INCIVILITY IN THE INFORMAL WORKPLACE: A CASE STUDY OF EMERALD LUTHERAN

CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how incivility is expressed in an informal church organization and the impact relationships among those in the organization have on incivility. The researcher had staff members of the church complete journals. The researcher also observed the staff for one week and then conducted interviews based on the observations and journals. The researcher then coded data and grouped it into overarching themes. Themes that emerged about displays of incivility included: interrupting or not respecting another's ideas and yelling and gossiping behind each other's backs. The researcher examined these themes in terms of the relationships that exist among these coworkers. Results demonstrated that the staff did not frequently escalate incivility because they valued relationships and were aware of external causes of uncivil behavior. Reasons for not escalating incivility were then explored and connected to existing incivility research. Finally, suggestions for further study and practical applications are offered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. RATIONALE

Incivility in the workplace is a growing problem. According to Shandwick and Tate (2011) in the 2011 Civility in America survey, 43% of those surveyed have experienced incivility while at work. At the same time, 38% of those surveyed believe that workplace incivility is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon (Shandwick & Tate, 2011). In addition to those statistics, 59% of respondents attribute workplace incivility to employees of organizations themselves (Shandwick & Tate, 2011). Another study found that incidents of incivility experienced in the workplace went from 25% in 1998 to 50% in 2005 (Porath & Pearson, 2010).

Equally alarming are the findings of the Workplace Bullying Institute's (WBI) (2010) survey findings. In their first survey, the WBI defined workplace bullying as, "repeated, health harming, abusive conduct committed by bosses and co-workers" (para. 3). In the WBI's (2010) second survey on workplace bullying, the construct was defined as "repeated mistreatment: sabotage by others that prevented work from getting done, verbal abuse, threatening conduct, intimidation, & humiliation" (para. 3). According to the WBI's (2010) findings, the prevalence of bullying has increased since first reported in their 2007 survey. In addition, bullying is four times more prevalent than overtly illegal forms of harassment. Bullying is an escalated form of workplace incivility (Namie, 2003) and both forms of harassment are damaging to organizations.

Incivility has many negative impacts on an organization's functioning. According to Davenport Sypher (2004), incivility in the workplace can lead to lowered self-esteem among employees, reductions in both productivity and involvement, and can adversely impact overall organizational health. Porath and Pearson (2010) found that of victims of incivility at work, "48% intentionally decreased work effort, 47% intentionally decreased time at work, 38% intentionally decreased work quality, 80% lost work time worrying about the incident, 63% lost

time avoiding the offender, 66% said their performance declined, 78% said their commitment to the organization declined, [and] 12% said they exited the organization as a result of their uncivil treatment" (p. 64-5). Additional negative impacts to the organization are increased costs associated with employee turnover, decreased creativity, stifled teamwork, and a loss of up to 13% of management's time dealing with incidents of incivility (Porath & Pearson, 2010). Therefore, the issue of incivility is a very costly problem for the modern American workplace. While incivility is a problem within organizations, it also has ramifications beyond the workplace.

Incivility impacts people on an individual level and in their personal lives. According to Roizin and Oz (2011), incivility in the workplace can be carried home like a contagion where it can spread into relationships beyond those within the organization. In addition, incivility carries negative physiological effects (Roizin & Oz, 2011). Physiological ramifications reported by Roizin and Oz (2011) include increased blood pressure, which leads to the threat of heart disease and lung problems (para. 5), depression, self-doubt, self-blame, and overall damage to one's self-esteem (Newman & Grigg, 2010). The impact of incivility on health is startling.

Several factors of modern America can be attributed to the increase in incivility. Life in modern America is becoming increasingly complex and stressful. According to Tugend (2010), factors that promote uncivil behavior are stress, anonymity, and a lack of time, all of which can be easily traced back to the recent economic downturn. In addition to complexity, new technology allows individuals to be uncivil in two primary ways. According to Tugend (2010), first, technology can be used as a means to ignore individuals and to be rude to people who are present. Second, technology allows a greater level of anonymity than past generations have experienced (Tugend, 2010). Given these factors that contribute to incivility, the increase of incivility in modern America is unsurprising (Tugend, 2010). At the same time workplaces are becoming increasingly informal.

1.1.   The Changing Face of the Workplace: Casual is not Just for Fridays

Modern American workplaces are more informal now than ever before. According to Morand (1998), there is a general trend towards organizations and their members needing more flexibility and innovation, which leads to a need for a more informal workplace. Ball (2010) agreed, stating that the workplace has been becoming more informal, especially since the dotcom boom of the early 1990s. Ball (2010) also stated that the informality that was initially limited to the technology and innovation industries has recently infiltrated the more formal industries such as banking, automotive, and sales. Informality is becoming pervasive, which can be seen in the physical locations where people work.

Office spaces are becoming increasingly informal in terms of their architecture, furniture, and employee belongings. Morand (1998) cited several examples of organizations trading their formal office spaces for more informal locations. Aspects of an organization used to define its formality go beyond solely architectural characteristics and includes linguistic elements, conversational turn taking and topic selection, emotional and proxemic gestures, and physical and contextual codes (Morand, 1995). An informal workplace is marked by a lack of regard for proper language use, hap-hazard turn taking and topic selection, more emotional displays and touching, and a warm home-like environment (Morand, 1995; 1998). To contrast, a formal workplace maintains highly structured language use, predetermined conversational patterns while remaining focused on one topic, a general lack of emotional displays and touching, and a setting that is sterile and professional (Morand, 1995;1998). While there is likely no purely formal or informal workplace, an argument can be made that overall an organization is either formal or informal.

1.2.   Emerald Lutheran: An Exemplar of the Informal Workplace

Emerald Lutheran was established in 1921 by 12 founding members (Emerald Lutheran, 2010). The church moved from the original location to two others before settling in their current location, where Emerald Lutheran has been holding services since 1965. The church has grown substantially since moving to this location and is currently undertaking a remodeling and expansion project. Emerald Lutheran currently has about 4,000 members, consisting of 1700 families, a substantial growth considering the church started with 12 founding members. The church currently employs fourteen individuals consisting of four pastors, an administrator, two secretaries, a parish nurse, a volunteer coordinator, a music director, a custodian, and three youth ministry coordinators. Emerald Lutheran, like many other churches, prides itself on providing a warm and welcoming environment.

Most churches provide a warm and welcoming environment for their parishioners, which contributes to churches having an informal environment for their employees. According to Greenwood (2005), churches often "have an informality in power and fluidity in structure" (p. 4). Emerald Lutheran even touts an informal and casual feel on their website, where they indicate that the nave (seating area for the congregation) of the church's pews are all intentionally slightly off center to convey a whimsical environment. Also according to Emerald's description of their building, the windows are made of sewer tile filled with circles of glass of different colors; these multiple sizes and colors of the windows are meant to represent all of the different types of people who are welcomed into their self-described "warm" environment.

1.3.   The Informal Workplace and Civility: The Present Study

As workplaces are becoming increasingly informal, understanding incivility within the context of the informal workplace becomes essential. Workplace incivility, as defined by Andersson & Pearson (1999) is "…low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm

the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others" (p. 457). Although workplace incivility and informal organizational climates have been on the rise in recent years, there is no evidence to suggest that there is causality between the two. That said, Andersson & Pearson (1999) propose that "the probability of the occurrence and/or escalation of an incivility spiral is enhanced if the social interaction takes place in an organization that has an informal climate" (p. 465). While Andersson & Pearson (1999) provide strong support for this claim, they neglect key elements that differentiate the organizational cultures of formal and informal workplaces. Andersson & Pearson (1999) argue that the way that incivility is enacted in a formal environment would likely look entirely different than incivility in an informal environment due to the interpersonal relationships that employees develop.

Andersson & Pearson (1999) refer to employees in a formal environment as having explicit rules that outline how to communicate at work. While Andersson and Pearson (1999) argue higher likelihood of incivility spirals in informal workplaces, the current study assumes there would be increased interpersonal closeness among workers in an informal workplace due to the employees' associations with each other. Thus, an informal workplace would encourage relational closeness to develop among employees and make escalating incivility less likely among these employees because of the interpersonal relationships and relational aspects present in informal workplaces.

Having more relational closeness at work would likely change the ways that employees interpret and respond to instances of incivility. Whereas the formal environment has rules for communication and engagement (Morand, 1995; 1998), the informal environment is oriented more towards friendship and interpersonal relationships. The interpersonal relationships that form in an informal environment would likely change not only how incivility is perceived, but also how individuals respond to incivility. Both the perpetration and perception of workplace

incivility will be impacted by the workplace environment and relationships implicit in each type of workplace.

Therefore, this study will seek to answer the overarching question: how is incivility in the informal workplace communicated? To answer this overarching question, this study will use Emerald Lutheran church as a case study. Workers from Emerald Lutheran will keep a journal, be observed, and then be interviewed about their interactions in the workplace and the ways in which employees not only experience, but also respond to incivility in their work place.

1.4.   Summary

The following chapters will use Emerald Lutheran church as a site in which to investigate uncivil communication patterns found in informal workplaces. The remaining chapters will explore incivility in the informal workplace. Specifically, Chapter Two will review the literature on workplace incivility that is relevant to this study. Next, Chapter Three will explain the methods and procedures used to conduct this study. Chapter Four will then present the results of this study. Lastly, Chapter Five will discuss implications, limitations, and venues for future research. Throughout this process, I will examine the role incivility plays as employees in an informal work environment communicate.

CHAPTER 2. A REVIEW OF THE INCIVILITY AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

LITERATURE

To best understand incivility in the informal workplace, this section will cover the literature on incivility and informal workplaces. The first section of this chapter will highlight some definitions of incivility and its related concept, workplace bullying. Following the discussion on incivility, the focus will turn to incivility specific to church organizations. Upon completion of discussing incivility in church organizations, a definition of the informal workplace will be provided. Finally, this section will end with a focus on the current study by tying all of these concepts together, which will lead to the research questions posed for this study.

