial work behavior, aggression, revenge, retaliation, contract breach, abusive supervision, negative reciprocity, counterproductive work behavior, counterproductivity,* and *workplace deviance*. To supplement this search, we reviewed abstracts of recent *Academy of Management* and *Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology* conferences. Last, we scanned the reference sections of existing meta-analyses on harassment (i.e., Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a), sexual harassment (Cantisano, Domínguez, & Depolo, 2008; Chan et al., 2008; Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003; Willness et al., 2007), incivility (Lim & Cortina, 2005), bullying (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2010), aggression (Hershcovis et al., 2007; Lapierre, Spector, & Leck, 2005), contract breach (Zhao, Wayne, Glib-

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kowski, & Bravo, 2007), abusive supervision (Mackey et al., 2017; Schyns & Schilling, 2013), and counterproductive work behavior (i.e., Berry, Lelchook, & Clark, 2012; Berry et al., 2007; Dalal, 2005; Hershcovis et al., 2007; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010b) to identify articles omitted in the above search.

Inclusion Criteria and Coding of Studies

To be included in the meta-analysis, primary studies had to contain a correlation, or information that could be converted into a correlation, between NWB from two parties: Party A and Party B. For the NWB from Party A, three key features of a scale were considered. First, the behavior needed to fit our definition of NWB above (in brief, behaviors breeching standards for acceptable behavior which harm the organization, its members, or both). Second, the scale items had to measure behavior, not attitudes (e.g., injustice) or intentions (e.g., intentions to harass others). Third, the negative behavior must be directed at a specific target. For example, a worker can be targeted, can target others, or can witness others being targeted.

Our coding of negative reciprocity from Party B consists of behaviors that include the same features of NWB (i.e., negative workplace behavior directed at a target), except that the negative reciprocity must originate from a different individual than the instigator of the NWB. For example, bullying can be an instigating action (i.e., being bullied by Party A as an NWB) and bullying can also be a negative response (i.e., Party B bullying others in response to being bullied him- or herself; e.g., Baillien, Bollen, Euwema, & De Witte, 2014). Thus, the key criterion differentiating negative reciprocity from NWB is not that it is a separate construct, but that it is a *reaction* from someone who was not the instigator of the NWB. There is also a small subset of constructs, specifically retaliation, revenge, and withdrawal, that are formulated specifically as a response to negative behavior and are categorized as negative reciprocity (e.g., Aquino et al., 2001; Bies & Tripp, 1995; Chi & Liang, 2013; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2012; Wei & Si, 2013). Returning to Table 1, checkmarks appear in the NWB and negative reciprocity columns to the extent that the constructs from primary studies fit the NWB or negative reciprocity conceptualization, or both, as included in the current meta-analysis.

Based on the aforementioned concerns about causality, we utilize the theoretically driven determinations made in the primary studies regarding the temporal ordering of variables to guide our categorizations of instigating actions (i.e., NWB) from Party A and reciprocating actions from Party B. Researchers rely on equity theory, justice theory, self-verification theory, and social exchange perspectives, among others, to explain how negative work behaviors motivate negative reciprocity and retaliatory acts (Aquino et al., 2001; Bies & Tripp, 1995; Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002; Swan, 1997). Examples of these theoretical arguments include statements such as: "Employees who are targets of mistreatment will reciprocate incivility by directing negative behaviors to the mistreatment source" (van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010, p. 1487); "We suggest that social undermining behaviors can be construed as negative events that result in affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002, p. 335); "It is reasonable to expect that subordinates of abusive supervisors reciprocate their supervisors' hostility in some fashion (Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001, p. 974); and "Individuals who experience incivility should be more likely to perform counterproductive work behavior that targets individuals" (Penney & Spector, 2005, p. 781). Relying on such theoretical arguments and the underlying logic of the authors was our coding strategy for distinguishing negative workplace behaviors (NWB) as instigating actions, and negative reciprocity as negative response behaviors.

Coding of all articles was initially completed by Lindsey M. Greco of this study. Coding of any studies presenting uncertain categorization within the negative reciprocity framework was resolved through discussion among the authors during the coding process.[1] Further, to confirm the accuracy and reliability of the coding, the second and fourth authors independently coded a random subset of 20 studies. Agreement between coders across 705 decisions was 96%. The majority of discrepancies were the result of inconsistencies in primary articles (e.g., sample size reported in the methods was slightly different than sample size reported in correlation matrix) these and other disagreements as to the categorization of NWB and negative reciprocity were resolved through discussion. Fn1

Evaluating construct severity and activity. A major hurdle in classifying the severity and activity of constructs is that while researchers make theoretical and definitional distinctions, such distinctions are not always present in the operationalization of the constructs (Greco, O'Boyle, & Walter, 2015; Griffin & Lopez, 2005; Hershcovis, 2011). For example, bullying is defined as negative and aggressive behavior which is primarily psychological in nature and leads to humiliation, intimidation, or fright (Notelaers & Einarsen, 2008). Yet items measuring bullying such as "spreading rumors," "insulting or ridiculing," and "social exclusion" appear on a variety of scales measuring social undermining, incivility, abusive supervision, and interpersonal conflict, among others. In addition, as noted above, some constructs, such as counterproductive work behavior, purposefully have a range of items that capture severity, while other constructs, such as incivility, are purposefully meant to capture only behaviors on the low end of the severity dimension. Taking these considerations into account, we felt that the most appropriate method for evaluating severity and activity of constructs was to evaluate each scale at the item level.

To code severity and activity, we followed previous studies evaluating the observability of various personality (e.g., Funder & Dobroth, 1987; John & Robins, 1993; Rothbart & Park, 1986) and counterproductive work behaviors (Carpenter, Rangel, Jeon, & Cottrell, 2017) by rating characteristics of the constructs at the item level. First, we identified the most commonly used constructs and scales captured in the present meta-analysis; for each construct, when a scale represented the majority of measures (i.e.,

[1] We also initially coded for the type of NWB (e.g., counterproductive work behavior, aggression, etc.) and then the type of negative reciprocity (e.g., counterproductive work behavior, aggression, retaliation, etc.). After collecting and coding the primary studies it became clear that the substantial amount of overlap in items and the inconsistent labeling of various sets of items made distinguishing between some constructs functionally impossible. Thus, although we were initially curious to analyze individual constructs within the NWB-negative reciprocity typology, there was no consistent rationale for doing so.

greater than 50%), then we included items from that scale. Take incivility, for example, where 34 out of 47 studies (72%) in the present meta-analysis measured incivility with items from Cortina, Magley, Williams, and Langhout's (2001) workplace incivility scale (WIS); accordingly, items from the WIS were included in the rating process. The only exception to this rule was for aggression, where Mitchell and Ambrose's (2007) scale and Greenberg and Barling's (1999) scales made up 37% and 32% of studies, respectively. In this case we included items from both scales and averaged all items together. In total, we included a pool of 184 total items from 16 scales.[2] Fn2

Participants. Four-hundred and four adults who were currently employed or had been within the last 3 years (working at least 20 hr a week) were recruited through MTurk (an online survey program which has been shown to provide a diverse and representative sample; Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Klotz & Bolino, 2016; Mai, Ellis, Christian, & Porter, 2016). Fifty-six participants failed one or both of two attention check questions which asked them to mark a particular answer to indicate they were reading the survey, and were removed from the dataset, leaving 348 adults (180 men, 167 women, one unreported; mean age = 34.95, *SD* = 10.33, with one participant declining to share demographic information).

Procedure. Because of the large number of items, and in order to avoid survey fatigue, we randomly sampled a subset of items so that each participant rated approximately 23 items. Participants were instructed that they would be asked to rate a number of harmful workplace behaviors. We defined harmful behaviors as behaviors that "could harm other people, or disrupt or harm the organization's productivity." Participants were then informed that they would be rating the behavior on two dimensions. The first dimension was severity, defined as "how intense, harsh, or harmful it is (to people or to the organization). For example, someone could spend an hour on the computer for personal purposes (less severe), or they could quit in the middle of an important project (more severe)." The participants rated each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all severe*) to 7 (*very severe*).

The second dimension each participant rated the item on was activity, defined as "how much it involves causing harm by not doing something helpful (passive) as opposed to causing harm by doing something harmful (active). For example, someone could harm someone else's presentation by either not pointing out errors they see (passive) or by intentionally putting errors into the presentation (active)." The participants rated each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very passive*) to 7 (*very active*).

