

Effect of Dispositional Factors on Computer-Mediated Communication Use and Employees' Incivility: A Study of a Historically Black University in the United States

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By

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Abstract

Effect of Dispositional Factors on Computer-Mediated Communication Use and Employees' Incivility: A Study of a Historically Black University in the United States; by Mrs. Shetia C. Butler Lamar

This thesis diagnoses and proposes action toward addressing issues related to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use at my university. The conception of the idea to examine these issues originated from a meeting where one of the university's administrators mentioned the issues and suggested that there was a need to address them. Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to explore the relationships between dispositional factors and computer-mediated communication use, as well as the influence of computer-mediated communication use on (in)civility in my organizational environment. Constructed point-by-point throughout this thesis is the whole argument that such relationships exist.

This study was undertaken to propose an action plan based on the following: (1) my doctoral and practical knowledge base; (2) the identification of a management issue; (3) literature about (in)civility and computer-mediated communication use; (4) arguments on methods and findings; (5) the development and design of proposed management action and (6) testing of the proposed management action in discussions with relevant stakeholders.

Clark's (2013) study on workplace incivility and Kettinger and Grover's (1997) work on computer-mediated communication usage as a determinant of workplace incivility offer the basis for the framework of this study. The approach to conducting this research involved mixed method and participatory action research using the four phases of action research proposed by Coghlan and Brannick (2014). The first phase of this study examined the context of the problem to determine if the issue was worth studying. Phase 2 entailed the development of a plan for examining the issue. Taking action in phase three, involved data collection to diagnose and assess the problem. Finally, phase four involved analysis of the collected data and preparation and sharing of an action plan with employees and pertinent organizational decision makers for feedback via focus group discussion.

Although the nature of action research differs from a typical traditional research, to put the study into perspective, at the diagnoses stage (Stage 3), I considered important propositions (hypotheses) based on previous studies. With regard to the data collected to diagnose the issue, the sample size was appropriate and inclusive of the organization's employee population. From the employee population of 729, the sample included 298 university respondents of which, 45.5% were faculty and 52.1% were staff. I used both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data.

Findings from the study indicated significant relationships between computer-mediated communication use and perceived task interdependence, perceived usefulness, gender, and employee class. Generally, results of the data collection indicate that workplace incivility does exist in the organizational environment. However, it rarely occurs in the form of a direct attack and most commonly occurs in a passive-aggressive nature. Moreover, in alignment with other studies that applied traditional research methods that have suggested a linkage between computer-

mediated communication use and workplace incivility, the results of this study also show significant evidence that the use of computer-mediated communication influences workplace incivility. In addition, based on further examination of the findings based on focus group feedback, this study also specifically exposed a significant correlation between workplace incivility and the use of email as a form of computer-mediated communication.

The development of a proposed action plan resulted from the feedback received from the survey. However, in response to the feasibility testing results, which suggest that the proposed action plan was feasible but not detailed or cost-effective, modifications to the plan incorporated a more detailed, cost-effective approach to resolving the organizational issue. Ultimately, based on the findings of the focus group discussions, participant-managers agreed to promote implementation of the proposed action plan based on the findings of the research.

Although, the aim of the thesis was not at generalization of its findings, nonetheless, this study offers university administrators insight into the organization's incivility problem and provides implications that can potentially help to address the organizational issue. Its findings also contribute to the previous studies related to incivility in the higher education environment that typically addressed faculty and students while neglecting to include (or specifically specifying the inclusion of) staff (or others working in a supporting capacity) participants in the sample. In addition, this study contributes to previous studies that largely neglect historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in their examination of civility as it relates to the higher education industry.

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DEDICATION

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” Hebrews 11:1

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to those who have fought tirelessly and faithfully for social freedom and cultural equality. It is devoted to the disenfranchised and those who were expected to be a statistic but strive for greatness by faith. It pays homage to mothers of murdered children whose dreams seem to have become an impossible reality. However, by faith, they persevere to see their children’s dreams alive through others. It is a testament that faith works; perseverance pays off. It is the result of a mother’s faith, prayers and sacrifice. This, the fruit of my individual labour, is a reflection of the collective efforts of my “village” and is therefore dedicated to those whose faith has influenced my life and pursuit of my goals both directly and indirectly.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Structure of this Chapter

This introductory chapter of the thesis introduces the objective of the study and the context of the examined organizational issue both generally and in relation to the researcher. It describes the researcher's role within the organization, interest and relevance to the subject matter. It also offers insight into how the research findings will support the researcher's development as a practitioner in their career, thus introducing the idea of the scholar practitioner. It additionally states the purpose of this study by providing a description of the examined organizational issue and its background and explaining why this research is important. Lastly, it concludes with a summary of the chapter contents and an outline of the remaining sections of the thesis.

1.1 Problem Statement

Workplace incivility has been a serious problem faced by Savannah State University. By indication of university administration, it has potentially influenced the use of computer-mediated communication tools that have been employed (in accordance with university system standards) to stimulate successful collaboration among university employees that have the potential to promote higher levels of student retention and graduation.

This research proposes several approaches to addressing the issue. Perhaps the most prevalent method applied previously has been the availability of regular training on employed systems.

Despite training efforts, Savannah State University has still experienced issues with workplace incivility and the use of computer-mediated communication. Action is required if the university is going to reduce occurrences of workplace incivility, attain higher levels of collaboration based on the use of computer-mediated communication, and increase success as it relates to student retention and graduation.

1.2 Objective of the Study

Although previous research suggests that workplace incivility generally appears in higher education in interactions between faculty, between faculty and students, and between students and their peers (Disbrow and Prentice, 2009; Taylor et al, 2018), further research is necessary to examine how workplace incivility occurs, how it is perceived, and how it should be addressed within a given organization. Previous research suggests that although there are some consistencies with regard to civility, variations exist with regard to how it is defined based on the organizational environment (Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Disbrow and Prentice, 2009; Yamada, Duffy, and Berry, 2018). In addition, perceptions of civility can be varied (Caza and Cortina, 2007; Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Clark and Springer, 2007; Kim., Insin, & Sunghyup, 2016; Walsh & Cunningham, 2017). As a result, approaches to addressing it can differ based on the circumstances of the environment (Cortina et al, 2001; 2013; Cortina and Magley, 2003; Clark and Ritter, 2018; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Sidle, 2009; Zheng., Tomas., Ryan, & Hinrichs, 2016). Therefore, the goal of this study was to define, explore and propose actions related to workplace incivility within a specified organization.

In alignment with the aforementioned need for organization specific exploration of workplace incivility, this study employed action research methodology to evaluate and reflect upon the presence of workplace incivility at Savannah State University and to explore the role that computer-mediated communication plays in contributing to workplace incivility. This thesis offers a practical but theoretically sound perspective that is inclusive of new knowledge gained through insider action research, evaluation and reflection on the identified issue relevant to the examined university. Accordingly, this research assessed the following critical action research objectives:

1. Definition of the fundamental concepts relevant to the development of the thesis: workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication, and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs);
2. Identification of the organizational problem;
3. Establishment of the theoretical and practical framework for the study through a review of relevant literature;
4. Definition of the methodology employed to gather insight into and foster better understanding of the examined organizational issue through deductive reasoning.
5. Analysis and identification of relevant understandings;
6. Proposal of changes to Savannah State University's policies and strategies based on research awareness;
7. Discussion of the findings and intended practical impact of the proposed action plan.
8. Offering of conclusions and recommendations; and
9. Identification of emergent areas for future research based on limitations and findings.

The action research used a mixed methods approach. It included the deployment of survey instruments to diagnose the organizational issue and develop an action plan. It used focus group discussion to offer qualitative insight into employees' perceptions relevant to the organizational issue and proposed action plan as a means of reflection and evaluation of its application to practice.

1.3 Research Questions

In an effort to offer a more focused approach to studying incivility in the workplace, this research examined the effects that previously observed dispositional factors, including gender, department, and work-related tasks, among university employees have on workplace incivility and the use of computer-mediated communication in a historically black university in the United States. The main aim of the study was to evaluate the specified organizational issue using action research methodology to: (1) appropriately identify the organizational problem, (2) apply knowledge of related theory to encourage the organization to reflect upon its impact on the organizational community, and (3) collaborate with organizational stakeholders to develop an action plan that would appropriately address the organizational issue. Thus, in an effort to identify the nature of the issue, the undertaking of this study included exploration of the influence of dispositional factors on computer-mediated communication usage and incivility among university faculty, staff and administrators in the examined university. This offered both the researcher and organizational stakeholders a deeper understanding of the problem while contributing to previous studies on

higher education environments that primarily addressed the same groups (i.e. faculty-to-faculty and faculty-to-student, etc.). In addition, this study offers implications not provided by the extant literature by offering answers to the identified questions, specifically with regard to the examined organization. Consequently, to achieve the above objectives and to investigate further the root causes and propose tangible solutions to the above organizational issues, this thesis answered the following questions:

1. Does workplace incivility exist at the examined university?
2. In what form does workplace incivility appear at the examined university?
3. Is computer-mediated communication being used at the examined university?
4. What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for at the examined university?
5. Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility at the examined university?
6. Which of the examined dispositional factors (i.e. gender, employee type, task variables, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use) influence computer-mediated communication use at the examined university?

The research answered the above questions using both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis (Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017). Specifically, I obtained the answers to Questions 5 and 6 via testing of selected hypotheses (Sanders & Yang, 2016; Painter & Jorge, 2017).

1.4 Fundamental Concepts and Definition of terms

In an effort to establish a clear understanding of the research, this section provides an operational definition for each of the uncommon terms used in this study. This includes the factors specifically evaluated and other terms used relative to the evaluated factors. It offers a perspective of each term based on their definition according to academic research, in practice, and relevant perceptions in the examined organizational environment.

1.4.0 Workplace Incivility

Workplace incivility, according to Cortina et al (2001), relates to “low-intensity behavior” with obscure intent to cause harm to the intended target. Such behaviors occur in the form of: being rude or discourteous, disregarding the feelings of others, showing lack of effort, demonstrating lack of respect for authority figures, etc. Incivility, as a major organizational problem, was also corroborated by many recent studies (Chen et al, 2018; Ejohwomu., Olalekan, & Ka, 2017; Painter & Jorge, 2017; Young., Melissa, & Marizen, 2017). This study uses this terminology to encompass all unfavorable workplace behaviors.

1.4.1 Computer-mediated Communication Methods

Extant literature describes *computer-mediated communication methods* as human communication that occurs using electronic devices (Kettinger & Grover, 1997; Herring, 2019). These devices include email, electronic messaging systems, electronic information sharing systems, and other

systems that facilitate communication via electronic system use. In this research, the term specifically refers to the use of email and other higher education systems that have been implemented in the university being evaluated including the following: Student Success Collaborative (SSC); DegreeWorks; GradesFirst; LiveText; Ad Astra; Desire2Learn, etc.

Description of the Types of Computer-Mediated Communication Systems Being Used in the Examined Organization

Student Success Collaborative

The *Student Success Collaborative (SSC)* provides predictive analytics that help higher education institutions positively redirect students identified as at-risk and/or off-track for graduation. University administrators, faculty and staff have access to this system. This system's use is for academic advising, to document and communicate information about students between organizational entities, to facilitate communication with students, and to run related reports (Krumm, Means, Bienkowski, 2018).

DegreeWorks

DegreeWorks is a web-based academic advising and degree audit tool that assists students and their academic advisors with successfully navigating degree curriculum requirements. University administration, faculty and staff use this software. Its functions include access to academic transcripts for advising; the ability to document academic planning; the ability to identify course pre-requisite issues and tools that allow assessment of curriculum changes based on change of major.

GradesFirst

GradesFirst is a web-based student performance monitoring system that automates the process of student services and communication between faculty and academic advisors (Venit, 2017). It is accessible to university administrators, faculty, and staff. It offers the capability of sending early alerts to academic advisors and students related to students. The distribution of early alerts occur based on attendance issues, poor performance in a course, etc.

LiveText

LiveText is a higher education assessment software used to document course assessments. It offers a comprehensive assessment of learning outcomes with robust data collection and analytics features. It allows university faculty, staff and administrators to document assessment rubrics and run reports based on a course and/or student (Michielsen, 2018; Part, 2018).

Ad Astra

Ad Astra is a higher-education system that uses data, software and analysis to help institutions with academic planning (Ad Astra, 2019). Its use is for space reservation and the management of space utilization.

Desire2Learn

Desire2Learn (or BrightSpace) is an online learning management system (LMS) used to make educational materials accessible online. Its users include faculty, staff, and students (Amin and Mohammed, 2018).

1.4.2 Historically Black Colleges\University (HBCU)

According to the Department of Education, Historically Black Colleges\Universities (HBCUs) are a source of pride and accomplishment for the community and nation. The Higher Education Act of 1965 defines HBCUs. According to definition, HBCUs are historically black colleges or universities that were established prior to 1964 and were established on the principal mission to educate black Americans. A nationally recognized accrediting agency or association that is reliable with regard to the quality of training offered or making reasonable progress towards accreditation as determined by the United States Secretary of Education must now accredit these institutions. HBCUs are responsible for offering skill and talent development for all students regardless of race (White House. Initiatives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities 2019, March 20).

1.4.3 Other Dispositional Factors Being Examined in this Study

Employee Classification

Employee classification distinguishes employee groups. Employees identified themselves as faculty, staff, or administrator.

Task Attributes

Task attributes (Kettinger and Grover, 1997) in this study describe the job-related tasks that employees perform while using computer-mediated communication systems. The tasks evaluated in this study include general task, social/entertainment, broadcast, and other. General tasks describe job-related tasks typically performed on a regular basis. Social/Entertainment tasks are those tasks that are unrelated to the job function. Broadcast tasks are tasks used to disseminate or gather information to or from the masses. Other tasks include actions that do not classify under one of the other task related categories.

Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warchaw, 1989) is the extent to which employees feel that the computer-mediated communication systems are simple to use.

Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warchaw, 1989) describes the extent to which employees believe that the computer-mediated systems are valuable.

In summary, this research used all of the terms defined above to evaluate the influence that employee characteristics and behaviors have on promoting the use of computer-mediated communication technology and workplace incivility. This study contributes to the extant literature relevant to these concepts by examining a specific organization that has an existing issue related to the use of computer-mediated communication and workplace incivility. Specifically with regard

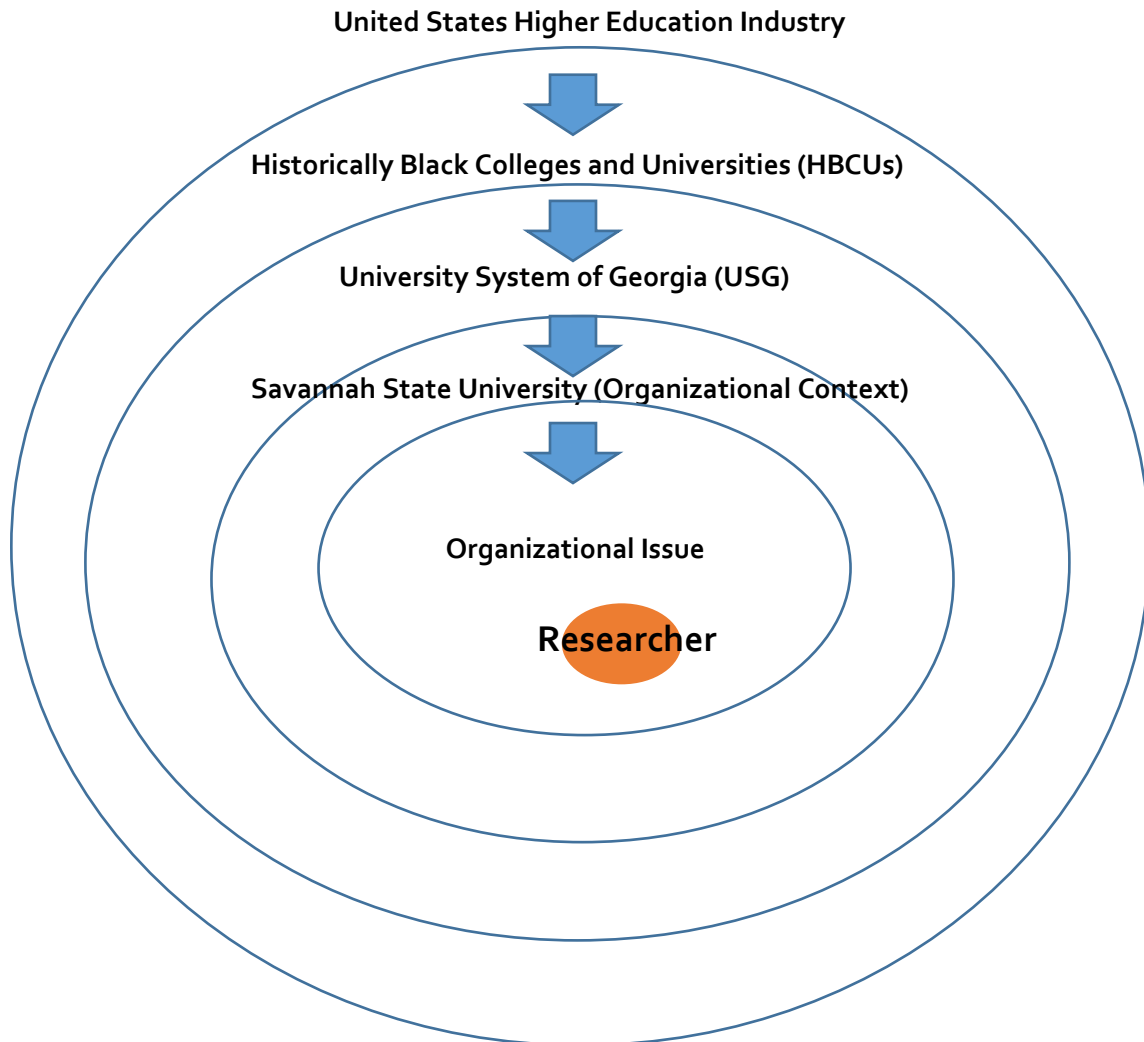
to the organization examined, this research identified existing relationships between the implementation of computer-mediated communication systems and workplace incivility. It also examined the effects that various factors such as gender, employee type, job-related tasks, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness have on employees' use of the computer-mediated communication systems. In addition, it examined how the use of computer-mediated communication systems influenced workplace incivility.

1.5 Context

Though the primary focus of this research was to examine a specified issue relevant to the impact of workplace incivility, it was important first to establish an understanding of the context in which this issue exists. The context relevant to an action research study offers insight into the environment in which the examined issue exists (Baskerville and Wood-Harper, 1996; Coghlan, 2019). The contextual details outlined in this section were important to establishing an understanding of the external factors that influence the organization and related issues.

The proceeding sections illuminate the volatile environment in which the examined organizational issue exists. It discusses the nature of the United States higher education industry and describe its impact and relevance to the action research study. It also explains and describes the historically black college and universities (HBCUs) designation and the university governing body, the University System of Georgia. It offers a comprehensive discussion of the research context with regard to the industry, assigned distinction, governing body, and organizational characteristics in which the examined organization and its associated issue exist. It illuminates both the external and internal factors that influence the organizational issue (specifically the presence of workplace incivility), the research process and its associated outcomes. The figure below (Figure 1.0) shows the contextual spheres of influence as it relates to the examined organizational issue and the researcher. The sections following proceed in accordance with this model.

Figure 1.0 Contextual Spheres of Influence



1.5.0 United States Higher Education Industry

The Higher Education Industry in the United States has recently suffered from challenges related to declining high school graduation rates, low accessibility to needed resources, diminished teacher quality and retention, and lower levels of college preparedness. As a result, the once successful industry leader has been more recently suffering from declining productivity. Thirty years ago, it was a leader in quality and quantity of high school diplomas; its rank more recently falls second in the world (US News Best Countries for Education Ranking, 2019). In terms of diversity, based on a national assessment of the nation's graduation rates, in 2012 it graduated 69% Black students, 73% Hispanic students and 86% Caucasian students (Coleman, 2013, U.S. Department of Education, 2018.; Layton, 2014). With regard to accessibility to resources, 97% of low-income students depend on schools for access to the internet and 40 million do not have high-speed internet in the schools they attend (Sparks, 2013). Statistics show that 1.3 million high school students do

not graduate on time yearly. States with the highest rate of students who do not graduate on time have rates between 80-89%, while, states with the lowest rate have less than 60%.

Although teacher quality is essential to the achievement of students, in the U.S., the statistics related to the retention of teachers are daunting. Fourteen percent of new teachers resign by the end of their first year teaching. Within the first 3 years of teaching, 33% leave. By the 5th year, almost 50% percent of teachers quit (Kopkowski, 2013). This attrition affects the consistency of quality instruction and forces remaining teachers to teach out of their field of expertise. Statistics show that schools that have a low-income population of 75% or more have three times more teachers teaching out of their field than do wealthier schools (Darling-Hammond and Sykes, 2003; Purcell et al, 2013).

With regard to high school education, students are not being properly prepared and do not have the appropriate skills and knowledgebase necessary to be successful after graduation (Alliance for Excellent Education, n.d.; Swanson, n.d.). In fact, statistics suggest that only one of four high school students' graduate from high school prepared for college with regard to the core subjects of Math, English, Reading, and Science. This lack of preparation, in turn, affects the workforce given that 85% of the currently available jobs and 90% of the new jobs require some college or other form of post-secondary education (Sheehy, 2012).

1.5.1 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) distinction

What are HBCUs?

Within the higher education industry, the distinction Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), as defined in the Higher Education Act of 1965, exists to define any historically black colleges or universities established prior to 1964 and established on the principal mission to educate black Americans. This university distinction was established based on the challenges faced by students of color at that time to provide a full range of postsecondary educational opportunities for students of color.

What are the challenges faced by HBCUs?

Although other researchers have similarly assessed the challenges faced by HBCUs, the New America Foundation offers a comprehensive perspective of the relative issues (Crawford, 2017; Williams et al, 2018; Farmer et al, 2019). The New American Foundation is a non-partisan U.S. organization that focuses on public policy issues relevant to education among other national issues. It has conducted extensive reviews of relevant data and offers perspectives on the current challenges faced by HBCUs. Their review, likened to that of other researchers, is inclusive of declining enrolment and graduation rates based on: educational funding, institutional relevance,

student preparedness, leadership advocacy, and challenges maintaining academic accreditation. They also offer the following recommendation for HBCU reform: strengthened institutional governance, increased enrolment and resources, embracing diversity, improving student outcomes, and improving HBCUs' perceptions and transparency.

The proceeding sections are adapted from their 2015 report and offer insight into the ongoing challenges and recommended solutions.

[Declining Enrolment and Graduation Rates \(Funding, Relevance, Preparedness, Advocacy\)](#)

[Funding](#)

According to the New America Foundation (NAF), HBCUs have more recently experienced dramatic changes in enrolment from 2000-2010 (New America Foundation, 2015). The organization believes that this decline may be attributed somewhat to the changes in the Parent PLUS loan criteria that has negatively affected potential students' ability to pay college tuition. In addition, the increased options at non-black colleges for students of color have offered students of color more opportunities to attend non-black colleges. Also, given that most of the HBCU student population required financial support to attend college, tightened financial aid eligibility requirements have had a negative impact on students' ability to obtain needed funding. For example, the Parent PLUS loan program was modified in 2011 to tighten credit eligibility, making it difficult for families to obtain a Parent PLUS loan. In fact, in Fall of 2012, 14,616 students at HBCUs learned that their parents' applications for PLUS loans were rejected based on the adjusted approval criteria. This denial resulted in a drop in HBCU enrollment and loss of an estimated \$168 million from students who were not able to obtain financial support.

Student loan and other debt are a significantly higher issue for HBCU graduates than graduates of other colleges. According to data collected by GALLUP, from 2000-2014 half of HBCU graduates reported more than \$25,000 in loan debt, while only 34% of graduates from predominantly white college reported similar levels of debt. Subsequently, while only 22% of HBCU students graduated with no debt, 39% of non-HBCUs graduates left school debt free. These differences are to some extent attributed to the fact that nearly 78% of all HBCU graduates take on loans to finance their education, compared to barely 60% of their peers at predominantly white institutions. Black college graduates are 17 points more likely to graduate with debt than white college graduates are.