2.1.   Defining Incivility

By understanding civility, a better understanding of incivility can be gained. The concern about civility and manners came about as a result of new demands placed upon people living in close quarters, which created a need for rules of civic engagement (Boyd, 2006). Boyd (2006) elaborated on the importance of civility in the modern city because of the workplace and division of labor. This section will provide a brief definition of civility and then address the definition of incivility.

Civility can be defined in two primary ways. According to Fyfe, Bannister, and Kearns (2006), civility can be either proximate or diffuse. Proximate civility is an absence of rudeness, and the responsibility for maintaining civility is placed on the action of a communicator. An example of proximate civility would be getting through an interaction with another by being polite, but not necessarily needing to be overly warm or friendly. Diffuse civility, on the other hand, is focused on the response of others and the maintenance of shared space. Diffuse civility is less direct than proximate civility. An example of diffuse civility would be the way an

individual conducts her/himself in the public sphere within the existing social norms and by using good manners.

The word "manners," which comes from the Latin word "manus," meaning hand, literally refers to how we handle others (Billante & Saunders, 2002). Civility is an important part of modern society; it shapes our daily interactions with others. According to Billante & Saunders (2002), civility serves three primary functions: first, civility defines being respectful of others as a moral virtue; second, civility governs public behavior by serving as a means of understanding how to appropriately engage strangers; third, civility serves as a form of self regulation and serves as a desirable alternative to repressive codes of conduct and laws levied by various institutions. While civility serves these functions in society, violations of civility are also important to understand.

Incivility, or the lack of proper manners, has a complex definition, which can be broken down into overarching categories. The remainder of this section will provide an overview of these categories and then discuss the ways in which the definition of incivility has evolved and changed. The categories of the definition of incivility include: intentionality, outcomes, norms of behavior. Upon completion of the discussion of all categories, some common examples of uncivil behavior will be provided.

To start, the role of intentionality in incivility will be explored. Intentionality is universal among the multiple definitions of the concept. For example, Andersson & Pearson (1999) addressed intentionality in their definition by making note of "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target" (p. 457). Working from this part of Andersson & Pearson's (1999) definition of incivility, the intent of the perpetrator might not necessarily be "to harm the target" and might be little more than an oversight on the perpetrator's part. Similarly, Porath and Pearson (2010) addressed intentionality of incivility in their definition by talking about, "seemingly inconsequential inconsiderate words and deeds" (p. 64), again stressing that

the perpetrator might not necessarily intend to be uncivil. Intentionality of incivility remains ambiguous across the many definitions of incivility. While one witness may attribute an event as unintentional or even harmless, another may state that the uncivil act was intentional and harmful (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al, 2001; Porath & Pearson, 2010). Although the act may not be intentional on the part of the perpetrator, the target's perception is what makes incivility identifiable; incivility is thus receiver-based. When communication is deemed as uncivil by a target, the target can respond in many different ways.

The universal aspect of an uncivil behavior is the fact that the target feels as though the incivility was intentional and directed at them personally (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Porath & Pearson, 2010). Outcomes of incivility may be as benign as ignoring the act (Andersson & Pearson, 1999), or as severe as workplace aggression; in its most extreme, incivility might even escalate to homicide within the workplace (Namie, 2003). Andersson & Pearson (1999) argued that one outcome of incivility can be a retaliatory spiral of escalating uncivil behavior. What may have been an unintentional slight, in other words, can sometimes trigger an intentional response from a target and progress to violence and severe harm, both of which Namie (2003) suggested as possible outcomes of ever escalating minor incivilities. While perceptions and outcomes of incivility can vary, most scholars agree that acts of incivility generally violate some sort of social norm.

Violation of social norms, specifically organizational or workplace norms, is a commonly-found element defining incivility. For example, Porath and Pearson's (2010) definition of incivility is, "the exchange of seemingly inconsequential inconsiderate words and deeds that violate conventional norms of workplace conduct" (p. 64). An earlier definition by Andersson and Pearson (1999) included the clause, "…in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others" (p. 457). Norms of interaction play an important role in defining what is

considered uncivil behavior in each workplace. For the purpose of this study, Andersson and Pearson's (1999) definition of workplace incivility as "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms of mutual respect" (p. 457) will be used because it incorporates many of the common elements of incivility found throughout this line of research. This definition encompasses several behaviors that have been routinely considered a violation of norms and are thus referred to as uncivil.

Uncivil actions are by and large only identifiable by the target of an uncivil behavior (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Although the target's perception is key to determining whether or not a behavior can be qualified as incivility, there are certain elements that researchers have agreed constitute uncivil behavior. Porath & Pearson (2010) list the following examples of incivility: "taking credit for other's efforts, passing blame for our own mistakes, checking e-mail or texting during meetings, talking down to others, not listening, belittling others, withholding information, paying little attention or showing little interest in others' opinions, making demeaning or derogatory remarks to someone, [and] avoiding someone" (p. 64). Any of these actions can easily trigger another and lead to an escalation of incivility in the "tit for tat" manner that Andersson and Pearson (1999) theorized. Escalation of incivility is problematic not only for the individuals involved, but also for the organizations where incivility is occurring.

Escalation of incivility is problematic for organizations. Andersson and Pearson (1999) proposed that workplace incivility often escalates in a "tit for tat" manner, with an initial act of incivility followed by a more hurtful act of incivility and so forth until incivility escalates, perhaps even leading up to workplace aggression and violence (Anderson & Pearson, 1999; Kormanic, 2011; Namie, 2003). Escalated incivility can also manifest itself as other harmful workplace phenomenon such as workplace bullying and workplace aggression (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Baron & Neuman, 1996; Kormanic, 2011; Namie, 2003). While incivility can

spiral upon itself and increase in severity, the prevalence of uncivil behavior in general is increasing.

A number of factors in the modern workplace have contributed to an overall increase in incivility. According to Davenport Sypher (2004), "Longer work days, longer working weeks, and more weeks at work, coupled with less leisure and vacation time, may in part explain a rise in incivility at work" (p. 264). While time at work can be a factor, Neuman & Baron (1996;1997 cited in Tracy et al., 2005) argued that "dynamics such as highly diverse workforces, restructuring and staff reductions, decreased resources coupled with increased productivity expectations and autocratic management styles" are all organizational dynamics that have lead to an increase in incivility at work. Arguably, the higher demands placed on workers results in more time at work and less availability for leisure, which then, in turn, would increase stress and thus incivility (Davenport Sypher, 2004; Neuman & Baron, 1996; 1997; Tracy et al, 2005). While incivility is on the rise in the workplace, recently attention has been paid to its more severe and prolonged form, workplace bullying.

2.2.   Incivility versus Workplace Bullying

Namie (2003) argued that workplace bullying is more intense than "harmless incivility, rudeness, boorishness, teasing and other well-known forms of interpersonal torment" (p. 1). Namie (2003) also claimed that bullying is, "deliberate, repeated, and sufficiently severe as to harm the target person's health or economic status" (p. 1). Another fundamental difference between incivility and bullying is that bullying is an enduring phenomenon, whereas incivility can be limited to one event and is not necessarily an ongoing phenomenon (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2005). Furthermore, harm associated with bullying is normally greater than harm associated with incivility, as incivility is less intense than bullying (Namie, 2003; Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2005). According to Namie (2003) "incivilities would range from 1 to 3 while bullying covers mild to severe interference with the accomplishment of legitimate

business interests, reflecting scores of 4 to 9. The highest score is reserved for battery and homicide which grind work completely to a halt" (p. 1). Overall, the most prevalent difference between bullying and incivility is the severity of the harm inflicted on the target and the duration of the phenomenon. Despite the differences between incivility and bullying, they both can lead to similar organizational outcomes.

Incivility can lead to organizational harm such as wasted time and lower morale among employees. Pearson & Porath (2005) claimed that workplace incivility can "erode organizational values and deplete organizational resources" (p. 7) by lowering employee morale and creating an organizational culture of hostility. Incivility left unchecked by leadership easily escalates into workplace aggression (Namie, 2003; Pearson & Porath, 2005). All forms of workplace mistreatment are problematic, but what makes incivility unique is the fact that it takes into account the "lesser forms of mistreatment" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 453) that are neglected by both workplace bullying and workplace aggression.

2.3.   Incivility in the Workplace

Incivility in the workplace came under closer scrutiny with the Integra Realty (2001) study that coined the term "desk rage," which accounted for violence within the workplace as a result of minor incivilities among employees. Similarly, Andersson & Pearson's (1999) research focused on "lesser forms of mistreatment" (p. 453) rather than more overt forms of organizational mistreatment such as workplace bullying and workplace aggression. While that difference exists, Andersson & Pearson (1999) examined the escalating nature of incivility to try to understand how incivility can lead to these phenomenon and why it might escalate. While Andersson and Pearson's take into account lower intensity malfeasance and how it escalates, they largely ignored the issue of dominance.

Displays of dominance are an important part of understanding intentional acts of incivility. Davenport Sypher (2004) argued that displays of incivility are about asserting

dominance and power over the victim, assuming intentionality on behalf of the perpetrator. Namie (2003) likewise argued that workplace bullying stems from a desire of the perpetrator to have control over the target of the bullying. Roscigno, Hodson, & Lopez (2009) found that incivilities within the workplace tend to follow broader social norms of dominance and control. Similarly, Cortina et al. (2001) found that targets of incivility tend to be individuals in the organization with less power and in the lower ranks of the organizational hierarchy. Unsurprisingly, Cortina et al. (2001) also found that individuals with a higher rank in the organization were more likely to be instigators of uncivil behavior. Issues of dominance inherent to uncivil behavior are thus inextricably linked to issues of equality.