Analyses. We evaluated the consistency in judgments by calculating $r_{WG(J)}$ (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984), an estimate of interrater agreement. Mean $r_{WG(J)}$ values across all scales for severity were .87 and ranged from .80 (interpersonal conflict; Spector & Jex, 1998) to .96 (workplace aggression; Greenberg & Barling, 1999) and mean $r_{WG(J)}$ values for activity were .77 and ranged from .63 (organizationally directed counterproductive work behavior) to .93 (workplace aggression; Greenberg & Barling, 1999). Based on LeBreton and Senter's (2008) guidelines for interpreting interrater agreement, scores fall within the *moderate* agreement (.51–.70 range; five scales for activity); *strong* agreement (.71–.90 range; nine scales for severity; eight scales for activity); or *very strong* agreement (.91–1.00 range, six scales for severity; two scales for activity) ranges.[3] AQ: 7 Fn3

We next categorized each construct based on severity and activity. First, we averaged the severity and activity item scores into overall scale scores. Each scale item was rated an average of 44 times. For example, the severity of the incivility scale represents the average of the mean severity of each of seven items across 44 raters. We then sorted the scales in increasing severity and activity and divided them into three categories so that they captured the range, rather than simply the endpoints, of each continuum.[4] If a study contained a construct that was not included in the above 16 scales, then example scale items were examined and the most representative category was reached by consensus between authors; for example, destructive leadership was labeled as abusive supervision. The severity and activity categories are presented in Table 1. Fn4

Evaluating target. For the target of the negative reciprocity behavior, coding of direct versus displaced reciprocity was done by evaluating the wording of items and scales in the primary study. Direct reciprocity was coded as such when there was enough information to ascertain a "direct" response (e.g., a supervisor abuses a subordinate, who engages in supervisor-directed counterproductive work behavior or dysfunctional resistance; Tepper et al., 2001; Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011). Displaced reciprocity was coded as such when the behavior was directed at a target other than instigator of NWB (e.g., workplace incivility increases theft from the organization; Bibi, Karim, & Din, 2013) or when workplace conflict leads to aggression toward one's family (Liu et al., 2015). There were a large number of studies (k = 59) where the targets were "unspecified." For example, when being the target of incivility is related to instigating incivility (e.g., Leiter, Day, & Price, 2015), when being the target of bullying and experiencing relationship conflict is related to a target engaging in bullying behaviors themselves (Baillien et al., 2016), or when interpersonal conflict is related to interpersonally directed counterproductive work behavior (e.g., Bowling & Burns, 2015; Meurs, Fox, Kessler, & Spector, 2013). What is unclear from these studies is if the negative reciprocity was directed at the instigators of the NWB, was displaced onto other targets, or possibly both. Therefore, any studies with unspecified targets were not included in the moderator analysis related to target. All studies and variables coded for the meta-analysis can be found online as supplemental material.

In addition to the above categories, we coded for demographic (i.e., percent female, nationality of sample, job tenure, and age), methodological (i.e., publication status, rating source, longitudinal nature of study), and situational (i.e., relative status of respondents, direct target vs. exposure) moderators. The results for the demographic variables were negligible and due to space constraints were omitted. The results for the publication bias tests are reported below.

[2] The list and items are available by request from Lindsey M. Greco.

[3] Item and construct mean scores and $r_{wg(j)}$ values are available upon request from Lindsey M. Greco.

[4] To further support the validity of the coding scheme, we recruited 12 Subject matter experts to engage in a Q-sort task, ranking the most commonly used scales from most to least severe and from active to passive. Results were largely consistent with the item-level ratings and are available by request from Lindsey M. Greco. AQ: 29

Meta-Analytic Procedure

Techniques and corrections. Prior to each analysis, we ensured that each included coefficient was drawn from an independent sample (Schmidt & Hunter, 2004). If one study reported multiple types of negative reciprocity behaviors then we created linear composites of the uncorrected effect sizes. Reliability estimates of these composites are based on Mosier reliability estimates as these are more conservative (Mosier, 1943; Schmidt & Hunter, 2004).

We used random-effects meta-analysis across all analyses to allow for the possibility that parameters vary across studies. We followed Schmidt and Hunter's (2004) guidelines for psychometric meta-analysis for the primary and categorical moderator analysis, relying on the Pearson correlation coefficient as our effect size metric and weighting by sample size as this approach has been shown to be the least biased for analyses of correlations (Brannick, Yang, & Cafri, 2011; Hall & Brannick, 2002). When possible for studies, we corrected for unreliability in the independent and dependent variables at the local level of analysis. When unavailable, we used an artifact distribution (Schmidt & Hunter, 1996, 2004) from the primary samples in the present work based on a reliability generalization procedure which weights alphas by the inverse variance (i.e., precision) rather than sample size (Duhachek & Iacobucci, 2004; Greco, O'Boyle, Cockburn, & Yuan, 2018). AQ: 8

Our results include the number of studies (k), the cumulative sample size (N), and a weighted mean point estimate of the study correlations ($\bar{r}$), along with the correlations after correcting for unreliability (ρ). We include the standard deviation and the standard error of the weighted mean average (SD_r, SE_r) their population counterparts (SD_ρ, SE_ρ), a 95% confidence interval around $\bar{r}$, and the 80% credibility interval around ρ. The credibility interval expresses variance in ρ in that 80% of the "true" effects for the various subpopulations lay within the credibility interval (Schmidt & Hunter, 2004; Whitener, 1990). The wider the credibility interval, the greater the likelihood that moderators are present, ceteris paribus (Whitener, 1990).

For the analysis of the base rate of the negative behavior, we placed each NWB mean and standard deviation on a zero-to-one metric. This approach resolved issues associated with differences in scaling formats between studies. Confidence intervals around mean estimates were built using formulas from Wilson (1927) with a continuity correction recommended by Newcombe (1998).

Tests of moderators. To conduct the metaregressions and meta-ANOVAs we used Lipsey and Wilson (2001) equations. These techniques overcome limitations associated with assuming moderators are orthogonal and/or artificially dichotomizing continuous moderating variables (Steel & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2002). We used random effects, restricted maximum likelihood estimation because simulation work has shown this procedure to be the least biased (Thompson & Sharp, 1999; Viechtbauer, 2005) and it is recommended with small sample sizes (Gonzalez-Mule & Aguinis, 2017). Consistent with Lipsey and Wilson (2001), for both the metaregression and meta-ANOVA, we transformed individual correlations into Fisher's Z, performed the analyses, and then converted the values back into correlational form for easier interpretation. Effect sizes were weighted by their inverse variance (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001).

Testing for publication bias. Publication bias has been raised as a significant concern in meta-analytic research (Kepes, Banks, McDaniel, & Whetzel, 2012; Phillips, 2004; Rothstein, 2003). The so-called "file drawer problem" has the potential to bias results if data contained in published studies differs from data in unpublished studies or otherwise unavailable data. To test for publication bias we used comprehensive meta-analysis 3.0 (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2014) to conduct meta-ANOVA, fail-safe N, and trim-and-fill analyses for each of the subanalyses for activity and severity (e.g., minor–minor) to assess the extent that effects were systematically missing from our search (see Table 2). T2

First, we conducted a between groups difference test using meta-ANOVA between published and unpublished studies. In all cases, the differences in effect sizes were slight and not statistically significant. Second, for the fail-safe N analyses, we incorporated both classic fail-safe N as well as Orwin's fail-safe N. The classic fail-safe N provides the number of nonsignificant studies needed to bring the overall meta-analytic estimate to $p > .05$. We supplemented this with Orwin's fail-safe N because the APA Meta-Analytic Reporting Standards (MARS) as well as a number of recent publications (e.g., Kepes et al., 2012; Kepes, McDaniel, Brannick, & Banks, 2013) have stressed the importance of interpreting effect size magnitudes along with or even in lieu of statistical significance testing. Orwin's test answers how many studies finding no effect ($r = .00$) it would take to reduce the observed effect size magnitude of the overall meta-analytic estimate to below a predetermined threshold. We chose Cohen's heuristic for a small correlation (i.e., $\rho = .10$) as our threshold, thus Orwin's test in this context is the number of studies finding no effect which would be needed to reduce the medium and large effects we report below to small effect sizes. Results for the classic fail-safe N show that in some cases, it would take over 10,000 studies with nonsignificant results to make the overall estimate nonsignificant (the range of studies is from 85 to 10,000). Orwin's fail-safe N, the more conservative test, still shows that it would typically take three to five times more missing zero-correlation studies to lower the meta-analytic correlation based on the identified studies to less than .10.