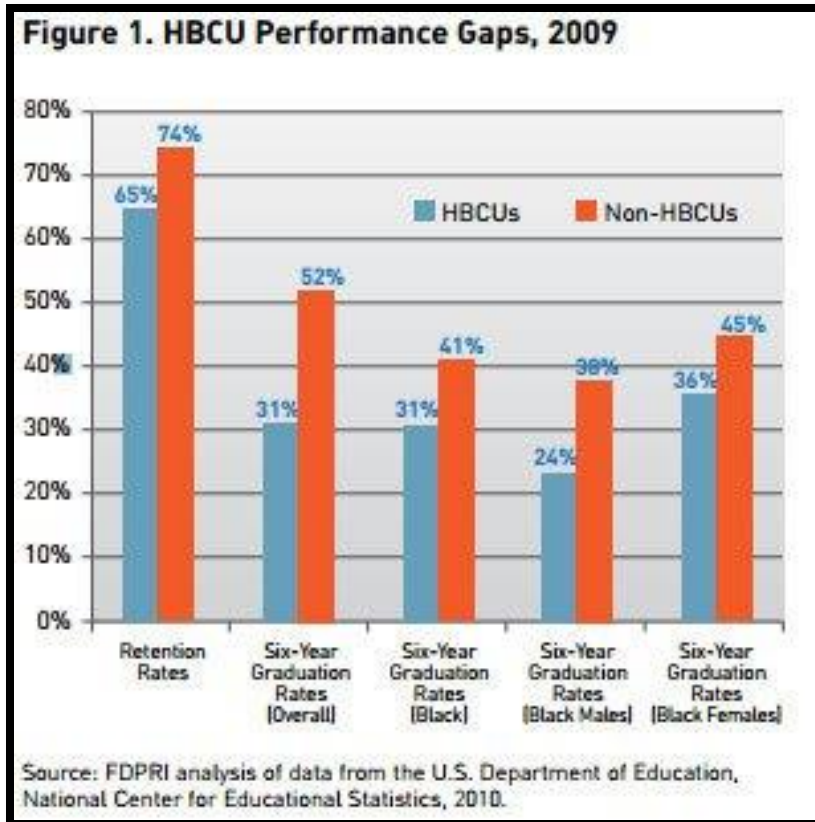
See the table below (from the 2014 GALLUP report) for a breakdown of undergraduate student loan debt by race:

| <i>Undergraduate Student Loan Debt, by Race: 2000-2014 Graduates</i> | |
|---|------------------|
| Approximately how much money did you borrow in student loans to obtain your undergraduate degree? | |
| | 2000-2014 |
| | % |
| BLACKS | |
| No loans | 22 |
| \$1-\$25,000 | 28 |
| More than \$25,000 | 50 |
| WHITES | |
| No loans | 39 |
| \$1-\$25,000 | 28 |
| More than \$25,000 | 34 |
| TOTAL | |
| No loans | 37 |
| \$1-\$25,000 | 28 |
| More than \$25,000 | 35 |
| Feb. 4- March 7, 2014 | |
| Figures adjusted for inflation in 2014 dollars | |
| GALLUP | |

Relevance

According to reports by the New America Foundation, because of the recent decline in enrollment in 2011, the relevancy of HBCUs has been a matter for recent focus. Many argue that HBCUs still contribute by awarding degrees to African-American students and producing highly skilled workers despite their relatively small enrollment and graduation numbers compared to non-black institutions. Despite declining enrollment, HBCUs produce 16% of all bachelor’s degrees earned by African-Americans, 25% of all bachelor’s degrees in education earned by African-Americans and 22% of all bachelor’s degrees in STEM fields earned by African American students.

Although some research indicates that HBCU graduation rates equal or exceed that of their predominantly white institutional (PWI) peers when socioeconomic status and academic preparedness are considered. In the absence of this consideration, graduation rates for HBCUs are in excess of 21 points lower than their peer institutions, and retention rates are 9 points lower than those relative to non-HBCUs are. The U.S. Department of Education statistics figure below illustrates these findings.



Preparedness

Additionally, a lack of academic preparedness and the need for remedial education has had a negative impact on HBCUs. The low pass rate associated with remedial courses has caused many states to question their effectiveness, reduce funding, and in some cases, eliminate them from the four-year public institution curriculum. This trend has resulted in an increased need for HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions to support and provide education to students who are academically under-prepared and have limited resources.

Advocacy

NAF suggestions offer that the lack of a collective effort among HBCU leadership with regard to advocating for needed support makes it difficult for HBCUs to sustain long-term success.

Challenges Maintaining Academic Accreditation

HBCUs have also experienced issues with maintaining accreditation. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) began formally accrediting HBCUs in 1928. However, many HBCUs have since faced challenges maintaining their accreditation. For instance, between 1998 and 2013, SACS put 29 HBCUs on warning and 20 on probation, and revoked accreditation for four HBCUs. Although HBCUs only make up 13% of SACS membership, they constitute 25% of SACS sanctions. It is critical for HBCUs to meet accreditation requirements to maintain eligibility for federal financial aid for their students and families.

HBCU Reform Recommendations

Based on evaluation of the factors above, HBCU advocates and researchers have offered a number of recommendations for HBCU reform. They suggest that HBCU impact, productivity and sustainability is linked to their ability to recognize their unique purpose to serve as a beacon for serving diverse, low-income, first-generation students. Subsequently, HBCU advocates suggest that the basis for HBCU assessments should be on their ability to serve their unique student population given the innate challenges associated with serving those students rather than the based on deficits. Suggestions for reform include:

- The need for **strengthened institutional governance** in the form of enhanced internal organizational structures that promote effective governing, enhanced faculty recruitment strategies, improved professional development for faculty, strengthened enrollment management and student support, and efficient budgeting.
- **There is a need for growth in enrollment and resources.** It has been suggested that this effort can potentially be facilitated by enhancing K-12 recruitment efforts, promoting increased levels of diversity, increasing retention rates to stabilize enrollment and revenue, increasing available funding by promoting increased alumni giving and securing major corporate and foundation donors. In addition, another approach would entail soliciting the support of state and federal governments to provide additional funding to address the unique needs of HBCU students.
- **The need for embracing diversity.** HBCUs should consider expanding their target market from black Americans to include Latino, American Indian, Asian, white and international students. HBCUs will need to reflect upon the potential implications that pursuing a new student focus will have on the HBCU culture and climate. Therefore, the HBCU mission may need adjusting to accommodate for the additional groups of students.
- **Improving Student Outcomes.** HBCUs need to offer financial aid-eligible and first-generation college students enhanced support to promote success. This may include incorporating curriculum focus on strength areas and recruiting qualified faculty around those areas. They should also collect and use student success data in a more consistent and meaningful way to track student progress and provide additional support when needed. HBCUs should enhance student advising and development to connect practical relevance and research opportunities while driving academic success. Additionally, advocates suggest that HBCUs should engage the media in portraying a more comprehensive story as it relates to their outcome measures. For example, recommendations suggest that the nature of comparisons of graduation and retention rates based on income status to account for the impact of students' ability to pay.
- **Enhance Perceptions and Transparency of HBCUs.** HBCUs should improve both internal and external communication about the success and challenges HBCUs face. Doing so will enable them to identify HBCU champions. In addition, they should exhibit a willingness to present accessible and up-to-date information about institutional outcomes

and struggles in a manner that will allow HBCUs to share their unique narrative in a more compelling way. This openness could potentially promote public and financial support. In addition, HBCUs should incorporate student testimonies to promote the value of HBCUs.

1.5.2 The University System of Georgia (USG)

Within the United States higher education industry, The University System of Georgia (USG) is a state governmental agency that is responsible for governing public institutions of higher education in the state of Georgia in the United States. It mandates and enforces goals and policies for all educational institutions under its governance. It also distributes public funding to the institutions. This university system is one of the largest systems in the United States. It has four categories including research universities, state universities, state college, and regional universities.

Based on information obtained from a University System of Georgia recent Comprehensive Administrative Review (2017), the university system has been substantially impacted by the following: (1) its obligation to support economic development by making higher education both affordable and accessible to support the workforce, (2) the impact of increases in higher education spending (primarily administrative) that subsequently affect tuitions and funding, (3) the pressures to control costs while managing to benefit core stakeholders, and (4) the need for processes improvement and institutional effectiveness to support student success and degree attainment goals.

Higher education has also recently been impacted, in addition to the administrative goals, by the implementation of state-wide legislations like the Complete College Georgia initiative and the Georgia House Bill 280 “campus carry” legislation. The USG implemented the Complete College Georgia initiative to support the projected increase in jobs requiring a college education in Georgia. Its design includes initiatives to maintain a commitment to higher education quality while promoting a rapid increase in the attainment of certificates and degrees (Complete College Georgia, 2019). In addition, although there is a rise in the number of university campus shootings, the USG recently implemented House Bill 280, better known as the “campus carry” legislation to allow individuals on a college campus to bear arms (Additional Information Regarding House Bill 280, 2017).

1.6 Organizational Context

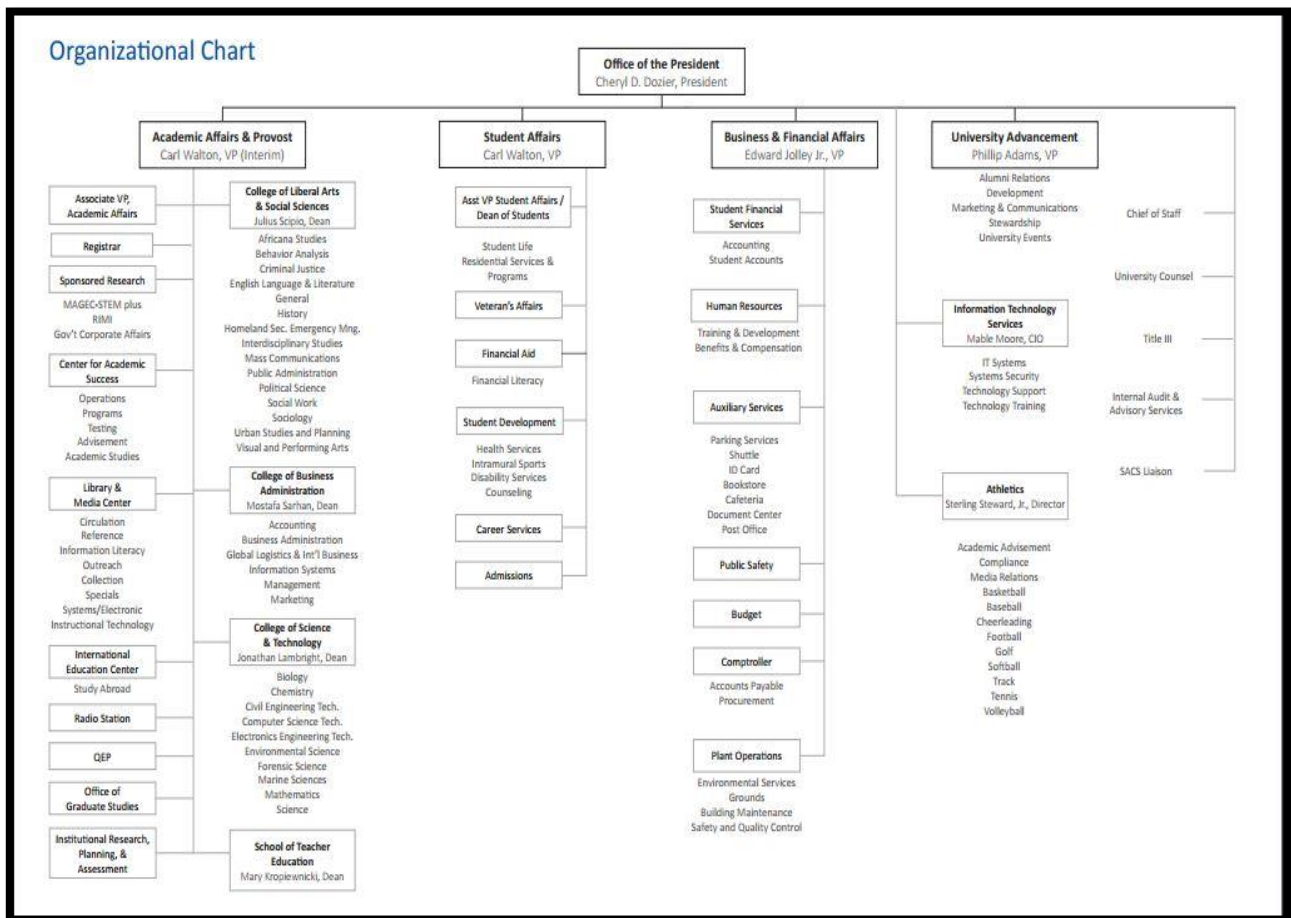
The organization examined in this study, Savannah State University (SSU), is the oldest public HBCU in the state of Georgia and the oldest institution of higher learning in the city of Savannah. Given that it is a public institution, the state (USG) governs the institution and it must comply with the state’s enforced standards. These standards are relative, for example, to: technology, administration, admissions, fees, budgeting, degree offerings, etc.

Savannah State University was founded in 1890. Although at its founding it was established for the education of colored youth, the current demographics of the university (as obtained from the

university’s Office of Institutional Research and Planning), although generally African American, are relatively diverse; including: 84.4% Black/African American, 6.5% Hispanic/Latino, 4.3% White, 3.2% Other, .4% American Indian/Alaska Native, and .2% Asian.

With regard to the university’s organizational structure, the organizational chart reveals that (at the onset of this research) the university had four colleges and a number of supporting departments. However, it also shows that (at the time of this study) a single administrator was responsible for single-handedly managing twenty of the university’s enterprises. See university’s organizational chart in **Figure 1-1** below.

Figure 1-1 University’s organizational structure



Source: (2017) Retrieved from Institutional Research, Planning/ Documents <http://www.savannahstate.edu/irp/documents/org-chart.pdf>

Regarding the Savannah State University’s performance, research revealed that in the higher education environment, organizations are evaluated based on benchmarks that assess their ability to achieve goals relevant primarily to enrolment, retention and graduation. The statistics show that Savannah State experienced an increase in total enrolment from 2007 to 2014 and became relatively stagnant thereafter. The retention figures show a steady decline in total returning freshman from 2013 to 2015. However, despite the decline in retention, graduation rates have

increased from 2011-2015 from 453 in 2011 to 464 in 2012, 527 in 2013, 570 in 2014, and 578 in 2015 (Institutional Research and Planning Fact Book, 2015).

1.7 Background and Identification of Organizational Issue

This study examined the relevance and impact of workplace incivility in the subject organization and examined the role that computer-mediated communication use plays in promoting uncivil behaviors. It explicitly fosters an understanding of existing organizational issues. It also illuminates organizational stakeholders' perception of them. This research provides the insight needed for organizational leaders to develop a more favorable organizational culture that has the potential to, in turn, promote future organizational success.

The approach to this study is inclusive of the understanding that gaining employee buy-in is critical to establishing a shared organizational culture and promoting a collaborative effort towards achieving organizational goals. Failure to clearly communicate and gain employee support of organizational goals and standards can have adverse effects on the organizational environment and its stakeholders.

Specifically, this study took into account that Savannah State University (a historically black institution of higher education) has experienced issues of workplace incivility. These issues were pointed out by organizational leadership in the established topic of focus for a weeklong institute, "...Collective Collaboration and Civil Communication Contribute to Consistent College Completion" (taken from the university's 2015 Spring Faculty/Staff Institute Program). Civility was highlighted, in this meeting of faculty, staff, and administrators, as an aspect of the organizational environment that has the potential to promote the university's ability to develop increased rates of retention. Subsequently, the university identified incivility (the opposite of civility) as a major workplace issue in my organisation, and deemed that it is necessary for action to be taken to reduce its occurrence. The university administrator suggested that the presence of incivility inhibits the organization's ability to collaborate collectively and engage in civil communication to promote enhanced levels of student retention and graduation using the implemented systems.

To illuminate the linkage between uncivil behavior and the use of the systems discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.4.1, discussants stated that there is a need to promote the use of recently implemented systems to encourage collaboration among organizational entities. And, similar to the work of previous researchers, both the reduction of uncivil behavior and increased use of currently employed systems had the potential to promote increased rates of retention and graduation at the university (Wasserman and Kram, 2009; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017; Jayamohan., Alexander, & Moss, 2017).

During this meeting addressing the importance of the civility issue, brainstorming sessions allowed members of the organization to reflect and work collaboratively to discuss ways to resolve issues related to using implemented systems to increase student retention, graduation rates and overall workplace civility. In addition, in other breakout sessions, diverse members of the organization paired together to brainstorm ways that uncivil behavior occurs in the workplace in relation to different aspects of the organization where new systems have been implemented to promote

increased retention and graduation rates. The focal areas for the discussions included: advisement, assessment, customer service, and collaboration between departments.

1.8 Researchers Role & Relevance to the Issue

According to McNiff (2016), researchers should seek to redefine their abilities with regard to undertaking action research. Therefore, in assessing my relevance to the study as an insider researcher (Unluer, 2012; Pang & Ng, 2016; Ejohwomu., Olalekan, & Ka, 2017), I focused on evaluating my capabilities with regard to offering solutions to the organizational issues. As an alumna and member of the faculty at the university examined in this study, it is my desire to support the growth and development of the organizational environment given that I have a stake in its success. Therefore, I explored the issue discussed in the meeting (see Section 1.7) to offer university administrators the information needed to appropriately classify and address the organizational challenge. Although I do not have the authority or autonomy to take any action with regard to the organizational issue myself, I believe that the output of my research and my position in the university has been insightful to those who do have the authority to approve and implement the recommended action. Therefore, I have initiated efforts and intend to continue them using evidence from my research to support university administrators in taking action towards addressing organizational issues related to civility and computer-mediated communication use.

1.9 Rationale for Undertaking This Study

Previous researchers' (Betancourt & Wezel, 2016; Ohmer, Sobek, Teixeira, Wallace, & Shapiro, 2013) studies suggest rationale as an important component of considering community-based research. In consideration of this suggestion, besides the mere fact the doctoral thesis is a requirement for pursuance of the doctoral degree, it was my desire in this study to apply what I have learned in the doctoral program to evaluate my comprehension. Therefore, I selected an issue that I (in agreement with administrators) deemed pertinent to the success of my organization as an opportunity to apply my knowledge. It was my intention, as an Information Technology professional, developing faculty member at my university and aspiring business consultant, to apply action research methodology in a manner that examined an issue that was relevant to my discipline. Although different from traditional research methods commonly employed in higher education in terms of approach, as other scholars have suggested, action research is a derivative of social science research that promotes collaborative efforts that have the potential to lead to social change (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Bergkvist & Taylor, 2016; Jayamohan., Alexander, & Moss, 2017).

Additionally, in my pursuit of becoming a scholar-practitioner (Wasserman and Kram, 2009; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Rodrigues & Krishnamurthy, 2016; Pardo & Alfonso, 2017), it was my desire to evaluate my organizational issue in a manner that pursued deeper understanding not only of the issues being examined but also of what it takes to appropriately propose, apply and evaluate related action. It is evident to me, based on the ever-evolving business environment, that there is a need for professionals who have the instinctive ability to offer solutions to organizations who are experiencing challenges related to change (Araten-Bergman., Hila., Peli, & Band-

Winterstein, 2016; Keck & Babcock, 2017). As Stacey (2011) suggests in the discussion of complex adaptive systems, to help organizations maintain competitiveness, researchers must also (like the organizations they seek to consult) adapt and collaborate to address the constant evolution of the organizational environment. Therefore, these factors along with my personal interests prompted my desire to identify and further investigate a specific organizational issue to test my knowledge of action research while providing possible solutions that promote the development and progress of my organization and future organizations for which I may have the opportunity to serve as a consultant.

1.10 Why is this Research Important?

This research is important to local university administrators, employees, alumni, students, and the university's governing body. University administrators have found this research to be most profitable given that the results have provided them with the immediate benefit of a better understanding of the variables associated with civility in the university. It has also afforded them with awareness about computer-mediated communication use and how it affects the occurrence of workplace incivility (Pang & Ng, 2016; Kennedy & Francisco, 2017; Young., Melissa, & Marizen, 2017; Stich et al, 2018). This research gave employees an opportunity to support the enhancement of the organizational environment by collaboratively expressing their perspectives on workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use (Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017). Alumni and students will reap the indirect benefits of any changes that occur within the organizational environment because of action taken relevant to this research. In addition, the university's state governing body can benefit from the findings of this research, given that the results may illuminate the nature of other similar challenges in other universities. And, the proposed action plan has some level of relevance to other universities that are experiencing similar issue with workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication use and declines in student retention and graduation.

This study helps the examined university (and can potentially offer implications for the higher education industry) to dispel the myths related to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use in the organizational community by establishing a degree of certainty with regard to the issues (Larsen, 2017; Li & Zheng, 2017). The university's ability to understand and take action towards addressing the issue has the potential to promote success with regard to enhancing the organizational culture, student retention and graduation rates. It also offers an opportunity for future engagement with employees given the success of this collaborative effort.

The findings of this research may also offer implication for other universities that exist within the same context and are currently experiencing issues with civility and computer-mediated communication use. In addition, the data gathered from this research has the potential to offer fundamental information about how the enhancement of civility and computer-mediated communication use could promote student retention and graduation efforts.

1.11 Chapter Summary

In summary, each section of the introductory chapter provides the basis from which the proceeding sections of the thesis were developed. The objective of the study introduces the intended outcome of this research. The context of the study offers an understanding of the unstable environment in which the examined issue exists. It gives the reader insight into why the examined issue exists and the potential challenges faced in developing and implementing an approach towards resolving it. The identification of the organizational issue that requires inquiry and management action (Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017; Jayamohan., Alexander, & Moss, 2017), introduced the reasoning for pursuing this study. However, the background of the organizational issue and the events/evidence that brought it to my attention offer insight into previous research and the associated objectives. The explanation of why this study is important provides a foresight of the potential benefits of this research, while, my rationale for undertaking the study and relevance gave me the chance to introduce myself, my relationship with the identified organisational issue, and the extent of my (as the researcher) desire and ability to influence change in my organization. Particularly important is the fact that, as an alumna and member of the faculty at the university, I have the capacity to use evidence from this study to persuade others to take action (Connors & Halligan, 2017). The next section of this chapter will offer insight into what readers should expect in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

1.12 Structure of the Thesis

In an effort to present the findings of this research in a manner that is conducive for clarity to the intended audience, the thesis structure is in an extended format similar to the structure proposed in the work of Coghlan and Brannick (2014). This structure allows for a detailed presentation of the organizational issue examined. It explains the relevant methodology applied to explore the organizational issue and the extant literature. It includes an explanation of the results and identification of what the findings reveal relevant to the extant literature. It concludes with a synopsis of how the findings promote adoption of the proposed course of action for addressing the problem and reflection on how undertaking the study has informed my thinking.

More explicitly stated, in the previous sections, the introduction (Chapter 1) offers an overview of the subject matter discussed in this research, provides the rationale behind undertaking the thesis and a synopsis of the identified organizational issues. The next chapters will proceed as follows: Chapter 2, the Literature Review, will include a review of literature relevant to the organizational issue. In this review of relevant literature, I framed the organizational issue with regard to its relevance to extant studies that have examined similar workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication issues in the workplace. The Research Paradigm, in Chapter 3, offers a presentation of my research philosophy and how an evaluation of the different research philosophies informed the methodology used in the study, the application of action research, the research methods, and an evaluation of the ethical issues related to the study. Chapter 4, the Research Design, offers a discussion of the systematic approach to examining the organizational issue, an explanation of how I diagnosed the organizational issue and how I employed action

research methodology to collaboratively develop an appropriate action plan towards addressing the identified issue. Chapter 5, Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion of Findings, contains a description of the results from diagnosis of the issues and the feedback gathered for the development of the proposed action plan. A discussion of the Development of the Proposed Action Plan occurs in Chapter 6. This discussion provides a detailed explanation of how the feedback received from organizational stakeholders influenced the development of the proposed action plan. The Chapter 7 Summary of Findings provides a synopsis of discoveries from the study based on the overall results of the data collected and explains how the findings are relevant for practical application towards addressing the organizational problem. In Chapter 8, Reflections, I provide a summary of what I have gained personally from conducting this research in terms of how it fostered my ability to apply previous knowledge and gain valuable awareness. Chapter 9, Research Conclusions and Recommendations, offers a synopsis of the inferences that are drawn from this research based on the research findings and offers recommendations for approaching relevant action. The Chapter 10 Implications, Contributions to Knowledge and Future Research Agenda present the suggestions made by this research, illuminate its contributions to the exiting knowledgebase relevant to the subject matter, and proposes ideas for future related studies. The thesis concludes with Chapter 11, which identifies the Limitation of the Study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 What to Expect in this Chapter

This section of the thesis offers an overview of the literature that has informed this research. This discussion of the research agenda illuminates the empirical, theoretical, and conceptual framework in which this study is grounded (Camp, 2001; Marriam, 2001; Knobloch, 2010; He & Fang, 2016; Kennedy & Francisco, 2017). The empirical review illuminates the discourse related to workplace incivility as defined in previous research. While, the review of relevant theories discusses the theoretical implications for this research. The conceptual framework suggests that previous studies have offered evidence with regard to defining and approaching workplace incivility. Collectively, the review of literature illuminates the discourse related to workplace incivility, human behavior, and leadership as previously defined based on culture, gender and industry. This chapter also includes a discussion of the relationships identified in previous literature between workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use. Moreover, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the assumptions and delimitations of this study and a summary of this chapter.

2.1 Empirical Review on Workplace Incivility: What does previous research say?

This empirical review, adapted from the comprehensive work of Schilpzand, Pater, and Erez (2016), illuminates the diverse nature of previous research related to workplace incivility. It specifically states when and how the introduction and understanding of the concept occurred, the geographic locations previously studied, the varying industries and professions examined, and the measurements used to evaluate the concept.

According to what exists in the searchable literature, Anderson and Pearson developed a relevant construct and introduced the concept of workplace incivility in 1999 in their research on negative workplace behaviors. They suggested in their study that the presence of such uncivil workplace behaviors promotes the presence of more aggressive forms of unfavourable behavior. Since their study, many related studies have emerged in journals related to organizational behavior.

In addition, although the bulk of previous research commenced in the United States, studies have also emerged in other countries. The examined countries include Australia, Canada, China, Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, and the UK (Kirk, Schutte & Hine, 2011; Leiter, Laschinger, Day, & Oore, 2011; Laschinger et al (2012) ; Chen, Ferris, Kwan, Yan, Zhou, & Hong, 2013; Kim & Shapiro, 2008; Griffin, 2010; Scott, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013; Totterdell, Hershcovis & Niven, 2012). This diverse interest in the subject matter demonstrates that relative issues exist outside of the United States and among other cultures.