Uncivil acts are sometimes a way of showing that someone is not an equal and can be a means of dehumanizing people (Boyd, 2006). In a similar manner, Lim and Cortina (2005) found that there was a strong link between sexual harassment and incivility in the workplace and proposed that this link could be due in part to the same quest for power and dominance on the part of the perpetrator. While Cortina et al. (2001) found that individuals in lesser positions are normally targets of incivility, Davenport Sypher (2004) found that incivility is not limited to a downward direction in the workplace but can happen among individuals at the same scalar level and even travel upwards within the organizational hierarchy. Upward travel of incivility within the organizational hierarchy may be due in part to the fact that individuals in the lower ranks of an organization have other forms of power, not just authoritative power, and thus the role of authoritative power and rank in the organizational hierarchy may therefore be minimized (Cortina et al., 2001). Regardless of power differences, what constitutes an act of incivility is largely dependent on an organization's culture.

Determining what constitutes an act of incivility in the workplace has been an issue that has been up for scholarly debate. Montgomery, Kane, and Vance (2004) addressed issues of uncivil behavior using an approach that studied norms of mutual respect; i.e. the ways that

13

individuals should act at work depending on the organization's culture. In addition, norms of mutual respect can differ among individuals in the same organizational environment depending on their previous socialization (Kormanic, 2011; Montgomery, Kane & Vance, 2004). Findings from Montgomery, Kane & Vance (2004) proved that some behaviors are considered universally uncivil: disrespectfulness, rudeness, and impatience. At the same time, individuals who shared some sort of salient identity characteristic with the target generally viewed the target in a favorable manner and assessed the behavior of the perpetrator as a violation of norms of respect. Likewise, Kormanic (2011) found that determining an organization's base understanding of the issue of workplace violence and incivility is important when determining the best reactive measure to take against the phenomena. While defining incivility is largely based on organizational culture, males and females were found to have different tolerance levels for violations of a norm of mutual respect (Montgomery, Kane & Vance, 2004). In addition to norms of mutual respect, an organization's culture largely determines what constitutes uncivil behavior.

Kormanic (2011) examined organizational violence from the position of understanding the organization's "as-is" condition regarding awareness of violence and incivility. Similarly, Griffin (2010) studied the target's perception of incivility based on their perception of their mistreatment compared to mistreatment that occurs throughout the rest of their organization. Griffin found that a target's perception of incivility as compared to overarching incivility has a negative effect on intention to stay. Put another way, if targets of incivility feel singled out and like they receive more incivility than others in an organization, they are more likely to exit the organization (Griffin, 2010). Not surprisingly Griffin (2010) also found that an overarching culture of incivility within an organization increases employee intention to leave despite the lessening of feelings of being singled out. While many factors contribute to an organization's

culture, some have argued that religious organizations have a culture that is unique from for-profit organizations.

2.4.   Incivility in Religious Organizations

The idea of incivility, bullying, rudeness, and conflict are not frequently thought of as part of most churches, mainly because churches are reluctant to admit that these unpleasant aspects of life are a part of their daily functioning (Fuller, 2006), and churches maintain ideals as goals of their organizations (Greenwood, 2005). Another reason the idea of churches as immune to incivility is that, according to Garner & Wargo (2009), most members of churches focus on the religious aspects of the organization and not on the business aspect of the organization. Churches are largely dedicated to ideals of harmony, peace, unity and love, and fear a perception of failure should any exception to those ideals occur (Greenwood, 2005). Conflict is often buried in church settings and expressed in more subtle and detrimental ways (Garner & Wargo, 2009; Greenwood, 2005). While conflict may be buried or only be subtly expressed, incivility is present in churches.

Incivility in churches can occur in many ways but has been mostly studied as occurring from congregation member to pastor. This type of incivility depends upon not only the relationship between the parishioner and the pastor, but also the climate of the church as factors in expressions of dissent (Garner & Wargo, 2009). If a church member wants to express dissent to a pastor, he or she will frequently use ingratiation. Put another way, a church member may couch a complaint in the form of a compliment (Garner & Wargo, 2009). Church goers may also remain silent or make only subtle remarks towards church staff in an attempt to achieve their desired ends, whether it be different music, a change in the worship service, or recommendations about the building (Garner & Wargo, 2009). These contested issues are all part of a church's culture. Unfortunately, little else is known about incivility in church organizations, especially regarding incivility among church employees. While little is known

about incivility in a church organization's staff, work that has been done on workplace formality is applicable to churches.

2.5.   Formal versus Informal Workplaces

Formal and informal workplaces both come with overarching ideas inherent as to what each type of organization will look like. Although there are several assumptions one can make about the formal and informal workplace, the heart of this study depends on a solid definition of these constructs. While many studies have focused on the impact of incivility on an organization's culture (Blau & Anderson, 2005; Cortina & Magley, 2009; Cortina et. al, 2001, Lim & Cortina, 2005), this study will focus on the impact that existing culture has on how incivility is communicated in the informal workplace. To the author's knowledge, no other study has addressed the role an organization's informal culture plays on incivility within the workplace.

Several factors combine to create an organization's culture. Four factors that contribute to a workplace's formality include linguistic elements, conversational turn taking and topic selection, emotional and proxemic gestures, and physical and contextual codes (Morand, 1995). None of these attributes of an organization are fixed, but are socially constructed and reproduced by the members of the organizations themselves through communication. Communication plays a primary role in creating an organization's culture, starting most basically with the way people use words in everyday conversation.

Linguistic elements are the way in which people use words, such as enunciation, grammar and syntax, and use of colloquial words or phrases (Morand, 1995). Linguistic elements found in the formal workplace are fully enunciating words, using proper grammar, and avoiding colloquialisms (Morand, 1995). In an informal organization, words may be slurred together and riddled with additions and deletions, a slight disregard for grammar, and use of

colloquial words and phrases. An example of informality would be walking into someone's office and saying, "Wanna coffee?", whereas in a formal organization the same idea would likely be conveyed by saying, "Would you like a cup of coffee?" Just as there are linguistic differences in everyday conversation, so, too, there are differences in terms of conversation patterns and topics discussed in both formal and informal workplaces.

Conversational turn taking and topic selection also are very different in formal and informal organizations. In formal organizations, the pattern of turn taking in conversations is explicit and bound by rules of conduct, such as in a court of law (Morand, 1995). The topic of conversation is also regimented, and participants in the conversation focus on one topic at a time (Morand, 1995). Conversely, in an informal workplace, interruptions in speech and turn taking are not patterned (Morand, 1995). Conversations, who speaks when, and topics all shift among participants; it is not uncommon for individuals to enter and exit conversations at a whim (Morand, 1995). The difference is from having everyone discuss one topic with explicit rules of who speaks when and having many small conversations, which may shift from topic to topic. Part of what allows these turn taking patterns and topic selections to emerge as they do in an informal workplace is the emotional and physical closeness among communicators.

Emotional and proxemic gestures in the informal workplace allow greater leeway for individuals in the organization (Morand, 1995). Informal workplaces allow closer distances among employees in conversation and greater range of emotional displays (Morand, 1995). Less work is done to hide emotions, and actions such as sneezing, coughing, or minor grooming are permitted. To contrast, in formal workplaces there must be more work done to conceal emotions; people in conversations tend to keep a greater distance (Hall, 1969 cited in Morand, 1995). In an informal workplace employees are more emotional and keep closer distance while in conversation than in formal workplaces. Part of what encourages or discourages the distance between employees is the physical surroundings in the organization.

Physical and contextual cues as artifacts can be found in two ways in the organization. The first aspect of physical and contextual cues is modes of dress in the workplace. The second aspect of physical and contextual cues comes in the form of "ecological features" (Morand, 1995) within the organization. Ecological features of the organization are the color of the walls, décor, furniture, and other artifacts within the workplace. Informal workplaces are marked by casual dress of employees such as tennis shoes, business casual dress, and mis-match clothing (Morand, 1995; 1998). Ecological aspects of informal workplaces are warm colors on the walls, asymmetrical arrangement of comfortable furniture, and personalized workspaces with pictures of family and friends, and other features that display the inhabitant's personality (Morand, 1995; 1998).

Taken together, informal organizations are marked by informal conversational patterns, switches in topic and participants in conversations, more emotional displays, and a more comfortable and homey work environment (Morand, 1995). Conversely, the formal workplace is marked by regimented conversation patterns, which are limited to one given topic, fewer emotional displays, and a stark and Spartan design of office spaces which limit personal expression (Morand, 1995). Although these are overarching ways to understand the informal and formal workplace, these archetypes of behavior and design are not set in stone.

Using these constructs allows us to say that generally an organization is formal or informal; however, exceptions to the factors of what makes an informal or formal work environment exist. For example, differences can occur within factors, such as different physical locations of an organization may have varying degrees of formality (the difference in an academic setting between the classroom and an instructor's office space) (Morand, 1995). Differences can occur among factors, too; for example, office spaces may be highly personalized yet linguistic patterns are structured by rules of proper speech (Morand, 1995). This is to say, there is likely not an informal or formal organization that purely fits each category at all times

(Morand, 1995). Instead, the formality of a workplace is structurally co-created by members of the organization (Morand, 1995).

2.6.   Incivility in the Informal Workplace: The Current Study

Existing studies have examined organizational factors that individually impact workplace incivility, yet not within the framework of formality or informality. O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew (1996) argued that because interactions at work happen within the context of the workplace and its environment, there are factors in the workplace that determine the motivation of organizational violence such as desks sat within close proximity of each other, uncomfortable temperatures, and noise (O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996). Constructs studied in O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin and Glew's research do not fit Morand's (1995) model of an informal or a formal workplace. While the current literature does not address formality and incivility, scholars have broadly theorized the impact that formality may have on an organization.

Many scholars have theorized the impact of workplace formality and the effect on incivility with little testing of these theories being completed. For example, Pearson & Porath (2005) and Andersson and Pearson (1999) argued that today's casual workplaces may cause increased incivility due in part to the lack of structure that dictates what is appropriate communication in informal workplaces. Specifically, Andersson and Pearson (1999) stated, "The probability of the occurrence and/or escalation of an incivility spiral is enhanced if the social interaction takes place in an organization that has an informal climate" (p. 465). Later, Roscigno, Hodson, & Lopez (2009) argued that there is a link between increasing organizational chaos and increasing incivility. While there may be a lack of structure that could lead to uncivil communication in the workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Pearson & Porath, 2005), an attribute of an informal workplace is more relational ties and closer interpersonal relationships among employees (Morand, 1995; 1998). Morand (1995) also asserted that individuals in an

informal workplace are more likely to have bonds beyond those solely related to work. The greater interpersonal ties in informal workplaces likely lead to more feelings of liking (Morand, 1995). In a similar vein, Davenport-Sypher (2004) argued that societal incivility is a result of the "disconnectedness" people in modern society experience from their friends, family, workplace, and community at large. The connectedness in an informal workplace may cause there to be less incivility, while at the same time the lack of structure in communication patterns may cause there to be more incivility.