Third, because of a lack of stability in trim-and-fill results when k is small, we set a minimum k of 10 for the trim-and-fill results, which reduces the misattribution of second order sampling error to publication bias (Harrison, Banks, Pollack, O'Boyle, & Short, 2017; Sterne et al., 2011). We used a random effects trim-and-fill approach and as a post hoc exploratory test, we looked for potential publication bias on both sides of the funnel plot as opposed to just the traditional left side (where small effect sizes from small samples are likely to be suppressed). Our reason for exploring both sides is that an argument could be made that in addition to very small effects being suppressed due to nonsignificance, very large effects may be suppressed due to author or reviewer concerns of common method bias, multicollinearity, construct redundancy, and other related factors. Across the 18 tests, we found no evidence of bias to the left of the mean effect size, indicating that there is no reason to expect that effect sizes smaller than the mean results were disproportionately excluded from the search. AQ: 9

However, the exploratory test of looking for bias on the right-hand side (where large effect sizes from small studies are likely to be suppressed) showed asymmetry, indicating that studies with

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Table 2
Tests for Publication Bias

		Trim-and-fill (left)		Trim-and-fill (right)		Fail safe *N*	
Analysis	*k*	*k*-trim	Δr (−)	*k*-trim	Δr (+)	Classic	Orwin
Minor–Minor	49	0	—	13	.08	10,000+	179
Minor–Moderate	31	0	—	6	.04	9,441	109
Minor–Severe	4	0	—	0	.00	85	8
Moderate–Minor	35	0	—	8	.07	8,730	65
Moderate–Moderate	102	0	—	19	.05	9,595	412
Moderate–Severe	17	0	—	0	.00	5,160	57
Severe–Minor	38	0	—	12	.06	6,954	47
Severe–Moderate	9	0	—	0	.00	1,816	39
Severe–Severe	9	0	—	0	.00	1,449	45
Passive–Passive	49	0	—	13	.08	10,000+	179
Passive–Balanced	26	0	—	9	.06	5,314	75
Passive–Active	20	0	—	7	.05	2,625	51
Balanced–Passive	41	0	—	8	.06	10,000+	67
Balanced–Balanced	80	0	—	12	.04	10,000+	287
Balanced–Active	68	0	—	0	.00	10,000+	249
Active–Passive	35	0	—	12	.07	5,607	36
Active–Balanced	17	0	—	5	.09	8,210	61
Active–Active	19	0	—	1	.02	1,164	82

Note. Random effects trim-and-fill results. k = number of observed studies; *k*-trim = number of studies trimmed in order to make a symmetrical distribution of effect sizes; Δr (+) = increase in correlation if imputed studies were included; Δr (−) = decrease in correlation if imputed studies were included; Classic fail safe N = number of included studies with nonsignificant results ($p > .05$ on a two tail test) needed to make the overall meta-analytic estimate not statistically significant; Orwin's fail safe N = number of studies with no correlation ($r = .00$) needed to reduce the observed meta-analytic effect to less than Cohen's threshold of a small effect size ($\rho = .10$).

very large relationships between negative workplace behaviors and negative reciprocity behaviors may indeed be excluded from the published literature and our search. Although this test was purely exploratory, and taking into account that it is very uncommon for effect size distributions to be perfectly symmetrical outside of simulation research, this suggests that small studies that find very large effects may be suppressed, perhaps as a result of being dismissed as containing either a measurement problem (e.g., common method variance [CMV]) or factors that might create analysis problems (e.g., multicollinearity, suppressor effects). The results of these exploratory tests do little to change the conclusion that publication bias is unlikely to affect our results, beyond suggesting that the true relationship between instigated negative behavior and retaliation may be even stronger in the population. In other words, on average, the true relationships may be slightly larger than the reported estimates.

AQ: 10

Results

The findings are based on 96,930 individuals, drawn from 207 studies reporting 246 independent samples. Twenty-four nationalities and multiple industries (e.g., health care, government workers, manufacturing, service jobs, etc.) were represented in the samples. Most of the samples (50.2%) hailed from the United States and the most common sample was drawn from a general population of workers. The meta-analytic results for the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity are summarized in Table 3. Table 4 contains the results for the analysis of the relationship between the base rate of NWB and the base rate of negative reciprocity and the methodological moderator results are presented in Table 5.

T3-4

T5, AQ:11

RQ 1: Severity of NWB and Negative Reciprocity

The results for the relationship between the severity (i.e., minor, moderate, severe) of NWB and negative reciprocity are presented in Table 3. The true-score correlations (ρ) between NWB and negative reciprocity are positive and moderate to strong (Bosco, Aguinis, Singh, Field, & Pierce, 2015) for all relationships. When Party A engages in NWB of minor severity, it is positively associated with negative reciprocity behaviors from Party B that are minor ($\rho = .46$), moderate ($\rho = .45$), and severe ($\rho = .32$). Although the relationship between behavior returned in-kind (i.e., minor–minor), was the strongest, there was no statistically significant difference between these values ($Q = 1.56$, *ns*). When Party A engages in NWB of moderate severity, it is positively associated with negative reciprocity behaviors from Party B that are minor ($\rho = .28$), moderate ($\rho = .51$), and severe ($\rho = .42$). The relationship between moderate–moderate behaviors, representative of in-kind reciprocity, and moderate–severe behaviors, representative of escalation, are significantly higher than the relationship between moderate–minor behaviors, which would represent de-escalation ($Q = 18.56$, $p < .01$). These results suggest a stronger relationship between behaviors from Party A and Party B that are equal or greater in valence rather than behaviors indicative of de-escalation.

Last, when Party A engages in severe NWB, this behavior is positively associated with negative reciprocity behaviors from Party B that are minor ($\rho = .26$), moderate ($\rho = .52$), and severe ($\rho = .59$). Again, the strongest relationship is for behaviors of equal valence (i.e., severe–severe), and the relationships between severe–severe and severe–moderate behaviors are significantly higher than the relationship between severe–minor behaviors ($Q = 12.96$ $p < .01$). Because severe NWB from Party A contains scales

Table 3

Meta-Analytic Relationships Between Severity and Activity of Negative Workplace Behaviors and Negative Reciprocity Behaviors