Diversity also exists with regard to the organizations examined. Specifically, in the last ten years, previous studies have also explored a variety of industries and professions. Some of those examined include: property management company employees, manufacturing employees, university employees, call center employees, grocery store chain employees, and engineering firm employees (Miner, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt, 2012; Wu, Zhang, Chiu & He, 2013; Sakurai & Jex, 2012; Scott, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2013; Walsh, Magley, Reeves, DaviesSchrills, Marmet & Gallus, 2012; Adams & Webster, 2013).

There is also some disparity with regard to the instruments employed to measure workplace incivility. Although most have employed Cortina et al's (2001) seven-item workplace incivility scale (WIS) to evaluate antecedents, processes, and outcomes relevant to workplace incivility, others have adapted the scale to include additional questions relevant to related experiences (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013; Clark, 2013). For example, the measure used in this study is one developed by Clark (2013) and includes 34 items. Other relevant scales employed in related research include the Uncivil Workplace Behavior Questionnaire (Martin and Hine, 2005), the Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale (Spector & Jex, 1998), and the Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire (Neuman & Keashly, 2002).

2.2 Conceptual/Theoretical Framework: Why is it important?

The conceptual framework of this research study contributed to my ability as a researcher to understand the fundamental concepts of workplace incivility and human behavior that underlie this study and contributed to my ability to explain, predict and understand phenomena in order that I could begin to challenge and extend existing knowledge based on relevant assumptions. The theoretical framework informed my understanding of the existing field of knowledge as it relates to understanding and influencing human behavior through organizational approaches to applying relevant theory and the use of technology. Figure 2.0 in the Appendix offers a graphical depiction of the understanding that provided the foundation for this research. The sections following will offer a review of relevant extant literature relative to the previously introduced context of this study and illuminate the fundamental premise for undertaking this thesis and proposing subsequent action.

2.3 Workplace Incivility Significance to Higher Education

Workplace incivility has become more prevalent in recent higher education research. For instance, Pitrowski and King (2016) offered a conceptual framework for studying what they refer to as "adult bullying". Their proposed framework includes five areas of investigation: "destructive leadership, abusive supervision, workplace bullying, incivility, and the Adult Bullying Syndrome" (Piotrowski and King, 2016). In addition, Carrie Clark (an advocate for ending workplace bullying) has done several studies on the subject matter. Clark's (2013) national study on workplace incivility provides the basis from which to approach the evaluation of the organizational issue in this study. Her study examined faculty-to-faculty incivility in a nursing environment in an effort to address issues of collegiality and civility. Clark's (2013) findings indicate that incivility can have negative impacts on the academic environment. She suggests that learning to address issues of incivility has the potential to promote the development of an organizational culture of civility and enhance the satisfaction and quality of performance of academic faculty (Livengood & Rose, 2016; Sugathan., Kumar, & Avinash, 2017; Alt and Itzkovich, 2019; Furst-Holloway and Miner, 2019). She found in her research that incivility issues occurred mostly between faculty and administrators. In addition, employees experienced frustration given that organizational leadership tolerates such uncivil behavior. Respondents in her study suggested face-to-face communication

and civility (consultant facilitated) workshops on effective communication as possible resolutions. However, they were reluctant about addressing related issues given their fear of retaliation.

Following this study, Clark has conducted several subsequent studies on workplace incivility. In a more recent study of faculty-to-faculty incivility, Clark et al (2013) evaluated the issue from a national perspective and found that academic leaders have the ability to promote civility in the workplace. They suggest that this collaboration with faculty will promote the ability to develop policies and evaluations that encourage a civil workplace and foster an environment that encourages faculty relationships, open communication, and “a sense of community”. In 2014, Clark collaborated with another researcher in a study that discussed cognitive rehearsals as a possible intervention against incivility (Griffin and Clark, 2014; Basso & Pizzutti, 2016; Albrecht., Walsh, & Sharon, 2017). They found that the cognitive rehearsals technique helps to improve communication by promoting dialogue related to addressing incivility issues. However, in another study, Clark, Ahten, and Macy (2014) evaluated nursing graduates in an effort to examine their ability to address incivility issues and found the use of scenarios to be an effective tool to teach relative strategies.

Other studies cited Clark et al’s work. For example, a study on academic incivility (Wright and Hill, 2015) used her work as a basis to develop a strategy towards addressing issues among faculty. Other studies have cited Clark’s (2013) research in evaluations of incivility as it relates to perceptions of faculty (Sills, 2016), generational differences and coping strategies (Ziefle, 2014), and faculty leaders experiences with barriers to managing a civil workplace (Peters and King, 2017). Findings of these previous studies suggest the implementation of educational programs (Sills, 2016) and establishment of an understanding of the nature of incivility (Ziefle, 2014; Peters and King, 2017).

In alignment with Clark’s work, recent research suggests that the fact that incivility happens in the academic workplace should not be surprising given the current overall climate (Graffenreid, 2018). According to Graffenreid (2018), incivility often hides in the midst of other issues, like class or cultural assumptions, which contributes to administrators’ reluctance to take action given their fear that subordinates will view them as culturally unaware. However, she (like previous researchers) recommends that academic administrators should take actions to prevent their reluctance to address such issues. Her recommendations for addressing issues of civility in the workplace are consistent with those of others. She, like them, recommends that organizational leaders should: become more aware of relevant policies, make sure those policies are clearly communicated, be proactive in setting expectations, exercise self-awareness and demonstrate the type of behavior they want to see, and support a team effort to promote change by addressing related issues.

On the other hand, researchers should consider the potential implications specifically related to higher education environments based on previous research which suggests that academic freedom promotes incivility in the educational environment (Twale and De Luca, 2008) and faculty incivility impacts the professional development of students (Del Prato, 2013).

Additionally, researchers should evaluate samples that are more diverse to identify and compare trends. Studies that are more recent have examined faculty samples to explore faculty-to-faculty incivility trends (Peters, 2014; Wright & Hill, 2014). However, previous research largely neglected staff samples.

Other findings indicate that workplace incivility may increase with the use of technology (Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016). In addition, faculty believe that electronic communication promotes uncivil behavior (Clark, 2013; Uribe et al., 2016; Kim & Rhee, 2017). In consideration of these findings, researchers should explore the impacts that technology has on the organizational environment to ensure that the implementation of technology has not stimulated an increase in workplace incivility.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: How Human Behavior and Perceptions Impact the Presence of Workplace Incivility

In order to promote the ability to influence intended behaviors in the examined organization, it was important to establish a general understanding of human behavior as it relates to how perceptions influence behaviors. Therefore, I explored several previously examined behavioral theories relevant to influencing intended perceptions and subsequent behaviors in comparison to relevant findings in previous studies on computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility. I selected the examined theories based on their relevance to previous studies that have specifically explored and offered implications related to computer-mediated use and workplace incivility.

Previous theories have offered a basis from which to understand human behaviors and factors that influence them. Researchers commonly use theories to establish a baseline from which to understand predicted behaviors. In this study, several theories were considered in developing my understanding of what others have found relevant to how individuals' behavior can be influenced in an organizational environment, how their learning affects their actions, and how they react to the implementation of information systems. Subsequently, in pursuit of understanding related to these human behaviors, a number of themes have emerged. These include the following: the theory of reasoned action and planned behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980; 2011); the social cognition and social learning theories (Bandura, 1971; 1986); the theory of assertive discipline (Canter and Canter, 1976; Canter, 2010); the theory of operant conditioning (Skinner, 1954; Sanders & Yang, 2016); and the technology acceptance model (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw, 1989; Sanders & Yang, 2016). The sections below offer a summary of each theory and explain how they are applicable to the study.

2.5 Establishing an Understanding of Behaviors and How They Are Influenced: Theory of Reasoned Action, Social Cognitive Theory, Assertive Discipline, and Operant Conditioning

Relevant to influencing behaviors, Fishbein and Ajzen's (1980) theory of reasoned action, suggests that attitudes influence behaviors. This theory is relevant to literature on civility that states that varied perceptions of civility exist and affect relevant actions (Caza and Cortina, 2007; Clark and

Carnosso, 2008; Clark and Springer, 2007; Sanders & Yang, 2016; Painter & Jorge, 2017). It is also relevant to Kettinger and Grover's (1997) research that suggests that perceptions of the ease of use and usefulness of technology influences use. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) supports Euben and Lee's (2005) work on addressing civility issues. While Bandura's theory suggests that employees will act in a manner based on their understanding of what is expected, Euben and Lee's (2005) work similarly offers that organizational leaders have the ability to influence acceptable behaviors by establishing explicitly defined and documented organizational standards that are enforced and have associated repercussions for violators. Also aligned with Euben and Lee's (2005) understanding of how workplace civility is influenced, the theory of assertive discipline (Canter and Canter, 1976; Canter, 2010; Bergkvist., Hjalmarson, & Mägi, 2016; Dutta., Attila, & Dhruv, 2017), although it was designed to propose an approach to classroom management for teachers, offers a fundamental principle from which intended behaviors can be established and enforced. It suggests that leaders must establish rules that clearly defined acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, teach them to subordinates, and gain support from other organizational leaders to promote intended behaviors. On the other hand, Skinner's (1954) theory of operant conditioning provides a fundamental approach to promoting behaviors that are consistent with organizational standards. He suggests that behaviors are a direct result of learning in a function of change. He offers that in order to more favourably influence behaviors, organizations must promote positive reinforcement rather than punishment. This theory promotes the idea that those behaviors that receive positive reinforcement will continued. Therefore, in consideration of the best approach to addressing workplace incivility in the examined organization, one should consider incorporating an employee recognition program (in the proposed action plan) to promote more favorable (intended) behaviors.

These theories collectively established the foundation from which I pursued evaluation of behaviors associated with the organizational issues. They established my belief that employees in my organization (like those examined in previous research), would also be susceptible to methods of addressing civility and computer-mediated communication issues that involve changing perceptions, establishing expectations relevant to intended behaviors, and rewarding compliance with deployed standards.

2.6 Understanding the Social Context of Behaviors: Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior

Given that this study seeks to examine computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility in a social context, it is important to draw from previous theories that have established a framework for understanding why people behave in a given manner given certain organizational influences. Therefore, given that the theory of reasoned action and planned behavior have been widely cited in previous studies that sought understanding with regard to influencing intended behaviors and examined technology use relevant to behaviors, I found them to be most appropriate to provide a baseline understanding for this research.

An investigation of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1980) theory of reasoned action identified ways of influencing human behaviors in the social context. I found that the theory of reasoned action is made up of a linkage of learning theories: the social constructivism theory (Berger and Luckman, 1966), expectancy-value theories (Atkinson, 1964), and consistency theories like the balance theory (Heider, 1958). Each of these theories offers a unique perspective with regard to human behavior. See Figure 2.1 in the Appendix H to view the model.

For example, the social constructivism theory (Berger and Luckman, 1966) suggests that human development is stimulated socially and knowledge creation takes place through interactions with others while Atkinson's (1964) expectancy-value theory suggests that when presented with alternative options one will pursue the action that has the highest expected success rate and value. In addition, the balance theory (Heider, 1958) deals with the psychology of motivation and suggests that one will pursue consistency with regard to maintaining their values and beliefs over time. Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) offered an extension of their theory of reasoned action in 1985 (Ajzen, 1985; Song., Kee., Youn-Chul, & Sung, 2016), called the theory of planned behavior, that links beliefs and behavior and suggests that attitudes about a given task or thing influences intentions and behavior related to that item.

This review of the theory of reasoned action and planned behavior prompted an understanding of the approach for dealing with issues related to civility and computer-mediated communication use at the subject university with the expectation that interactions in the organizational environment likely influence behavior. Employees (when deciding on what action to take) are likely to pursue actions that have value and result in success, and avoid those that do not. Employees will strive to be consistent once values and beliefs are established (Rofcanin., Kiefer, & Strauss, 2017). Based on this theory, it is reasonable to expect that employee's attitudes about computer-mediated communication use and civility will influence their relative objectives and actions.

On another note, Bandura's (1971) social learning theory suggests that behaviors being learned in social environments are based on observation rather than reinforcement (Walther., Nicole., Jeong-woo, & Soo, 2016; Zinko., Zhan., Hunt, & Adam, 2017). To view the model, see Figure 2.2 in the Appendix H.

This theory takes into consideration six concepts: "expectations, observational learning, behavioral capability, self-efficacy, reciprocal determination, and reinforcement" (Bandura, & Walters, 1977). As it relates to the organizational issue of incivility (and based on this theory), employees will be more likely to mimic what they see displayed in the organizational environment rather than act in a manner consistent with what is only being communicated as ideal behavior. Therefore, it would be important to involve organizational leaders in the process of adopting and displaying intended behaviors.

Regarding theories that are specifically relevant to the use of information systems, the organizational culture theory (Schein, 1990) and technology acceptance model (David, Bagozzi,

and Warshaw, 1989; Venkatesh and Bala, 2008) are relevant to the influence that culture and perception have on behaviors related to technology use. Schein's (1990) organizational culture theory suggests that behaviors in the organizational environment are a result of a set of shared assumptions that guide and define appropriate behaviors based on the situation. According to this theory, these assumptions also promote a pattern taught to new members of the organization. However, this theory also suggests that leadership and other organizational members have the potential to manipulate and alter associated behaviors. Therefore, the notion that culture influences the adoption of standardized organizational behaviors influenced the approach to studying computer-mediated communication use at the university studied in this research.

Additionally, the technology acceptance (TAM) model (David, Bangozzi, and Warshaw, 1989; Venkatesh and Bala, 2008; Hagmayer, 2016; Young., Melissa, & Marizen, 2017) offers perception of usefulness and ease of use as factors that influence users' acceptance and use of technology. In accordance with this model, the more one perceives the computer-mediated communication technology to be simplistic in terms of usability, the more likely they are to use it. In addition, the more individuals view the technology as useful, the more likely they will use the technology (Davis, Bangozzi, and Warchaw, 1989; Lin-Hi & Blumberg, 2016; Maley & Moeller, 2017; Shelton, 2018). Therefore, the approach to issues with the use of computer-mediated communication should involve relevant training on the importance and functionality of such systems. Figure 2.3 in Appendix H offers a graphical depiction of the TAM model.

2.7 Arguments Related to Effects of Computer-Mediated Communication Use on Workplace Incivility in Higher Education

As previously discussed, in accordance with recommendations from the governing body, the examined university has implemented computer-mediated communication systems to support enhanced levels of communication and collaboration among organizational entities in an effort to support the achievement of organizational benchmarks. However, the organization has simultaneously experienced issues with workplace incivility. Therefore, to establish an understanding of the potential impact that using computer-mediated communication has on workplace incivility in the examined organization, it is necessary to explore similar relationships in previous research to identify potential trends and similarities relevant to the occurrences experienced in the examined organization. Relevant findings also have the potential to contribute to the developing discussion on using computer-mediated systems to promote enhanced levels of communication and collaboration in the higher education environment.

According to research on the higher education environment, findings suggest that the use of technology has the potential to promote uncivil behaviors (Clark, 2013) and increase workplace incivility (Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016). Moreover, academic freedom contributes to its effects not only on faculty behavior but also on student development (Twale and De Luca, 2008). As a result, it is essential to the development of students that higher education environments identify ways to implement technology and allow academic freedom in a manner that promotes the enhancement of the educational environment but does not sacrifice its ability to promote civility behaviors.

On the other hand, in an evaluation of promoting the effectiveness of virtual teams, other researchers found that some forms of electronic communication are more effective than others as it relates to relationship building (Pauleen and Yoong, 2001; Joo., Jakeun, & Fink, 2016; Li., Keke., Diane, & Avey, 2017). In addition, communication methods influence social interaction and performance, which positively influence satisfaction (Lin, Standing, and Liu, 2008). These ideas offer a different perspective of previous research that suggests that communication channel influences organizational politics (Sussman et al, 2002; Böhm & Theelen, 2016; Hjerto & Kuvaas, 2017). In addition, Froehle (2006) found in a study of how service employees' use of technology impacts customer satisfaction that the use of technology does not negatively influence service quality. In fact, other findings suggests that the use of computer-mediated communication promotes collaboration and social interaction (Huang, Lu and Wong, 2003; Bajwa, et al, 2005; Minton, 2016; Shin., Alexander., David, & Kristy, 2017).

Other research, suggests teamwork as a means to promote civil workplace behaviors (Logan, 2016). Logan's (2016) findings suggest that organizations can address workplace incivility by fostering a work environment that promotes empowerment, support, openness, and teamwork, while enforcing policies against workplace incivility. As another alternative approach, Armstrong (2017) found in a quality improvement project involving nurses in rural Montana that the implementation of a civility-training program has the potential to increase awareness of workplace incivility, reduce its occurrence in the workplace, and increase employees' confidence levels with regard to responding to uncivil behaviors (Zinko et al., 2016; Kaul & Desai, 2017).

2.8 Leadership Influence on Workplace Incivility

Leadership influence has been widely studied with regard to its impact on organizational environments. In a 2015 issue of the Leadership Quarterly, researchers conducted an examination of transformational and transactional leadership with regard to their impact on leveraging and cultivating the generation of organizationally focused ideas. In this study, Deichmann and Stam (2015) extended the previous research by incorporating the evaluation of a leader's personal beliefs as they relate to the leader's ability to identify with the organization they lead. Their findings revealed evidence that both transformational and transactional leadership are effective methods of promoting commitment to organizational goals and ideals. However, while their findings indicated that higher levels of commitment are associated with the followers own beliefs, they also found that leaders have the ability through transformational leadership to influence the organization if they possess a stronger ability to identify with the organization.

Saleem (2015) evaluated perceived organizational politics as a mediator of leadership styles and job satisfaction. Using a non-probability convenience sample, she found evidence that indicates that transformational leadership positively affects job satisfaction while transactional leadership has a negative impact on job satisfaction. With regard to perceived organizational politics, findings indicated that politics partially mediated the relationship between both leadership styles and job satisfaction.

In an effort to address the disparity of evaluation of leadership styles in the higher education environment, a study of faculty and supervisors in public and private universities revealed that the servant leadership style significantly influences job satisfaction in a positive manner while controlling, autocratic leadership styles have the lowest impact (Alonderiene and Majauskaite, 2016). In a study on the impact of leadership, Kok and McDonald (2017) found eight broad themes that contribute to excellence in an academic department; they were change management, research and teaching, communication, strategy and shared values, leadership, departmental culture, rewards and staffing.

2.9 Workplace Incivility and Gender

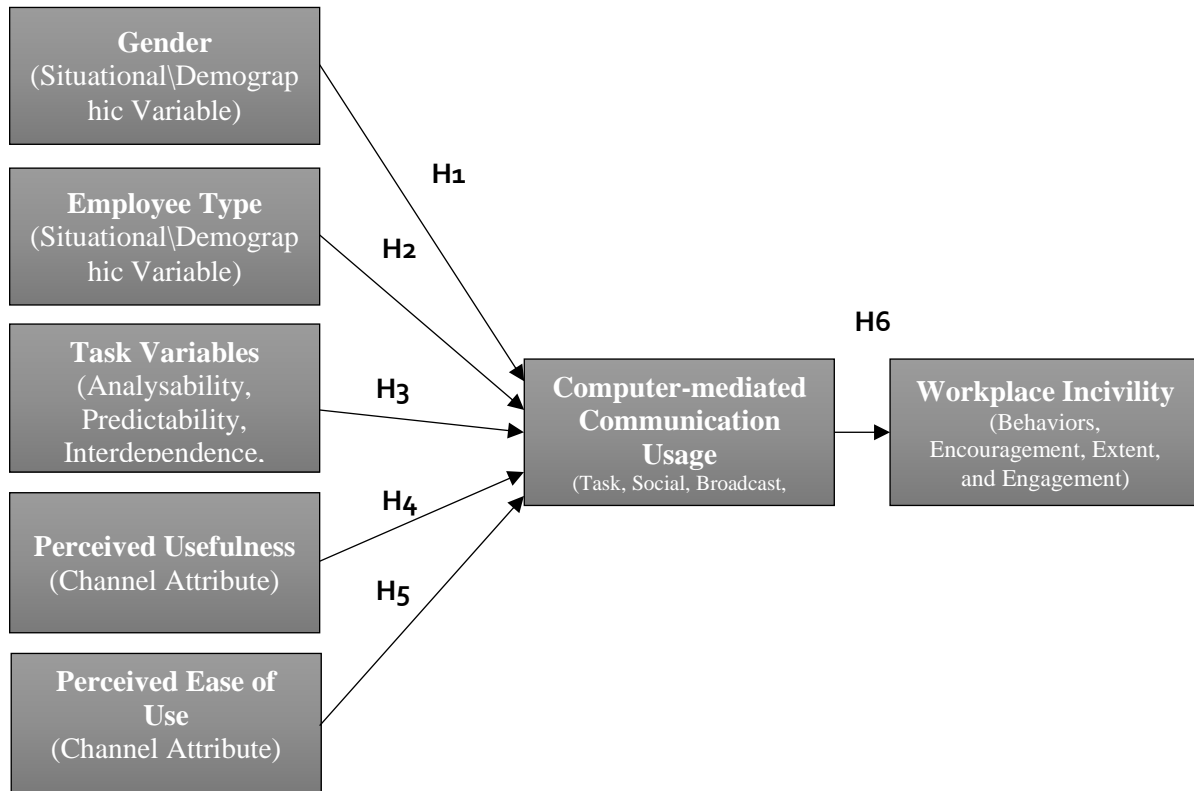
Gender has also emerged as a common theme related to the study of workplace incivility. Recent research has explored the implications that gender have with regard to incivility in the workplace. Findings suggest that women's perception of injustice mediates the relationship between their observed workplace incivility and factor like job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and organizational trust. However, in a study of public university employees in the northwest United States, men report higher perceptions of injustice and stronger indirect effects of observed incivility (Miner and Cortina, 2016). In other research that examined faculty members of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS), women reported lower levels of job satisfaction than men did, while heterosexuals reported higher stress and lower job identity than sexual minorities (Zurbrügg and Miner, 2016).

According to the extant literature on gender as it relates to workplace incivility, future research should examine other factors that mediate the relationship between observed incivility and occupational well-being (Miner and Cortina, 2016). It should also examine factors that could potentially buffer its effects (Miner et al, 2012) and specified organizations that are made up of a more diverse sample in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, educational background, industry, and job type (Zurbrügg and Miner, 2016; Schroder et al., 2016; Sheffield & Morgan, 2017).

2.10 Summary

In summary, the extant literature on workplace incivility offers varied perspectives from which to understand how it appears, how it influences, how to influence it and how to address it in the higher education environment. Although there is some consistency with regard to these phenomena, researchers generally agree that further research is needed to evaluate these factors as they relate specifically based on a given organizational environment. Therefore, considering all of the literature, I proposed the following conceptual model to specifically diagnose the organizational issue. See Figure 2.4 below:

Figure 2.4 Proposed Conceptual Model



The figure above shows the relationships evaluated. It refers to the proposed hypotheses (H_1 - H_6) as gathered from extant literature. The research design chapter includes a detailed discussion of these hypotheses. However, I derived the gender, task variable and computer-mediated communication usage variables from the computer-mediated communication research (Kettinger and Groover, 1997). The employee type and workplace incivility variables are from Clark's (2013) research on workplace incivility, and the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use variables were taken from theoretical research (i.e. Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior, Social Learning, and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)). The table following on the next page (Table 2-1) offers a more inclusive indication of the studies evaluated in this study that support and are relevant to the attributes in the proposed conceptual model.

| TABLE 2-1 Supporting\Relevant Studies to Conceptual Model Attributes | |
|---|--|
| ATTRIBUTES | SUPPORTING\RELEVANT STUDIES |
| Computer-Mediated Communication Use | <p>Influences workplace incivility Kettinger and Groover, 1997; Pang & Ng, 2016; Kennedy & Francisco, 2017; Young., Melissa, & Marizen, 2017; Stich et al, 2018</p> <p>Varied Perspectives Exist Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017</p> |
| Workplace Incivility | <p>Influences Computer-Mediated Communication Clark, 2013</p> <p>Impacts the Organizational Environment Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Disbrow and Prentice, 2009; Yamada, Duffy, and Berry, 2018</p> <p>Varied Perceptions Exist Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Disbrow and Prentice, 2009; Caza and Cortina, 2007; Clark and Springer, 2007; Kim., Insin, & Sunghyup, 2016; Walsh & Cunningham, 2017</p> <p>Exists Among Faculty and Students Kettinger and Grover, 1997; Clark, 2013; Peters, 2014; Wagner, 2014; Wright and Hill, 2014; King and Piotrowski, 2015; and Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016</p> |
| Gender | <p>Relates to Computer-Mediated Communication Use Kettinger and Groover, 1997;</p> <p>Relates to University Employees' Workplace Incivility Miner and Cortina, 2016</p> <p>Influences Faculty Workplace Incivility Zurbrügg and Miner, 2016</p> |
| Employee Type | <p>Influences Workplace Incivility Clark, 2013</p> |
| Task Variable | <p>Relates to Computer-Mediated Communication Kettinger and Groover, 1997</p> |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Perceived Usefulness</p> | <p>Influences subsequent behaviors Davis, Bangozzi, and Warchaw, 1989</p> <p>Relates to Workplace Incivility Clark, 2013</p> |
| <p>Perceived Ease of Use</p> | <p>Influences subsequent behaviors Davis, Bangozzi, and Warchaw, 1989</p> <p>Relates to Workplace Incivility Clark, 2013</p> |

Therefore, as depicted in the figure above and because of understanding developed based on this review of relevant literature, this study was undertaken to uncover relevant understanding about workplace incivility at the specified organization, Savannah State University.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH PARADIGM

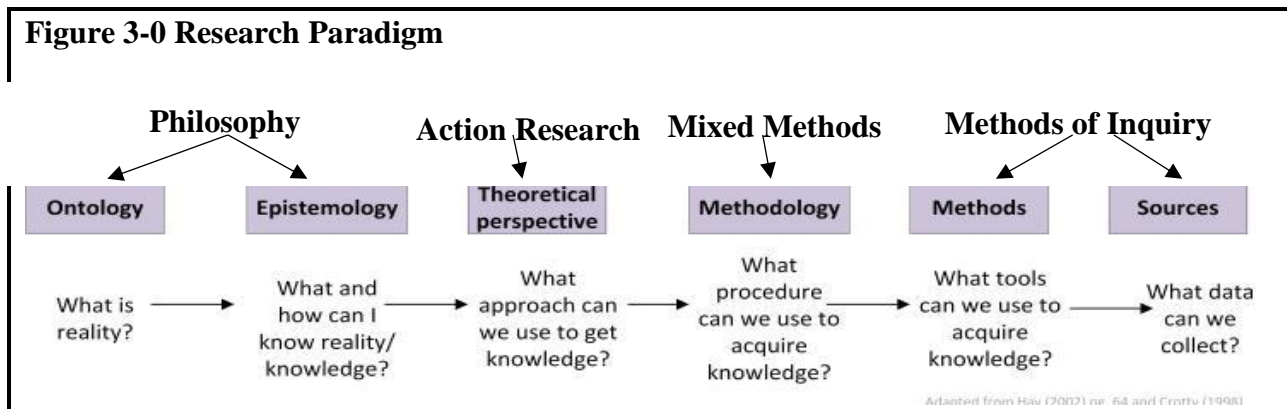
3.0 Introduction: Research Design\Paradigm

The research paradigm describes the fundamental beliefs and agreements shared among researchers relative to the understanding and appropriate approach to a research problem (Coghlan, 2019; Kumar, 2019). In this research, the research paradigm derives from research philosophy, action research, a mixed methods research, associated research methods, and relative ethical implications.

