Incivility by Degree:

The Influence of Educational Attainment on Workplace Civility

Helen L. MacLennan
Saint Leo University

Abstract

Research indicates that incivility, or subtle rude behavior, often stems from personal power inequities and flows downward, with those at the bottom of the hierarchy experiencing the greatest perception of incivility. This study used the Organizational Civility Scale (OCS) to survey residential property managers across the United States regarding perceptions of civility in their own organizations. The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of civility based on formal education level and the findings revealed statistically significant differences. Participants lowest on the formal education hierarchy reported a greater frequency of incivility, lower satisfaction with their workplace, and a lower perception of overall civility at work. The study provides additional insight into the relationship between power and incivility, which may add increased sensitivity of the issue and aid in the development of organizational incivility prevention programs. Suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Introduction

It is widely known that in many professions, a lack of formal education will limit job and advancement opportunities. But, is there another less recognized negative effect? The present article focuses on a comparison of the perceptions of organizational civility and workplace satisfaction in those with a college degree and those without.

An individual's formal education level can certainly influence their social status, but it may also sway attitudes and behaviors in interactions with others at different hierarchical status levels. Those at the top levels of the status hierarchy, with the greatest sense of personal power, may view and treat those at lower levels as status inferiors. As a result, certain negative behaviors may be perceived to be perfectly acceptable when they are directed at individuals at a lower status levels, but unacceptable when directed at those who occupy a higher status level. However, because overt mistreatment is socially, and often legally, unacceptable, individuals may turn to more ambiguous forms of mistreatment, such as incivility, in an attempt to maintain the existing power hierarchy.

Incivility is differentiated from other forms of mistreatment based on its subtlety, low intensity and the ability of its user to deny any malicious intent (Pearson, Andersson & Wegner, 2001). It can include general rudeness, the use of condescending remarks, belittling the efforts of others, taking credit for the work of others, withholding information, or disregarding the feelings and opinions of others (Pearson & Porath, 2009; Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Clark and Carnosso (2008) found that civility was generally found to be a positive attribute, while incivility

had negative connotations and was seen as a deliberate means to exclude certain groups of people, placing a burden on some societal groups.

Taken together, unacceptable behaviors and general incivility at work is perceived to be a major issue that is only getting worse. In a national poll, 75% respondents believe that incivility is getting worse (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2000). Pearson and Porath (2005) polled 800 U.S. employees, 10% of whom reported witnessing incivility at work on a daily basis. In a national survey conducted in 2001 by Public Agenda, New York, 79% of those responding indicated that a lack of respect and courtesy is a serious problem that needs attention. In additional studies across 9,000 employees, Pearson and Porath (2009) found that 95% of those responding indicated they had experienced incivility at work.

The following sections detail hypotheses that conceptualize the relationship between formal education level and perceptions of incivility at work. This research study does not attempt to provide a comprehensive measure of organizational incivility climate. Rather, it explores the possibility that the formal education level of an individual may be related to their perceptions of incivility within their organization. The comparison provides additional insight into the relationship between personal power status and workplace incivility.

The Power – Incivility Link

Massey (2007) observed a natural tendency for the classifying of individuals into categories, which may be based on race, ethnicity, social class, gender, education level, or other categories. These categorizations are not inherently problematic. However, the tendency to categorize individuals often results in classifying those groups of individuals on a hierarchy based on what society has deemed to be important. There is plenty of evidence that these hierarchy systems relate to power and impact both the attitudes and behaviors of individuals (Raven, 1992, 1993, 2008; Farkas et al., 2002; Nelson et. al, 2006; Michinov, 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001, 2012; Pratto & Stewart, 2011; Pratto et al., 1994; Pinker, 2002, Lareau & Conley, 2010). The real issue is that perceptions of power may contribute to an attitude of superiority by those who hold higher power, which can, in turn, serve to condone the unequal treatment or degradation of those in inferior status positions (Scott, 2007).