Party A	Party B	*k*	*N*	$\bar{r}$	SD_r	SE_r	95% CI	ρ	SD_ρ	SE_ρ	80% CV	$Q_{Between}$ (category)	$Q_{Between}$ (dir/disp)
							Severity						
Minor	Minor	49	18,539	.39	.17	.03	[.34, .44]	.46	.19	.03	[.21, .70]		
	Direct	10	1,679	.42	.08	.03	[.36, .49]	.46	.09	.03	[.35, .58]		
	Displaced	29	11,080	.32	.17	.03	[.26, .39]	.39	.20	.04	[.13, .64]		1.75
Minor	Moderate	31	8,699	.40	.19	.03	[.33, .47]	.45	.19	.04	[.20, .69]		
	Direct	4	668	.33	.17	.09	[.14, .51]	.36	.21	.11	[.08, .63]		
	Displaced	25	7,699	.41	.19	.04	[.33, .48]	.46	.19	.04	[.22, .70]		.47
Minor	Severe	4	1,025	.27	.14	.07	[.13, .42]	.32	.15	.08	[.13, .50]		
	Direct	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
	Displaced	3	898	.22	.07	.05	[.13, .32]	.26	.05	.04	[.19, .33]		—
												1.56	
Moderate[a]	Minor	35	12,489	.25	.22	.04	[.18, .33]	.28	.24	.04	[−.02, .59]		
	Direct	10	2,269	.40	.16	.05	[.29, .51]	.44	.18	.06	[.21, .67]		
	Displaced	21	7,391	.24	.24	.05	[.14, .34]	.26	.26	.06	[−.07, .60]		4.38*
Moderate[b]	Moderate	102	45,691	.45	.15	.02	[.42, .48]	.51	.16	.02	[.31, .71]		
	Direct	11	2,976	.45	.15	.05	[.36, .54]	.49	.17	.05	[.28, .71]		
	Displaced	69	21,002	.46	.16	.02	[.42, .50]	.50	.16	.02	[.30, .71]		1.28
Moderate[c]	Severe	17	6,985	.39	.20	.05	[.29, .49]	.42	.23	.06	[.13, .71]		
	Direct	6	1,430	.45	.13	.06	[.33, .56]	.51	.12	.06	[.35, .67]		
	Displaced	8	4,179	.33	.23	.08	[.16, .49]	.35	.25	.09	[.02, .67]		1.89
												18.56** b, c > a	
Severe[d]	Minor	38 (12)	14,324 (5,392)	.22 (.22)	.12 (.09)	.02 (.03)	[.17, .26] (.16, .27)	.26 (.24)	.13 (.10)	.02 (.03)	[.09, .43] (.11, .37)		
	Direct	6 (3)	1,278 (777)	.30 (.27)	.12 (.15)	.06 (.09)	[.19, .41] (.09, .45)	.36 (.33)	.14 (.18)	.06 (.11)	[.18, .54] (.10, .56)		
	Displaced	31 (9)	12,960 (4,615)	.21 (.21)	.12 (.07)	.02 (.03)	[.16, .25] (.15, .26)	.25 (.22)	.13 (.08)	.03 (.03)	[.08, .42] (.12, .33)		2.42
Severe[e]	Moderate	9 (7)	3,977 (3,110)	.47 (.51)	.14 (.13)	.05 (.05)	[.38, .57] (.41, .61)	.52 (.55)	.14 (.13)	.05 (.05)	[.34, .71] (.38, .72)		
	Direct	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
	Displaced	7 (5)	2,164 (1,297)	.36 (.37)	.09 (.08)	.04 (.04)	[.28, .44] (.29, .45)	.40 (.41)	.10 (.08)	.04 (.04)	[.28, 53] (.30, .51)		—
Severe[f]	Severe	9 (9)	1,871 (1,871)	.49 (.49)	.30 (.30)	.10 (.10)	[.30, .69] (.30, .69)	.59 (.59)	.33 (.33)	.11 (.11)	[.16, 1.0] (.16, 1.0)		
	Direct	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
	Displaced	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12.96** e, f > d	
							Activity						
Passive	Passive	49	18,539	.37	.18	.03	[.36, .48]	.42	.20	.03	[.16, .68]		
	Direct	10	1,679	.43	.10	.04	[.39, .55]	.47	.11	.04	[.33, .61]		
	Displaced	29	11,080	.32	.18	.04	[.29, .45]	.37	.21	.04	[.10, .64]		1.75
Passive	Balanced	26	7,980	.36	.19	.04	[.28, .43]	.41	.20	.04	[.16, .66]		
	Direct	3	560	.33	.19	.12	[.10, .56]	.36	.23	.14	[.07, .65]		
	Displaced	22	7,293	.36	.19	.04	[.28, .44]	.41	.19	.04	[.16, .66]		.82
Passive	Active	20	5,176	.34	.12	.03	[.28, .40]	.39	.13	.03	[.22, .55]		
	Direct	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
	Displaced	11	2,785	.33	.15	.05	[.23, .42]	.38	.16	.05	[.18, .58]		—
												1.87	
Balanced[g]	Passive	41	14,303	.24	.21	.03	[.18, .31]	.28	.23	.04	[−.02, .57]		
	Direct	12	2,548	.41	.16	.05	[.31, .50]	.45	.18	.05	[.22, .68]		
	Displaced	25	8,926	.23	.22	.05	[.14, .32]	.25	.24	.05	[−.06, .56]		7.74**
Balanced[h]	Balanced	80	33,003	.41	.17	.02	[.38, .45]	.47	.19	.02	[.23, .71]		
	Direct	6	1,252	.35	.29	.12	[.12, .59]	.43	.30	.13	[.04, .82]		
	Displaced	59	19,192	.38	.17	.02	[.33, .42]	.42	.18	.02	[.18, .65]		.11
Balanced[i]	Active	68	30,848	.42	.14	.02	[.39, .46]	.48	.15	.02	[.30, .67]		
	Direct	28	9,084	.52	.13	.03	[.47, .57]	.57	.13	.03	[.41, .74]		
	Displaced	30	9,228	.38	.13	.03	[.33, .43]	.42	.14	.03	[.25, .60]	18.15** h, i > g	22.2**
Active[j]	Passive	35 (8)	14,967 (5,743)	.20 (.17)	.12 (.08)	.02 (.03)	[.15, .24] (.11, .22)	.24 (.19)	.13 (.08)	.02 (.03)	[.07, .40] (.09, .29)		
	Direct	4 (1)	999 (—)	.25 (—)	.08 (—)	.05 (—)	[.15, .35] (—)	.30 (—)	.09 (—)	.05 (—)	[.18, .42] (—)		
	Displaced	29 (6)	11,853 (3,216)	.20 (.21)	.13 (.09)	.02 (.04)	[.15, .25] (.11, .28)	.25 (.21)	.14 (.09)	.03 (.04)	[.07, .42] (.09, .33)		.40
Active[l]	Balanced	17 (15)	10,794 (9,927)	.41 (.42)	.17 (.17)	.04 (.05)	[.33, .50] (.33, .51)	.48 (.49)	.17 (.17)	.04 (.04)	[.27, .70] (.28, .71)		
	Direct	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
	Displaced	11 (9)	4,675 (3,808)	.45 (.49)	.19 (.19)	.06 (.07)	[.34, .57] (.36, .62)	.52 (.55)	.19 (.19)	.06 (.06)	[.28, .76] (.32, .79)		—
Active[m]	Active	19 (18)	8,325 (7,655)	.46 (.47)	.20 (.20)	.05 (.05)	[.37, .55] (.37, .56)	.54 (.55)	.21 (.21)	.05 (.05)	[.28, .81] (.28, 82)		
	Direct	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—		
	Displaced	4 (3)	1,302 (632)	.43 (.49)	.09 (.10)	.05 (.06)	[.33, .52] (.37, .61)	.53 (.59)	.12 (.15)	.06 (.09)	[.37, .68] (.40, .79)	36.33** m, n > l	—

Note. *k* = number of independent samples; *N* = total sample size; $\bar{r}$ = observed effect size; SD_r = standard deviation of observed effect size; SE_r = standard error of observed effect size; 95% CI = lower and upper limits of 95% confidence interval of *r*; ρ = effect size corrected for predictor and criterion unreliability; SD_ρ = standard deviation of corrected effect size; SE_ρ = standard error of corrected effect size; 80% CV = 80% credibility interval of ρ; dir = direct reciprocity; disp = displaced reciprocity. Superscripts denote between-group Q tests by category of Party A - Party B relationship (e.g., a = Moderate-Minor category, b = Moderate-Moderate category). In the severe category, numbers in parentheses are parameter values with sexual- and ethnic-harassment effect sizes removed.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

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Table 4
Base Rates of Party A and Party B Behavior and Moderating Effect of Base Rate of Party A Behavior