Given the conflicting viewpoints about incivility in the informal workplace, this study seeks to answer the question: in what ways is incivility in the informal workplace communicated? To do so, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: How is incivility expressed in informal workplaces?

RQ2: How do the relationships among coworkers in an informal workplace impact incivility?

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODS

To answer the research questions posed, an inductive qualitative approach was used. This research used Yin's (2009) single-case multiple unit of analysis design. According to Yin, (2009) the single-case multiple unit of analysis research design should be used when the sample is "representative or typical" (p. 48) and the research is "testing a well-formulated theory" (p. 47). Emerald Lutheran is representative of an informal workplace. Additionally, Andersson and Pearson's (1999) theory of escalating incivility is a well-formulated theory upon which much of the work on workplace incivility is based.

3.1.   Sources of Data

A combination of self-report journals, interviews, and observation were used as data for this study. According to Yin (2009), the ability to use multiple sources of evidence is one of the strengths of a case study due to the fact that the different sources can be used as a means of triangulation of data. Also, given the somewhat elusive nature of incivility, observation provided insights into how incivility is not only perpetrated, but was also compared to the target's perception of incivility. The researcher completed 30 hours of observation. Journals also provided a means of understanding what was considered uncivil behavior and guided interviews. While observation and employee journal entries are important, interviews with employees were the primary source of data in this study.

Interviews were used as a means of data collection rather than focus groups due to the potentially sensitive nature of incivility in the workplace. Interviews were also used to make participants less likely to give answers that are socially desirable, such as the case would be in a focus group. Interview questions were based primarily on Andersson and Pearson's (1999) definition of incivility. Interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researcher, resulting in 293 pages of double-spaced transcripts. The transcribed data were then coded by the

researcher. Data analysis for the interviews, journals, and observation used an open coding scheme. Through the interviews and observation, the researcher was able to conclude that Emerald Lutheran is indeed an informal organization.

3.2.   Emerald Lutheran as an Informal Workplace

After reviewing Emerald Lutheran's website and deducing that the organization would likely be informal, the researcher sat down to have a conversation with the head pastor of Emerald Lutheran to be sure that the organization did indeed fit Morand's (1995) criteria of an informal workplace. As the researcher went through the elements it appeared to be exactly the type of organization that would best fit Morand's (1995) definition of an informal workplace. When asked during interviews, all participants stated that the organization was generally informal. Although the organization is very informal, all participants stated that there are times that necessitate formality, such as worship services, funerals, weddings, and when certain visitors are present. For the vast majority of time, however, the workplace tends towards informality in its daily functioning.

This section will address how Emerald Lutheran fits an informal organization by addressing the linguistic elements present, conversation and turn taking, topic selection, emotional and proxemic gestures, and physical and contextual codes. Each section will provide specific examples from the researcher's observations and comments from the church's staff members that clearly identify Emerald Lutheran as an informal workplace. To start, many of the linguistic elements described by Morand (1995) were present at Emerald Lutheran.

Informal linguistic patterns were found frequently throughout the researcher's observations at Emerald Lutheran. During the observation period, the researcher made note of several instances where the staff paid little regard to pronunciation. For example, when addressing each other, the staff would frequently truncate names. As an example, rather than

saying "Good morning Kelly" one staff member entered the office and said "Good mornin' Kel" rather than taking the time to fully pronounce all of the words in the sentences. Colloquialisms and innuendo along with use of slang words were also observed by the researcher. Another element of the informal organization that the researcher noticed was conversational turn taking and topic selection.

Throughout the day at Emerald Lutheran, the researcher observed periods of time when the staff was highly focused on work; however, they frequently got interrupted by staff members coming across an article in the news, a piece of news from home or a family member, or any number of the items staff has previously discussed. A stop in one of these work periods frequently meant that staff would share other stories or talk about what they found interesting or relevant to the topic of conversation. Staff members would randomly join and leave conversations as workload or interest level allowed. Additionally, during the staff meeting that was observed, the staff would often break off into their own personal side conversations in small groups or dyads. The staff meeting also demonstrated the staff showing displays of emotion in the workplace.

Emotion is ever present in the daily functioning of Emerald Lutheran. During the staff meeting, for example, as good news was shared, the researcher observed that the staff would frequently get excited and exclaim in a muted tone under their breath. Likewise, when sad news was shared, people would frequently sigh and show their emotion. In addition to emotion, proxemic gestures also displayed the organization's lack of formality. For example, as a staff member was dealing with a stressful situation regarding a family member, it was not uncommon to see co-workers place a hand on the staff member's shoulder. The observation period was also before a holiday, and the researcher noticed that before departing for the long weekend, many of the staff would give each other a hug as they would leave. While the staff was clearly

emotionally bonded, there were also overt physical cues and artifacts that demonstrated the organization's informality.

The physical space in Emerald Lutheran was clearly constructed to promote a sense of formality; however, the staff's personal artifacts overwhelmed what would have otherwise been a rather austere and unwelcoming work space. The researcher noted that all of the doors on the offices were covered with pictures drawn by children related to the staff or Sunday school students. In addition to the drawings there were photographs of the staff members, their families, and friends that adorned the walls and doors of the office spaces. Another contextual clue that displayed Emerald's casual environment was clothing that staff members wore. By and large most people dressed business casual while at work; however, it was not uncommon to see staff members in t-shirts and jeans. For example, during the interview with the researcher, Jordan said, "I also like that I can wear jeans…I have colleagues that work in churches and they have to wear slacks and a tie." The personal artifacts found in the different offices, along with the casual clothing worn for work all demonstrate that the physical and contextual cues followed Morand's (1995) definition of the informal workplace.

Additionally, when reviewing the observation notes on Emerald Lutheran overall, the researcher noted that the organization is informal. The researcher frequently observed the staff talking about personal events and making jokes. There was a great deal of warmth in all of the interactions witnessed. The staff also liked to tout the flat organizational structure present during their interviews. It was only through interviews that the researcher was able to determine who supervised whom, and even that remains somewhat of a mystery. The staff is all very committed to the success of the organization and intrinsically motivated to complete tasks without much regard to organizational structure. Overall, this lends itself to the "family feel" that so many participants described as a particularly positive aspect of working at Emerald Lutheran during their interviews with the researcher.

24

3.3.   Participants

Emerald Lutheran was chosen as a site for this study due to the researcher's advisor's involvement with the organization; however, all raw data were only handled by the researcher to preserve confidentiality of participants. The researcher presented information about the study to Emerald Lutheran's staff. Upon completion of the presentation, employees who were at least half time and wished to participate in the study were provided with a journal and instructions about how to keep their journal for the study. Participants were also presented with informed consent forms to be signed and returned at the time of their interview with the researcher.

Eleven of fourteen eligible staff members participated in the study. All participants in this study were Caucasian. Seven of the participants were female and four were male. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 64 years old with an average age of 50.3 years old. These individuals held their position at Emerald Lutheran anywhere from five weeks to 16 years with an average tenure of 10.2 years with the organization. Of the staff who did not participate, one staff member declined participation, one was on vacation at the time of the study, and the third who did not participate was on sabbatical. Unfortunately, participants who were unable to participate represented important aspects of the organization in terms of position held.

Participants held various positions in the organization including: Head Pastor, two Pastors, Parish Administrator, Communications Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, two Youth Ministry Directors, Director of Church Ministry, Lay Ministry Coordinator/Volunteer Coordinator, and Parish Nurse. It should be noted that many of these positions overlapped in terms of responsibilities in the organization. For example both the Communications Coordinator and Administrative Assistant shared general secretarial duties for the church such as answering phones and clerical work. Additionally, many involved with Ministry shared responsibilities with the Pastoral staff and Youth Ministry staff. There was a great deal of

interdependence among the positions that the staff held with regard to overall department within the church. Staff offices were also similarly placed in the church according to job title. For example, most of the youth ministry staff member's offices were located together in the church's basement whereas the administrative staff and the pastors' offices were located on the main floor in the church's main office.

3.4.   Data Collection

All data were collected and archived by the researcher for this project. Data were collected in a strategic manner, starting with presenting Emerald Lutheran's staff with journals, completing observation during the time the staff was journaling, and concluding with in-depth interviews. This section will highlight the specifics of each phase of data collection. Data collection started with Emerald Lutheran's staff keeping a journal while the researcher made observations.

Journals were provided for each staff member of Emerald Lutheran by the researcher. Upon entry of the organization, the researcher stated that the study was about organizational culture to prevent incivility from becoming salient early on in the research. Participants were instructed to make note of events within their day that they found joyful and irritating/problematic specifically related to interactions with each other. Using these broad themes provided insight into the role that interpersonal relationships play within the workplace, along with keeping incivility from being a salient concept in the beginning of the research. Participants were informed that the study was examining workplace culture, as incivility is a part of organizational culture. By including incivility in an organization's culture, the researcher was able to make observations without being considered a policing agent.

Observations were made with the researcher as participant within Emerald Lutheran. The researcher assumed minor tasks such as stuffing envelopes, sorting markers, and

laminating signs for the staff. During observation, the researcher took notes on events beyond

sole instances of incivility, again to keep incivility from being salient early on in the research.

The researcher also observed one staff meeting and was asked to join the group rather than sit

apart from the staff. Upon completion of journaling and observation, the researcher used a

combination of items in employee journals and observation notes to personalize an interview

schedule for each staff member.