Several researchers suggest that individuals in higher power positions often believe that those in lower positions deserve not only their status, but also disparate treatment, as a means to "keep them in their place." Porath, Overbeck, and Pearson (2008) suggested that uncivil behavior, in some cases, results from a competition for social status as group members struggle to maintain or defend an existing social status. The problem lies not simply with the idea that certain individuals are considered to be "inferior" by "superior" members of either an organizational or socially constructed hierarchy, but with those feelings of superiority and power comes the propensity for dispensing inequitable treatment in a top-down flow of incivility. Pearson et al. (2000) posited "Incivility is mistreatment that may lead to disconnection, breach of relationships, and erosion of empathy" (p. 125).

Blanchard (2015) indicates that there are at least five bases of power at play in work relationships. They include position power, task power, personal power, relationship power, and knowledge power. Knowledge power stems from a variety of skills and is typically evidenced by certifications or formal degrees. Consequently, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: As a group, individuals with a high school education level will report less satisfaction with their workplace environment than their college educated counterparts.

Porath et al. (2008) suggested that incivility represents not only a violation of the norms for civil behavior in the workplace, but also a challenge to an individual's status. They contended that targets' responses to status challenges would depend on the status of both the challenger and the target. Pearson and Porath (2009) also indicated that a larger range of behaviors are considered appropriate for status "superiors" even when the behaviors violate social norms. These studies examined power dynamics in workplace relationships and indicate that the use of power and authority to over-control and treat others oppressively is likely to be present in many workplace relationships. However, when social norms dictate a disdain for overt aggression and blatant mistreatment, an individual may turn to incivility as a more ambiguous and socially acceptable way to exert their power over others.

Several researchers have empirically tested the link between the influence of power in relationships and incivility. Pearson et al. (2000) provided a macro-level analysis of social interactions based on the conflict-theory perspective of the impacts of social and power inequities. For example, across a broad range of participants, these researchers found that incivility tends to come from the top and flow downward based on hierarchal, gender, and status differentials. In further support of the theory of top-down incivility flow, Caza and Cortina (2007) found that top-down incivility (i.e. incivility stemming from individuals at a higher level in the institutional hierarchy) was more strongly associated with perceptions of injustice than was peer-instigated incivility. Consequently, the following are hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: As a group, individuals with a high school education level will report greater perceptions of incivility from coworkers than their college educated counterparts.
Hypothesis 3: As a group, individuals with a high school education level will report greater perceptions of incivility from workplace supervisors than their college educated counterparts.

A hierarchy of status and power exists within and outside every organization. In a top-down flow, those individuals with the greatest power, either real or perceived, may also have a greater tendency to utilize and justify various forms of mistreatment against those with less power. In addition, incivility is possibly a more frequently used form of mistreatment because of its subtle and often undetectable intent. Consequently, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 4: As a group, individuals with a high school level education will report a greater frequency of incivility at work than their college educated counterparts.

The Significance of Incivility

Incivility is often viewed as being unworthy of serious attention. However, those seemingly insignificant subtle acts of incivility have many far-reaching implications. Research indicates negative implications at the societal, organizational, and individual levels.

In society, individuals are categorized based on any number of factors such as gender, social status, religious beliefs, race, etc. Groups that are lower on the hierarchy are valued less and considered socially unequal in terms of prestige and power. hose categories exist on a hierarchy of social class, frequently determined by income level. Regardless of the term used, the "poor,"

"lower class," "underprivileged," "undervalued," or "welfare dependent" occupy positions at the bottom of the ranking system that lumps together those individuals with little economic power, monetary wealth, few occupational opportunities, and little education.

Unfortunately, society places a greater importance on some groups than others (Kerbo, 2012). As a result, member of certain groups may develop an attitude of superiority that can influence their behavior in interactions with members of other groups. For example, incivility may be viewed as acceptable if directed toward members of those in lower social class group positions and is used as a means of preserving the existing social order (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001, 2012; Pratto & Stewart, 2011; and Pratto et al. 2006). Kerbo (2012) added that the tendency to group and rank individuals is the basis for social inequality. However, because blatant discrimination against undervalued social classes is socially and frequently legally unacceptable, incivility, a more subtle and ambiguous forms of mistreatment, may be used in its place (Cortina, 2008).