The research philosophy in this study explains the examined problem as it relates to a perceived reality. The findings of previous literature, the researcher’s personal experiences, and knowledge of the examined organizational environment all inform the research philosophy. The action research used in this study sought to explore that “reality” as a means to better understand and address the organizational problem. The employed research methodology allowed an extension of the fundamental understanding of workplace incivility in higher education by undertaking a systematic approach to answering the established research questions. Employing this methodology contributed to an effective evaluation of the examined subject matter while managing and avoiding challenges associated with exploring the research questions (Coghlan, 2019; Industrial Research Institute, 2010). To develop a comprehensive understanding of the organizational issue that would promote informed decisions with regard to proposing possible solutions a mixed methods approach was used (Halcomb, 2019). The methods of inquiry simply describe the specific means used for collecting the relevant data (McCrudden, Marchand, and Schultz, 2019).

This chapter introduces and provides support for the research paradigm employed in this study. At the onset, it begins with a dialog of the specific type of research paradigm used and then discusses the research in the context of how it should be understood and approached given the existing principles and agreements found in previous research. It further discusses the action research methodology employed to diagnose and propose action towards resolving the identified organizational issue. It proceeds with a discussion of the implemented methods used to collect relevant data, and it concludes with a statement of the evaluated assumptions and the ethical issues. The figure below offers a graphical depiction of how the research paradigm was informed.

Figure 3-0 Research Paradigm



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3.1 My Research Philosophy

The research philosophy for this study is comprised of both ontological and epistemological reference. It was my goal to pursue deeper understanding of the organizational issue using a mixed-methods approach. The table below explains the research paradigms considered when evaluating the appropriate approach to this study.

Figure 3.1 Research Paradigms\Philosophy

| Paradigm | Ontology <i>What is reality?</i> | Epistemology <i>How can I know reality?</i> | Theoretical Perspective <i>Which approach do you use to know something?</i> | Methodology <i>How do you go about finding out?</i> | Method <i>What techniques do you use to find out?</i> |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| Positivism | There is a single reality or truth (more realist). | Reality can be measured and hence the focus is on reliable and valid tools to obtain that. | Positivism Post-positivism | Experimental research Survey research | Usually quantitative, could include: Sampling Measurement and scaling Statistical analysis Questionnaire Focus group Interview |
| Constructivist / Interpretive | There is no single reality or truth. Reality is created by individuals in groups (less realist). | Therefore, reality needs to be interpreted. It is used to discover the underlying meaning of events and activities. | Interpretivism (reality needs to be interpreted) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phenomenology • Symbolic interactionism • Hermeneutics Critical Inquiry Feminism | Ethnography Grounded Theory Phenomenological research Heuristic inquiry Action Research Discourse Analysis Feminist Standpoint research etc | Usually qualitative, could include: Qualitative interview Observation Participant Non participant Case study Life history Narrative Theme identification etc |
| Pragmatism | Reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted in light of its usefulness in new unpredictable situations. | The best method is one that solves problems. Finding out is the means, change is the underlying aim. | Deweyan pragmatism <i>Research through design</i> | Mixed methods Design-based research Action research | Combination of any of the above and more, such as data mining expert review, usability testing, physical prototype |
| Subjectivism | Reality is what we perceive to be real | All knowledge is purely a matter of perspective. | Postmodernism Structuralism Post-structuralism | Discourse theory Archaeology Genealogy Deconstruction etc. | Autoethnography Semiotics Literary analysis Pastiche Intertextuality etc. |
| Critical | Realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant internal influence. | Reality and knowledge is both socially constructed and influenced by power relations from within society | Marxism Queer theory feminism | critical discourse analysis, critical ethnography action research ideology critique | Ideological review Civil actions open-ended interviews, focus groups, open-ended questionnaires, open-ended observations, and journals. |

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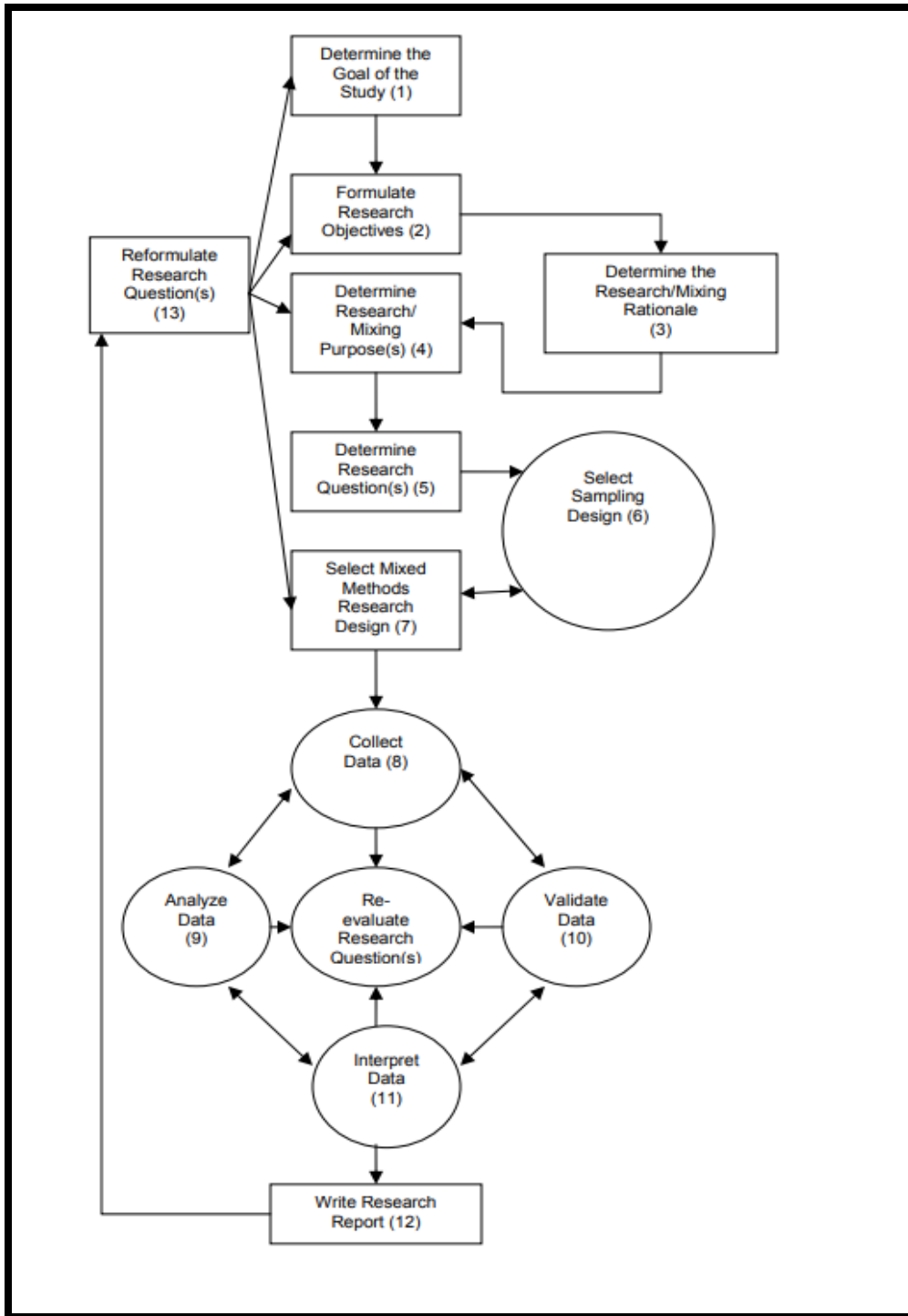
As presented in the table above, I evaluated a number of possible approaches. In my evaluation of each, I determined that an interpretive approach would be most appropriate given that the research seeks to identify perceptions rather than truths about the issue.

In alignment with previous research on workplace incivility, my initial evaluation of the organizational problem ought to identify relationships between previously evaluated variables to diagnose the issue. However, further investigation in this study used inductive reasoning to offer a deeper understanding of the deductive findings. While the deductive method of diagnosing the issue helped me understand the relationships between previously examined variables, the use of inductive methods allows me to pursue interpretive comprehension of the underlying meaning.

3.2 Research Methodology

Although all research methodologies have weaknesses, previous researchers have suggested that a mixed-method approach allows the researcher to use the strengths of one method to overcome the shortcomings of another (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Halcomb, 2019). Therefore, in accordance with Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) who suggest that traditional qualitative and quantitative research naturally complement one another, I applied a mixed-methods approach to this study. The figure on the next page shows the process employed in this study.

Figure 3-1 Steps in Mixed Methods Research Process



Retrieved from: Linking Research Questions to Mixed Methods Data Analysis Procedures (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2006)

Proceeding through the steps outlined above, I established the goal of the study in **Step 1**. It was determined that the purpose of this study was to evaluate the presence of workplace incivility in a specified organizational environment by identifying how it exists, analyzing the relationship between workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication and evaluating the influence of dispositional factors (or personal characteristics) on computer-mediated communication usage and workplace incivility.

In accordance with **Step 2**, I formulated the following critical research objectives:

1. Definition of the fundamental (and supplemental) concepts relevant to the development of the thesis: workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication, and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).
2. Identification of the organizational problem
3. Establishment of the theoretical and practical framework for the study through a review of relevant literature.
4. Definition of the methodology employed to gather insight into and foster better understanding of the examined organizational issue through deductive reasoning.
5. Analysis and identification of relevant understandings.
6. Proposal of changes to Savannah State University's policies and strategies based on research awareness.
7. Discussion of the findings and intended practical impact of the proposed action plan.
8. Identification of emergent areas for future research based on limitations and findings.

In **Step 3**, it was determined that a mixed-methods approach would be appropriate based on previous research that employed action research methodology to pursue deeper understanding of relevant organizational issues with the intent to recommend appropriate action towards addressing identified issues. Upon examination of the organizational context, I determined that I needed to collect data that would allow me to diagnose the organizational issue and begin to understand relative perceptions of employees. Therefore, I decided to base my research approach on the methodology proposed by Creswell (2003) that suggests that a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is appropriate. Based on reading various studies (Creswell, 2003; Koschate-Fischer., Isabel, & Hoyer, 2016; Alderman, 2017; Halcomb, 2019), I found that both could add value to my findings given that the quantitative approach is primarily experimental, and the qualitative approach promotes the collection of data that is interpretive and offers perspectives on the subject matter being examined. Therefore, in an effort to produce information that both investigates the problem of incivility and computer-mediated communication use and offers me the ability to identify employee perspectives on the issue, I decided to apply a mixed-methods approach. I believe that by using a mixed methods approach, I was able to pursue understanding based on existing theory and of the unknown with regard to the organizational issue being examined in this research (Hwang., Youngji., Sonali, & Elena, 2016; Kelly & Hun-Tong, 2017).

In addition, in keeping with Creswell's (2003) suggestion that assumptions should be involved in the approach to all research, I opted to apply both the epistemological and methodological

assumptions to this study. These assumptions, in my opinion, were most fitting given that I explored relationships between examined factors, computer-mediated communication methods and workplace incivility using both deductive and interactive reasoning to pursue understanding based on logic and experience. In addition, the use of both models allowed me as the researcher to remain independent of the research.

I confirmed the purpose of the mixed-methods approach in **Step 4** based on realizing that I (as the researcher) do not have the autonomy or authority to implement the proposed action. Therefore, to approach the evaluation of the feasibility of the proposed action plan I proceeded with qualitative data collection to support the primary findings.

I established the following research questions in **Step 5**:

7. Does workplace incivility exist at the examined university?
8. In what form does workplace incivility appear at the examined university?
9. Is computer-mediated communication being used at the examined university?
10. What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for at the examined university?
11. Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility at the examined university?
12. Which of the examined dispositional factors influence computer-mediated communication use at the examined university?

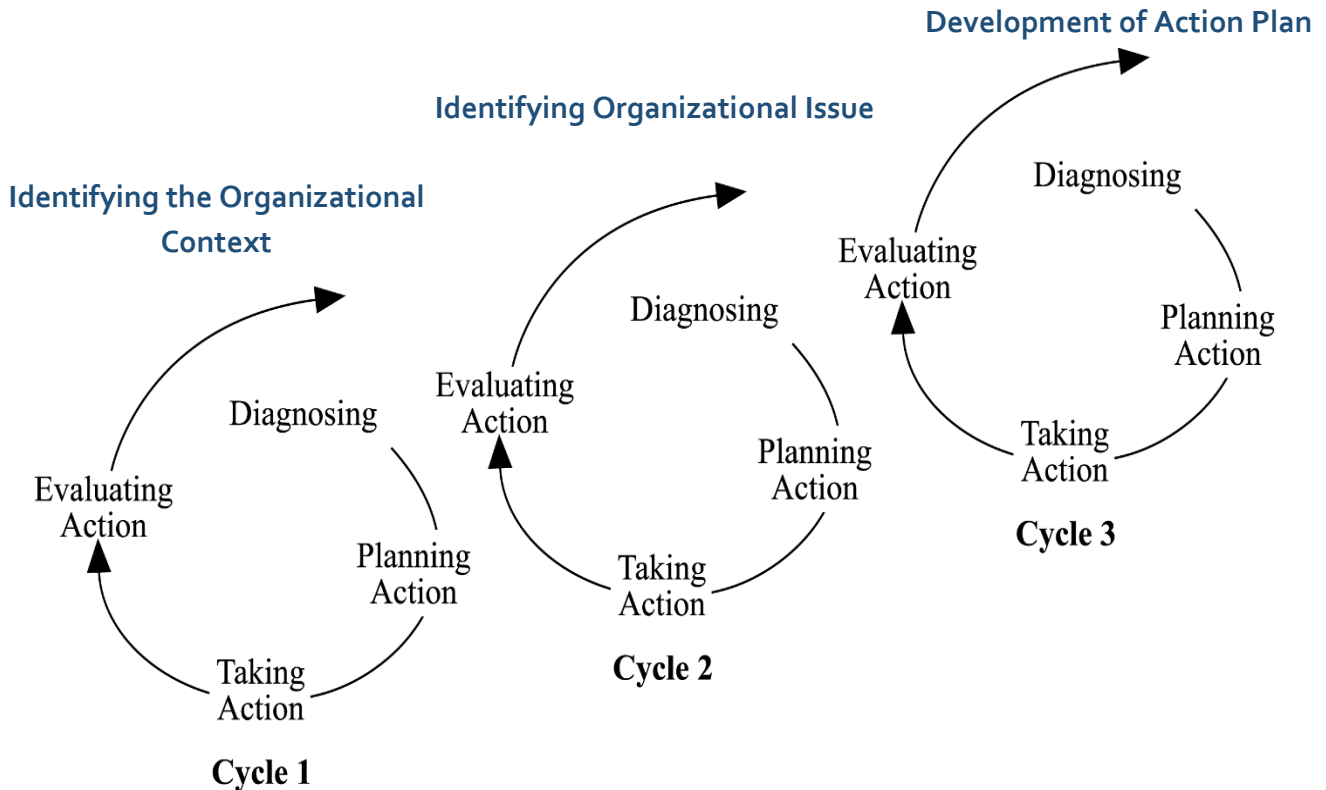
In **Step 6**, I evaluated different sampling methods to determine the most appropriate approach. Based on my research on sampling methods, I found that a non-probability sampling technique would be most appropriate given the nature of the study. This method allows all members of the population to have an equal chance of selection to participate (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Creswell, 2017; Peregrine, 2019). Considering the purpose of this study, to employ action research methodology to a specified organizational issue, I determined that the purposeful or purposive sampling method would be most appropriate. According to Creswell (2007) purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select research participants at a specified site that meet a specified criteria and have the ability to inform “purposeful” understanding of an identified research problem and/or focus being examined. With regard to this study, the targeted participants included all university employees at the evaluated site categorized under one of the following criteria: faculty, staff or administrators. Among this sample, I conducted three focus group interviews on the university campus. Focus groups were formed using cluster sampling to group focus group participants by category of: faculty, staff, or administrators (Gentles & Vilches, 2017; Creswell and Clark, 2007; Creswell et al 2007).

I confirmed the mixed methods research design for this study in **Step 7**. In this step, I confirmed that an action research approach was applicable to the research and selected Coghlan and Brannick’s (2014) four-phased approach to action research, which includes constructing, planning, taking action, and evaluating action. Action research methodology involves the evaluation of a specified problem in an existing situation. It seeks to draw conclusions from findings relevant to the problem in an effort to apply action and monitor the effect of the applied action. It produces

results that are specifically relevant to the subject evaluated and is therefore not generalizable. Therefore, I believe that this approach is most appropriate for the research design of this study.

See the figure below for a graphical depiction of how I implemented these steps in this study:

Figure 3-2 Coghlan and Brannick’s Four Phased Approach to Action Research



Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2001) p. 19

Retrieved from: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/30/d2/e8/30d2e804fcc34c16a2b730bb620fb563.jpg>

In each phase, the following questions were asked:

- **DIAGNOSING/CONSTRUCTING:** What is the issue?
- **PLANNING:** What should we do about it?
- **TAKING ACTION:** Apply selected action
- **EVALUATING ACTION:** What happened as a result of action taken?

The following sections summarized each cycle:

In **Cycle 1**, I identified the organizational context and approached the context first in the Diagnosing/Constructing phase by researching relevant literature on the organizational context including workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication, higher education, HBCUs, USG, and human behavior theories. In an effort to plan appropriate action in the second phase, I determined how extant literature is relevant to the organizational problem and how to apply previously employed approaches to this study. Subsequently, I conducted the action taken in the

next phase working collaboratively with local organizational resources to gain access to organization specific data. Finally, I assessed the action taken based on reevaluating collected literature to confirm existing correlations between previously examined organizations in extant literature and the organization examined in this study.

Cycle 2 of the research, identifying the organizational issue, derived from the Diagnosing/Constructing phase and involved working collaboratively with organizational resources to collect data relevant to the internal organizational issue examined in this study. To plan the appropriate action that should be taken relevant to the identified issue, I determined the approach(s) to research that is generally accepted within the organizational environment and by the approving doctoral program, developed and proposed a timeline for research, and confirmed the process to obtain approvals both locally and from the doctoral program to collect data. Next, I proceeded to take action by proceeded with Phase 1 of the research. During Phase 1 data collection, I completed the appropriate training and applications to obtain doctoral program and local data collection approval. I also obtained appropriate approvals and collected relevant data. I examined various research approaches to confirm appropriateness of selected approach and examined collected data to identify the organizational issue. I then developed a comprehensive report of results. Finally, I evaluated the results for correlations with extant literature and implications relevant to the development of an appropriate action plan.

In the final cycle, **Cycle 3**, I developed the action plan. In the Diagnosing/Constructing phase, I examined the results of the quantitative data collected from the survey used to diagnose the organizational issue to develop an appropriate action plan. I then developed a proposed action plan based on the results from Phase 1 of the research in the Planning action phase. Given that I do not have the authority to implement the action plan, in the Taking Action phase, I conducted focus group testing to get feedback from organizational stakeholders to determine the feasibility of the proposed action plan. Finally, in the Evaluating Action phase, I assessed the feedback received in the feasibility test to re-evaluate the results from Phase 1 of the research and update the proposed action plan. The next chapter provides a more detailed explanation of each cycle of the research design.

Data collection, the methods of inquiry, proceeded in **Step 8** in a two-phased approach including the collection of survey data to identify\diagnose the organizational issue and a feasibility study to establish further understanding of the findings and establish support for the proposed action plan.

In **Steps 9-11**, the collected quantitative data was analyzed, evaluated, validated and interpreted. It was first exported from Qualtrics and imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to be analyzed for descriptive statistics and using regression analysis to estimate relationships between the examined variables. I then documented and compared the results to results from extant literature. I translated the findings of this research into a list of recommended actions proposed towards addressing the examined organizational issue. I also conducted feasibility testing of the proposed action plan to validate the proposed actions. Feasibility testing was conducted in a five-step process including a theoretical evaluation of the proposed actions, SWOT Analysis, evaluation of financial implications, identification of available resources, and translation of feasibility\development of final proposal. I evaluated the constraints and expectations of the proposed actions with regard to time, cost, the impact of

personal characteristics, and the potential social, cultural, and political impacts associated with implementing the proposed change. Additionally, as a part of the feasibility testing phase, upon analysis of the collected data relevant to the issue and development of a proposed action plan, an electronic (Qualtrics) questionnaire was emailed to all participants to obtain feedback on the proposed action plan. This study did not specifically excluded anyone from providing feedback.

In **Step 12**, I compiled all findings relevant to the study into a final proposal and PowerPoint presentation to present to organizational leaders for consideration.

Finally, in **Step 13**, I reformulated the research questions in terms of how future research on the subject matter should be undertaken. The reformatted questions enhance the previously offered questions by approaching the organizational issue in a more focused, thoughtful manner. They promote examination of the organizational issue as it relates specifically to a specified type of computer-mediated technology. I offered these questions based on my reflection on the examined findings. Subsequently, I proposed the following questions for future research:

- **ORIGINAL:** Does workplace incivility exist at the examined university?
- **REFORMULATED:** Does [*specified technology*] related workplace incivility exist at the university?
- **ORIGINAL:** How does workplace incivility appear at the examined university?
- **REFORMULATED:** How does [*specified technology*] related workplace incivility occur at the university?
- **ORIGINAL:** Is computer-mediated communication being used at the examined university?
- **REFORMULATED:** Is computer-mediated communication being used at the university as a replacement for face-to-face communication?
- **ORIGINAL:** What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for at the examined university?
- **REFORMULATED:** How are computer-mediated communication methods being used as a replacement for face-to-face communication?
- **ORIGINAL:** Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility at the examined university?
- **REFORMULATED:** Does using computer-mediated communication as a replacement for face-to-face communication influence [*specified technology*] related workplace incivility at the university?
- **ORIGINAL:** Which of the examined dispositional factors influence computer-mediated communication use at the examined university?
- **REFORMULATED:** Which of the examined dispositional factors influence [*specified technology*] related computer-mediated communication use at the university?

3.3 Assumptions

This study was approached and conducted with the following assumptions in mind based on my individual understanding and perceptions of the issue: (1) There is an existing issue with workplace incivility at the university being examined; (2) The use of computer-mediated communication in the workplace influences workplace incivility; (3) Employees will be honest in their responses about workplace incivility in the workplace; (4) Employees will be honest in their responses about the use of computer-mediated communication in the workplace; (5) Organizational leaders want to become aware of ways to correct workplace incivility issues in the workplace; (6) Organizational leaders want to become aware of ways to promote the use of computer-mediated communication in the workplace.