				Party B base rate			Party A base rate moderator				
Party A	Party B	*k*	*N*	*M*	*SE*	[95% CI]	*B*	[95% CI]	β	R^2	Model *Q*
						Severity					
Minor	Minor	33	13,692	.17	.02	[.14, .21]	.22**	[.06, .39]	.48**	.23	6.83*
Minor	Moderate	26	7,615	.15	.09	[.11, .19]	.02	[−.38, .43]	.02	.00	.01
Minor	Severe	4	1,025	.20	.08	[.04, .35]	—	—	—	—	—
Moderate	Minor	27	9,224	.22	.03	[.16, .27]	.23	[−52, .98]	.12	.01	.36
Moderate	Moderate	90	25,288	.16	.02	[.13, .19]	.65**	[.45, .86]	.53**	.29	38.07**
Moderate	Severe	13	5,224	.08	.01	[.05, .11]	−.13	[−.36, .10]	−.41	.17	1.23
Severe	Minor	20	8,532	.20	.03	[.15, .26]	.16	[−.04, .35]	.34	.12	2.41
Severe	Moderate	9	3,977	.16	.03	[.10, .22]	.53*	[.11, .94]	.65*	.43	6.18*
Severe	Severe	9	1,871	.34	.07	[.21, .47]	.28	[−.46, 1.0]	.24	.06	.55
						Activity					
Passive	Passive	33	11,990	.17	.02	[.14, .21]	.22**	[.06, .39]	.48**	.23	6.83*
Passive	Balanced	23	7,026	.15	.02	[.11, .20]	.01	[−.35, .38]	.02	.00	.01
Passive	Active	16	4,965	.16	.03	[.10, .21]	.20	[−.18, .57]	.25	.06	1.06
Balanced	Passive	30	10,625	.23	.03	[.18, .28]	−.04	[−.37, .29]	−.04	.00	.05
Balanced	Balanced	71	28,404	.14	.01	[.12, .16]	.37**	[.13, .61]	.30**	.09	9.17**
Balanced	Active	60	24,624	.16	.01	[.13, .19]	.22	[−.16, .60]	.14	.02	1.28
Active	Passive	19	9,415	.20	.03	[.13, .27]	.20	[−.05, .45]	.36	.13	2.46
Active	Balanced	15	9,364	.10	.01	[.07, .12]	.00	[−.21, .21]	.01	.00	.00
Active	Active	18	8,170	.20	.04	[.13, .27]	.80**	[.40, 1.21]	.68**	.46	15.07**

Note. *k* = number of independent samples; *N* = total sample size; *M* = scaled mean base rate; *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; 95% CI = lower and upper limits of 95% confidence interval; β = standardized coefficient; R^2 = percentage of explained variance; Q indicates the model significantly explains variance in effect sizes.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

relevant to sexual, ethnic, or racial harassment that relate differentially to particular populations (i.e., women and minorities; Miner-Rubino & Cortina, 2004, 2007; Richman-Hirsch & Glomb, 2002), we also analyzed the severity relationships without these scales (presented in parentheses in Table 3). With such studies removed, when Party A engages in severe NWB, it is positively associated with negative reciprocity behaviors from Party B that are minor (ρ = .24), moderate (ρ = .55), and severe (ρ = .59), which is consistent with the findings which include the sexual and racial/ethnic harassment scales in that the strongest relationship is for severe–severe behavior. In sum, RQ 1 asked whether severity moderated the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity, and the results generally show the strongest relationships between Party A and Party B behavior of equal severity, representing tit-for-tat behavior, although in some cases, escalation of behavior is almost equally as strong.

RQ 2: Activity of NWB and Negative Reciprocity

The results for the relationship between the activity (i.e., passive, balanced, active) of NWB and negative reciprocity are also presented in Table 3. When Party A engages in passive NWB, it is positively associated with negative reciprocity behaviors from Party B that are passive (ρ = .42), balanced (ρ = .41), and active (ρ = .39). Although the strongest relationship is for behaviors of equal valence (i.e., passive–passive), there was no statistically significant difference between these values ($Q = 1.87$, *ns*). When Party A engages in balanced NWB, it is positively associated with negative reciprocity behaviors from Party B that are passive (ρ = .28), balanced (ρ = .47), and active (ρ = .48). In this case, the strongest relationships are for in-kind (balanced–balanced) and escalating (balanced–active) behaviors and the relationship between balanced–balanced and balanced–active behaviors are significantly higher than the relationship between balanced–passive behaviors ($Q = 18.15$, $p < .01$), showing a stronger relationship between behaviors from Party A and Party B that are equal or greater in activity rather than behaviors indicative of de-escalation.

Last, when Party A engages in active NWB, it is positively associated with negative reciprocity behaviors from Party B that are passive (ρ = .24), balanced (ρ = .48), and active (ρ = .54). Although the strongest relationship is between behavior of equal valence (active–active), both active–active and active–balanced behaviors are significantly higher than the relationship between active–passive behaviors ($Q = 36.33$, $p < .01$) and are not significantly different from each other. After removing scales related to sexual and racial/ethnic harassment, when Party A engages in active NWB, it is positively associated with negative reciprocity behaviors from Party B that are passive (ρ = .19), balanced (ρ = .49), and active (ρ = .55). These findings are consistent with those including the sexual and racial/ethnic harassment scales in that the strongest relationship is for behaviors returned in-kind. In sum, RQ 2 addressed whether activity moderated the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity. Taken together, it appears that NWB from Party B is more likely to be directly reciprocated with behavior of equal activity, although, again, there was some support for the contention that behavior can escalate, such as when balanced behavior from Party A results in an active response from Party B.

tapraid5/z2j-aplpsy/z2j-aplpsy/z2j99918/z2j3342d18z | xppws | S=1 | 1/31/19 | 10:07 | Art: 2017-3602

Table 5
Effects of Situational Moderators on Relationship Between NWB and Negative Reciprocity Behaviors

Party A	Party B	*k*	ρ	Longitudinal β	Same rater β	R^2	Model *Q*
				Severity			
Minor	Minor	49	.42	.27	.30*	.13	6.76*
Minor	Moderate	31	.38	.32	−.22	.12	4.00
Minor	Severe	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moderate	Minor	35	.31	−.19	.24	.09	3.24
Moderate	Moderate	101	.47	−.05	.25*	.06	6.10*
Moderate	Severe	—	—	—	—	—	—
Severe	Minor	38	.28	.11	.18	.03	1.25
Severe	Moderate	9	.46	.38	.03	.15	1.61
Severe	Severe	—	—	—	—	—	—
				Activity			
Passive	Passive	49	.42	.27	.30*	.13	6.76*
Passive	Balanced	26	.36	.31	.05	.10	2.86
Passive	Active	21	.38	.27	−.41*	.21	5.27
Balanced	Passive	41	.30	−.11	.19	.05	2.03
Balanced	Balanced	79	.42	.08	−.04	.01	.50
Balanced	Active	68	.46	.00	.30*	.09	6.62*
Active	Passive	35	.27	.07	.02	.00	.16
Active	Balanced	—	—	—	—	—	—
Active	Active	19	.59	.24	.05	.06	1.24

Note. NWB = negative workplace behavior; *k* = number of independent samples; ρ = effect size corrected for predictor and criterion unreliability; Longitudinal is coded as 1 = surveys were separated by time; 0 = surveys were collected at a single time; Rating source is coded as 1 = same individual reported both NWB and NR behavior and 0 = different individuals reported NWB and negative reciprocity behavior; β = standardized coefficient; R^2 = percentage of explained variance; Q indicates the model significantly explains variance in effect sizes.
* $p < .05$.

RQ 3: Target of Negative Reciprocity

Within each severity and activity category, we also analyzed relationships between Party A's NWB and responses from Party B that were either direct (directed at Party A) or displaced (directed at a target that was not Party A). As noted in the Method section, in many studies determining the target of the response behavior was not possible, and as a consequence, testing for differences in direct and displaced behavior was not always feasible (indicated by dashes in Table 3). For severity, five of the six tests for differences in target were not significant, indicating that direct and displaced forms of negative reciprocity were equally likely across targets. There was a significant difference between direct and displaced behavior for moderate–minor relationships where a moderate NWB from Party A was associated more strongly with a minor response from Party B that was direct (ρ = .44) versus displaced (ρ = .26; $Q = 4.38$, $p < .05$).

We also tested whether differences in activity of responses were related to the target of the negative reciprocity behavior. In four of the six tests, there was no difference in the strength of the relationship based on whether Party B targeted Party A directly, or whether Party B displaced behavior onto another target. However, in balanced–passive relationships, Party A balanced NWB was more strongly associated with a passive response from Party B that was directed at Party A (ρ = .45) versus passive behaviors that were displaced onto other targets (ρ = .25; $Q = 7.74$, $p < .01$. Similarly, in balanced–active relationships, balanced NWB from Party A was associated more strongly with an active response from Party B that was directed at Party A (ρ = .57) vs. active behaviors that were displaced onto other targets (ρ = .42 $Q = 22.20$, $p < .01$). Thus, across both severity and activity of behavior, there were few differences in the relationship between Party A and Party B's behaviors based on the target, although we recommend caution in interpreting these results because of the small sample sizes across categories. Interestingly, for both severity and activity, there was evidence that direct responses were more likely when the exchange of behaviors represented de-escalation (i.e., moderate–minor, balanced–passive).