At the organization level, incivility does not often get the same attention as violence and aggressive behavior; it is less transparent in intent, but much more prevalent (Pearson et al., 2000). Incivility can have a significant negative impact on the overall financial health of the organization. Employees confronting incivility at work may suffer increased stress, use more sick days or may even opt to leave the organization. Additionally, a climate of incivility can influence relationships with those outside the organization resulting in a loss of customers and damage to the organization's reputation.

In addition to financial costs, incivility may, either intentionally or unintentionally, result in the discrimination of individuals in protected classes, putting organizations at a greater risk of illegal discrimination and resulting litigation. Cortina (2008) added that "Power also gives individuals at the top of the social structure the tools to translate their biases into discriminatory conduct" (p. 62). Research indicates that incivility is increasing. As a result, it is likely to have an even greater impact on individuals and organizations in the future.

While a great deal of incivility research has focused on organization-level implications, the underlying impact to organizations stems from the perceptions and resulting impact on the individuals who work there. Several researchers have found that incivility has a host of negative effects on the individuals who are targets. The literature revealed the following individual-level implications of organizational incivility: Employee stress and burnout (Pearson & Porath, 2009; Nydegger, 2001); Damaged social identity (Andersson & Pearson, 1999); anger (Andersson & Pearson, 1999); perceived injustice (Cortina, 2008); frustration (Cortina & Magley, 2009); low job satisfaction (Cortina & Magley, 2009; perception of social ostracism (Caza & Cortina, 2007); reduced helpfulness (Porath & Erez, 2007); and reduced creativity (Porath & Erez, 2009).

As Clark (2010) contended, all members of an organization, from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom, may be either an agent or a target of incivility, depending on with whom they are interacting. However, a top-down flow of incivility results in the unequal treatment of those at the bottom of the power hierarchy like those without a formal education. While overt aggression and violence tends to receive much more attention from management, lower-intensity deviant behaviors are actually more predominant, less visible, and can be just as harmful to individuals and the organizations for which they work (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Caza & Cortina, 2007; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Ottinot, 2010; Pearson et al., 2000; Penny & Spector, 2005; Porath & Erez, 2009, 2011; Reio & Ghosh, 2009; Trevino & Youngblood, 1990).

In order to help us to understand how individuals are affected by the power of others, this research uses Sidanius and Pratto's (2001, 2012) social dominance orientation (SDO) theory as a

theoretical foundation. SDO Draws from Lewin's (1951) discussions of social power and power fields, which described how an individual may be simultaneously affected by the power of several individuals, Sidanius and Pratto (2001, 2012) theorized that there are group-based social hierarchies within the social system. They added that there are behavioral differences in people at different levels, which serve to reinforce the existing social system.

This research also draws on Cortina's (2008) theory of selective incivility, which provides a model of uncivil behavior some may use as a covert form of discrimination against members of undervalued social groups. The central argument in the theory is that incivility may represent manifestations of bias in the workplace. Cortina (2008) posited that discriminatory behavior at work is influenced by a combination of both personal bias and the organizational climate as it relates to biased behavior.

In sum, it is important to assess the influence of power on incivility climate. Consequently, this research seeks to investigate perceptions of organizational incivility, as measured by the Organizational Civility Scale, developed by Clark and Landrum (2012) and compare group differences based on formal education level. The study is intended to provide insight into the relationship between knowledge power and incivility.

Method

Procedure and Participants

This research study was comprised of a random sample of residential property managers across the United States drawn from members of the Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM) who met the following two qualifications: (1) they were categorized as a manager of public housing or private residential rental property and they (2) provided an e-mail address in their personal profile. While the contacted individuals do not represent all of the possible property managers in the United States, they serve as a general estimate to calculate property manager perceptions. The researcher asked qualified members to participate on a voluntary basis with no promise of compensation. Participants were offered a copy of the resulting study.