Interviews were conducted on location for participants' convenience. Although Lindlof

and Taylor (2002) advocate using a neutral location for interviews, Emerald Lutheran offered

several spaces sufficient to guarantee participant privacy. Staff members with private office

spaces were interviewed in those spaces as they are likely considered a second home and a space

where employees feel comfortable (Morand, 1998). Completing interviews within individual

staff members' offices also allowed the researcher a greater understanding of artifacts within the

organization. Staff members without a private office space were interviewed in the church's

Chapel, or in the office of the staff member who was on sabbatical at the time of the research.

Interviews were private between the researcher and the participant and were audio recorded.

Interviews were conducted by the researcher and audio recorded for later transcription.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) stated, "By transcribing a taped interview, we end up with a text that

reproduces the discourse—not only what was said but also how words or phrases were uttered"

(p. 186). Audio recording interviews also allowed the researcher to engage the participants more

than taking notes alone would allow (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). While conducting the interview,

the researcher used an interview schedule.

Interviews were guided by a personalized interview schedule. Lindlof and Taylor (2002)

recommend using an interview schedule when "the project requires the uniformity in the

wording and sequencing of the questions" (p. 194). The interview schedule was useful because

27

questions on the interview schedule were drawn from the definitions of incivility, and the links to existing research were made clearer. The basic format for the interview schedule, which is included in the Appendix, consisted of nondirective, directive, and closing questions.

Nondirective questions asked during interviews revolved around participants' experiences with incivility within their workplace. Types of questions asked were primarily example and experience questions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). These types of questions allowed participants to provide specific case in point examples of incivility they have experienced in the workplace. Nondirective questions were supplemented with the researcher's notes from observation along with entries that staff members provided while keeping their journals. Based on observations the researcher made, participants were asked specific experience questions. For example, "Your journal mentioned [specific event from journal] how did you feel afterwards?" Journal entries and researcher observations also were helpful for some of the directive questions that the researcher asked.

Directive questions asked consisted mostly of compare-contrast questions because they make participants think about experiences and situations and compare them (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). While most of the compare-contrast questions focused on how a situation could have been different if all actors had been civil, the researcher also referred back to journal entries of high and low points in a participant's day and asked the participant to compare the two events. Additionally, participants were asked to discuss how they would react in a situation where incivility was present if the instigator was a friend as compared to merely a co-worker. For example as a follow-up to "How did you respond to whoever mistreated you?" the researcher then asked, "Would your response have changed if the person were in a different position in the organization than you?" The previous two types of questions make way for closing questions that are of a more personal nature after the researcher has established rapport with the interviewee (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

28

Closing questions are "sensitive questions of a personal or political nature [that] are best left for later in the interview" (p. 203). Personal and political questions were asked towards the closing of interviews. An example of a closing question that was asked at this point was, "In what ways has incivility impacted your experiences at work?" Finally, loose ends questions based upon the interview as a whole were asked (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). At the end of the interview, participants were thanked for their time and provided ways to contact the researcher should they want to know the results of the study or have any questions. Some participants were contacted to serve as a member-check so as to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

Upon completion of the interviews, data were transcribed from the audio recording by the researcher. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) stated that having the researcher transcribe the recording "…allows the researcher to listen to the interview in a more studied way. One can attend more closely to the conversation and pick up certain themes, issues or contradictions that may not have been noticed in real time. Thus, transcribing can serve as a portal to the process of data analysis" (p. 205). Transcriptions were preserved in their original and nuanced form so as to preserve the richness and depth of the data. Transcription data was used as examples of categories in the discussion section and was used as a starting point for analyzing the data. Analyzed data were presented as neutrally as possible to ensure participant privacy.

Participants were allowed to choose their pseudonyms for this study; however, due to the wide variation of participant requests and possible identifiers encoded in their choices, the researcher assigned gender-neutral pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Gender neutral pseudonyms were chosen by the researcher as some staff members may be identifiable by maintaining gender in analysis. As some staff members are the only one in their title role in the organization, titles were subsumed into overarching groups or omitted entirely. For example, the two secretaries and the church administrator will be referred to as administrative staff, while

pastors will be referred to as members of the pastoral staff rather than using identifiable titles such as outreach pastor, youth pastor, etc. The staff of Emerald Lutheran was promised confidentiality and also was provided with the opportunity to provide a pseudonym for their organization; however, they decided Emerald Lutheran was sufficient. After all of the data were collected, the researcher then began to analyze the data.

3.5.   Data Analysis

Data analysis for this project relied on an interpretive approach as presented by Lindlof and Taylor (2002). The first step of data analysis was transcribing and then reading through all of the data. After all of the data were read, the researcher then marked phrases related to workplace incivility. The following step was open coding. Open coding was used to build categories by going line by line through transcripts (Strauss, 1987) of the interviews and Emerald Lutheran's staff journals, along with the researcher's observation notes. At the same time, in vivo coding was used to determine verbiage that participants themselves used when talking about the organization's formality and incivility (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Theoretical memos were used to "flesh out the thematic qualities of the coding categories, or how their meanings shift across time, social actors or other dimensions" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 220). For example, the researcher noted early on that participants frequently talked about focusing on the message and not the tone.

The last steps in data analysis were integration and dimensionalization (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). At this point, through axial coding, codes were identified and defined by connecting and collapsing existing categories of statements. Through axial coding, previously marked statements were subsumed into overarching themes. Themes then were identified, along with examples and definitions of each theme. Themes such as respecting the other as a human were identified in this process. Through dimensionalization of the data, the researcher

30

worked towards theoretical saturation by identifying distinctions and similarities among categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) such as the fact that almost all of the staff stated that they did not like when others spoke behind each others' backs.

After categories were established in analysis, findings were tied back to existing literature on workplace incivility. The main components of the definition of workplace incivility in the literature review were used as overarching categories for data analysis. The specific ways that incivility is manifest in informal organizations was tied back to Andersson and Pearson's (1999) definition of incivility. By following the proposed methods, this research expands our general knowledge of incivility in the informal workplace and provides insight into incivility in religious organizations, specifically churches. Additionally, this study provides unique insights into workplace incivility by incorporating participants' journals, the researcher's observations and interview data. New themes emerged from the data given the unique attributes of the informal workplace. Similar themes from other research are also found, so this study also raises new and interesting questions about the role and implications of organizational culture and workplace design on workplace incivility and incivility in church organizations.

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS

During the researcher's observations it became apparent that incivility was a rare occurrence at Emerald Lutheran church. Interviews confirmed the rarity of incivility at Emerald Lutheran church; however, each employee interviewed was able to recount a story of when he or she had likely come across as uncivil or been the target of uncivil behavior. This chapter will first address how incivility was expressed at Emerald Lutheran. Second, this chapter will explore the role that relationships among Emerald Lutheran's staff played on incivility spirals.

4.1.   Uncivil Behavior Specific to Emerald Lutheran

To answer RQ1, participants were asked what rude or discourteous behavior in the workplace looked like. Participants provided remarkably similar answers. The commonly found themes were: interrupting or not respecting another's ideas, and yelling and gossiping behind each other's backs. This section will explore in-depth each aspect of uncivil behavior that participants regularly discussed.

The most frequently given response (n=5) when asked about uncivil communication was interrupting and not respecting other's ideas. Interrupting and not respecting other's ideas are linked together because participants frequently cited the two as going together. For example during the interview, Terry said, "It [not listening] quickly tells a colleague or a companion of any kind that you don't care, just by not listening and people can pick up on that." To staff members, interrupting showed a lack of regard for the other's idea and was considered uncivil or discourteous. Jordan remarked, "People can come off as rude when it appears they are focused on different things." Taken together, it is clear that a lack of regard for the other's ideas and not listening are considered uncivil behavior. Other behaviors considered uncivil were yelling and gossiping behind other's backs.

Tone and yelling were both of importance to understanding uncivil behavior in the informal workplace. Carrol cited being blunt or "in your face" as a way that people can be uncivil at work. Bobbie frequently attributed yelling to people "being angry and not knowing why." Terry also alluded to people being angry without really knowing why; saying, "I really do believe that sometimes people act out of frustration in other parts of their lives and it can come off sideways." Yelling is a part of what makes tone unpleasant. Other aspects of tone that came off as rude or uncivil to Emerald employees can best be summarized in the words of Jessie: "[being] cold, stony, you know, not being welcoming and not being friendly to me are discourteous." Other responses that alluded to tone included, "being snappy" and "barking." Thus, tone was an important factor to employees of an informal workplace when deciding if the interaction was uncivil or discourteous. In addition to tone of voice, gossiping behind other's backs was considered rude or uncivil behavior.

A commonly held belief of uncivil behavior among Emerald Lutheran's staff was that speaking about others behind each other's back is considered uncivil. This links back to the notion of not respecting the other or, in the case of incivility, the instigator's relationship with the target. Of interesting note is the fact that when asked how they respond to uncivil behavior, many participants (n=7) cited talking to a trusted co-worker. While many referred to this as venting (n=3), others (n=4) used this as a tool to gather information about what may have been happening in the other person's personal life; to determine if there were issues in their own behavior that caused the other person to behave in an uncivil manner; or to determine if there were underlying issues within their relationship with the instigator. While the behavior was largely considered uncivil, for the majority of participants it was used to discover underlying issues and as an attempt to process the event from a slightly more objective standpoint. These were the primary themes found regarding how incivility is expressed in the informal workplace.

Next, the responses to uncivil communication and then the role of relationships in responses to uncivil communication at Emerald Lutheran will be explored.

4.2.   Responses to Uncivil Communication

To answer RQ2, participants were asked how they respond to uncivil communication. Questions such as an overall response, the role of rank in the organization, and liking of the instigator were all asked. The commonly found themes in participant responses about their reaction to uncivil communication were: open and honest conversations with the instigator and avoidance of the instigator. Themes about liking involved participants placing a value on the relationship and thus remaining silent; or the opposite and not placing any value on the relationship and deciding to remain silent. This section will explore in-depth each aspect of uncivil behavior that participants regularly discussed.