3.4 Ethical Issues

In accordance with the recommendations of Banegas and Castro (2015), I considered the following ethical issues with regard to their ability to influence action research and educational research in this study:

- **Collaboration** - The literature stresses the importance of ensuring that participation in the research is voluntary and anonymous. Therefore, I employed an Appeal to Participate, Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and Consent Form explaining the rights of participants and the responsibility of the researcher. The PIS includes the “Withdrawal from the Study” statement. A copy of the Appeal to Participate, PIS and Informed Consent form can be found in Appendix B, C, and D.
- **Confidentiality and anonymity** – To ensure that participants were aware of the confidentiality of their responses, the survey packet included an Informed Consent Form (Appendix D) including an “Assurance of Confidentiality” section outlining the confidentiality terms. In addition, the Appeal to Participate form (Appendix B) includes a “Confidentiality Statement”.
- **Authorship and ownership** – To ensure that participants are aware that their participation does not entitle them to authorship, ownership, or naming in the thesis, the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (Appendix C) explains the role of the participant for clarity and includes a “Compensation for Participation” statement that clarifies that participants did not receive compensation.
- **Representation and voice** – All qualitative data collected in the study were either quoted as submitted or submitted to the participant for approval (in the case of the feasibility data) prior to inclusion in the thesis. In addition, to ensure that participants are aware of their right to challenge any misrepresentation of their statements, the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) includes the “Potential Risk and Discomforts” statement explaining the nature of participation.

- **Benefits** – To ensure that participants are aware of the benefits of the study, the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) includes a “Potential Benefits” section to outline and explaining the research objectives and expected benefits.

3.5 Chapter Summary

The research paradigm chapter describes my approach to this study and its rationale. It offers to the reader clarity on the thinking that influenced the research methodology. The next chapter provides a detailed breakdown of the research design. Coghlan and Brannick’s (2014) four-phased action research approach informed the manner in which it is constructed.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.0 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, I developed the research design for this study using the four phases of action research proposed by Coghlan and Brannick (2014). The sections following discuss each phase in detail and their employment in the development of the research strategy.

In applying the four-phased technique, I also applied a mixed methods approach to substantiate the research findings. By using multiple data collection techniques, I was able to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the organizational issue and an appropriate approach. While quantitative data collection offered me the ability to measure the extent to which the examined factors exist in the examined organization, the collection of qualitative data allowed me to explore a deeper understanding of the quantitative responses using open-ended questions to engage in clarifying inquiry. Additionally, the use of action research methodology allowed me to engage with members of the organization for a deeper understanding of collected data and to identify relevant themes absent from the survey responses, but rather by probing focus group engagement.

4.1 Diagnosing\Constructing

Being an insider in the examined organization made gaining access to important resources relatively simple. In the constructing phase of this study, I conducted a collaborative evaluation of the organization's civility and computer-mediated communication use issues with stakeholders to determine what action(s) should be taken towards appropriately addressing the issues (De-Guinea, 2016; Martin-Lacroux, 2017). In doing so, I gathered information about the organizational context to develop a framework from which to evaluate the issues and develop an appropriate approach to planning the proposed action. To frame the organizational issue, I gathered information about the external and internal environment of my university, I selected a research approach based on what I have learned about action research and literature on civility and computer-mediated communication use, and evaluated the feasibility of my approach based on the University of Liverpool thesis proposal requirements. The sections that follow describe my findings relevant to considering the context and need for this study.

4.2 Planning Action

In the planning phase of this study, I developed a strategy towards approaching the organizational issue. Findings from previous literature related to workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication use and knowledge gained from my review of pertinent information during the constructing phase informed the proposed plan. The following sections discuss how the relative literature and University of Liverpool Ethics Approval process requirements informed the planning of my approach to evaluating the organizational problem.

4.2.0 Application of Learning from Relative Literature

The proceeding sections describe how the literature relevant to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use informed the development of the survey packet, the proposed research design and the ethics application.

4.2.1 Assessment of Validity and Feasibility of Research Timeline

In an effort to complete the ethics requirements for research, I had to evaluate my proposed plan by undertaking a study for feasibility. This testing evaluated the proposed actions in an effort to identify the related expectations and constraints with regard to time, cost, the impact of my personal characteristics, and the potential social, cultural, and political impacts associated with implementing the proposed change. This evaluation of feasibility is in accordance with recommendations for participatory action research (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013; Morales, 2019) that suggest that researchers should assess their approach to action research in consideration of the optimal timing to undertake the study based on its current relevance to the organizational environment and the availability of necessary resources. I evaluated the following research steps in the feasibility testing: Development of Proposal, Obtaining Ethics Approval, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Development of Proposed Action Plan, and Completion of Thesis. An outline of the summary of the feasibility testing for each aspect of the study is included below:

Task I: Development of Proposal

Task Description: Formulate proposal for research including an introduction of the identified organizational issue, potential benefits and importance of the study, researcher's role in research, identification of relevant literature, purpose of the proposed research, identification of proposed methods and methodology, analysis of the feasibility of the proposed research approach.

Duration: 6 months (August 2016 to February 2017)

Possible Issues Evaluated:

- Change in doctoral curriculum
- Delay in Supervisor Matching
- Need to Revise Proposal
- Break down in supervisor\student communication

Solutions:

- Drafted proposal ideas prior to entering the thesis phase
- Appropriate follow-up to ensure matching occurred in a timely manner
- Provided proposal draft immediately upon confirming doctoral supervisor to avoid delays in receiving feedback.
- Maintained regular contact with doctoral supervisor via email, skype, and online discussion posts to ensure open and consistent lines of communication.

Task II: Obtaining Ethical Approval

Task Description: Completion of ethics application requirements including: compiling survey packet, obtaining local IRB approval, completion of UOL ethics application, UOL ethics response form, developing the consent form and participant information form, obtaining feedback and approval from doctoral supervisor, and applying for UOL ethics approval.

Duration: 3 months. (January 2017 to April 2017)

Possible Issues Evaluated:

- Delay in obtaining local approval
- Need to revise UOL ethics application documents based on supervisor feedback.
- Delay in submission of ethics application documents for approval.
- Need to revise UOL ethics application document based on supervisor feedback.
- Delay in receiving ethics approval.

Solutions:

- Maintained awareness of approval process guidelines and deadlines to receive feedback.
- Followed-up appropriately to make sure we received feedback in a timely manner.
- Checked email and online course discussion threads for feedback regularly.
- Replied to request for corrections promptly.
- Revised and resubmitted revisions promptly.

Task III: Data Collection

Task Description: The process of contacting potential participants and getting them to complete the survey instrument, feasibility study questionnaire, and participation in the focus group discussion.

Duration: 1.5 years. (April 2017 to October 2018)

Possible Issues Evaluated:

- Participants do not respond promptly to requests to participate.
- Potential participants have concerns about the risks associated with participating in the study.
- Delayed response to invitation to participate due to timing of invitation distribution.

Solutions:

- I allotted additional time to offer the flexibility necessary to accommodate delays in data collection.
- I sent email announcements multiple times to remind all employees of request to participate.
- Researcher's and participant advocates' contact information were included in email announcement to address any questions or concerns regarding risks associated with participation.
- I allotted additional time to data collection period to ensure that I was able to contact all employees during periods when they were not on vacation.

- I scheduled focus group discussions based on the availability of all participants.

With regard to evaluating the research findings, I employed appropriate research methods (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014) to evaluate the observed data, contemplate potential explanations for the findings, establish the most reliable explanations of the data, and select appropriate action. An evaluation of the data analysis and development of proposed action plan phases is below:

Task IV: Data Analysis

Task Description: The process of importing survey data into SPSS to run statistical tests, conduct data analysis, and transcribe feasibility testing and focus group feedback.

Duration: 1.5 years. (August 2017-February 2019)

Possible Issues Evaluated:

- Delay in data collection.
- Need to modify proposed methods of data analysis
- Delay in inputting data into statistical software

Solutions:

- Although data analysis had the potential to be completed within a week or two after data collection, one month was allotted to complete data analysis to provide flexibility for delays in the data collection and the need to adjust methods of analysis.
- I used an electronic survey to allow for ease of data collection and easy export of data from electronic survey platform (Qualtrics) to statistical software (SPSS) for data analysis.
- I confirmed compatibility between the electronic survey platform (Qualtrics) and statistical software (SPSS) to ensure ease of transfer of data.
- I facilitated Feasibility Questionnaire data collection using an electronic survey platform (Qualtrics) to allow for easy extraction of that feedback.
- I documented the focus group feedback and disseminated it to participants for corrections prior to inclusion in the final report to ensure the accuracy of all statements.

Task V: Development of Proposed Action Plan

Task Description: The process of evaluating the findings and developing a proposed action plan applied towards addressing the examined organizational issue was a collaborative effort with organizational stakeholders. Based on the results of the research, a preliminary action plan was prepared. I communicated the preliminary plan to organizational stakeholders and evaluated for feasibility based on their feedback, relevant literature, and organizational documents. I conducted the feasibility study in accordance with Arain et al's (2010) research that suggests that researchers should explicitly state and define the purpose of a feasibility study prior to implementation. Subsequently, the purpose of the feasibility study conducted in this research was communicated and the proposed action plan was sent to stakeholders in the form of a presentation (via email) to

obtain their feedback about the effectiveness of the proposed plan. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, I allowed stakeholders to provide feedback anonymously via an electronic (Qualtrics) questionnaire that invited them to assess the proposed action plan. I used all findings from the feasibility study to evaluate the proposed plan and prepare a final proposal for the organization, which is included in the thesis.

I evaluated all proposed actions for feasibility based on five assessments as outlined below:

1. **Theoretical Evaluation of proposed actions** – my evaluation and revision of proposed actions based on comparison to research findings in related literature.
2. **SWOT Analysis** – collaborative (researcher and organizational stakeholders) evaluation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with each proposed action based on previous studies, any existing organizational documentation related to previously implemented actions with regard to addressing the organizational issue (i.e. software usage reports, incident reports, meeting minutes, etc.) and feedback from organizational stakeholders (McNiff, 2015).
3. **Evaluation of financial implications** – collaborative (researcher and organizational stakeholders) evaluation of the potential costs associated with implementing the proposed actions (based on review of documented pricing or labor hour costs related to the proposed actions and stakeholder feedback) (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).
4. **Identification of available resources**– collaborative (researcher and organizational stakeholders) review of available university resources (i.e. time, funding, and personnel) that may be able to support the implementation of the proposed actions. We evaluated this step based on feedback from stakeholders and a review of the documented explanations of organizational functions as it relates to relevant organizational entities that may be able to support the proposed efforts.
5. **Translation of Feasibility\Development of Proposal** – collaborative preparation of a proposal document to outline the proposed actions in a manner that translates to all stakeholders. All technical jargon used in the thesis was revised in the proposal that was presented to the organization. The formal presentation was formatted in MS PowerPoint and provided to organizational stakeholders for feedback. It included an overview of the identified organizational issue, research methods, results and findings of the research, and a list of proposed actions for consideration. In addition, to ensure that action was appropriately incorporated into this investigative study, the feedback gathered from pertinent organizational stakeholders was incorporated as a summary into the final report.

Duration: 1.5 years. (August 2017 to January 2019)

Possible Issues Evaluated:

- Delay in feasibility testing due to lack of accessibility to relevant data.
- Stakeholders recommend different approaches to resolving the organizational issue.

Solutions:

- Conducted research prior to receiving feasibility testing results to identify resources that may be essential to supporting the development of the proposed action plan.
- Adapted the proposed action plan promptly to accommodate the concerns of organizational stakeholders.
- Worked collaboratively with organizational stakeholder to update the proposed plan to address identified issue and concerns.

Task VI: Completion of Thesis

Task Description: The process of drafting, revising, and developing the final thesis including all associated chapters.

Duration: 2.5 years. (August 2016 to February 2019)

Possible Issues Evaluated:

- Research steps take longer than anticipated.
- Breakdown in doctoral student\supervisor communication.
- Delay in making requested revisions.
- Delay in receiving feedback.
- Need for major revisions.

Solutions:

- I incorporated slack time into each phase of the research process to ensure that if delays occur, the research plan could still proceed toward the proposed deadline for completion as intended.
- Became fully aware of the policies as outlined in the UOL DBA Handbook and maintained regular contact with supervisor and DBA personnel to ensure that even in the event of a breakdown in communication, we took the appropriate action promptly to ensure that the communication breakdown did not affect the proposed study plan.
- Checked online discussion thread and emails daily to obtain and respond promptly to requests for revisions.
- Maintained regular contact with supervisor and DBA personnel to preserve an open and accessible line of communication.
- Acted promptly to make revisions as recommended and resubmitted with corrections in a timely manner.

- Given that data collection is not essential to the initial development of the introduction (Chapter 1) and methodology (Chapter 2/3) chapters, I began drafting and submitted these chapters for preliminary review and feedback prior to data collection. We made necessary additions after data collection.
- I collected literature relevant to the study throughout the research process. Therefore, I was able to identify the most applicable literature and expedite the development of the literature review chapter (Chapter 2/3) after data was collected.

In summary, testing the feasibility of the proposed tasks helped me to evaluate the research process steps both individually and collectively. It helped to develop my awareness with regard to potential issues that could be detrimental to the research process if encountered unexpectedly. Therefore, given the proactive identification of potential issues and proposal of solutions because of feasibility testing, I was able to maintain the proposed research plan for completion of the doctoral thesis requirement.

4.2.2 Thesis Supervisor Selection

According to Yarrwood-Ross and Haigh (2014), thesis supervisor selection is critical to the success of doctoral students. Upon completion of the aforementioned timeline, I posted my proposal to the thesis module learning set (as required) for matching with a thesis supervisor. It is coincidental that my thesis supervisor happened to be the first potential supervisor who contacted me with regard to supervising me through my research. However, I did review his credentials against my goals with regard to my proposed research and future research ambitions. I accepted his invitation given that he (like myself) has a background in business. He also has conducted and published noteworthy research in the area of management. His publications have been included in some of the academic journals in which I wish to pursue authorship. I recognized his ability to offer guidance that would help me to develop my thesis and other noteworthy research that is not only worthy of practical application to address organizational issues but also worthy of academic publication.

4.2.3 Application for Ethics Approval

Moore and Savage (2002) suggest that ethical approval is necessary to ensure that the researcher complies with set standards related to obtaining the informed consent of participants. Therefore, after formally confirming my thesis supervisor to the university, we worked collaboratively to incorporate all of my aforementioned plans into the required ethics approval forms for submission. We obtained approval to conduct the study first from the examined university via our IRB Review process. Then, obtained approval from the University of Liverpool based on the appropriate procedures as outlined in the DBA Handbook (DBA Thesis Handbook, 2015).

The proceeding sections explain how I carried out the planned actions in the university to pursue diagnosis and understanding of the workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication issues.

4.3 Taking Action

The action in this study was taken primarily in an effort to identify the organizational issue and develop a proposed action plan towards addressing it. Subsequently, based on what was found from extant literature related to the nature of the issue, data collection was conducted first to determine if issues with workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use exists. Subsequently data was collected to examine if relationships exist between dispositional factors taken from previous studies (i.e. gender, employee class, perceived task interdependence, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility).

The following section offers an overview of the employed methods in this study. It explains the proposed research design and the associated procedures applied to analyze the data collected relevant to the examined factors. It also offers an examination of the research participants including the distribution of various types of participants in the study and their associated demographics.

4.3.0 Data Collection

In an effort to appropriately identify and evaluate the organizational issue, I employed the previously planned survey to collect data relevant to stakeholders' evaluation of the organizational issue. Upon receipt of ethics approval, data collection commenced. To initiate contact with participants, I sent an emailed invitation to participate to all faculty and staff. The invitation included a link to the electronically formatted survey formatted in Qualtrics. The participant information sheet and consent forms were included within the first pages of the electronic survey. Participants indicated their consent to participate by selecting "YES" after viewing the PIS and Consent Form. Participants who did not wish to proceed with the survey after reading the PIS and Consent Form were able to select "NO" to end the survey. Completion of the survey took approximately 10 minutes. The data collection period occurred for approximately a 1 to 2-month period.

4.3.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

I aligned all data collection and evaluation methods with those employed in relevant literature and statistical recommendations from previous researchers (Nunnally 1978; Hair et al, 2010; Connors & Halligan, 2017). I entered the data collected into a spreadsheet, via the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). I used descriptive statistics tools from SPSS to evaluate the samples. I applied the following methodologies: reliability analysis, factor analysis, correlation, and regression analysis. A detailed description of each method is included below.

4.3.1.1 Validity and Reliability Analysis

According to Hair et al (2010) reliability is an assessment of the extent of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable. Reliability analysis is used to evaluate the extent to which a scale is appropriate with regard to offering consistency in providing comparable results for the same participants at different times. To conduct this type of analysis, each measure is assigned a Cronbach's Alpha value. According to previous literature, (Hair et al., 2006; Nunnally, 1978), a Cronbach's Alpha measure of 0.7 or higher is adequate for research. Therefore, to assess the

reliability of the employed measures, I conducted scale reliability analysis for each instrument using SPSS to obtain the Cronbach's Alpha for each survey. Scales having a Cronbach's Alpha score exceeding .7 were deemed acceptable with regard to the data.

4.3.1.2 Correlation

Correlation analysis was used to identify the existence of mutual relationships between factors (Nunnally, 1978). The correlation formula is indicated below:

The diagram shows the formula for the correlation coefficient r . The formula is
$$r = \frac{\sum (z_x z_y)}{n}$$
 Four red boxes with arrows point to parts of the formula:

- A box labeled "Correlation coefficient" points to the variable r .
- A box labeled "The z-score for the X value" points to z_x in the numerator.
- A box labeled "The z-score for the Y value" points to z_y in the numerator.
- A box labeled "The number of pairs of scores" points to n in the denominator.

Source: Nunnally (1978)

In this formula, “r” is indicative of the strength and direction of the linear relationship between variables. The z-scores are used to standardize the measurement of the distributions of the x and y variables. “N” is the total number of variables being examined. This formula allows the researcher to discover which variables directly relate to others. According to the thresholds proposed in previous literature, relationships (or correlations) are indicated as follows:

- Negative Correlation - when a variable increases causing as another to decrease.
- Perfect Correlation – indicated by a value of -1.00.
- No Correlation – indicated by a value of zero.
- Positive (perfect) Correlation – indicated by a value of +1.00

Therefore, I assessed relationships between factors based on the recommended thresholds. Calculation of these values was facilitated using SPSS software.

4.3.1.3 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is employed to estimate the extent of the relationships between examined factors (Nunnally, 1978). It is important to note that, as part of the specific objectives of this study, regression analysis was the instrument/tool used to validate research Questions 5 and 6. By extension, the multiple regression equation was specifically used to validate Hypotheses 1 to 6. Consequently, the simple linear and multiple regression models are summarised in equations (1) and (2) below:

MODEL

$$CMC = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 GENDER + \alpha_2 EMOCLASS + \alpha_3 PTI + \alpha_4 PU + \alpha_5 PEOU + \varepsilon \text{ --- (1)}$$

$$WPI = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 CMC + \varepsilon \text{-----}(2)$$

Where:

WPI- Workplace Incivility, CMC – Computer-Mediated Communication Use, PTI – Perceived Task Interdependence, PU – Perceived Usefulness, PEOU- Perceived Ease of Use, EMPCLASS – Employee class. $\alpha_0, \alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4$ and α_5 are the estimated parameters, while ε is the error term. This equation indicates the extent to which the explanatory or independent variable influences the dependent variable. It supports the correlation findings by allowing the researcher to add to the identification of the relationships by exploring the extent to which factors are related. According to extant literature, a p-value that is less than 0.05 indicates that the alternative hypothesis should be accepted, while, a p-value equal to zero is indicative that factors have no effect on each other. I used this threshold as the basis for evaluating relationships between the examined factors (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2016; Alderman, 2017).

4.3.2 Interpretation of Findings

In accordance with Coghlan and Brannick’s (2014) action research approach, I evaluated the research findings based on knowledge of extant literature and documented into a table\chart format that translates to organizational leadership. I also documented all findings in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. I used tables, charts, and graphs to depict the diversity of the sample and relationships identified between factors.

4.3.3 Drafting of Proposed Course of Action\Feasibility Testing

Finally, I compiled all information relevant to the study into a preliminary report including the findings, their relevance to previous literature, and a set of proposed action items for implementation to address organizational civility issues. I presented the proposed action plan to organizational stakeholders (i.e. faculty, staff, and administrators) in the form of an email inviting them to participate in a feasibility study (Bowen et al, 2009; Hagmayer, 2016; Young et al., 2017). This phase of the research allowed employees to review the findings of the data collection, evaluate the proposed action plan and offer feedback using a feasibility questionnaire to contribute to the revision of the proposed action plan. Upon collection of the feasibility data, a revised version of the action plan was composed and reviewed in a collaborative effort (focus group) with organizational stakeholders that would be involved in the adoption, approval and implementation of the proposed plan. The section below explains the methods used for the focus group.

4.4 Taking Action: Evaluation of Proposed Course of Action\Focus Group Feedback

Focus groups are used to gather stakeholders’ opinions about a proposed idea, issue, product or service (Krueger and Casey, 2014; De-Guinea, 2016; Martin-Lacroux, 2017). In action research, this method is used for the evaluation of proposed action (Smith, 2015; Sanders & Yang, 2016; Painter & Jorge, 2017). In the final phase of data collection, I reviewed the revised action plan with three groups of organizational stakeholders to obtain their feedback with regard to implementing the proposed plan. I used the three-phase approach to obtain feedback from all levels

of the organization; including staff, faculty, and administrators. I provided all focus group participants a summary of the survey and feasibility questionnaire findings and a copy of the original and revised action plan prior to the meeting for review. The objective of the focus groups was to determine if university stakeholders would implement the proposed action plan. I facilitated the focus group discussions in a dual moderator format. I designated one of the participants to ensure the progression of the discussion, while I (as the researcher) made sure that all intended topics were covered. I used the following questions for discussion:

- What are your thoughts about the survey research findings?
- Do you believe that the identified issues need to be addressed?
- What are your thoughts about the feasibility questionnaire findings?
- Do you believe that the revisions to the proposed action plan address the concerns expressed in the feasibility study?
- Would you implement the proposed action plan?

4.5 Constructing: Instruments/Development of Survey Packet

As stated in the introductory chapter (Chapter 1), this research examined the effect that dispositional factors including gender, department, and work-related tasks among university employees have on the use of computer-mediated communication and employee civility in a historically black university in the United States. Although the nature of action research differs from that of traditional research, to put the study into perspective, some propositions (hypotheses) were considered based on reviewed previous studies (Davis, Bangozzi, and Warchaw, 1989; Kettinger and Grover, 1997; Clark, 2013; Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017; Painter & Jorge, 2017). Specifically, to answer Questions 5 and 6, I tested the following hypotheses with regard to Phase 1 of this research, which involved the identification of the specifics regarding the organizational issue:

1. **H₁:** *Gender will influence computer-mediated communication usage.*
2. **H₂:** *Employee type will influence computer-mediated communication usage.*
3. **H₃:** *Task attributes will influence computer-mediated communication usage.*
4. **H₄:** *Perceived usefulness will influence computer-mediated communication usage.*
5. **H₅:** *Perceived ease of use will influence computer-mediated communication usage.*
6. **H₆:** *Computer-mediated communication usage will influence workplace incivility.*

It is also important to note that the hypotheses were stated in the alternate form (alternative hypothesis) based on the various reviewed literatures (Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017; Painter & Jorge, 2017). Consequently, upon the above, I selected the survey instruments employed in this research based on their relevance to evaluating issues related to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use. Based on a common theme among the relevant studies that I found in the literature review related to examining issues of workplace incivility and the use of computer-mediated communication, I used instruments that were employed in Kettinger and Grover's (1997) work on workplace incivility and Clark's (2013) work on computer-mediated

communication use. From these studies, several instruments were used including: the workplace incivility scale (Clark, 2013); the computer-mediated communication use and perceived task interdependence scales (Clark, 2013), and Davis, Bangozzi, and Warchaw's (1989) perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use scales. The sections following offer a brief description of the nature and validity of each scale. According to previous literature, Cronbach's Alpha measures of 0.7 or higher are adequate for research (Hair et al, 2010).

4.5.0 The Workplace Incivility Scale

The workplace incivility scale is a 34-item scale (Cronbach's Alpha of .973) developed by Clark et al (2013) in their study of faculty-to-faculty incivility in nursing. It measures the extent to which respondents have experienced various instances of workplace incivility. It is rated on a 4-point Likert scale. Responses are indicated as never, rarely, sometimes, or always.

4.5.1 The Computer-mediated Communication Use Scale

Kettinger and Grover's (1997) computer-mediated communication use scale, is a 24-item scale ranked on a 7-point Likert scale, with a Cronbach's Alpha value of .970. It was employed in their study of inter-organizational email use to evaluate the extent to which computer-mediated communication technology was used as an alternative to face-to-face communication. Responses are anchored from "Never" to "Always". The scale is divided into four subsets describing the nature of use; task use, social/entertainment use, broadcast use, and other use.

4.5.2 The Perceived Task Interdependence Scale

Perceived task interdependence was measured using Kettinger and Grover's (1997) 13-item scale. This scale, having a Cronbach's Alpha of .968, was used in previous research to measure the extent to which respondents' perceived computer-mediated communication use to be related to tasks and the type of task being performed. The scale is divided into four types of tasks; task analyzability, task predictability, task interdependence, and task uncertainty. Responses are ranked on a 7-point Likert scale with responses ranging from "Never" to "Always".

4.5.3 Perceived Usefulness

The perceived usefulness scale (Cronbach's Alpha of .992) was developed by Davis, Bangozzi, and Warchaw (1989) to measure the extent to which individuals perceive a subject to be useful. It is a 14-item scale. Responses are ranked using a 7-point Likert scale of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". This scale was employed in this study to measure the extent to which employees believed that computer-mediated communication technology was valuable.