Demographic Statistics

Demographics of respondents are reported in Table 1 below. Respondents ($f = 178$) were fairly evenly represented with regard to gender with 57.4% or $f = 101$ identifying as male and 42.6% or $f = 75$ identifying as female. The majority of study respondents in this research study (78.7% or $f = 140$) indicated they were managers of private residential rental communities. The majority of them (82% or $f = 147$) have held their job for five or more years. The respondents in this study were concentrated in three age groups. Approximately 38% or $f = 67$ of the respondents indicated they were in the 57+ age group, 33.9% or $f = 60$ of them indicated that they were in the 48-57 age group, 18.6% or $f = 33$ of them in the 38-47 age group. With regard to education level, the majority of the respondents (77% or $f = 136$) indicated that they held a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 1: Frequencies by Respondents' Tenure, Age Group, Gender, and Education level

		Frequency	Valid %
Tenure	less than 1	7	4.0
	1 – 2	9	5.0
	3 – 4	9	5.0
	More than 4 – less than 5	7	4.0
	5 or more	146	82.0
	N = 178	178	100.0
Age Group	18-27	2	1.1
	28-37	15	8.5
	38–47	33	18.6
	48-57	60	33.9
	57+	68	37.9
	N = 178	178	100.0
Gender	Female	76	42.7
	Male	102	57.3
	N = 178	178	100.0
Education Level	High School or GED	40	22.7
	Bachelor's Degree	104	59.2
	Master's Degree	30	17.0
	PhD	2	1.1
	N = 165	165	100.0

Survey Instrument

Perceptions of civility climate are measured using the Organizational Civility Scale (OCS) developed by Clark and Landrum (2012). The present author has purchased the right to use the OCS in this research (see Appendix C). The OCS (Clark & Landrum, 2012) is a comprehensive measure of organizational civility and has undergone extensive pilot testing. The instrument measures perceptions of organizational civility climate through the subscales listed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Organizational Civility Construct Measurement.

Construct Measurement	# of items	Response Scale	α
Perceptions of coworker relationships	9	5 point scale	.95
Perceptions of supervisor relationships	6	5 point scale	.89
Frequency of incivility	16	5 point scale	.96
Employee satisfaction	6	100 point scale	.88
Overall civility rating	4	100 point scale	.87

Because individuals are unlikely to volunteer information about their own uncivil behaviors or may even be unaware of them, the author set out to measure incivility from the viewpoint of the target. The attitudes and behaviors of management typically drive the climate within an organization, thus he researcher suspects that a measurement of the perceptions of organizational incivility climate will provide a good indication of the individual-level incivility behaviors within the organization. The researcher made no changes to the OCS instrument for this study. However, because the OCS was designed for use as a multi-faceted organizational civility climate assessment tool, not all sections of the OCS were relevant for use in this study.

Data Collection

The OCS surveys for this study were distributed exclusively via email. Participants were asked to complete and return the survey via an online survey tool (SurveyMonkey). The initial e-mail request with imbedded human subject safeguards including purpose and instructions, was sent to 1,639 potential participants and yielded 160 valid responses. The researcher sent a second request to non-respondents and subsequently received one additional valid response. A third and final request was delivered several months later to those who had not responded to the previous two requests. The final request yielded 17 more valid responses, for a total of 178 valid responses.

Results

The purpose of this research was to examine whether perceptions of organizational civility climate differed based on formal education level. The researcher used the Organizational Civility Scale (OCS), an instrument developed to measure perceptions of organizational civility climate by measuring perceptions of coworker relationships, perceptions of supervisor relationships, frequency of coworker incivility, employee satisfaction, and overall civility in the workplace.

This study sought to address four hypotheses related to the relationship between formal education level (college education vs. high school education) and the perceptions of organizational civility climate as measured by the self-reported OCS instrument. The contributions of this research will serve as a foundation for further study. Through this approach, management practitioners could be directed toward strategies and initiatives to reduce incivility in their organizations.