RQ 4: Frequency of NWB and Negative Reciprocity

We further investigated effects between NWB and negative reciprocity by testing the relationship between the frequency, or base rates, of behaviors from both parties. First, however, we discuss the interpretation of the mean levels of negative reciprocity behaviors as reported in Table 4. As an example, when considering the severity of the behavior between Party A and Party B, when NWB from Party A is minor, mean levels of reciprocity from Party B are .17 for minor, .15 for moderate, and .20 for severe. Rescaled to a typical 7-point frequency scale, this means that the base rates of Party B's behavior are 2.02 (*minor severity*), 1.90 (*moderate severity*), and 2.20 (*severe*). Thus, for minor behaviors from Party A, the frequency of minor and severe responses from Party B falls between 2 (*once a year*) and 3 (*twice a year*) while the frequency

tapraid5/z2j-aplpsy/z2j-aplpsy/z2j99918/z2j3342d18z | xppws | S=1 | 1/31/19 | 10:07 | Art: 2017-3602

of moderate responses falls between 1 (*never*) and 2 (*once a year*). Across both severity and activity, mean values of Party B's behavior ranged from .08 for severe behavior in response to Party A's moderate behavior and .34 for severe behavior in response to Party A's severe behavior.

To address RQ 4, we examined the relationship between mean levels of NWB from Party A and mean levels of negative reciprocity from Party B by regressing the mean level of negative reciprocity on the mean level of NWB. In all categories except one, increases in the mean level of Party A's behavior are associated with increases in Party B's behavior when that behavior is the same level. More specifically, for severity, with every increase of one standard deviation in minor NWB from Party A, Party B's minor reciprocity increases by .48 standard deviations ($\beta = .48$, $p < .01$), and with every increase of one standard deviation in moderate NWB from Party A, moderate reciprocity from Party B increases by .53 standard deviations ($\beta = .53$, $p < .01$). For activity, a one standard deviation increase in passive NWB from Party A results in a .48 standard deviation increase in passive reciprocity from Party B ($\beta = .48$, $p < .01$), a one standard deviation increase in balanced NWB from Party A results in a .30 standard deviation increase in balanced reciprocity from Party B ($\beta = .30$, $p < .01$), and a one standard deviation increase in active NWB from Party A results in a .68 standard deviation increase in active reciprocity from Party B ($\beta = .68$, $p < .01$). In only one case was NWB from Party A associated with behavior that would be classified as de-escalation; severe NWB from Party A results in a .65 standard deviation increase in moderate reciprocity from Party B ($\beta = .65$, $p < .05$). Thus, for RQ 4, increasing the rate of NWB from Party A was most consistently related to increases in negative reciprocity from Party B that were at an equal level, and, in this analysis, there was no indication of escalation of behavior.

RQ 5: Moderating Effect of Study Design Variables

RQ 5 concerned the effect of several a priori specified moderators related to methodological issues affecting the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity: the longitudinal nature of the study and whether Party A and Party B's behavior were rated by the same rater. As shown in Table 5, whether the study employed a longitudinal design where Party A and Party B's behavior were separated in time did not significantly moderate the relationship between behaviors. This suggests that NWB–negative reciprocity relationships are not affected by whether the proposed instigating action from Party A is measured at a point in time prior to the proposed reciprocity behavior from Party B. Because one criteria required for causal inference is that the proposed causal variable precedes the other in time (e.g., Hayes & Preacher, 2014), tentative conclusions can be drawn from the *lack* of a moderating effect. These results provide some support for the appropriateness of theoretical arguments employed by the majority of studies incorporated in the present analyses.

Our second moderator tested for the effects of the rating source on the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity. Because self- and other-ratings can capture unique variance in negative workplace behavior (e.g., Berry et al., 2012), we coded for whether Party A's and Party B's behavior was coded by the same or different individuals. The source of each rating has the potential to affect the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity because of individual perceptions, exposure to behavior, and methodological issues (e.g., common method variance; Podsakoff et al., 2003). In one case, relationships were strengthened when the behaviors were rated by different individuals (i.e., passive–active, $\beta = -.41$, $p < .05$), while in other cases, relationships were strengthened when behaviors were rated by the same individuals (i.e., minor–minor $\beta = .30$, $p < .05$; moderate–moderate $\beta = .25$, $p < .05$; passive–passive $\beta = .30$, $p < .05$; and balanced–active $\beta = .30$, $p < .05$). The results suggest that rating source is not consistently related to differences in relationships between behaviors from Party A and Party B.

Discussion

The present meta-analysis used a relationally based framework to test the exchange of negative workplace behaviors between individuals by defining NWB in terms of severity, activity, and target. The findings support the idea that negative behavior tends to be returned in-kind, consistent with propositions from negative reciprocity that rest on "an eye for an eye" (Gouldner, 1960; Helm et al., 1972). Indeed, the strongest relationships were between behaviors of matched level between Party A and Party B. However, relationships representative of escalation in behavior (i.e., increased severity or activity) were also strong and positive, providing some support for the idea that negative behaviors might escalate in intensity, or have the potential to spiral (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Baron & Neuman, 1996; Folger & Skarlicki, 1998; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010a; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Interestingly, relationships between Party A's NWB and less intense negative reciprocity by Party B, patterns which would represent de-escalation, were the weakest effects, whether these de-escalations were considered in terms of severity (i.e., less severe behavior) or activity (i.e., more passive behavior). Below we discuss the findings for each of the major classifications in more detail.

Severity, a categorization in our framework defined by the amount of harm NWB inflicts upon a target (i.e., minor, moderate, severe), is a fundamental theme in many models of NWB, including Robinson and Bennett's (1995) seminal work on workplace deviance. Across different levels of severity, results show that the strongest relationships are those between behaviors at the same level of severity, for example, minor–minor, moderate–moderate, and severe–severe. We further probed the relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity by exploring the base rates (i.e., frequency) of Party A's and Party B's behavior. Increases in Party A's minor behaviors were related to increases in Party B's minor responses and increases in Party A's moderate behaviors were related to increases in Party B's moderate responses. Taken together, the results suggest that the severity of Party A's behavior is most often returned in-kind, or tit-for-tat (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), from Party B, although in some cases, escalation of behaviors (moderate–severe) or de-escalation (severe–moderate) may also be likely. Interestingly, from the base rate analysis, only one relationship represented a de-escalation of behavior. The frequency of Party A's severe behavior was related to increases in the frequency of *moderately* severe behavior from Party B, a pattern which suggests that for the most severe types of behavior (e.g., harassment, violence), individuals may be influenced by strong ethical norms or concerns about legal repercussions that affect

tapraid5/z2j-aplpsy/z2j-aplpsy/z2j99918/z2j3342d18z | xppws | S=1 | 1/31/19 | 10:07 | Art: 2017-3602

viable response options and limit viability of severe negative reciprocation (Harvey & Keashly, 2003).

The second major theme which we used to categorize NWB in our framework is activity (i.e., passive, balanced, active), which captures harm that comes from withdrawal of positive behavior versus active engagement in negative behavior and represents a critical dimension of social exchange theory (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Results for activity were largely consistent with those from severity; two of the three strongest relationships are between those at the same level of activity: passive–passive and active–active. For the balanced level, the strongest relationship was for balanced–active, indicative of escalation, although the difference between this value and that for balanced–balanced was relatively small. In terms of frequency, increases in Party A's behavior at a particular activity level were most strongly associated with increases in behavior from Party B at the same activity level (i.e., passive–passive, balanced–balanced, and active–active). This pattern of data again suggests that the valence of NWB is most likely to be returned in equal measure, rather than escalated or de-escalated.

Our final categorization for NWB was based on the target of the reciprocity behavior, whether Party B's behavior is directed back at Party A or displaced onto a separate target. We were surprised to find that studies rarely considered outright whether the target of the reciprocation constitutes direct or displaced behavior. For example, in studies proposing that Party A's NWB results in Party B perpetuating the same or similar actions in response (e.g., bullying begets bullying; aggression transforms others into aggressors; incivility is met with incivility), the majority fail to describe whether the response behavior (i.e., negative reciprocity), is directed at the instigator, at others besides the instigator, or possibly at both. Because it was possible to classify only a small number of studies based on target, our ability to test for differences between targets was somewhat limited. In general, there were few differences in the relationships between NWB and negative reciprocity based on target. However, we did find that in two cases representative of de-escalation from Party B (moderate–minor and balanced–passive) that the relationship was stronger for direct versus displaced responses, indicating that Party B de-escalated the intensity of a response when responding directly back onto the instigator. There was also a single case of escalation, again directed more strongly at the instigator (balanced–active). Interestingly, this latter finding is consistent with previous work on supervisor aggression and supervisor-directed counterproductive work behavior that shows stronger relationships between direct responses to abusive supervisors than it does to displacement of responses to coworkers (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010b; Zhang & Liao, 2015). Overall, the general lack of consistency in findings raises interesting questions about not only the target of the behavior but also whether relative status differences could possibly affect the NWB–negative reciprocity relationship. Unfortunately, the small number of studies precluded such additional analyses.