When having a conversation with a co-worker about uncivil behavior, most employees (n=10) said that they would have a conversation with the instigator for one of two reasons. Either employees were legitimately concerned they had done something wrong to cause the other person to be uncivil (n=4), or participants naturally assumed that there was an external factor in the instigator's life that caused them to be uncivil (n=7). Some participants expressed concern over both having done something wrong combined with an external factor (n=3).

Some employees naturally assumed the act of incivility was on account of something they had done to cause the other to be uncivil and sought feedback on how they could do better by the other person. For example, Sammie said, "One, for me to really take a look at if I'm doing something to disturb that person or if maybe that person has some issue with me that I need to be aware of and not do that to them." In this type of response there was an assumption of an underlying issue with the relationship and that a solution could be reached by a change of behavior on the part of one or both parties involved in the incivility.

Another assumption of employees who sought the other person out was that there was an external factor that caused the rudeness. This was overwhelmingly the case as participants (n=9) alluded to external factors that cause others to act in an uncivil manner. Two external factors that the staff alluded to were stress and family issues. Stressors that were brought up as justification for uncivil communication included family, tight deadlines, large workloads, and overall frustration with projects. Family issues included an ill family member, divorce, and children facing academic issues. Most of the time the staff (n=9) cited knowing of issues going on in each other's lives and being more able to forgive uncivil communication because of knowing about the instigator's external issues. During times when a staff member attributed rudeness to an outside event, the mantra of "focus on the message, not the tone" was provided by participants (n=6), assuming the message itself was not uncivil when removing tone.

4.3.   The Role of Relationship in Preventing Uncivil Communication Patterns

To further explore RQ2, participant responses most frequently cited maintenance of relationships (n= 9) as a reason that prevented the escalation of incivility. Another reason participants provided was maintaining the church's ministry (n=4). Retaliation and escalation of incivility was largely absent, with the exception of two participants, both of whom retaliated in passive ways such as withholding information, and that was a rare occurrence for those individuals. Interestingly, participants (n=6) also cited the lack of an important relationship as a reason to "brush things off" and ignore uncivil behavior. This section will highlight the ways in which the relationships of employees at Emerald Lutheran impacted uncivil behavior in the workplace, along with exploring the value placed on the ministry of the church.

When asked about friendships with co-workers, all participants (n=11) stated that they saw their co-workers as friends, with some interesting variations of the answer. Some participants (n=3) went out of their way to delineate their co-workers from the external group of

friends, saying that they do not necessarily socialize outside of work. Meanwhile, other participants (n=4) stated that their relationship with their co-workers was more like that of a family than co-workers. Participant responses such as "we're one big family here" and "this is a family-friendly organization" refer to the fact that employees are not only engaged in working together as a family would be, but their families are also involved in their workplace and they generally know each other's families. During the observation period, the researcher frequently noted participants' family members visiting during the work day. Of the participants who referred to familial aspects of the organization, some (n=5) also said that they were friends beyond just the workplace and involved in each other's family lives. The idea of the organization as a family recurred throughout the interviews and was an important factor in determining how staff members responded to uncivil communication patterns. Along with the notion of the staff as family was the idea of Emerald Lutheran as a home.

For many participants (n=4) Emerald Lutheran was described as home and the employees like a second family. For example, Kelly referred to the organization as a house where "it isn't necessary to acknowledge everyone every time they walk by because it is a space that we live in." For Kelly, not being acknowledged is not considered uncivil behavior due to the fact that everyone is living in the space as a family would. When the target does not perceive incivility to happen, there is nothing to start an incivility spiral.

In terms of preventing an incivility spiral, should the target perceive the instigator to be uncivil, outside issues were salient. For example, Jody said, "Relationships cause Emerald to be friendlier than other organizations. Knowing people, their families, and their struggles makes it easier to forgive minor rudeness when you know the causes." Involvement of staff members' family in the church and knowing each other's families was part of what caused the maintenance of civil communication should one staff member falter and be unintentionally uncivil. While the

familial aspect of the church was important so, too, was the church's overall ministry and goals associated with the ministry in terms of preventing incivility spirals.

When asked about retaliation and responses to uncivil communication, a prevalent theme among participant responses (n=4) was the work of the church and the importance of the ministry of the church. Interestingly, this response was given by staff members beyond solely the clergy, as the numbers may imply. For example, Dana said, "…that kind of thing [retaliation] would be so hurtful to the ministry of the church." Lee approached the idea of the ministry of the church in a slightly different manner, stating, "it [retaliation] is a question of revenge versus justice. Never for revenge, but if something unjust happens it is my responsibility to step up and say something." Lee's response also ties back to the familial aspect as Lee felt protective of co-workers, while determining if there is just a need for justice, versus the personal want of revenge.

Finally, a lack of a relationship was cited by participants (n=6) as a reason not to escalate incivility or retaliate. This response was given mainly in terms of volunteer to staff or parishioner to staff relationships, as all of the staff cited being close to each other. For example, Sammie said, "sometimes you have to have a little bit of a thick skin when you work in a church, and not necessarily with staff, but with congregation members because everyone has an opinion on how things should go or how things should run…" Sammie continued, saying, "We'll always talk about this in staff [meetings], we'll bring something like that to our staff meeting and talk about it. We try to do, 'let's get rid of the tone that they said it in but hear the message.'" Terry also echoed these sentiments, by saying, "My sense is that you would be, someone would feel freer to respond rudely to someone who is rude to you if you don't have that [solid] relationship." So, a lack of a close relationship caused there to be less investment in maintaining the relationship, therefore to the staff, the incivility became unimportant and meaningless because of the lack of relationship present.

4.4. Summary

Findings for RQ1 demonstrated that interrupting or not respecting another's ideas, yelling and gossiping behind each other's backs were largely considered uncivil acts by the staff at Emerald Lutheran and witnessed by staff, albeit infrequently. For example, Jordan said, "when you're not in tune enough with your co-workers to know their rhythm and their reason on how things are going." Jessie also alluded to how not respecting ideas and yelling cause people to "be made to feel less important or less than intelligent."

Overall findings for RQ2 demonstrated that knowing each other's families and outside issues combined with a high value on the church serve a large role in preventing incivility spirals. For example, Jessie said, "the smaller staff, the work that we do, allows us to become more emotionally attached to the people we work with." Lee also said, "We are dedicated to being a team and committed to making relationship more important than structure. I think that simply fosters, we'll call it, open, friendly, welcoming, all those things." Frankie echoed this sentiment by saying, "We are all working towards the same goal. We all have different jobs and we have compassion for one another and I guess I didn't feel that in some of the places that I worked." While relationship is very important, a lack of meaningful relationship also prevents incivility spirals due to the fact that the instigator's action is minimized by a lack of caring on the part of the instigator. Interestingly, it appears that for the staff at Emerald Lutheran, those who linger somewhere between complete stranger and close friend are those with whom they seem most likely to be inclined to escalate uncivil communication patterns.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Overall, findings of this study nicely illuminate not only what is considered incivility in the informal workplace, but also consider if indeed an incivility spiral is more likely on account of relationships in the informal workplace. In this section, results from chapter four will be tied back to existing research on workplace incivility and incivility spirals. Findings from RQ1 will be analyzed, followed by findings from RQ2. Results will be analyzed and further explained within the context of the existing research.

5.1. Analysis

Following Kormanic (2011), this study seeks to understand the organization's "as-is" condition regarding incivility. RQ1 explores how incivility is expressed in informal workplaces. The primary impetus for RQ 1 is to determine what activities are considered uncivil in the informal workplace. This research question is of particular importance since perception of the target is key to understanding what constitutes uncivil behavior (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina et al, 2001; Porath & Pearson, 2010). Another reason this research question is of such great importance is because incivility is based largely upon a violation of workplace norms (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Porath & Pearson, 2010).

Commonly found themes are similar to those expressed in the workplace incivility literature. Interrupting or not respecting another's ideas relates back to Porath & Pearson's (2010) example of "paying little attention or showing little interest in others' opinions" (p. 64). While not respecting ideas is found in the existing literature, yelling and gossiping behind each other's backs is not. Yelling is likely not found in the literature because it goes beyond the scope of "lesser forms of mistreatment" as described by Andersson & Pearson (1999, p. 453) and may be more in line with workplace bullying such as Namie (2003) proposed. Gossiping behind each other's backs could be considered an issue of respect for others; however, since the target may

not find out about it, it would not be considered incivility by the current definition because of the focus on the target's perception.

Interestingly, elements of incivility found in the research that did not surface in the study consist of taking credit for other's efforts, passing blame for our own mistakes, checking e-mail or texting during meetings (Porath & Pearson, 2010). Taking credit for other's efforts was likely not found due to the fact that participants in the study (n=7) cited Emerald's informal policy of "See work, do it." Simply put, job descriptions are not concrete but flexible and dependent upon work that needs to be done, regardless of formal title or job description. For example, one of the pastors told a story about having to clean a bathroom on a Sunday morning. This was not seen as someone not completing their job or a source of anger, but more as a task that needed to be completed. Passing blame for mistakes is likely not found because, while the staff is specialized, there is enough interdependence in each position that the staff would be unlikely to blame each other for a mistake. Last of all, checking e-mail and texting during meetings happened while the researcher was observing the staff meeting; however, this seems to be an acceptable norm of behavior given the staff's need to be available to parishioners and is thus not regarded as an act of incivility or rudeness by the other staff members. So, this could also mean that the informal workplace has redefined what it means to be uncivil. Put another way, what would be uncivil in a more formal organization may well be within the standards of behavior for an informal organization. For example, showing up a few minutes late to a meeting in a formal organization may be considered uncivil and disrespectful, whereas the same act in an informal organization may be deemed acceptable due to the different expectations inherent in each type of organization.

A general lack of incivility at Emerald Lutheran may be a bit of a puzzle considering that according to Davenport Sypher (2004) "Longer work days, longer working weeks, and more weeks at work, coupled with less leisure and vacation time, may in part explain a rise in incivility

at work" (p. 264). Many employees of Emerald Lutheran talked about working as necessary to complete the tasks that needed to be accomplished and not in terms of hours spent at work. This resulted in some very long work-days and weeks, while at the same time many employees touted the availability to leave as needed and not having to structure vacation time or personal time around work hours, specifically.