Data Reduction

The original OCS instrument includes nine sub-scales with 2-16 subset items, for 86 possible dependent variables (Clark & Landrum, 2012). Given the large number of items, which are highly correlated, the researcher used an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to reduce the data to a more manageable size. The goal was simply to take the large set of dependent variables and reduce them to a smaller, more manageable number while retaining as much of the original variance as possible. Factor analysis seeks to identify groups of items with correlations greater than zero (Walkey & Welch, 2010). The assumption is that certain underlying factors or influences are the cause of such correlations. A comparison to the outcome of Clark and Landrum's exploratory factor analysis (EFA) indicated very similar Cronbach's alpha (*a*) levels.

The researcher used an EFA to reduce each section of the OCS to latent variables. She did not use the sections of the OCS relating to stress and coping based on the lack of validity explained by Clark and Landrum (2012). Table 7 shows the results of the original authors. The researcher reduced the individual items in each section of the OCS by retaining the items loading with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. There were eight latent variables resulting from the EFA. The retained factors are considered representative of overall organizational civility climate. Table 3 shows the percentage of variance explained by the latent variable(s) for each section.

Table 3: Outcomes of Exploratory Factor Analysis for Dimension Reduction of the Organizational Civility Scale

Section Title	# Items/ #Resulting Latent Variables	% of Variance Explained by Latent Variable	Name of Factor, # of Factors Analyzed, Alpha Level
Perceptions of Organizational Climate	16/2	76.83%	Supervisory Relationship (9, *a* = .968) Co-Worker Relationship (6, *a* = .910)
Frequency of Incivility	16/1	68.07%	Frequency of acts of incivility (16, *a* = .968)
Employee Satisfaction	6/1	77.16%	Feelings about employee satisfaction (6, *a* = .898)
Overall Civility Rating	4/1	78.99%	Overall civility ratings (4, *a* = .87)

Findings

This study addressed four specific hypotheses. The researcher used a combination of statistical tests to explore the relationships among the variables including the Pearson correlation (*r*), which measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables (Moore, McCabe, & Craig, 2009). Finally, the researcher used one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to explore whether any of the groups differed in their perception of organizational civility climate by examining the difference in group means.

Table 4 reports the correlations among education level and the five latent variables. There were several variables with statistically significant correlations. Education level showed a positive correlation with supervisor relationships ($r = .191$) and overall workplace civility ($r = .246$) indicating a positive correlation between those with a college level education and workplace civility and supervisor relationships in the workplace. Education level showed a significant negative correlation with the frequency of incivility ($r = -.170$) and employee satisfaction ($r = -.253$). Consequently, Hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 are partially supported.

Table 4: Organizational Civility (OCS) and Educational Level Correlations

Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Education Level					
2. Supervisor Relationship	.191*				
3. Coworker Relationships	.024	.000			
4. Frequency of Incivility	-.170*	-.697**	.065		
5. Employee Satisfaction	-.253**	-.892**	.067	.752**	
6. Overall Work Civility	.246**	.941**	-.039	-.876**	-.948**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To address the hypotheses, the researcher used a one-way ANOVA to examine the variance of means across the five latent variables representing sections of the OCS by education level. The researcher recoded the independent variables such that high school education = 0 and college education = 1. The results, shown in Table 5, revealed a statistically significant group mean difference by education level on the perceptions of supervisor relationships $F(1,151) = 5.697$, $p = .018$, on the frequency of incivility $F(1,165) = 4.883$, $p = .028$, on employee satisfaction $F(1,164) = 11.11$, $p = .001$ and on overall civility $F(1,122) = 7.768$, $p = .006$.