Comparisons With Previous Meta-Analyses

Considering the existence of a large number of different meta-analysis on various forms of NWB, it is useful to compare the findings from the current study with previous findings. As noted, the majority of meta-analyses on different types of negative behavior at work have combined inter- and intrapersonal effect sizes (cf., aggression, Hershcovis & Barling, 2010b; abusive supervision, Mackey et al., 2017; Schyns & Schilling, 2013; Zhang & Liao, 2015; sexual harassment, Cantisano et al., 2008). Therefore, we would not expect that these findings would fully generalize to relational exchanges as presented in the current analyses. For example, in the present meta-analysis, coding for behaviors from distinct individuals, Party A and Party B, may account for some of the disparate findings between analyses. Take the relationship between organizationally directed counterproductive work behavior and withdrawal, which has been reported as both $\rho = .74$ (Spector et al., 2006) and $\rho = .46$ (Carpenter & Berry, 2017). An unexamined moderator in the above studies is whether the correlates came from the same (intraindividual) or different (interindividual) individuals. Considered within the current framework where Party A engages in organizationally directed counterproductive work behavior and Party B engages in withdrawal, this relationship would be coded as a moderate–minor exchange ($\rho = .28$) and a balanced–passive exchange ($\rho = .28$). Both values are considerably smaller than the prior values and speak directly to the reciprocal nature of NWB exchanges.

In addition, we incorporated many different constructs falling under the broad heading of NWB and were therefore able to categorize the constructs based on different levels of severity and activity. This is an important extension of previous work because the categorization enabled us to capture changes in level representative of de-escalation, tit-for-tat behavior, or escalation (For example, in previous meta-analyses on counterproductive work behavior and aggression (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010b), harassment (e.g., Bowling & Beehr, 2006), or abusive supervision (e.g., Mackey et al., 2017), it is unclear whether the relationships are representative of behavior of equal level (i.e., severity and activity) and what, if any, responses would be representative of de-escalation, on one hand, or escalation, on the other. The present meta-analysis helps to elucidate different options for negative reciprocation which represents behavior that de-escalates, perpetuates, or escalates exchanges of NWB. In addition, the consistent positive relationships found in this analysis suggests that any empirical work which seeks to explore behavioral reactions to NWB but focuses on only one form of reaction, or one level of severity or activity, will very likely fail to capture other closely relevant forms of reciprocation which occur in response to the NWB.

Last, by categorizing the behavior of Party A and Party B we can offer some insight into the directionality of effects at different levels as proposed in current studies of CWB. For example, based on the theoretical rationale of the primary studies, we observe that when Party A engages in a minorly severe behavior, such as incivility, this is related to Party B's moderately severe behavior, such as bullying, in response ($\rho = .45$). However, because the data is correlational, one may argue that the opposite is true, that bullying was the "instigating" action and incivility the response. This possibility of revere causality is captured in the moderate–minor relationship ($\rho = .28$). If the categorization into Party A and Party B was random, then one would expect the strength of these relationships to be the same across all reciprocal exchanges.

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Theoretical Implications

We make several theoretical contributions to the literature. First, social exchange theory is among one of the most influential and common paradigms for understanding workplace behavior (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), and while the theoretical perspectives are grounded in the idea of exchange (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999) many studies on NWB are largely individually based. By employing a relationally based paradigm, we present negative behaviors from Party B, not as simple causes or results of affective or cognitive constructs, but as representative of an exchange of behaviors with Party A. In organizational settings, as in general society, individuals form and maintain their social relationships with others by building mutual rules, norms, and obligations of reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Emerson, 1976). This meta-analysis provides empirical support for these organizing principles, confirming that the exchange of negative behavior, through the norm of negative reciprocity, is a consistent and integral part of organizational life. We specifically suggest that individuals are most likely to perpetuate negative behaviors of the same severity or activity which they have experienced.

Second, in differentiating between passive and active reciprocity we respond to calls to examine social interactions not only in terms of hedonic tone (i.e., positive vs. negative, constructive vs. destructive), but also in terms of activity (i.e., active vs. inactive; Cropanzano et al., 2017). In doing so, we extend Gouldner's (1960) conceptualization and highlight the importance of the often overlooked passive form of negative reciprocity, finding that its subtlety belies its constancy: Passive reciprocity, just as does active reciprocity, plays a central role in capturing the exchange of behavior in organizational landscapes. Incorporating constructs related to passive responses extends social exchange theory and highlights key deficiencies in theories of negative workplace behavior which generally do not differentiate between choices to actively engage in negative behavior versus choices to withhold positive behavior. These less clearly defined, more passive forms of negative reciprocity likely have significant influence on organizational outcomes and represent a clear need for future theoretical consideration.

Third, we contribute to numerous theories related to targets of NWB (e.g., incivility, Andersson & Pearson, 1999; retaliation, Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; reactance theory, Wright & Brehm, 1982; displaced aggression, Dollard et al., 1939) by specifying the target of negative reciprocity behaviors (i.e., direct vs. displaced). Although some studies use theory to outline the particular target of behavior (e.g., Bowling & Michel, 2011; Hershcovis et al., 2012; Mitchell & Ambrose, 2012), the majority of studies assessing negative reciprocity such as incivility, bullying, and counterproductive work behavior, fail to specify the target of the response behavior. It is surprising and suggestive that few differences were found in the strength of the relationships between Party A's NWB and Party B's negative reciprocation based on whether that reciprocation was direct or displaced. Given the impact of NWB, one might expect that variation in targets would lead to significant variation in the strength of a relationship. However, the small number of studies in each condition limits the certainty that can be drawn from this analysis.

Although our ability to test the target of negative reciprocity responses was limited, we did find evidence that negative reciprocity was associated with reactions directed at multiple targets—both at the instigator and at others in the organization. Interestingly, displacement of behavior may arise from two distinct theoretical processes. First, theories of aggression (e.g., Buss, 1961; Dollard et al., 1939) posit that a frustrated actor may displace aggressive behavior onto another target out of fear of retribution, for example, when an employee steals something from the organization instead of directly confronting an abusive supervisor out of fear that the supervisor may retaliate further. Second, social learning theory suggests that displaced reciprocity may occur because targets model the poor behavior of perpetrators and then go on to direct negative reactions toward their colleagues (e.g., Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). Future theory and research on exchanges of NWB would benefit from examining tit-for-tat or escalation of behavior in terms of both possible theoretical motivations for the negative reciprocity (i.e., frustration but fear of punishment vs. modeling). This explicit inclusion of target individuals of NWB may be one of the key factors through which theory on spirals of escalation can be explicitly tied with cultures and climate for NWB.

Practical Implications

The consistent, positive relationship between NWB from Party A and negative reciprocity from Party B suggests that even one negative behavior in an organization is likely related to negative behaviors of similar severity or activity in return. This result is consistent whether NWB is considered in terms of severity or in terms of activity. Thus, a primary practical implication of the work is that managers who stop one NWB from Party A are, in fact, likely stopping multiple negative behaviors from a multitude of Party Bs. In other words, because our analysis shows that NWB will be reciprocated, either directly or indirectly, with other forms of NWB, limiting one NWB severs the chain of negative reactions and has important implications for the overall level of NWB in organizations. As such, managers should be diligent in discouraging and reacting against "instigating" negative acts in the workplace. In addition, managers should also work to establish strong norms to prevent other employees from becoming "instigators" themselves.