Another reason for the lack of incivility at Emerald Lutheran is a lack of the need for dominance and control among staff members. For example, Davenport Sypher (2004) argue that displays of incivility are about asserting dominance and power over the victim, assuming intentionality on behalf of the perpetrator. Cortina et al. (2001) also state that targets of incivility tend to be individuals in the organization with less power and in the lower ranks of the organizational hierarchy. Emerald Lutheran prides itself on its flat organizational hierarchy. It was only through interviews that the researcher was able to determine any semblance of an organizational hierarchy. Even so, those in positions of power are uncomfortable labeling themselves as anyone's boss or supervisor, citing equal value of everyone's contributions to the organization. During isolated incidents, people in supervisory positions might act as supervisors, but generally speaking are more inclined to act as co-workers. This is due in part to the theological aspect of Emerald Lutheran as a church organization. Several participants (n=3) refer to upholding and respecting each other as children of God, and therefore everyone is equal regardless of formal title. This value of equality and respect of each other as Children of God diminished not only the perception of incivility, but also the escalation of incivility. While the lack of needing control is important, in a related way respecting individuals as human was also important in terms of preventing uncivil communication patterns.

According to Boyd, (2006) uncivil acts are sometimes a way of showing that someone is not your equal and can be a means of dehumanizing people. Jessie referred to uncivil acts as those that make one feel, "less than human or less than intelligent." At the same time, most staff

members spoke of lifting others up; this works since the vast majority of staff members (n=10) described feeling valued in the organization and appreciated for the gifts that they bring to the organization. According to Greenwood (2005) churches maintain ideals as their organizational goals, so the fact that Emerald Lutheran's staff "walks their talk" lends itself to people truly being valued and seen as special and worthy of respect and love not typically found in other organizations. Another part of why there is such a low level of incivility present among Emerald Lutheran's staff is partially due to the lack of incivility spirals in the organization, or put another way, the lack of incivility prevents the opportunity for escalation since there is nothing upon which to escalate as Andersson and Pearson (1999) proposed.

Overall there was a lack of incivility, and workplace bullying at Emerald Lutheran. This could partially be because according to Namie (2003), bullying is a form of escalated incivility. Since there is so little incivility in the first place, and the staff does not generally escalate incivility, naturally there is little opportunity to get to more intense forms of incivility, let alone workplace bullying. While the lack of incivility spirals can be attributed to having little incivility upon which to build, other important causes for the lack of spiraling incivility were found.

In terms of RQ 2, Andersson and Pearson (1999) predict "...an incivility spiral will be more likely to occur and/or escalate into an exchange of coercive action in an organization with a climate of informality." (p. 465). Results of this study find exactly the opposite of Andersson and Pearson's (1999) prediction. This section will explore the possible reasons for why there is a lack of incivility in Emerald Lutheran using Andersson and Pearson's assumptions underlying this proposition and existing research on incivility.

Part of what makes Emerald Lutheran's staff unlikely to escalate incivility in the "tit-for-tat" manner that Andersson and Pearson propose is the fact that employees in the organization are highly in tune with one another and their lives beyond work. Anderson and Pearson (1999)

said, "when employees have to pay attention to mode of dress, enunciation, and conversational cues, they are forced to pause and think before they act. Without the trappings of formality to routinize interactions and control for deviations, employees may have trouble maintaining their professional distance and objectivity" (Goffman, 1967; Morand, 1998). Professional distance and objectivity are not the goal at Emerald Lutheran, and furthermore the argument can be made that professional distance and objectivity ignore taking into account external factors that make it so easy for Emerald Lutheran's staff to write off and forgive instances of incivility. Furthermore, routinization of interactions and control for deviations are not feasible goals for an organization that is so outwardly focused, and thus constantly in change, as Emerald Lutheran. The staff at Emerald Lutheran celebrates the constantly changing nature of interactions and deviations from what is expected in the workplace. The staff, by being so outwardly focused, thus accepts these deviations as a part of what makes their job so great. While accepting deviations and surprises in the work day are important to the staff at Emerald Lutheran, so, too, is the connectedness of the staff at Emerald Lutheran.

As Davenport-Sypher (2004) argue, societal incivility is a result of "disconnectedness" that people in modern society experience from their friends, family, workplace, and community at large. Staff members at Emerald Lutheran are connected in many ways. A vast majority of the staff interviewed attend church at Emerald Lutheran. Additionally, friends, family, workplace and community all converge at Emerald Lutheran. During observations, the researcher witnessed friends, family, parishioners, and members from the community at large all interact with the staff. Since many staff members attend church and families are welcomed along with community members, there is a lack of disconnectedness among these aspects of staff members lives, thus making relationships with co-workers highly valued. This also holds true to Morand (1995) who claimed that individuals in an informal workplace are more likely to have bonds beyond those solely related to their tasks at work. While relationships are important and

43

multi-faceted, there are also reasons related to the idea of family specifically that prevent incivility spirals at Emerald Lutheran.

The idea of the staff as a family and the church as a home are one reason that incivility spirals happen infrequently. The staff as a family prevents the spirals in two key ways. First, the notion of family prevents the target from perceiving an unintentional slight as uncivil or discourteous. Staff members are easily able to either account for or write off instances that many would perceive as discourteous. Second, the value of the close relationship prevents the staff from retaliating should they perceive the instigator as being rude or uncivil because they consider the value of the relationship. While the notion of family is important, the underlying assumptions of this metaphor can be problematic.

The staff of Emerald Lutheran focused primarily on the positive aspects of the family metaphor. Only two participants mentioned any amount of dysfunction as a part of the family, and that was in a humorous manner. By and large any mention of the familial aspect of the organization was in a positive and loving manner. Passive aggression, fighting, and cliques that are common to families were not mentioned. While the family metaphor, for better or worse, shaped how the staff at Emerald Lutheran responded to incivility, the lack of an important relationship also impacted their responses.

Several staff members (n=6) reported not caring about a relationship enough to retaliate and cause a problem. When making reference to these types of situations, it was to non-staff members as everyone reported caring deeply about their relationships with their co-workers. Not caring about the relationship with other staff enough to escalate incivility was absent from the research as a factor in preventing or increasing the odds of an incivility spiral. This finding came as a surprise to the researcher. From these findings, it appears incivility may reside in the relationships that lie somewhere between strangers and close relationships or even between

organizational insider and outsider. Part of the reason for the incivility found in these intermediate relationships may be because of the lack of knowledge of what is acceptable behavior in terms of relationship maintenance, and a lack of a complete understanding of outside factors in the instigator's life. Furthermore, having an interaction with someone in this type of intermediate relationship may be required, but not necessarily valued. These types of relationships would most likely occur in workplaces where individuals know each other, but not very well or in situations where dealing with the public at large is a regular function of work life. Lacking knowledge of an individual may prevent an incivility spiral because of the inclination to remain silent, but in interactions where a staff member was the target of incivility the staff relied heavily on the idea of focusing on the message and not the tone of the conversation.

When dealing with instances where someone, be it another staff member or parishioner, was rude, the staff mentioned the idea of focusing on the message and ignoring the tone. Fisher and Beach (1979) proposed that it is possible for individuals to focus on solely the task aspect of a communicative act early on in group or relationship development. This makes sense within the context of Emerald Lutheran's staff citing removing tone and focusing on the message from organizational outsiders because this method of coping with incivility is generally used on uncivil messages from those with whom the staff had a less meaningful relationship. Meanwhile, instances of incivility between staff members focused much more on understanding external variables at play with less focus on remove tone from the message. While focusing on message and neglecting tone was helpful for dealing with incivility from outsiders, norms of behavior were very salient in terms of dealing with staff-to-staff incidents of incivility.

Knowing the norms of behavior and knowledge of the individual are an important factor when determining whether or not an incivility spiral will occur. Andersson and Pearson (1999) said, "In an informal setting it is more difficult for employees to discern acceptable behavior from unacceptable, both in others and in themselves, thereby creating greater potential for

misinterpretation and subsequent deviant behavior" (p. 465). Since the staff all knows each other very well, they have clear ideas of what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Also, in Christian theology very clear rules for respectful interaction are present such as the overarching principle of forgiveness of sins, The Golden Rule and The Ten Commandments. As the staff is very involved with their organization and Christian doctrine, rules of behavior are clearly established. Some staff (n=4) spoke of upholding each other and showing respect for each other as Children of God. This is not to say that Christian doctrine is the only factor preventing incivility spirals at Emerald, however it surely plays a part.

5.2.   Limitations

Although this study can tell us much about what uncivil behavior in an informal workplace looks like, there are some factors that limit this study that must be addressed. Issues that will be discussed will be the relationships among Emerald Lutheran's staff members, the unique challenges of the space and remodeling, the duration of the study, time of year of data collection, missing participants, the church as a values-based organization, the researcher as an outsider, the number of participants, and finally the lack of diversity among the participants.

Emerald Lutheran is unique, something that the staff prides themselves on and was very excited and willing to share with the researcher. Emerald Lutheran's staff is unique due in part to the long tenure of employment of staff (average tenure of employment is 10.2 years). Many staff members talked about how rare the kind of longevity that the staff at Emerald Lutheran has enjoyed is and how that longevity has fostered such strong interpersonal relationships. For example, most of the staff alluded to having either visited or worked at another church and talked about high levels of turnover and a lack of civility and positive relationships among the staff. At the same time, it is probable that the low level of incivility could be related to the longevity of the staff. Given the findings of the study, it seems more likely that the high value

46

that people who have lasting and strong relationships place on those relationships is likely the cause of the lack of spirals in incivility as opposed to having a lack of incivility spirals as causing the longevity of the staff. While the longevity of the staff is unique to Emerald Lutheran, so is their space and their current remodeling project.