Independent sample t tests indicated that respondents with a high school level education ($M = 78.57$, $SE = 1.56$) reported less civility from their coworkers than did those with a college education ($M = 85.22$, $SE = 3.308$). Those with a high school education ($M = 67.43$, $SE = 5.805$) reported significantly less civility from supervisors than did those with a college education ($M = 82.40$, $SE = 2.262$). Finally, respondents with a high school education ($M = 73.26$, $SE = 4.553$) reported less overall civility in general than did their college educated counterparts ($M = 83.46$, $SE = 1.792$). Consequently, hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 are supported. The analyses indicated that while not significant across all measures, there are statistically significant differences in the perceptions of organizational civility climate based on education level. The evidence indicates that individuals without a formal education report poorer relationships with supervisors, a greater frequency of workplace incivility, and less satisfaction with their workplace.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance based on Formal Education Level Using Latent Variables.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Supervisor Relationships	Between Groups	5.526	1	5.526	5.697	.018
	Within Groups	145.474	150	.970		
	Total	151.000	151			
Coworker Relationships	Between Groups	.089	1	.089	.088	.767
	Within Groups	150.911	150	1.006		
	Total	151.000	151			
Frequency of Incivility	Between Groups	4.757	1	4.757	4.883	.028
	Within Groups	159.738	164	.974		
	Total	164.495	165			
Employee Satisfaction	Between Groups	10.467	1	10.467	11.111	.001
	Within Groups	153.555	163	.942		
	Total	164.022	164			
Overall Civility	Between Groups	7.359	1	7.359	7.768	.006
	Within Groups	114.641	121	.947		
	Total	122.000	122			

Discussion

Theoretical evidence provides a good indication that incivility positively relates to the amount of social and personal power possessed by an individual (Callahan, 2011; Cortina, 2008; Keller, 1988). However, empirical evidence is scant. The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between formal education level and perceptions of organizational civility climate. The researcher used the Organizational Civility Scale (OCS), an instrument designed to measure the extent to which incivility is perceived to be a problem in a variety of settings.

    The finding that those without a formal higher education reported a greater frequency of incivility in the workplace supports Sidanius and Pratto's (2001) theory that there are group-based social hierarchies and behavioral differences in people at different levels, which serve to reinforce the existing social system. In addition, this research supports Cortina's (2008) theory of selective incivility. Although those without a formal education are not necessarily in a protected class, the findings indicate that uncivil behavior may also result in a disparate impact to undervalued social groups.

    The analyses explored relationships among the variables and group differences in perceptions of organizational civility climate. Consequently, no causal statements can be made regarding the impact of certain demographic characteristics of power on overall organizational civility climate. Nevertheless, the researcher can discuss implications and recommendations for future research based on this study's results.

    Self-reported responses to the OCS indicated statistically significant relationships between formal education level and organizational incivility. However, a close review of the data

revealed an unusual number of respondents, the majority of whom had a tenure of more than five years, who reported that they had never experienced incivility in their workplace.

An inspection of the correlations between formal education level and the latent variables representing perceptions of organizational civility climate also showed some support for hypotheses H1, H3 and H4, or that those with a high school level education would report lower workplace satisfaction, increased supervisor incivility, and increased overall organization incivility. The correlations table (Table 4) indicated significant positive correlations between education level and both supervisor relationships and organizational civility climate. There were also significant negative correlations between education level and both the frequency of incivility and employee satisfaction.

Respondents with a high school education reported less civility from coworkers, less civility from supervisors, and less overall civility than did their college-educated counterparts. This finding suggests that perhaps the power and social status that stems from educational attainment may give rise to increased incivility when interacting with those lower on the educational hierarchy. The finding supports Lim and Cortina's (2005) contention that incivility often occurs in relationships of unequal power.

The majority (59%) of the respondent indicated that they hold a bachelor's degree, 22% indicated completion of a high school level education, and 17% indicated that they hold a master's degree. Although, the respondents were not evenly distributed with regard to education level, the majority of the educational categories were well represented. Overall the findings support Sidanius and Pratto's (2001) contention that certain values and beliefs provide justification for practices that are intended to maintain, increase, or decrease the levels of social inequality between status groups. However, further research is needed as there are many other variables to consider. For example, Leiter (2013) suggested that identifiable differences were enough to create an in-group and out-group dynamic in the workplace and the definition of civil and uncivil behaviors may differ in across group and within group interactions.