4.5.4 Perceived Ease of Use

The perceived ease of use scale was also developed by Davis, Bangozzi, and Warchaw (1989). It has a Cronbach's Alpha value of .971 and measures the extent to which individuals perceive technology to be simple to use. It is a 14-item scale. Responses are ranked using a 7-point Likert scale of "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". With regard to this research, this scale was employed to measure the extent to which employees perceived computer-mediated communication

technology to be simple to use. Negatively worded items in the Perceived Ease of Use scale were reverse coded to ensure that high scores on the scale were indicative of high levels of usability.

4.5.5 Background Information Form (BIF)

To collect demographic data relevant to the survey respondents, a background information form (BIF) was used to collect such information relevant to the participants. The data collected in the BIF included gender, race, age, years of employment, employment classification, faculty ranking, faculty employment classification, employment status, and university department. This information was used for further evaluations of the data to determine if patterns exist among various demographic groups (Larsen, 2017; Neumann., James, & Flora, 2017).

4.5.6 Participant Information Sheet

In accordance with the research ethics standards of the university examined and the University of Liverpool, a participant information sheet was developed to inform participants of the nature of the study and explain the terms of participation. The form included an invitation to participate, an explanation of the basis for participant selection, the purpose of the study, an explanation of procedures, risk and discomforts, alternatives to participation, compensation for participation, assurance of confidentiality, statement of injury or special costs, withdrawal from the study, and an offer to answer questions.

4.5.7 Consent Form

In addition, as required by the research ethics standards of both universities, a consent form was developed. Participants were additionally required to indicate their informed consent to participate in the study by selecting “YES” after viewing the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form. Their “YES” response was indicative that they understood the details of the Participant Information Sheet, and Consent Form and agreed to participate.

4.5.8 Development of Survey Packet

I compiled all of the aforementioned instruments into a single survey packet to be distributed to all university employees for participation. In consideration of the requirements for ethical approval, I electronically formatted the survey to ensure that it was easily accessible to participants and maintained confidentiality. In addition, in an effort to limit the time commitment of respondents, the survey was limited to an approximate completion time of 10 to 15 minutes.

4.6 Participants/Sample Determination

After the development of the survey packet, I determined the sample size that would be most appropriate for data collection. This section provides the statistical determination used to establish the appropriate sample size. It additionally offers a detailed outline of the distribution of participants.

The number of faculty and staff employed at the university during the period examined in this study was taken from the Institutional Research and Planning Fact book Fast Facts 2015 (Institutional Research and Planning Fact Book, 2015). It indicated that the university had 729

employees. Two hundred and sixty one (36%) were faculty, with 80% (208) of them being employed full-time and 20% (53) employed part-time. There were 468 (64%) staff employees of which 93% (437) were employed full-time and only 7% (31) were part-time employees (Institutional Research, Planning/Facts and Figures, 2017).

Based on the university's demographic data (including a sum of total faculty and staff) as derived from university's website, the university's total employee population at the time of this study was 729. To calculate the appropriate sample size for this study, we used Yamane's (1967) simplified formula of proportions. It is shown in the figure below:

Sample size: Theoretical aspects, formulas GfK

Simplified formula for proportions*
(Taro Yamane)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e)^2}$$

n - the sample size
N - the population size
e - the acceptable sampling error

* 95% confidence level and $p = 0.5$ are assumed

Source: Yamane (1967)

The sampling error used was .05 given the intent to reach the 95% confidence level. Because of the calculation, I proposed a minimum of 258 participants for the sample to meet the 95% confidence level with regard to the employee population. Therefore, this was the intended goal of the study.

Additionally, given that previous studies neglected to explore a representative sample (Clark, 2013), the sample for this study is diverse and includes various organizational member types, including staff and both full-time and part-time employees. Faculty participants included tenured faculty, tenure track faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and other faculty. I also selected participants from various organizational departments and colleges. Consequently, samples included new and veteran employees. In addition, employees of diverse cultures were encouraged to participate (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2016; Jayamohan et al., 2017).

4.7 Planning Action: Action Planning and Feasibility Testing Results

Upon completion of Phase 1 of the research, we drafted a proposed action plan based on the findings and shared with organizational stakeholders for feedback with regard to the feasibility of the proposed plan. All of the same provisions that were applied in the first phase of the research to protect participants were also applied to Phase 2. We invited all employees to participate. We did not specifically excluded any participants. A copy of the feasibility questionnaire is included in Appendix F. I summarized participants' feedback and considered it with regard to developing the proposed action plan.

In summary, responses on the feasibility questionnaire indicate that although participants find that the proposed action plan will be useful, they believe that the lack of support from administrators will prevent its implementation. Concerning the strengths of the proposed plan, respondents indicate that it considers the organization's diverse employee population; it promotes face-to-face collaboration, promotes awareness of workplace incivility and the implementation of core values, and involves pertinent organizational stakeholders in the implementation process. Respondents suggest that the proposed plan can be improved by obtaining more responses with regard to perceptions of the organizational issue, finding out more about how technology impacts behaviors, making items in the plan more comprehensive, and gaining the support of university administrators. With regard to opportunities the plan presents, participants feel that it can enhance awareness and promote collaboration and the exchange of feedback. Some of the threats proposed for consideration were time for implementation, resistance, and fear of exposure from individuals (administrators) who display uncivil behaviors. From a financial standpoint, respondents believe that the cost to implement the proposed action plan must be minimal in order to gain support given the associated budget constraints and implied personnel costs. With regard to resources needed to apply the proposed actions, respondents generally believe that the technology department and human resources should facilitate the needed training; otherwise, a budget is necessary to secure the needed training facilitators. Most respondents are not sure either if these resources are available or believe that they are. However, some responses indicate that budget cuts may influence the availability of financial resources.

CHAPTER 5
DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND DISCUSSION OF
FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The results chapter offers a detailed presentation of the findings relevant to this study. This section of the paper includes an explanation of the survey demographics, an assessment of the reliability of the instruments employed in the survey data collection, an explanation of the relative responses to each survey instrument, and an evaluation of the relationships discovered in the analysis of the factor examined in this study. The following chapter, Summary of Findings, will offer a synopsis of the findings and explain the implications these findings have with regard to the organizational issue.

I segmented data collection into two phases. In **Phase 1** of this research, I employed a survey instrument to collect data relevant to diagnosing the organizational issues of workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use. Upon completion of data collection, I used the Qualtrics reporting tool to develop demographic information related to the data (Munzel, 2016; Woisetschläger et al., 2017). In an effort to conduct a more extensive evaluation of the figures, I exported all of the collected data from the online data collection software Qualtrics into SPSS for data analysis. In **Phase 2**, a preliminary report of the findings and a proposed action plan was developed and emailed to all university employees along with an invitation to participate in a feasibility testing study and focus group related to the feasibility of implementing the proposed action plan.

The sections below outline the findings related to sample size and demographics of the data, the reliability of the employed survey instruments, the identified relationships between factors evaluated in the study, and extent to which factors are related and the joint effect (regression). In addition, it explains some of the findings of phase 2 of the research, which includes the proposed action plan, and feasibility questionnaire feedback. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the revised action plan and focus group feedback.

5.1 Participants

This research examined the effects that gender, department, and work-related tasks among university employees (i.e. faculty and staff) have on the use of computer-mediated communication and employee civility at the examined university. The sample includes both full-time and part-time employees. Tenured and non-tenured faculty are also included in the sample. I surveyed a diverse sample of various departments (Davis & Pink-Harper, 2016; Cheng et al., 2017). Participation was voluntary (Uribe et al., 2016; Kim & Rhee, 2017). I obtained contact information of participants from the examined organizations email directory. I emailed an email request to participate to all university faculty and staff. The initial contact with participants via email included a link to the survey instrument, formatted in Qualtrics. To obtain the Informed consent, participants could do so in the electronic survey by selecting “YES” on the consent form and Participant Information Sheet to indicate willingness to participate and proceed with completion of the survey. If “NO” was selected, the survey was ended. Participants were able to decide to skip a question or discontinue completion of the survey at any time. After data collection, I exported the data from Qualtrics into SPSS to be analyzed.

Three-hundred fifty employees responded to the survey. However, only 298 of the responses were usable (a response rate of 85%) given that I excluded 52 responses based on the exclusion criteria that stated that all incomplete submissions would be omitted (Walther et al., 2016; Zinko et al., 2017). This sample size and the response rate are acceptable based on standards for research that is relatively qualitative in nature (Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, 2016; Connors & Halligan, 2017). This is true given that this research was intended merely to diagnose a specified organizational issue, and not to make generalizations based on the data (Connors & Halligan, 2017).

Based on evaluation of the demographic data, the sample was made up of 55% Female and nearly 59% African American. It is relatively diverse in terms of age and department as shown in the tables below.

| TABLE 5-1 Age Distribution | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 18-23 | 24-29 | 30-35 | 36-41 | 42-47 | 47-53 | 54-59 | 60 and over |
| 16.4% | 7.8% | 14.3% | 18.4% | 11.9% | 8.2% | 14.7% | 8.2% |

| TABLE 5-2 Department Distribution | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| COBA | CLASS | COST | SOTE | ADMIN | SUPPORT | OTHER |
| 28.3% | 18.6% | 8.6% | 1.7% | 10% | 14.5% | 18.3% |
| COBA (College of Business Administration) CLASS (College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences) SOTE (School of Teacher Education) ADMIN (represents all staff administrators classified in a non-academic unit) SUPPORT (represents all staff serving in support departments) OTHER (represents all employees not classified in one of the other categories i.e. student workers) | | | | | | |

About 43.9% have been working for the organization for 5 years or less. Fifty-two percent of respondents were staff, while 44.5% were faculty and only about 4% were administrators. Of the faculty respondents, about 97.6 percent are non-tenured and 34.4% are on a non-tenured track. Eighty-five percent of all respondents are full time employees.

5.2 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

To determine if the employed survey instruments were appropriate with regard to making inferences about the data, I completed statistical reliability testing. However, before the computations of various construct validity tests (like Cronbach’s alpha), I subjected the initial draft to face validity, by first giving the questionnaires to the project supervisor for scrutiny (Ahn, 2016;

Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017). In addition, I also did content validity, by giving the questionnaire to six experts in human resource management and communication studies to confirm that the questionnaire items were representative and a good fit for purpose (Bergkvist & Taylor, 2016; Jayamohan et al., 2017). I used suggestions from these two sets of validators and experts to adjust the initial questionnaire. I administered the adjusted draft to a few selected respondents at the pilot stage.

To further ascertain the validity and reliability of the study instrument, I conducted a pilot test, by administering the updated questionnaire to 20 selected (using convenience sampling) respondents of the University. However, in order not to introduce biases, I exempted these 20 respondents from the main study (Sussman et al, 2002; Ahn, 2016).

Cronbach's alpha is the most commonly used measure to determine reliability of surveys/questionnaires having multiple questions evaluated on a Likert scale (Murray, 2013). Therefore, I partly used this measure in this study to determine the reliability of the measures. Previous researchers recommend a minimum threshold level of greater than or equal to 0.70 (Nunnally 1978; Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black 2006; Hwang et al., 2016; Kelly & Hun-Tong, 2017) to accept a measure as reliable. The 20 responses from the pilot stage were analysed, and various reliability figures established. The Cronbach's alphas for each measure met the minimum threshold and are indicated as follows: Workplace Incivility (.973), Computer-Mediated Communication (.970), Perceived Task Interdependence (.968), Perceived Usefulness (.992), Perceived Ease of Use (.971). In addition to the Cronbach's alpha test, the following reliability indexes were obtained from our analysis of the pilot data: composite reliability (CR), 0.79; average variance extracted (AVE), 0.78; and Dublin-Watson statistics, 2.111. All the calculated indices were well above the recommended thresholds (Pauleen and Yoong, 2001; Walther et al., 2016; Zinko et al., 2017), and again, it implied great internal consistency in the questionnaire questions, measuring the same value (Sussman et al, 2002; Ahn, 2016; Costa & Pedro Neves, 2017).

5.3 Results

This section offers an overview of the findings relative to each of the deployed survey instruments. It also highlights survey responses that were significant as indicated by high response rates on the Likert scale. The proceeding sections will discuss the findings related to each scale and provide answers to the previously proposed research questions below.

1. Does workplace incivility exist at the examined university?
2. In what form does workplace incivility appear at the examined university?
3. Is computer-mediated communication being used at the examined university?
4. What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for at the examined university?
5. Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility at the examined university?
6. Which of the examined dispositional factors influence computer-mediated communication use at the examined university?

5.3.1 Question 1 and 2: Workplace Incivility Scale: Does Workplace Incivility exist? How does it appear?

I employed the workplace incivility scale to evaluate the previously proposed question, “Does workplace incivility exist at the university?” Responses to the workplace incivility scale were indicated on a Likert scale with responses ranging from “NEVER” to “ALWAYS”; relative to the extent to which respondents believed that each behavior type exists in the workplace. Responses indicated as “NEVER” suggest instances where individuals stated that such actions do not exist. However, responses indicated in all other categories (rarely, sometimes, and always) suggest that these items are experienced to some extent in the workplace. Ninety-two percent of responses indicate that some type of workplace incivility exists, while only 8% indicate that such instances never occur. With regard to the type of workplace incivility that is most prevalent in the organization, 71% of responses suggest that resistance to change is prevalent. With regard to those behaviors that respondents suggested never exist, 86% indicate that “physical threats are never made against another faculty\staff member” and 69% or more indicated that “racial, ethnic, sexual, gender or religious slurs” are never made, “inappropriate emails are never sent”, and “private emails are never forwarded without permission”. Therefore, the findings from this instrument primarily indicate that **WORKPLACE INCIVILITY DOES EXIST** in the workplace. In addition, participants generally agree that physical threats, derogatory slurs, and inappropriate use of email are uncommon in the workplace. However, indirect attacks or passive-aggressive acts of incivility are a more common occurrence. The item with the highest average response as indicated by the mean response out of four (2.29) was the statement “Resisted change or were unwilling to negotiate.” The item that had the lowest response (1.17) said: “Made physical threats against another faculty/staff member”

5.3.2 Question 3 and 4: Computer-Mediated Communication Use Scale: Is it Being Used? What for?

The Computer-Mediated Communication Use Scale was used to collect data relevant to the use of computer-mediated communication system. The survey items included in the scale were related to four categories of use: task, social/entertainment, broadcast, and other. With regard to the responses related generally to the use of computer-mediated communication, 98% of **EMPLOYEES AGREE THAT COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION IS BEING USED** in the organizational environment. Responses also indicate that it is used most often (as indicated by the response other than “NEVER”) for “distributing\providing information” in the organizational environment (92.8%), to “send a message in place of a phone call” (90.8%) and to “keep a record of interactions/agreements” (88.4%). Computer-mediated communication is least often (as indicated by the response of “NEVER”) used to “discuss confidential matters” (52.5%) and to “carry on a negotiation/bargaining” (43.4%). The highest average response (3.86) as indicated by the mean response out of 5 was “Distribute/provide information.” The lowest average response (1.80) was on the statement that said, “Discuss confidential matters”

The perceived task interdependence scale indicates the extent to which people believe that computer-mediated communication is used for each type of task. The results indicate that employees generally agree that **COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

ARE BEING USED FOR ALL OF THE EXAMINED TASKS based on over 90% responses other than “NEVER” on all of the surveyed items. The item with the highest average response (4.89) as indicated by the mean response out of eight was “Reliance on established procedures and practices” and “Clearly known way to do the major types of work”. The lowest average response was still relatively high (3.77) on the item that asked, “How often do techniques/skills in the job change?”

The Perceived Usefulness Scale was used to evaluate the extent to which participants believe that the computer-mediated communication is useful. High levels (indicated by responses of “Strongly Agree”, “Agree” and “Somewhat Agree”) indicate that respondents perceive that the technology is useful to some extent with regard to the question and low levels (indicated by responses of “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, and “Somewhat Disagree”) indicate that respondents believe that the technology is not useful with regard to the questions. Responses indicate, based on the high levels (80% or more) of agreement on each item that there is a consensus among respondents that **COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION IS USEFUL TO SOME EXTENT**. And, such system are most useful for saving time (91.8%), accomplishing tasks more quickly (90.8%), making one’s job easier (93.6%), and overall completion of one’s job (91.67%). Item 14 on the Perceived Ease of Use Scale had the highest average response (5.92) out of seven. The item statement was “Overall, I find that information technology is useful in my job.” Item nine had the lowest average response, which was still relatively high (5.24). The item statement said: “Using information technology reduces the time I spend on unproductive activities.”

The Perceived Ease of Use Scale was used to evaluate the extent to which participants believe that the computer-mediated communication systems examined in this study are easy to use. High levels (indicated by a response of “None at all”) indicate the perception that the technology is easy to use and low levels (indicated by a response of “A great deal”) indicate that respondents find the technology difficult to use. In this scale, the negatively worded items were reverse coded to ensure that higher responses were indicative of higher levels of perception with regard to the simplicity of using the computer-mediated communication. The following survey items were reverse coded to ensure that high responses on the scale were indicative of a high perception of usefulness:

- I often become confused when dealing with information technology.
- I make errors frequently when using information technology.
- Interacting with information technology is often frustrating.
- I need to consult the user manual often when using information technology.
- Interacting with information technology requires a lot of my mental effort.
- Information technology is rigid and inflexible to interact with.
- Information technology often behaves in unexpected ways.
- I find it cumbersome to use information technology.

The findings indicate that over 50% of **RESPONDENTS GENERALLY FIND COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION TO BE CHALLENGING BUT RELATIVELY SIMPLE TO USE**. Item 14 on the scale had the highest average response (5.92) out of seven. The item statement was “Overall, I find that information technology is easy to use.” Item four had the lowest

average response (5.24). The item statement said: “Information Technology often behaves in unexpected ways”

5.3.3 Research Questions 5: Does Computer-Mediated Communication Use Influence Workplace Incivility? What factors influence computer-mediated communication use?

Regression and correlation analyses were used to evaluate the relationship between computer-mediated communication and workplace incivility. All values were calculated using the SPSS data analysis tools. According to Nunnally (1978), items that have a significance of less than .05 indicate that a relationship exists between the factors and the null hypothesis (which assumes that there is no relationship) should be rejected. The linear regression data in this study indicates a significance of .024 with regard to the relationship between the responses on the computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility scales. This figure suggests that there is a significant relationship between the factors given that the required threshold is lower than .05. Consequently, results from the linear regression equation are depicted below (to accept Hypothesis 6):

Table 5-3: Regression Results: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| | .136 ^a | .018 | .015 | 23.89990 |

Source: Researcher Framework, 2019

The R squared, also known as the coefficient of determination, represents the changes or variation in our dependent variable due to changes in all the independent variable (De-Guinea, 2016; Martin-Lacroux, 2017). Consequently, from the above table (Table 5-3) the R squared was 0.018 which simply implied that 18% variation in workplace incivility are due to changes in computer-mediated communication use, while the remaining 82% are factors which affect workplace incivility but are not captured in the model.

Table 5-4 Regression Results: ANOVA

| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Regression | 2963.310 | 1 | 2963.310 | 5.188 | .024 |
| Residual | 158223.787 | 277 | 571.205 | | |
| Total | 161187.097 | 278 | | | |

Source: Researcher Framework, 2019

From table 5-4, the p-value for the F-calculated at 5.188 (sig.=0.024) - is less than the critical value of 0.05, and, for this, the alternate hypothesis which stated that computer-mediated communication use will influence workplace incivility was accepted, based on the decision rule (Munzel, 2016; Woisetschläger et al., 2017). Therefore, according to the data, **COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION USE DOES INFLUENCE WORKPLACE INCIVILITY.**

5.3.4 Research Question 6: Relationship between Computer-Mediated Communication Use and Examined Factors

I also used regression and correlation to evaluate the relationship between computer-mediated communication use and the other examined factors including gender, employee class, task attributes, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. I calculated all values using the SPSS data analysis tools. The regression analysis data revealed that **A RELATIONSHIP EXISTS** between computer-mediated communication use and perceived task interdependence (.000), and, it also relates to perceived usefulness (.024). However, computer-mediated communication use was not found to be a significantly predictor of gender, employee class, or perceived ease of use. This means that higher levels of computer-mediated communication use result in high levels of perceived task interdependence and perceived usefulness. The table below shows the significance indicators for each factor examined in the study.

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 48.425 | 6.782 | | 7.140 | .000 |
| | GENDER | -1.214 | 3.045 | -.028 | -.399 | .691 |
| | EMPCLASS | -4.234 | 2.730 | -.113 | -1.551 | .123 |
| | PTI | .328 | .069 | .373 | 4.788 | .000 |
| | PU | .188 | .083 | .219 | 2.270 | .024 |
| | PEOU | -.105 | .151 | -.060 | -.694 | .488 |

a. Dependent Variable: CMC – Computer-mediated Communication Use
b. Independent Variables: EMPCLASS – Employee class, PTI – Perceived Task Interdependence, PU – Perceived Usefulness, PEOU- Perceived Ease of Use

This analysis suggests that the more employees use computer-mediated communication systems, the more they perceive them to be necessary for their job and easy to use.

However, to validate and authenticate (Hwang et al., 2016; Kelly & Hun-Tong, 2017) the various results from the analysis of regression equation, I analysed the model fit. This was an attempt to ascertain whether all the items were nested correctly within it (Hwang et al., 2016). Similar to previous literature, different types of “goodness of fit” indices were adopted (Hwang et al., 2016; Connors & Halligan, 2017). Consequently, I obtained the following results: the normed X^2 or X^2/df ratio=2.214; the comparative fit index (CFI)= 0.97; the root mean square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)= 0.055; Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)= 0.97; Incremental Fit Index (IFI)=0.96; and Normed Fit Index (NFI)=0.96 (Hwang et al., 2016; Kelly & Hun-Tong, 2017; Larsen, 2017; Neumann et al., 2017; Connors & Halligan, 2017). All the above results confirmed a good fit, since

all fall within the acceptable fit criteria (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2016; Alderman, 2017; Hwang et al., 2016).

Lastly, to be able to draw conclusions based on the multiple regression analysis, I validated the following assumptions, and I ascertained that all were deemed fulfilled: absence of Perfect Multicollinearity and Independent Errors (Pauleen and Yoong, 2001; Walther et al., 2016). In detecting multicollinearity/ perfect multicollinearity, I scanned the correlation matrix (observable in Table 4.4) which indicates that none of the constructs had a correlation of above 0.80 or 1.0 (Sussman et al, 2002; Hagmayer, 2016). In addition, various coefficients, like Tolerance (Tol) and Variance Inflation (VIF) were all within the required limits (Hagmayer, 2016; Young et al., 2017). There were no traces of independent errors (uncorrelated residuals), since the calculated Durbin-Watson statistics of 2.111 was within the acceptable range (Pauleen and Yoong, 2001; Sussman et al, 2002; Walther et al., 2016; Hagmayer, 2016; Young et al., 2017).

In addition to the regression analysis to understand both joint and individual effects, I also performed correlation analysis to evaluate the degree to which the examined factors were related (Nunnally, 1978). Findings indicate significant correlation between perceived task interdependence (.000) and perceived ease of use (.013) and computer-mediated communication. This result means that as levels of perceived task interdependence (belief the task requires use) and perceived ease of use (perception that systems are easy to use) increase, computer-mediated communication use is improved.

TABLE 5-6 Correlations of Constructs

| | | WPI | CMC | PTI | PU | PEOU | GENDER |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| WPI | Pearson Correlation | | | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | | | |
| | N | | | | | | |
| CMC | Pearson Correlation | .136* | | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .024 | | | | | |
| | N | 279 | | | | | |
| PTI | Pearson Correlation | -.060 | .437** | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .423 | .000 | | | | |
| | N | .179 | 180 | | | | |
| PU | Pearson Correlation | -.027 | .290** | .493** | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .652 | .000 | .000 | | | |
| | N | .279 | 281 | 178 | | | |
| PEOU | Pearson Correlation | -.043 | .140* | .280** | .459** | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .474 | .018 | .000 | .000 | | |
| | N | 279 | 283 | 180 | 282 | | |
| GEN DER | Pearson Correlation | -.062 | .029 | .072 | .224** | .160** | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .306 | .634 | .335 | .000 | .007 | |
| | N | .276 | 277 | 180 | 276 | 281 | |

| | | WPI | CMC | PTI | PU | PEOU | GENDER |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| EMP CLAS S | Pearson Correlation | - .158** | .005 | .235** | .302** | .175** | .200** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .008 | .929 | .001 | .000 | .003 | .001 |
| | N | .281 | 284 | 180 | 283 | 287 | 283 |

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Variables: WPI- Workplace Incivility, CMC – Computer-Mediated Communication Use, PTI – Perceived Task Interdependence, PU – Perceived Usefulness, PEOU- Perceived Ease of Use, EMPCLASS – Employee class

The 2-tailed correlations matrix revealed other relationships between the examined factors. Relationships were evaluated based on Nunnally’s (1978) explanation of Pearson correlation. He suggests that values close to one indicate that there is a strong relationship between the two factors, meaning that as one variable changes the other will also. Values close to zero indicate a weak relationship between factors. Positive values indicate a linear relationship. Negative values indicate an inverse relationship, meaning that as one variable increases, the other depresses and vice versa. Subsequently, although I only found two relationships in the regression analysis, the correlation analysis revealed that additional relationships exist. The results indicate that not only are perceived task interdependence (.437) and perceived usefulness (.290) correlated with computer-mediated communication use, but perceived ease of use (.140) and employee class (.235) are also correlated at the 0.01 and .05 confidence level respectively. Additionally, relationships exist between perceived usefulness (.493), perceived ease of use (.280), employee class (.235) and perceived task interdependence. I also found evidence that perceived ease of use (.459), gender (.224) and employee class (.302) significantly influence perceived usefulness. In addition, a relationship also exists between gender (.160), employee class (.175) and perceived ease of use.