A second practical implication, given the pattern of our effects, is that it is particularly likely that if the desire is to reduce NWB of a particular severity or activity, targeting behaviors at that level of severity or activity will pay the highest dividends; not only reducing the targeted behaviors but also those of the same activity or severity which are likely to occur through reciprocation. For example, if incivility is disrupting organizational functioning, initiatives should target uncivil behaviors rather than more severe forms of behavior such as bullying or harassment. Congruently, if an organization is facing an unexpected increase in NWB, a potential cause to examine would be the onset of NWB of a similar severity or activity which might be increasing reciprocation at the same level.

A third practical implication is that NWB should be considered, not just as individually motivated, as when an employee (Party A) frustrated by overwhelming job demands lashes out at a coworker (Party B), but as relational, as when the frustrated recipient (Party B) of the lashing out in the previous example returns the behavior in-kind. If a manager notices and disciplines only the behavior of

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Party B, then this may only amplify conflict between coworkers. Of course, this is not to say that all forms of NWB are relationally based. Certainly there will be a multitude of stressors and negative workplace events that provide the spark for an instigating action (Bies & Tripp, 1996). The implication of our findings along with previous work, however, is that human resource departments may at times be better served by focusing on mediation between employees as opposed to individually based disciplinary actions.

Limitations and Future Research

The present study is not without limitations. One of the primary challenges faced in the coding strategy was differentiating between severity and activity. As is evident in Table 1, all of the constructs, such as incivility and retaliation, categorized as low in severity were also categorized as passive, meaning that the results for minor–minor and passive–passive categorizations are identical. However, we believe that this limitation in our work points to clear avenues for future research. For example, measures of withdrawal (e.g., Hanisch & Hulin, 1990) often include forms of withdrawal at multiple levels, such as minor withdrawal (e.g., being unconcerned about personal appearance) and more severe forms of withdrawal (e.g., such being absent when not really sick). While both of these forms of withdrawal are passive, it is possible that the former does little harm to the organization while the latter removes the employee from the organizational context entirely for the duration of their absence, something which likely has a significantly greater impact on the organization's functioning. Accordingly, it may be important in future research to differentiate various types of passive reciprocity behaviors based on the degree to which the behavior harms the organization (i.e., severity).

In a similar vein, even though we categorized *constructs* along severity and activity dimensions, each of these scales contain *items* that range in both severity and activity. For example, Greenberg and Barling's (1999) aggression scale contains items ranging from moderate severity ("Sulk and/or refuse to talk about things with others;" $M = 3.40$) to high severity ("Push, grab, or shove someone;" $M = 6.61$). It is possible that endorsement of the more severe items is less common than endorsement of less severe items, which would result in the scale being less severe overall. This raises the possibility that the severity of the scale as a whole is dependent on the response patterns of answers for individual items on the scales. Although this is certainly a limitation, a proposed feature of many negative behavior scales is that they capture a range of items in order to overcome low-base rate issues associated with NWB (e.g., Greco et al., 2015; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Future research should examine the item-level response patterns of behaviors in terms of both severity and activity.

AQ: 12

Second, none of the studies included in our meta-analyses were experimental, in some cases because no correlations from experimental studies satisfied the coding criteria (e.g., Reich & Hershcovis, 2015; Wang et al., 2009, 2011). As such, causality cannot be established, only proposed based on the theoretical rationale of the primary studies and the temporal precedence of NWB. It is possible that some of the behaviors categorized as negative reciprocity in the primary studies, such as instigated incivility, may have in fact been the initiating factor in NWB–negative reciprocity relationships. However, because we coded behavior from Party A and Party B, it is possible for us to consider these questions of reverse causality. Interpreting both effects acknowledges the potential for reverse causality in the relationship between parties engaging in NWB (e.g., Lian, Ferris, et al., 2014) and enables interpretations in which both parties can be actors and recipients of each other's actions. We believe that future research should continue to assess issues of causality and reciprocation, especially in considering whether the reciprocation is of similar or increased intensity.

A third limitation is that our analysis of targets was limited by the measurement in primary studies. Until future researchers modify constructs and measurement to specify the targets of negative response behaviors, it is challenging or impossible to test whether certain types of behaviors lend themselves more to direct or displaced targets, or what important moderators of target selection might be. Although our analysis of direct and displaced targets largely failed to identify statistically significant differences, we do not believe that this is indicative of a lack of practical significance. Instead, our inability to find differences across targets points to a critical shortcoming where NWB researchers have not adequately captured the relevant targeting or targeted parties, especially when relying on a social exchange framework to derive their hypotheses. For example, it is possible that some of Party B's negative exchange behaviors are directed back toward Party A (as predicted by social exchange theory), but it is equally possible that Party B's negative behaviors are directed at another individual (i.e., party C). In the latter case, alternate theoretical frameworks may be necessary to explain the displacement of the negative reciprocity behavior. This limited information on targets also precluded us from testing for effects related to status differences between parties (e.g., Aquino & Bommer, 2003; Aquino & Douglas, 2003; Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000; Kim, Smith, & Brigham, 1998). For example, it is reasonable to assume that Party B may choose to directly reciprocate to Party A when both parties are of equal status, but that Party B may choose to displace reciprocation to someone or something besides Party A when Party A is a higher status individual. Although we were unable to test these differences we strongly encourage future research that specifies the precise target and also captures relative status differences (e.g., Hershcovis, Ogunfowora, Reich, & Christie, 2017).

In the present study we intentionally focused on studies reporting correlations between two measures of behavior. However, other studies have demonstrated the importance of attitudes, such as justice perceptions, in moderating the effects of reciprocity behaviors (e.g., Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). It would be worthwhile to consider other potential attitudinal, individual difference (e.g., Scott & Colquitt, 2007), or contextual (e.g., Whitson, Wang, Kim, Cao, & Scrimpshire, 2015) moderators within this framework, particularly in terms of Party B's decision to engage in NWB and the intensity with which they do so. For instance, individuals with high levels of certain personality traits (e.g., neuroticism, narcissism, equity sensitivity) might strengthen the relationship between Party A's and Party B's NWB, and high levels of other traits (e.g., agreeableness, prevention focus) may weaken it. Another avenue of future research has to do with the base rate of NWB as it relates to negative reciprocation. We showed that in-kind reciprocity was more frequent as employees were exposed to higher rates of NWB at the same level. However, this analysis assumed a linear relationship between NWB and negative reciprocity. It is possible that individuals will only negatively reciprocate at a certain threshold of NWB, when

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the base rate has become high enough (Helm et al., 1972), triggering a negative spiral of reciprocity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Bies & Tripp, 1995; Felson & Steadman, 1983). However, due to the small number of studies within categories for severity and activity, the assessment of quadratic effects would have had low statistical power (Gonzalez-Mule & Aguinis, 2017); we therefore did not assess such "tipping points" in our analysis. Future research should examine whether there is a nonlinear change in reciprocity behaviors based on the frequency of NWB.

A final area of future research relates to the findings from our tests of publication bias. Results showed that there was no reason to suspect that authors finding effect sizes *smaller* than the mean results were disproportionately excluded from the search. However, the exploratory test showed asymmetry on the right-hand side, indicating that studies with very *large* relationships between negative workplace behaviors and negative reciprocity behaviors may have been excluded from the published literature and our search. Because this analysis was purely exploratory and post hoc, and it is very uncommon for effect size distributions to be perfectly symmetrical outside of simulation research, we are not claiming definitively that publication bias was present. It may be possible that this result is simply due to second order sampling error. Still, this is consistent with small studies that find very large effects being dismissed as either containing a measurement problem (e.g., CMV) or something that might create analysis problems (e.g., multicollinearity, suppressor effects). If this is indeed indicative of publication bias, then on average, the true relationship may be slightly larger than the observed estimate. This is a viable area for future research in not just this context, but any area that often encounters larger than average correlations (e.g., intercorrelations of leadership qualities, team-level studies, diary, and experience-sampling designs).

AQ: 13

Conclusion

The present meta-analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the exchange of negative behavior in the workplace. We intentionally incorporated a wide range of constructs measuring negative workplace behavior from Party A (i.e., NWB) and the associated negative behavior from Party B (i.e., negative reciprocation) to provide an omnibus survey of how relational exchanges of negative behaviors occur within organizations. NWB from Party A was most consistently related to responses of equal valence (i.e., severity and activity) from Party B, supporting the perspective of an eye for an eye. Such findings provide important theoretical contributions to multiple literatures including social exchange, negative reciprocity, and various conceptualizations of negative workplace behaviors.

AQ: 14

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