Limitations

The quantitative research study is limited to managers of residential properties. The intention of the study is to explore the possible relationship between formal education level and organizational civility to determine whether statistically significant relationships and interactions exist. It does not intend to imply causation nor provide a comprehensive measurement of organizational incivility climate.

The Organizational Civility Scale is a self-reported survey based on the participants' perceptions of civility climate. The accuracy of these self-reported surveys may be compromised for several reasons. First, respondents may not remember instances of incivility, particularly if those instances are not recent. Also, certain behaviors may be over or under-reported based on what is perceived to be socially acceptable. Second, because the majority of the potential participants provided workplace e-mail addresses, there is a strong possibility that they were not completely forthcoming with information regarding negative behaviors in their workplace environment.

The idea that personal power can influence uncivil behavior is credible and aligns with other research findings (Andersson & Pearson, 1989; Cortina et al., 2002). However, an accurate measurement of organizational behavior is necessary. Donaldson and Grant-Vallone's (2002) research illustrates several factors influencing the validity of self-reported data. For example,

they find socially undesirable behaviors tend to be under-reported while socially acceptable behaviors are over-reported. In addition, they contend that an employee's fear of reprisal affects responses. Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002) added that the problem of self-report bias is compounded when all the variables are measured using a single method of measurement. The contention is not that self-reported data is not useful in organizational behavior research, but that results of findings may be misleading and should be interpreted with caution. It is quite possible that specific variables measured by self-reported data from the OCS have been subject to self-report bias and influenced by fear of reprisal from employers.

Respondents' fear of retribution from their employer for sharing information may be the study's greatest limitation and may have influenced the results. Donaldson and Grant-Vallone's (2002) research indicates that if the behavior to be reported is undesirable, participants were likely to fear the repercussions of reporting it to researchers. Several invitees called and several e-mailed the researcher indicating that they were not comfortable sharing information about negative behaviors within their organization. Although anonymity was assured, it is the researcher's assumption that many of the respondents may have under-reported information regarding negative behaviors in their current workplace environment.

The idea that personal power can influence uncivil behavior is credible and aligns with other research findings (Andersson & Pearson, 1989; Cortina et al., 2002). However, an accurate measurement of organizational behavior is necessary. Donaldson and Grant-Vallone's (2002) research illustrates several factors influencing the validity of self-reported data. For example, they find socially undesirable behaviors tend to be under-reported while socially acceptable behaviors are over-reported. In addition, they contend that an employee's fear of reprisal affects responses. Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002) added that the problem of self-report bias is compounded when all the variables are measured using a single method of measurement. The contention is not that self-reported data is not useful in organizational behavior research, but that results of findings may be misleading and should be interpreted with caution. It is quite possible that specific variables measured by self-reported data from the OCS have been subject to self-report bias and influenced by fear of reprisal from employers.

The researcher doubts that responses are completely candid for several reasons. Pearson and Porath's (2009) study across 9,000 employees indicated that 95% of the respondents indicated they had experienced incivility at work. In addition, 71% of the 1,180 employees surveyed in Cortina et al.'s (2001) study also reported experiencing incivility at work over a five-year period. However, many of the respondents in the present study, the vast majority of whom had tenure greater than five years, indicated that they had *never* experienced or even witnessed incivility from coworkers or supervisors in their organization. In reviewing the individual responses, 25.9% of the respondents indicated they had *never* experienced or witnessed rude remarks or put-downs toward themselves or others at work, 51% of the respondents indicated that they had *never* experienced or witnessed rude non-verbal gestures from coworkers or supervisors, 57% indicated that they had *never* experienced or witnessed name-calling by coworkers or supervisors, 40% indicated that they had *never* experienced or witnessed coworkers or supervisors using the silent treatment.

Lastly, research into workplace incivility is limited by a lack of civility measurement instruments available. The OCS survey instrument, while useful, utilized Likert-type scales and did not have any open-ended questions, which may have limited the ability of the instrument to measure all uncivil behaviors accurately.