At the time of the study the staff of Emerald Lutheran was housed in several different "far-flung" parts of the physical building. The building is currently undergoing a remodeling project that will fundamentally change the way that work gets accomplished in the building. For example, most of the youth ministry people have offices in the basement, far away from the main offices, which are located on the main floor of the building. O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, and Glew, (1996) said that desks and closer work spaces can create an increase in workplace incivility. It is entirely possible that there is a lack of interaction, or at least irritation, among all of the staff because of their physical location that prevents incivility from occurring, although those concerns did not emerge in the interviews. While the staff was spread across the building, the researcher also only completed a week of observation from the main office.

This study was conducted with only a week of observation and journaling by participants. This study did not include observation of a worship service; however, the focus was on interaction among employees; therefore, doing so would likely not have enhanced the study. This study was also not conducted during a particularly busy part of the year for much of the staff such as Christmas or Easter. It is of note, however, that the study was conducted during the first week of Wednesday and Sunday school; therefore, the youth ministry staff was exceptionally busy. While not all of the staff was busy, some were gone altogether.

Another limitation of the study is that not all staff members were able to participate. One staff member was out on sabbatical, the second one was on vacation during the study, and the third staff member declined to participate in the study. Thus, 21% of the church's staff was

not represented in this study, each of whom would have likely shed more light in the way incivility is enacted and responded to within the workplace. Furthermore, key positions at the church were not represented as a result of the staff who did not participate. At the same time, however, the vast majority of the staff's perspective was captured in this study, and references were made to those who were unable to participate. Just as staff behavior changes when people are absent, staff behavior is also sensitive to outsiders, as was joked about during the observation period by the staff at Emerald Lutheran.

The researcher was ultimately an outsider to the organization. While the staff was extremely welcoming and warm, the researcher was, at least initially, an outsider. During interviews, several participants cited changing levels of formality and behavior based upon who was present. While the researcher was an outsider, the relationships formed ultimately did allow participants to be honest, yet there is a possibility that the very presence of the researcher could have caused less incivility during the time of this study. At the same time, the researcher took precautions to keep incivility from being salient during the observation period; therefore, changes in terms of incivility may not have occurred. While the researcher's presence may or may not have affected the behavior of participants, the fact that Emerald Lutheran is a values-based organization may have played a role in preventing uncivil behavior.

Although Emerald Lutheran is an informal organization, it is also a values-based organization. One would assume that a values-based organization would try to hide incivility, however Emerald's staff behaved in a manner that appeared congruous with the organization's daily functioning. Staff frequently cited that they should have changed their behavior on account of a researcher being present; however, it appears that nobody did. Also, as a values-based organization, Christian doctrine was frequently mentioned. Participants talked about responses to incivility and rudeness that occurs within the organization in terms of Christianity. While Christian values may have colored how participants overall react to incivility and rudeness, the

staff also had plenty of stories indicating that not all churches are so friendly, and that their staff is truly exceptional. So, while Christianity and embodying those values helps prevent uncivil behavior at Emerald Lutheran, not all churches are so lucky to have such a devoted staff. While the staff was exceptional, this research focused only on one staff.

This research was conducted in one organization with a small staff. Several participants cited the small staff size as one of the reasons why everyone knows everyone so well and why they all get along. Equally informal organizations with larger staffs, be they religious organizations or not, may also yield entirely different results in terms of the value that is placed on relationships and how the staff responds to incivility. There is also no saying that the small staff caused there to be less incivility, as organizations with a small staff can just as easily fall victim to uncivil communication patters. In addition to the staff being small, it is relatively non-diverse.

The staff of Emerald Lutheran consisted solely of Caucasians and solely from the upper-Midwest: North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota. This study could have thus just captured how incivility is portrayed among Caucasians from the upper-Midwest. Furthermore, upbringing and common background could also have reduced the likelihood of discourteous and uncivil behavior.

5.3.   Suggestions for Further Study

As was stated, Emerald Lutheran possesses some very unique qualities as a church community. That said, other church organizations should be studied to see how incivility is portrayed within their walls because doing so may eliminate some concern over studying a values-based organization in terms of incivility. Furthermore, the staff at Emerald Lutheran often referred to other churches that had a great deal of uncivil behaviors among their staff. Church organizations are also non-profit organizations; therefore, an examination of other types

of non-profit organizations may yield different results. Another possible area of future research would be looking at for-profit informal organizations. Each of these possible realms of study will likely yield new and exciting results in terms of determining how incivility is communicated and if incivility will escalate in an informal workplace.

Another area of future research would be to conduct a quantitative study on incivility spirals in the informal workplace. Employees may say that little incivility occurs, but perhaps approaching the subject from the point of view of a survey would yield empirical results that could be used in conjunction with this study to gain a fuller understanding of incivility in the informal workplace. Whether empirical or qualitative in nature, a longitudinal study of an organization may also yield exciting and new research on incivility in the informal workplace.

As workplaces change employees, new perspectives emerge and a change in organizational culture occurs. Thus, a longitudinal study may account for differences in staff and changes in organizational rules and functioning that may also be important factors to take into consideration when looking at organizational culture and incivility. A longitudinal study may perhaps provide a final answer on whether longevity in an organization decreases the likelihood of an incivility spiral or whether the lack of incivility spirals promotes longevity within the organization. Furthermore, a longitudinal study accounts for different stress levels throughout the year and years and may also lead to some new and exciting results in terms of understanding incivility in the informal workplace.

5.4.   Conclusion

This study serves only as a starting point for understanding incivility in informal workplaces. Although this study is only a starting point, it makes some unique contributions to our understanding of incivility. This final section will provide a discussion of the utility of this

study and then provide some best-practices that management of informal organizations should implement in terms of fostering an environment with minimal incivility.

This study calls into question that informal organizations lead to greater instances of incivility. Incivility appears to be more closely related to relationships among employees rather than organizational formality. While formality may not be as relevant as initially thought, organizational culture remains highly salient as each member of an organization and their relationships ultimately contribute to culture. Furthermore, the size of an organization may play a part of determining the likelihood of an incivility spiral in an organization. Since many cited knowing each other well as important in determining a response to uncivil communication, perhaps larger informal organizations would be more given to incivility spirals than smaller organizations because employees are less likely to be well acquainted with all of their coworkers in that organizational setting. That said, there are many practical applications that can be taken from this study for organizations with an informal organizational climate.

Fostering an environment of trust is key. Many participants spoke about being able to trust their co-workers. The idea of trust involves relationship-building activities. Also, the notion of trust cannot be forced, but is something that takes time, thus finding ways to reduce turnover and fostering long-term relationships among employees may be helpful. True trust and accepting of one another allowed the organization to function, and function very well with a very flat organizational hierarchy.

The flat organizational hierarchy present at Emerald Lutheran is a very important part of their organization. All of the staff expressed joy at the flat hierarchy within their organization. Individuals who were considered management or higher-level employees in the organization tended to use a laissez-faire management style and trusted their employees to get their own work completed. Thus, as management, placing trust in an employee's abilities to complete

51

work without an excessive focus on organizational structure may yield positive results; however, in order to do so one must hire intrinsically motivated individuals.

All of the staff at Emerald Lutheran was highly intrinsically motivated. It was evident that nobody was really concerned about their paycheck or hours worked; instead, they focused on completing their tasks. The tasks were completed because the success of the organization was paramount, not because it was mandated by an external force such as a manager. Many employees (n=10) talked about their work as being meaningful and making a difference. Finding and retaining intrinsically motivated employees who warrant trust and will remain in the organization long-term may be an important step in reducing incidents of incivility and incivility spirals. While retaining intrinsically motivated employees is important, finding the right type of employee also plays an important role in mitigating incivility.

Many staff (n=5) smiled and smirked when bringing up Emerald Lutheran's informal hiring policy. As Kelly and several others put it, "We don't hire assholes here." Hiring decisions, in part, focus on the type of person being hired and the potential fit of the individual's personality within the existing culture of the organization. Assessments used by several corporations should work to incorporate incivility and the likelihood of the individual to be an instigator or escalator of uncivil behavior, or in Emerald staff terms, "an asshole". While personality assessments may be helpful, so, too, would be getting to better know potential candidates for a job before making a hiring decision and including more of the potential employee's co-workers in hiring decisions.

There was much to be learned from Emerald Lutheran. Perhaps this organization serves as a rare utopian organization, but modeling its principals could be a promising first step in reducing incivility in informal workplaces. The staff, their principles, and the type of management all combine to provide a warm and welcoming environment, not only for

employees but also for those who attend worship services there. The staff of Emerald Lutheran

is exemplary, and it is the researcher's hope that all organizations can learn valuable lessons

about fostering a civil and warm environment from this group of wonderful people.

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APPENDIX. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I.   Opening Questions

        A.   What is your job at Emerald Lutheran?

        B.   How long have you worked at Emerald Lutheran?

        C.   Describe what it is like to work at Emerald Lutheran.

        D.   Do you consider your co-workers your friends?

        E.   How formal do you consider your work environment at Emerald Lutheran?

II.   Norms of behavior

        A.   What would you consider rude or discourteous behavior in the workplace?

        B.   What, if any of the examples you mentioned do you see on a regular basis at

                work?

III.   Intentionality

        A.   In what ways are people unintentionally rude at work?

        B.   If someone were to do something unintentionally rude or discourteous:

                1.   How do you respond to the slight?

                2.   Would you respond differently if it were a habitual occurrence? Explain.

IV.   Outcomes

        A.   How did you feel after you were slighted?

        B.   How did you respond to whomever mistreated you?

                1.   Would your response change if the person were in the same/different

                        position as you within the organization?

        2.   If you like or know the person, does that change how you respond to the slight?

   C.   Did you feel as though you needed to get even with the person who slighted you? If so, how did that manifest itself?

V.   Closing Questions

   A.   In what ways has discourteousness impacted your experiences at work?

   B.   How would you perceive incivility at work if you were less friendly with your co-workers?

   C.   Do you feel that Emerald Lutheran is a friendlier place to work than other organizations? Explain.