5.4 Further Examination Based on Stakeholder Feedback

My preliminary review of the collected data did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication. Therefore, I collected more responses from the employee population to meet the minimum threshold. In addition, based on the feedback received from organizational stakeholders indicating their surprise that email communication was not a significant predictor of workplace incivility, I examined the relationship between computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the specific survey items related to email communication. Once I collected and evaluated all data, it became evident that a significant relationship exists between CMC both generally and especially with regard to item identified as email communication and workplace incivility. The following CMC survey items were identified related to the use of email communication as highly significant predictors of workplace incivility: “send a message in place of a phone call”; “distribute/provide information”; “give and receive feedback on reports and ideas”; “ask questions in a public setting” and “get to know someone”.

The table below shows the statistical values related to these relationships:

| TABLE 5-7 Relationships Between Workplace Incivility and CMC Survey Items related to Email Communication: Coefficients^a: | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 57.799 | 4.986 | | 11.593 | .000 |
| compmc17 | 2.880 | 1.563 | .154 | 1.843 | .066 |
| compmc18 | 2.055 | 1.463 | .109 | 1.404 | .161 |
| compmc19 | 3.323 | 1.661 | .164 | 2.001 | .046 |
| compmc4 | 4.128 | 1.404 | .216 | 2.940 | .004 |
| compmc5 | -5.327 | 1.650 | -.265 | -3.228 | .001 |
| compmc8 | -3.282 | 1.657 | -.175 | -1.980 | .049 |
| compmc10 | 1.692 | 1.593 | .094 | 1.063 | .289 |
| compmc15 | 2.519 | 1.636 | .134 | 1.539 | .125 |
| compmc21 | -5.647 | 1.374 | -.309 | -4.111 | .000 |
| compmc23 | .342 | 1.506 | .015 | .227 | .820 |

a. Dependent Variable: WPI

This revelation offers further support for my previously proposed action plan and proposed direction for future research.

5.5 Discussion of Findings

The research findings align with and support that of the previous theoretical and conceptual literature considered with regard to this study. The findings indicate similarly to Bandura's (1971) social and cognitive theories that interaction in the social environment influences behaviors, given that respondents consistently were in 90% agreement when asked about repetitive job-related tasks for which computer-mediated communication is being used. In addition, in correlation with the technology acceptance model (Davis, Bagozzi, and Warchaw, 1989), findings indicate that employee perceptions of technology influence their intentions with regard to its use. In addition, in alignment with the implications of previous literature relevant to workplace incivility (Kettinger and Grover, 1997; Clark, 2013), the findings of this study indicate that workplace incivility can be perceived differently in different organizations given that responses in this study are somewhat

different from previous studies. Task characteristics can also influence the use of computer-mediated communication given the relationship revealed in the regression and correlation analysis. It also suggests, similarly to that of Kettinger and Grover (1997) that the types of computer-mediated communication use should be differentiated to establish an explanation for associated behavior. Although university administrators believe there is a lack of computer-mediated communication use, 98% of employees responded that such systems are being used. Additionally, this study uniquely offers in contrast to previous literature (Clark, 2013; Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016) that workplace incivility and computer-mediated (technology) use can be independently motivated.

5.6 Summary of Results

The table below offers a summary of the results with regard to each of the proposed research questions.

| TABLE 5-8 SUMMARY OF RESULTS | | |
|--|--|---|
| Research Questions (Hypothesis) | ANSWER | EVIDENCE |
| Does workplace incivility exist at the university? | YES | 92% of responses indicate that some type of workplace incivility exists Only 8% indicate that such instances never occur. |
| How does workplace incivility appear at the university? | It occurs in many forms. However, it is most evident in resistance to change. It rarely occurs in the form of physical threats, inappropriate emails, breach or privacy, or inappropriate conversation. | 68% of responses suggest that resistance to change is prevalent. 86% indicate that “physical threats are never made against another faculty\staff member” 69% or more indicated that “racial, ethnic, sexual, gender or religious slurs” are never made and 74% indicated “inappropriate emails are never sent”, and 79% indicated “private emails are never forwarded without permission”. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Is computer-mediated communication being used at the university?</p> | <p>YES</p> | <p>Over 90% of participant selected responses other than “NEVER” on all of the surveyed items relating to the use of computer-mediated communication.</p> |
| <p>What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for?</p> | <p>Computer-mediated communication is being used to distribute and provide information, send messages, and keep record of interactions and agreements.</p> | <p>92.8% state that it is used for “distributing\providing information”</p> <p>90.8% state that it is used to “send a message in place of a phone call”</p> <p>88.4% state that it is used to “keep a record of interactions/agreements”</p> <p>Only 52.5% state that is used to “discuss confidential matters”</p> <p>Only 43.4% state that it is used to “carry on a negotiation/bargaining”</p> |
| <p>Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility?</p> <p>(Hypothesis 6)</p> | <p>YES</p> | <p>The relationship between computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility has a significance of .024 which meets the recommended threshold of .05</p> <p>And, highly significant relationships exist between computer-mediated communication use items related to email as revealed by further evaluation of the data based on stakeholder feedback.</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>What factors influence computer-mediated communication use? (Hypothesis 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)</p> | <p>Perceived task interdependence, perceived ease of use, gender, and employee class.</p> | <p>Perceived Task Interdependence (.000). Perceived Usefulness (.024). Perceived Ease of Use (.140) and Employee Class (.235) are also correlated at the 0.05 and 0.01 confidence levels respectively.</p> |
| <p>How do employees perceive computer-mediated communication?</p> | <p>Employees perceive computer-mediated-communication to be essential to most job task. They also believe that it is useful and relatively simple to use.</p> | <p>There was an over 90% response rate in agreement that task are not independent of computer-mediated communication use.</p> <p>Over 90% of respondents stated that computer-mediated communication system are useful for saving time (91.8%), accomplishing tasks more quickly (90.8%), making one’s job easier (93.6%), and overall completion of one’s job (91.67%).</p> <p>71.5% say that “My interaction with information technology is easy for me to understand.”</p> <p>69.7% says that “It is easy for me to remember how to perform tasks recommended by information technology.”</p> <p>71.9% say that “Information technology provides helpful guidance in performing tasks.” And 67.5% “Overall, I find that information technology is easy to use.”</p> |

5.7 What's Next?

In the next chapter, the overall proposed action plan is discussed with regard to its development and how it can be used to address the issues identified based on the results.

CHAPTER 6
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

6.0 Introduction

This section of the paper will offer a presentation of the proposed action plan. It will explain the basis from which it was developed and describe how feedback obtained from the feasibility study informed its modification and development to meet organizational needs. It will also discuss the feedback received from organizational stakeholders with regard to implementing the proposed plan and the internal processes that will likely influence successful implementation. The sections below proceed as follows: drafting of initial action plan, summary of feasibility study feedback, and development of proposed action plan.

6.1 Drafting of Initial Action Plan

I drafted the initial action plan based on previous research related to the subject matter and findings from data collection relevant to the existence of a workplace incivility issue at the university. Based on the preliminary findings of this research, I drafted and proposed an action plan to the organization for consideration. I compiled the proposed action plan, along with the findings of the survey research into a PowerPoint presentation and sent to all employees via email to obtain feedback. A copy of the information sent to employees is included in Appendix B. The email contained a link to an electronically formatted version of the Feasibility Study Questionnaire in Qualtrics. The email also contained the same Participant Information Sheet and Consent form that was sent with the survey employed in Phase 1 of the research and which explains both parts of the study. However, the appeal to participate in the feasibility study related to the research was adapted to specifically refer to Phase 2 of the research. The Feasibility Study questions are included in Appendix E. The feedback received from feasibility testing is summarized in the sections below. There are no identifying details included related to the respondents in an effort to preserve their confidentiality. The final revision of the action plan is discussed in the following sections.

6.2 Summary of Feasibility Testing Feedback

Based on the feedback received from the feasibility-testing questionnaire, I revised the proposed action plan to include recommendations for organizational stakeholders. A copy of the Feasibility Questionnaire is available in Appendix E. The proceeding sections provide a brief overview of the findings related to the SWOT Analysis (Phadermrod, Crowder and Willis, 2019) of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, financial implications, and resources identified from the feedback.

6.2.1 Strengths

Based on the feedback received, many of the respondents believe that the proposed plan has value. Some of the responses are quoted below:

- *“Great proposal Ideas proposed are feasible Some ideas can be implemented within reasonable (at least 3-6 months) time”*
- *“The proposed plan offered concise, yet simple, solutions in implementing computer-mediated communication usage and promoting civility into the workplace.”*

- *“This proposal will help promote collaboration between leadership, communication across organizational departments as well as increase higher levels of employee satisfaction.”*
- *The proposed actions involve the staff at the organization critical to addressing the survey results.*

The responses generally indicate that the proposed plan will enhance awareness of workplace incivility, be feasible to implement and promote collaboration among organizational teams. Some commented on the simplicity of the solution as a strength, while others appreciate the fact that all members of the organization will be included in the process. Several mentioned its ability to promote face-to-face interaction.

6.2.2 Weaknesses

With regard to weaknesses, respondents noticed flaws in the proposed plan and offered recommendations for addressing them, including:

- *“Business consultant - hiring one will attract some expense. Tasks could be more detailed...e.g. first objective...2nd task, what is involved in the employee training suggested: workshops, computer aided training? Being more specific on the tasks may make it easier to create your success criteria as you may be better able to see what you are measuring. You may also have a better estimate of the time frame. The participants column suggest that faculty - other than the chairs and department heads - need not be involved in the implementation”*
- *“The biggest weakness in the plan is to hire a consultant. Many faculty and staff members feel hiring consultants, whether true or not, are a waste of time and money - where the money could have been better spent on raises. Even if the cost of the consultant pay is showcased as coming from a different line item than human resources for salaries, perception - as we are discussing civility - is reality to most people.”*

While a few indicated that there were no weaknesses, many believed that hiring a business consultant would be too costly. Some indicated that the plan should be more detailed to outline the specific tasks associated with each recommendation. Others expressed concerns that the proposed plan did not consider the input of all stakeholders and did not address issues related to computer-mediated communication. The concern that upper management would not support the plan was also raised as a matter for consideration.

6.2.3 Opportunities

Respondents believe that the proposed plan presents many opportunities for the organization. For example, a statement in the feedback indicated that the proposed plan promotes training and awareness of the subject matter, collaboration and “comradery” among employees and continual feedback. Another statement suggested that it might present an opportunity for faculty members

to collaborate as consultants instead of seeking outside support from a hired business consultant. It also gives the organization an opportunity to celebrate employees in a positive manner.

6.2.4 Threats

Regarding the treats associated with the proposed plan, respondents generally agree that resistance to change and the lack of buy-in may pose a threat. Some also expressed that the expenses associated with the plan could be an issue that discourages acceptance of the plan. In addition, members of the organization may not want to spend any additional time for training. Some even stated that issues with workplace incivility could escalate because of enforcing the proposed plan. Some of these concerns are evident in the quoted responses below:

- *“I reiterate the issue with hiring consultants and training facilitators. Many times the extra expense is seen as unnecessary and thought dollar amounts could be used elsewhere.”*
- *“The threats will be the rebuttal of people who are in authority or employees who resist change.”*
- *“The greatest threat to applying the proposed actions is organizational leadership resistance -- one, resistance to accept the results as valid, and two, to implement the needed change.”*

6.2.5 Financial Implications

The responses regarding the financial implications of the proposed plan indicate that there is a consensus among respondents that hiring a consultant and training facilitator would be expensive. In addition, others feel that the plan will also result in a loss of labor time. Some of the related responses are quoted below:

- *“Anything that needs to be created or bought or developed will attract expenses which may not only be in terms of purchasing a service (e.g. hiring a consultant) but also with the possibility of additional time spent by those involved (extra time? overtime hours?)”*
- *“Typically hiring consultants and training facilitators is an expensive venture. If the training were to take place off campus like some of the retreats do, it will be an additional expenditure and one that to staff would seem excessive, unnecessary and another way the funds could have been used for increased staff salaries.”*
- *“A budget will be needed to compensate the business consultant and trainer. With tighter budgets on campus, this may or may not be feasible.”*

6.2.6 Resources

The feedback suggests generally that the proposed plan would require money, time, a business consultant, a training facilitator, and leadership buy-in. Some of the responses related to what is needed are included below:

- *“It would be good to have someone from the outside to consult and train, but a fair-minded individual on campus would do as well. Rooms, times and announcements will be necessary. Faculty will need designated periods to become involved in the process. With a tight class schedule, this may prove difficult.”*
- *“I think that the campus' Informational Technology Department can handle some of the tasks”*
- *“Online delivery models need to be applied. One or two organizational employees need to be tasked with putting most of the details in place with a strategic partner in each department on campus. This saves time and money with regards to limiting individuals involved in the initial stages.”*
- *“Technology and human resources will need to be utilized to implement the recommended actions.”*

With regard to the availability of the needed resources, some respondents indicated that the resources are available. While others stated that there is not funding for this type of plan given the current financial status of the university. See a sample of responses below:

- *“I think all the resources are readily available but not sure how much of each is available. The expenses do not appear to be great at this time and some of which can be substituted by faculty and staff with expertise and experience. There are opportunities that may exist during the semester as well as before the semester starts and after the semester ends, where those times can be used to create and develop and implement the proposed action plans. The ideas may certainly be embraced by the university leadership team because civility has been a topic of discussion prior and no empirical study has been shared (or done maybe) of which the university community. This could be a great starting point as it has supporting evidence and could be a catalyst for some changes.”*
- *“The BOR will probably approve funding for the hiring of business consultants, as they are all business people who imagine higher education is a business. Time will be harder to come by, and you will find that faculty, at least, will resent further incursions into their time.”*

6.2.7 Summary of Feasibility Findings

Overall, responses to the feasibility questionnaire indicate the employees believed that the proposed action plan is feasible and can be implemented with the appropriate changes. Their recommendations include a more detailed description of the plan and reduction in the associated costs to promote administrative buy-in. The following sections will explain the subsequent development of the revised action plan as a result of learning from the review of relevant literature and consideration of the feedback received from the feasibility questionnaire.

6.3 Recommendations and Development of Proposed Action Plan

The proposed action plan was developed based on the review of relevant literature regarding recommendations for addressing workplace incivility related issues and feedback received from

data collection. The proposed plan includes four primary objectives to be applied towards addressing the identified organizational issue:

- Decrease occurrences of workplace incivility
- Promote collaborative leadership
- Promote face-to-face collaboration across organizational departments
- Promote higher levels of employee satisfaction

These objectives are outlined based on the following factors: proposed actions, tasks, target group, participants, success criteria, timeframe, and resources. Proposed actions are the related actions that are required to achieve the objective. The tasks describe the associated tasks that are necessary to complete the proposed actions. The target group includes all of the employees that will be directly impacted by accomplishing the proposed objective. The list of participants includes all individuals or groups that will be required to engage in completing the required tasks. A success criterion is included for each objective to ensure that there is an established mechanism for measuring success of each objective. The timeframe for each objective describes the time allotted to achieve the overall objective. In addition, the resources list includes the items needed to complete the proposed tasks. The rationale for each objective of the proposed action plan is explained in the sections below.

6.3.1 Decrease Occurrences of Workplace Incivility

The overall objective of this study was to determine if an issue with civility exists in the examined organization. Given that workplace incivility was identified in the survey data collection phase as an existing issue in the workplace, decreasing these occurrences was an important objective to include in the proposed plan. I offered five actions to be implemented with regard to resolving this issue. The proposed actions are listed and explained below.

- **Increase awareness of the organization’s mission, vision and strategic plan.**

An organization’s mission, vision and strategic plan, should generally include evidence of the organization’s values. Although my organization’s mission statement and vision (as outlined in its Strategic Plan) do not currently make specific mention of civility among employees, it does state that it fosters an environment that nurtures diversity, is supportive in nature and exercises ethical actions. See excerpts from the mission statement below:

From the mission and vision statements...

“...high quality instruction, scholarship, research, service and community involvement.
“... fosters engaged learning and personal growth in a student-centred environment”
“...celebrates the African American legacy while **nurturing a diverse student body**”

From the vision...

“...a nurturing environment that embraces social and intellectual diversity”

“create an efficient, student-centred culture, responsive to the needs of its stakeholders, supportive of ideals and ethical verities...”

Therefore, it is important that the university reiterate awareness of these ideals to support a more civil workplace. To support this effort, our internal public relations department can facilitate an internal campaign that promotes internal awareness of the organizational ideals. By using internal resources to support this effort, the organization will be able to reduce costs associated with this effort by incorporating this component into the current employee labour hours.

- **Revise the organization’s strategic plan as needed to adjust to organizational needs.**

Given that the current mission and vision are not explicit in expressing a commitment to its internal customers, the organization should consider including a statement that promotes the organization’s commitment to maintaining a civil workplace. Given that there is an existing strategic planning committee (or one can be developed as an ad hoc committee), they can work collaboratively to revise the current strategic plan to be inclusive of the organizations commitment to fostering a civil work environment. There will be no costs associated with implementing this task.

- **Increase awareness of diversity and what workplace incivility is and why it should not occur in the workplace.**

Previous studies suggest that organizations that experience issues with workplace incivility should implement awareness training programs (Armstrong, 2017) and increase awareness of varied perspective of workplace incivility (Caza and Cortina, 2007; Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Clark and Springer, 2007). They should also develop an approach to addressing it based on the organizational environment (Cortina et al, 2001; Cortina and Magley, 2003; Clark, 2013; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Sidle, 2009), culture (Alexander-Snow, 2004), and diversity (Von Bergen and Collier, 2013). Therefore, it is important for my organization to increase awareness among employees to promote understanding and intended behavior. To do so, the campus public relations department can facilitate an internal campaign including a newly developed list of core values to support the awareness effort. Human Resources can also support the campaign by introducing the core values to employees in workplace (in)civility trainings that will increase employee awareness of workplace (in)civility. HR should also implement the core values into new hire trainings to indoctrinate new employees to the organizational values. To encourage the intended behaviors, the university’s Human Resources department should also develop an employee recognition program with the support of organizational leadership (administrators, department heads, and deans) to recognize employees who consistently exhibit desired (civil) behavior. And, they should consider implementing both university and department employee recognition programs. By implementing recognition programs at the department level, those recognized by their department can be automatically considered for university level recognition.

The tasks associated with this objective will be used to support the actions mentioned above. For example, in an effort to limit the costs associated with promoting workplace incivility awareness, rather than hiring an outside consultant, an internal task force of faculty and staff should be formed

to make recommendations on how to promote awareness of workplace incivility in the organizational environment.

The workplace incivility awareness campaign will impact all employees. Therefore, all leadership personnel will be needed to support the effort including: Human Resources, University Administrators, Supervisory Staff, Department Heads, Deans, the Public Relations department, Staff Council Leadership and the Strategic Planning Committee.

To measure the success of this objective, the university will need to conduct a follow-up employee survey to evaluate occurrences of workplace incivility. This can be facilitated electronically by the Information Technology department or an Ad hoc committee could be formed to facilitate this process.

6.3.2 Promote Collaborative Leadership

The characteristics of collaborative leadership include engaging in open dialogue, establishing awareness of consequences associated with behaviors, and being open to new ideas (Raelin, 2003). Previous literature suggests that leaders have the ability to promote intended organizational behavior (Clark et al, 2013). However, to support this effort, they should develop an awareness of the potential barriers to managing a civil workplace (Peters and King, 2017). Subsequently, this objective was included in the proposed plan to encourage leaders to obtain the necessary skills to adopt and to support employees' ability to adopt the culture of a civil workplace.

The actions associated with this objective include mandatory leadership trainings for organizational leaders (including all supervisory roles) and leadership recognition programs to acknowledge success. The on-campus Human Resources department can facilitate both the training and recognition programs building on internally developed performance evaluation benchmarks.

To facilitate this objective, an internal task force of faculty and staff can be formed to develop and facilitate training workshops and offer recommendations on how to promote collaborative leadership in the organizational environment. Volunteers can be taken from various relevant academic disciplines and other support departments to avoid the cost of hiring an outside consultant. Human resources personnel can implement a recognition program to acknowledge exemplary collaborative leadership. All organizational leaders will be impacted by implementation of this objective, including supervisory staff, administrators, department heads, and deans. Success in accomplishing this objective will be measured by periodic employee opinion surveys that allow employees to evaluate their immediate supervisor(s).

6.3.3. Promote Face-to-face Collaboration across Organizational Departments

The promotion of face-to-face communication was recognized by employees in the feasibility study as a strength of the proposed action plan. It was also recommended in previous literature as an effective way of addressing workplace incivility (Clark, 2013). Additionally, it was mentioned as a means of addressing issues with the quality of face-to-face interactions experience due to the

use of computer-mediated communication (Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016). Therefore, this objective seeks to promote more face-to-face interaction in the organizational environment.

As many committees are formed to implement projects, the organization would need to encourage the participation of representatives from departments that will be impacted by committee recommendations to serve on them (including those implementing new processes, policies, procedures, etc.). They must also require a minimum number of face-to-face meetings for all committees.

The consultants task force developed for previous objectives can be used to make recommendations on how to promote collaboration in the organizational environment and conduct relevant training. Human resources can also implement quarterly or yearly team building events for all employees. This effort has the potential to effect all university employees. However, Human Resources, University Administrators, Supervisory Staff, Department Heads, and Deans will primarily facilitate it. To measure this objective's success, organizational leaders should develop a repository and require publication of meeting minutes for university, college, and departmental meetings to evaluate attendance and participation from all organizational units.

6.3.4 Promote Higher Levels of Employee Satisfaction

Based on comments on items related to "buy-in", findings from the feasibility study indicate that employees perceive that organizational leaders are not interested in investing in the enhancement of the organizational environment. See some statements from responses below:

- "Upper management may not want to participate, as it may appear to others that they were a part of the problem. Also, many individuals may not want to participate because they will see it as a waste of time. Many programs on communication have been done before with no change in the workplace"
- Identified as a weakness: "Administrative buy-in and implementation"
- Identified as a threat "Lack of buy-in or weak buy-in"
- "The greatest threat to applying the proposed actions is organizational leadership resistance -- one, resistance to accept the results as valid, and two, to implement the needed change."
- "Revealing administrators who are not aware of their issues of incivility and their lack of concern of how their employees truly feel."
- " I believe the resources are available, but I am not sure that administration is convinced that incivility is a problem on this campus."

Therefore, there is a need for employees to see a willingness from organizational leaders to support employee satisfaction. The proposed actions associated with this objective include the development of an employee opinion survey that will be periodically distributed for feedback. This will allow organizational leaders to identify issues and propose appropriate actions. Also, employee opinion survey results will need to be shared with employees along with proposed action plans towards addressing identified issues. Benchmarks will also need to be implemented to

evaluate the overall success of applied corrective actions. To reduce associated costs, the survey instrument can be internally developed by the IT department and distributed electronically. Electronic data collection methods can also be used to analyze the data and develop reports of the findings. To measure the success of this objective, employee opinion surveys will need to be distributed for completion at least yearly to examine progress with regard to improving employee perceptions of the organizational environment.

6.4 Feedback from Focus Group

The previous section explains the initially proposed action plan and how it has been revised in response to the feasibility questionnaire feedback. This section discusses the final analysis of the revised plan in which I shared my ideas with organizational stakeholders to determine if they would be in support of implementing the proposed plan.

After the revised plan was developed, it was emailed to organizational stakeholders along with an invitation to participate in a 1-hour focus group providing feedback on the revised action plan. No one was specifically excluded from this phase of the research. However, focus group data collection was conducted in a three cycle process to include feedback from all levels of the organization (i.e. staff, faculty and administrators). The invitation to participate was emailed to all staff, faculty and organizational leaders who would be instrumental in decision making and adoption related to implementing the proposed plan; the focus groups included participants' representative of the following organizational groups: support staff, faculty, department directors, department chairs, administrators, information technology management, human resources staff, and public relations staff. The focus groups questions and responses are included below:

The first two questions asked to focus group participants were used to gather general feedback about their feelings towards the survey findings. The bulleted list below includes both summarized and quoted responses from participants. Responses are categorized by staff, faculty and administrators.