Research Implications

In alignment with recent research on the relationship between power and incivility in the workplace (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Cortina & Magley, 2003; Caza & Cortina, 2007; Cortina, 2008; Cortina & Magley, 2009; and Porath et al., 2008), this research hints that power plays a role in shaping organizational civility climate. This study indicates that particular individual characteristics of power linked to educational attainment may influence incivility and perceptions of appropriate behavior. This study did provide evidence that knowledge power may influence perceptions of organizational civility climate. The findings should motivate future researchers to investigate further the relationship between incivility and other power characteristics such as race, age, gender, and job position. Although the findings were not all significant, further research should explore incivility within and across various status group. Given the complexity and importance of incivility, the researcher recommends ongoing studies on the influence of power on incivility using a variety of methods and populations.

The researcher contends there are a variety of characteristics provide a sense of personal power. An increased sense of personal power may foster uncivil behaviors and influence the perception of what behaviors are acceptable when directed at others. Findings confirm key assertions made by Raven and French (1992, 1993) that forms of legitimate power may influence behaviors. Further research should explore other forms of legitimate power and perceptions from the point of view of both target and agent.

Finally, use of the OCS in a property management organization will provide valuable data to the creators of the instrument and may enable them to continue to adapt the instrument for use across various industries.

Managerial Implications

The study also has managerial implications. Managers must understand that civil interactions with colleagues and customers is critical for the success of the entire organization. An organizational climate of incivility can result in employee stress (Pearson & Porath, 2009; Nydegger, 2001), low job satisfaction (Cortina & Magley, 2009), increased consumer anger, and negative inferences about the organization among the public (Porath, 2010). Consequently, incivility not only makes the employees unhappy, it also has a negative influence on customers, which can have a definite and direct impact on the organization's bottom line.

From a social perspective, incivility can demonstrate bias against undervalued social groups (Cortina, 2008). As a result, an organizational climate of incivility may put an organization at a greater risk of treating employees and customers unequally based on their social group identity status. Whether or not such disparate treatment is intentional does not negate the danger that it can place the organization at a greater risk of costly litigation and damage to the organization's reputation.

If incivility is accepted, endorsed, or sustained within an organization, the tendency is for employees to adopt uncivil behaviors. Incivility can grow unchecked, resulting in an overall uncivil organizational climate. Given the potential for negative financial and human resource consequences based on incivility, it seems critical to manage incivility effectively to keep customers and employees both satisfied and well respected, which would reduce the cost of hiring and training their replacements.

In addition to management training, every employee within the organization should understand the costs and benefits of organizational civility and undergo training designed to reduce or eliminate uncivil behaviors. Employees should have access to confidential support systems. Civility should also be considered when screening new employees. For example, a combination of interview questions designed to identify an applicant's demeanor and social skills along with phone calls to previous employers could help identify desired traits. Effectively managing the civility climate within the organization can improve the working environment for its employees and improve the quality of interactions with coworkers, supervisors, or those outside the organization.

Suggestions for Future Research

Certainly the relationship between power and incivility deserves further study. First, because self-reports of negative behaviors may not be entirely accurate due to fear of retribution or faulty perceptions, it is suggested that the relationship be explored using other samples and methods. For example, it would be interesting to examine organizational incivility based on the education level of employees in various industries. Another option would be to survey both management and non-management employees within a single organization. However, because it is unlikely that an adequate sample size could be obtained from a single organization, a qualitative study would be suggested.

To develop more effective assessment tools, it is important to understand what particular behaviors are considered to be uncivil by different populations. The perception of incivility may differ based on personal characteristics, geographic location, or industry. Future research should explore differences in perceptions of incivility based on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, introversion/extroversion, emotional intelligence level, cognitive ability, self-confidence, and even appearance across various locations and industries. In addition, there may be differences based on the size and age of the organization. These differences may all serve to influence perceptions of incivility and hierarchical status of the organization's members.

Finally, the development of an organizational climate occurs over time. As new employees join the organization, their attitudes and perceptions are likely to adapt to those of other coworkers within the organization. A longitudinal study could explore the changes in perceptions of incivility at different points in time within an organization.

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