- **What are your thoughts about the survey research findings?**
 - **Staff Responses**
 - Not surprised at the results –*Support Staff*
 - “The findings are somewhat expected. Many employees share similar sentiments regarding our organization.” –*Support Staff*
 - “I was not too surprised by the survey research findings. I have been at Savannah State University for 6 years. During that time, I have had very few experiences with uncivil behaviors in email. The main issue I’ve come across during my time here is that there are way too many people who do not respond to emails which is really frustrating; especially when you need time-sensitive information. More so than being rude, there are too many people who don’t respond to emails or answer phone calls or return phone calls. That’s about the most uncivil behavior I’ve come across here.”–*Staff*

- **Faculty Responses**
 - “I generally agree with the survey results for both workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication.” –*Faculty*
 - “The *Findings* seem to confirm what I thought the survey findings would reveal. I.e., no surprises in the findings for someone like me who is employed in the environment subject (directly or indirectly) to the research. I.e., a level of disagreement exists and resolution can be effected through evolving methods.” –*Faculty*

- **Administrator Responses**
 - Surprised that computer-mediated communication did not impact workplace incivility given the known presence of inappropriate email etiquette. –*Administrator*
 - Surprised that computer-mediated communication is being used at all for communicating confidential information. –*Department Director*
 - “I found the research findings to be clean and clear. It is good to see that the campus utilizes civility for collegiality and student success.” –*Department Director*
 - “The survey research findings were surprising to me actually, but in a good way. There are things I’ve experienced that thankfully many others have not. It was nice to see that workplace incivility was not as bad I thought across the University. –*Department Director*
 - “Most of the findings seem to be accurate. The term “computer-mediated” can be a little misunderstood, but the context of the questions clarifies the meaning.” –*Department Director*
 - “Two findings shock me. They are as follows:
 1. How does workplace incivility appear at the university?
The evidence indicates that 70% or more states that.... Are never made. This is not true. Maybe not to them personally, but to others I am sure.
 2. Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility?

The answer was no. However, the significance was greater than the threshold. Which it should be. In fact, it should be higher. Because of lack of face-to-face contact individuals are more likely to say things that they wouldn’t otherwise and they take less time to consider how their words will be perceived by the recipient.” – *Department Director*

The feedback received reveals a general consensus among participants that the high level of workplace incivility was not surprising. However, the lack of a correlation between computer-mediated communication and workplace incivility was.

With regard to responses relevant to the need to address the identified issue of workplace incivility, participants gave the following responses:

- **Do you believe that the identified issue needs to be addressed?**
 - **Staff Responses**
 - Yes. The issue should be addressed. (*There was a consensus among participants*) – *Department Chair, Administrator, Department Director, Faculty, Support Staff*
 - “Definitely.” –*Support Staff*
 - “I think that the identified issues need to be addressed. If there are employees who are using emails to make threats against other people or if they are making racial, ethnic, sexual, gender or religious slurs, that needs to stop. That behavior is unacceptable in any area but particularly it is unacceptable in a work environment.” –*Support Staff*
 - **Faculty Responses**
 - Yes. The issue should be addressed. (*There was a consensus among participants*) – *Department Chair, Administrator, Department Director, Faculty, Support Staff*
 - “Yes, if we can make plans and implement it in the organization.”- *Faculty*
 - “Yes, the issues need to be addressed. The combination of 'conflict' and technology are the bane and future of our work world. Productivity and efficacy have been addressed by the survey and findings.” -*Faculty*
 - **Administrator Responses**
 - Yes. The issue should be addressed. (*There was a consensus among participants*) – *Department Chair, Administrator, Department Director, Support Staff*
 - “If the issues addressed will better the communication and morale of campus and its minimal cost associated, sure, by all means.”-*Department Director*
 - “Primarily, the findings that were discovered related to workplace incivility should be addressed.” –*Department Director*
 - “It is an area that most people do not consider, so there is a need to explore if this might be a resource to improve workplace concerns.” –*Department Director*

Responses reveal a consensus among participants at all levels of the organization (i.e. support staff, faculty, department directors, department chairs, and administrators) that the issue needs to be addressed.

As it relates to participant’s assessment of findings from the feasibility questionnaire, the following feedback was received:

- **What are your thoughts about the feasibility questionnaire findings?**
 - **Staff Responses**
 - Although it was not stated in the proposed plan, the evaluation of non-supervisory leaders (i.e. department coordinators) should be included in the employee opinion survey related to the objective to promote collaborative leadership. –*Support Staff*
 - “The feasibility findings appears to be very accurate particularly the SWOT analysis.” –*Support Staff*
 - “I agree with the strengths, weaknesses, threats and availability of the resources listed on the feasibility study results and I think that the sections in red on the proposed action plan addresses some of the issues. “ –*Support Staff*
 - **Faculty Responses**
 - “I mostly agree with the findings.” –*Faculty*
 - “The findings are well-presented. After reading hundreds/thousands of professional-level white papers and 'findings', the findings seem well-thought in preparation and well-done in the summary. Of course, if the questionnaire preparer had the thing to do over, she (like all professionals) would have learned from the process and done an even better job on the second try! I.e., the preparer did a professional-level job and should not second-guess too much.” –*Faculty*
 - **Administrator Responses**
 - Although the financial obligations of the plan have been significantly reduced based on the feedback received from the feasibility study, there will likely be some expenses involved with implementing the proposed plan. Therefore, the financial implications of the proposed plan could still be a matter of concern. –*Department Chair and Department Director*
 - In addition to the threats that have already been mentioned in the feasibility feedback, cultural differences should be considered with regard to their implications regarding workplace incivility –*Department Director*
 - “It is interesting to see the drive towards HR and how they keep this function afloat. Many see HR as the recruiting agent only, but an effective HR department has multiple roles in keeping any institution relevant and engaged.” –*Department Director*
 - “Buy-in seems to come up a great deal. It would be difficult to move forward to implement change if buy-in is not attained for key personnel.” –*Department Director*
 - “The findings give details of the topic. Most of the findings lean strongly in the same direction.” –*Department Director*

- “The most important issue is increasing the awareness workplace incivility. I believe that incivility has been normalize; thus, individuals do not recognized it when they see it.” –*Department Director*

Overall, responses related to views concerning the feasibility questionnaire findings varied. Each participant had a different perspective relevant to what others felt about the proposed action plan. While some believed that more emphasis needed to be placed on buy-in and the financial implications of the plan, others expressed concerns for its ability to be inclusive both in terms of how its approach is applicable to the organization’s diversity and in terms of its application to all authoritative and subordinate organizational personnel.

Participants were also asked to provide feedback on the revisions that were made to the proposed action plan based on the feasibility study. The responses are included below:

- **Do you believe that the revisions to the proposed plan address the concerns expressed in the feasibility study?**
 - **Staff Responses**
 - Yes. The revisions to the proposed action plan do address the concerns expressed in the feasibility study. *(There was a consensus among participants) – Department Director, Support Staff, Faculty, Department Director, Administrator, Department Chair*
 - “I think that the revisions to the proposed action plan addresses some of the concerns expressed in the feasibility study. Since there is no money to hire a business consultant, I like that the workaround to that issue is to use internal resources. Maybe the administration would be more apt to implement some of these changes if they see that it won’t cost them much money. The other good thing about using internal resources is that the people who work here know the culture of SSU. They know the ups and downs, ins and outs. I think that they could offer more useful solutions that could work for SSU even more so than an outside business consultant.” – *Support Staff*
 - **Faculty Responses**
 - Yes. The revisions to the proposed action plan do address the concerns expressed in the feasibility study. *(There was a consensus among participants) – Department Director, Support Staff, Faculty, Department Director, Administrator, Department Chair*
 - “I believe so; as suggested, rather than using external experts, internal task force will do a better job for this type of concerns in an organization.” - *Faculty*
 - “Yes, the revisions appear to be logical and allow greater effect and greater efficacy.” –*Faculty*

- **Administrator Responses**

- Yes. The revisions to the proposed action plan do address the concerns expressed in the feasibility study. *(There was a consensus among participants) – Department Director, Support Staff, Faculty, Department Director, Administrator, Department Chair*
- “Yes, very succinctly.” – *Department Director*
- “I agree with the SWOT analysis. I agree that external consultants do not work well in this environment on topics of this nature.” – *Department Director*
- “Yes. However, I do believe that top administrators are the major violators of incivility.” – *Department Director*

As shown in the responses above, participants were generally satisfied with the extent to which the revisions to the proposed plan addressed the feedback gathered from the feasibility study. Some even expressed that the revisions offer a more effective approach to addressing the organizational issue.

The final question asked of the focus group allowed them to express their support of implementing the proposed plan. The responses are included below:

- **Would you implement the proposed plan?**

- **Staff Responses**

- Yes. *(There was a consensus among participants. However, other recommendations were made as indicated below) – Department Director, Support Staff, Faculty, Department Director, Administrator, Department Chair*
- In order for the plan to be effective, it must be implemented with input from all organizational units. – *Support Staff*
- “Definitely.” – *Support Staff*
- “I would implement the proposed action plan. Instead of holding a special meeting on workplace civility using computer-mediated communication, I would incorporate it into other campus-wide meetings, like General Assembly. Since we have to spend so much of our time in meetings already, there may not be a wide response to another work-related meeting; however, if a session was offered during General Assembly or during Staff Appreciation Day or during SSU’s Women’s Conference or something like that, maybe that would make it easier for people to attend.” – *Staff*

- **Faculty Responses**

- Yes. *(There was a consensus among participants. However, other recommendations were made as indicated below) – Department Director,*

Support Staff, Faculty, Department Director, Administrator, Department Chair

- “I will do it in the atmosphere of mutual respect and trusting relationship.”
–*Faculty*
- “Yes. The 'plan' is reasonable and seems to obey the principles of cost/benefit and maximization of opportunity cost that the SSU College of Business Administration didactically expounds to students and attempts to adhere to in its own strategies, decision-making and ultimately should consider as an implementation possibility for self-governance and administration.” –*Faculty*

○ **Administrator Responses**

- Yes. *(There was a consensus among participants. However, other recommendations were made as indicated below)* – *Department Director, Support Staff, Faculty, Department Director, Administrator, Department Chair*
- A top-down approach would be most appropriate. Promoting the proposed plan from middle management up would not be as effective. –*Department Chair*
- Consider the internal and external threats to implementing the proposed action plan. –*Department Chair*
- Organizational leaders must commit not only to implementing the plan but also to ensuring that the appropriate follow-up occurs to ensure that the intended results are achieved. –*Faculty, Department Directors, Administrator*
- The plan is likely to be effective only for a small 4-year university like this one and may not be effective for a larger university. –*Department Chair*
- “Yes, this would allow the university to see civility in action.” –*Department Director*
- “I would suggest applying the action plan as a “corrective action plan” in areas where incivility has been identified.” –*Department Director*

Participants were collectively in support of implementing the proposed plan. However, some offered specific feedback relevant to the importance of gaining the support of organizational leaders, implementing the plan in a manner that encourages participation, and recognizing that although this plan may not be effective in our organization, it may not be as applicable to other organizations.

In addition, some of the university administrators shared general feedback about their perception of the organizational environment and how perceptions may influence the effectiveness of applying the proposed plan. The general feedback is included below:

- **Other Feedback**

- “In a transition from the an unrelated field to higher education, some things which would have in the legal field come across as incivility in higher education would not be considered uncivil. For example, in the legal field if a judge told you to do something and you didn’t that could be seen as being uncivil and actually carry consequences like being in “contempt of court”. As an administrator, there are times when I have asked something of professors and have been told no or they did the opposite. I have since (over the course of 11 years) learned the culture is different and transition is important. I think to alleviate such discrepancies or confusion there should be cultural awareness workshops or email etiquette workshops during the on boarding process. Also, just an on boarding process would be nice and this is typically handled at most places through HR.”

-Administrator

- “I find the research findings to be what I anticipated and some provoke subsequent questions. I am not sure I understand the correlated results between the research goal pertaining to workplace civility and computer-mediated communication. “Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility?” The response is “No.” On the other hand, over 90% agree that computer-mediated communication is necessary. Hence, computer-mediated communication would seem to correspond and contribute to workplace incivility. Of course, I agree that workplace incivility is an important issue and we need to take drastic measures to reach a resolution. Other than the suggestions related to collaborative leadership, promoting face-to-face collaboration across departments, and striving to attain higher employee satisfaction, I would suggest that embedded in all strategies would be the philosophy of ensuring that all employees understand overall university goals, the mission, and vision. In every endeavour to reverse the incivility trend, we should seek to teach so that the university community understands our overall purpose for working and participating at the university. From that foundation, we need to understand the respective jobs of our colleagues across the campus.”

As far as the findings in the feasibility questionnaire, I would suggest that the university focus on the importance of this issue, the power of the issue, and the manner in which incivility permeates and negatively affects every facet of the university life. Basically, the university cannot afford to ignore the problem. Focus on the strengths. Overall, the proposed action plan does address the concerns and I would recommend implementation of the action plan.”

-Administrator

This feedback offered a vantage point from which to approach the application of the proposed plan in consideration of diversity and the establishment of a clear understanding of university expectations related to civility standards.

Overall, responses from the focus group indicate that organizational stakeholders recognize that there is an issue with workplace incivility at the university. They also understand the importance of addressing the issue. Moreover, upon review of the proposed plan, they believe that it will be effective in addressing the identified issue. Therefore, they are in support of implementing the proposed plan. However, organizational stakeholders have some recommendations with regard to how the plan needs to be implemented to ensure its effectiveness. They believe that, in support of the objective to promote collaborative leadership, the proposed plan should be inclusive of the evaluation of non-supervisory leaders (i.e. department coordinators). Also, as a follow-up to this study, future research on the organizational issue should evaluate specifically a linkage between a lack of email etiquette displayed in the organization and workplace incivility.

The organizational stakeholders that participated in the focus group (like the feasibility testing respondents) also have concerns that although the plan is feasible and appropriate, senior level administrators may not buy-in. They advise that a top-down approach (rather than bottom-up) is needed to adopt and support the success of the action plan. Therefore, senior management would also need to support the plan to ensure that it is implemented appropriately and achieves the intended results of reducing incivility, adopting collaborative leadership characteristics, promoting face-to-face collaboration, and increasing levels of employee satisfaction.

6.5 Potential Benefits, Obstacles, and Unintended Consequences

To enhance the validity of the proposed actions, I also evaluated feedback from focus group participants regarding the potential benefits, obstacles, and unintended consequences of the proposed action plan. I found that participants believed that the proposed actions would benefit the organization by:

- Promoting awareness of workplace Incivility
- Fostering a better work environment; and
- Promoting collaborative decision making with regard to organizational policies

Given that these were the intended outcomes of the proposed action plan, I found these perceptions to be favorable with regard to the credibility and validity of the proposed plan.

In my evaluation of the apprehensions raised by participants regarding the implementation of the proposed plan, the following concerns are relevant:

- Resistance to change
- Lack of buy-in from senior-most organizational leadership

With regard to the potential for unintended consequences resulting from implementation of the proposed action plan, participants expressed the following:

- Some skilled employees may leave or be terminated due to failure or refusal to comply with policy changes related to workplace incivility.

In an effort to support implementation of the proposed changes in consideration of the concerns and potential unintended consequences identified, I reviewed previous findings with regard to resistance to change and lack of leadership buy-in. I found Yilmaz and Kilicoglu's (2013) work on reducing resistance to change in educational organizations to be most relevant to this study. Yilmaz and Kilicoglu's (2013) proposed methods are an extension of Kotter and Schlesinger's (1979) work that suggests six approaches that will help with dealing with resistance to change. They extended the previous research related to change by evaluating the educational environment specifically and offering reasons for resistance to change. Their proposed reasons for resistance to change include "interference with need fulfillment, selective perception, habit, inconvenience or loss of freedom, economic implications, security in the past, fear of the unknown threats to power or influence, knowledge and skill obsolescence, organizational structures, and limited resources (Yilmaz and Kilicoglu, 2013 p. 17)." They subsequently offered that Kotter and Schlesinger's (1979) methods that are made up of (1) proactively educating and communicating with employees about the change, (2) engaging their participation and involvement in the change effort, (3) managers facilitation and support of employees to address fear and anxiety related to change, (4) offering of incentives as a negotiation to agree to change, (5) the use of manipulation and co-option to engage those affected into the change, and (6) the use of explicit and implicit coercion (like stating that failure to comply will result in termination or other reprimand) would be effective in assisting school administrators in promoting change. Therefore, I intend to support the integration of these methods in the implementation of the proposed action plan to promote acceptance at all levels of the organization.

6.6 Chapter Summary

In summary, I developed the proposed action plan based on the research findings. Respondents viewed the initially drafted plan as costly and lacking detail. As a result, I revised the plan to include a more cost-effective approach. The revised plan is more detailed and eliminates the costs associated with hiring outside consultants. It instead suggests the use of internal resources. For example, it is recommended that an internal task force of faculty and staff should be formed to propose and develop all of the internal actions (including development of the core values), related to implementing the proposed actions relevant to addressing the workplace incivility issues. The Strategic Planning Committee can update the organization's mission and vision to include a statement related to the internal culture. Human Resources department should assume the responsibility of facilitating and developing (or finding pre-developed) training on workplace incivility. The Information Technology and Institutional Research departments should help to develop electronic trainings and surveys. Public Relations personnel should develop and implement an internal campaign promoting civility in the workplace and awareness of the organization's core values.

The focus group feedback indicates that organizational stakeholders recognize the organizational issue, understand the importance of addressing it and are in support of the proposed plan. However, they (like other employees) have concerns about resistance to change and senior level administration buy-in. Therefore, the proposed recommendations seek to address the workplace incivility problem and propose an action plan for adoption into university policy to promote buy-in at all levels of the organization. Moreover, based on my review of the relevant policies relevant to promoting adoption, it is very feasible to promote implementation of the proposed action plan. And, ultimately, the chapter shows that the proposed action plan and recommendations have been evaluated thoroughly to promote a collaborative approach towards addressing the organizational issue that will be effective if adopted and implemented based on a top-down approach.

CHAPTER 7
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

7.0 Summary of Findings

The proceeding sections discuss the research findings, how they relate to findings in my review of previous literature, analysis of the collected data, feasibility testing and focus group feedback. To illuminate the appropriateness of scholar-practitioner engagement relevant to this study, two of Ramsey's (2014) three key "moments of inquiry" frame the discussion of these findings: mapping the terrain and testing plausibility. Although, the approach also recommends evaluating action, given the nature of this study, including my lack of authority to implement the proposed actions, the research only included the first two inquiry cycles.

7.1 Mapping the Terrain

During the first phase of inquiry, Ramsey (2014) offers that scholar-practitioners should gather data to inform their decision on what action needs to be taken with regard to the identified organizational issues. In this study, this phase of inquiry included the review of previous literature to determine previous findings that are relevant to the issue, evaluating the organizational context to validate the importance of undertaking the study, and collecting data to identify and evaluate the organizational issue. The sections below discuss the findings related to this phase of inquiry.

7.1.1 Why this Study is important: Relevance of Findings to Extant Literature and Organizational Context

I approach this study with the general perception that organization based evaluation is necessary to assess workplace incivility (Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Disbrow and Prentice, 2009; Clark, 2013). Therefore, I first examined my organizational context specifically. By enhancing my understanding of the organizational context and previous studies related to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use, I was able to better approach the examination of my organizational issue. For instance, in my examination of the context in which my organization exists, I established an understanding that the United States educational system has experienced an overall decline in the quality and quantity of high school diplomas (US News Best Countries for Education Ranking, 2019). This helped me to assess the challenges experienced by my organization from the perspective that external factors may affect levels of internal workplace incivility. For instance, the quantity and quality of high school diplomas issued in Georgia is a fact that could influence the level of incivility in the subject organization. In addition, the fact that Georgia is one of the lowest ranked states in terms of graduation rates (Layton, 2014) could also make it highly likely that higher education rates are impacted by this external circumstance. In addition, understanding the statistics relevant to teacher turnover (Kopkowski, 2013), teachers teaching out of their field in schools in low-income populations (Darling-Hammond and Sykes, 2003; Purcell et al, 2013), the lack of college preparation (Alliance for Excellent Education, n.d.; Swanson, n.d.), and the significant level of need for post-secondary education to be successful in the workforce (Sheehy, 2012) helped me to understand why my organization may also experience a decline in student retention and graduation due to the lack of prior preparation. These ideas collectively helped me to re-frame my thinking about my organization's issue with workplace incivility. With this knowledge, I was able to isolate the problem rather than approaching it from

a perspective that workplace incivility would naturally influence student retention and graduation rates.

In my review of extant literature related to this study on workplace incivility, I found that my research is consistent with others that suggests that perceptions of workplace incivility can be diverse (Caza and Cortina, 2007; Clark and Carnosso, 2008; Clark and Springer, 2007; Kim., Insin, & Sunghyup, 2016; Walsh & Cunningham, 2017). This is based on findings that indicate that respondents in all phases of the research raised different concerns related to how workplace incivility exists in the organization. The study also supports previous studies that suggest that workplace incivility can appear in passive-aggressive behaviors (Caza and Cortina, 2007) given that the survey results show evidence that higher levels of non-aggressive workplace incivility behaviors exist than aggressive behaviors. Feedback obtained from organizational stakeholders in the focus group also revealed that participants believed, consistent with that of previous researchers, that there is a need to examine differentiated types of computer-mediated communication use (specifically email) to explain behavior relevant to specified mechanisms (Kettinger and Grover, 1997; Costabile, 2016; Foroudi., Khalid, & Mohammad, 2017). This research, like that of extant studies revealed evidence to support the claim that the use of technology is linked to promoting uncivil behaviors (Clark, 2013; Uribe et al., 2016; Kim & Rhee, 2017). And, it did show a correlation between computer-mediated communication use and increased levels of workplace incivility (Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016).

In the development of the proposed action plan, I considered previously offered theories that suggest that attitudes likely influence behaviors (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980) and actions result from an understanding of expectations (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, I incorporated tasks that promote a better understanding of workplace incivility. I also understood that supervisory leaders should lead in establishing clearly defined rules for acceptable behavior, teach established standards and gain support from administrative leadership to promote desired behavior (Schein, 1990; Canter and Canter, 1976; Canter, 2010; Bergkvist., Hjalmarson, & Mägi, 2016; Dutta., Attila, & Dhruv, 2017). As a result, I included organizational leadership participants in all tasks and incorporated a recognition program given that theories suggest that behaviors that are supported with positive reinforcement will be continued (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980; 1985). I also referred to the recommendation of previous literature that suggested that approaches to the issue of workplace incivility should be based on the identified environmental circumstances (Cortina et al., 2001; 2013; Cortina and Magley, 2003; Pearson & Porath, 2005; Sidle, 2009; Zheng., Tomas., Ryan, & Hinrichs, 2016), include diversity (Von Bergen and Collier, 2013; Jensen et al, 2016; Wang et al., 2016; Mayer et al., 2017), and promote the organization's ability to define, document, and enforce standards for acceptable behaviors (Euben and Lee, 2005). Therefore, I developed a plan that seeks to reduce workplace incivility, is inclusive of diversity training, and promotes the development of core values. My plan design recognizes that organizational leaders should serve as role models (Bandura & Walters, 1977) and their ability to increase employees' self-efficacy has the potential to combat against the negative impacts of workplace incivility (Fida et al., 2016) and foster a work

environment that promotes empowerment, support, openness and teamwork, while enforcing policies against workplace incivility (Logan, 2016). Therefore, I incorporated collaboration with university administrators in all phases of the plan. I also included the implementation of a civility-training program given my awareness that it has the potential to increase awareness of workplace incivility, reduce its occurrence in the workplace, increase employees' confidence levels with regard to responding to uncivil behaviors (Armstrong 2017; Zinko et al., 2016; Kaul & Desai, 2017), promote the development of an organizational culture of civility and enhance the satisfaction and quality of performance of academic faculty (Clark, 2013; Livengood & Rose, 2016; Sugathan., Kumar, & Avinash, 2017).

7.1.2 Diagnosis of the Issue: Survey Data Findings

With regard to demographics, participants were the majority (55%) female and (59%) African American. Most respondents were between the ages of 42 to 47. Most participants (75%) have been employed at the university for five years or less. The staff made up the majority (97%) of participants. Most faculty respondents (97%) were non-tenured. And, most (71%) were in a non-tenured track position. The majority of participants (86%) were employed at the university full-time, and more respondents (28.3%) were from the College of Business Administration (COBA) than any other department.

The survey results revealed many things about the organization. Responses to the workplace incivility survey indicated that workplace incivility does exist in the organizational environment given that none of the items were indicated with a consistent response of 0 occurrences., Although relatively minimal, there were a few reports of aggressive or physically threatening actions: physical threats (1.17); personal attacks (1.66); and the use of racial ethical or gender slurs (1.46). However, findings did indicate that the highest levels of occurrences of uncivil actions are indirect in nature, as indicated with responses of "SOMETIMES" and "ALWAYS" as they relate to the average response for "Resisted change or were unwilling to negotiate" (2.29) and "Consistently failed to perform his or her share of the workload" (2.15). Although most of the survey participants responded "NEVER" to displays of the aggressive behaviors described above, these items had a relatively high response rate of "ALWAYS".

Responses to the survey on computer-mediated communication use, revealed that computer-mediated communication is being applied to perform most tasks in the organizational environment as indicated by approximately 98% of respondents. It is being used mostly for tasks related to day-to-day processes based on over 90% of respondents on related items. However, it is minimally (almost never) being used for inappropriate uses (i.e. social/entertainment) given that 52% of respondents or less indicated relevant use.

With regard to the extent to which computer-mediated communication is being used to perform certain tasks, the perceived task interdependence scale results indicated that computer-mediated communication is being applied approximately 90% of the time over other communication options to perform repetitive and collaborative day- to-day processes and work-related tasks.

Responses on the perceived usefulness scale showed a consensus among over 80% of respondents with regard to the high level of usefulness of computer-mediated communication. Only three

respondents showed any indication that the technology was not useful. Most respondents replied that the computer-mediated communication used in the organizational environment is generally simple to use to complete tasks. Fewer than ten respondents perceived the technology as difficult to use.

The statistical analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility. In addition, there is a significant relationship between (1) the extent to which participants viewed the technology as being useful (perceived usefulness), (2) the extent to which computer-mediated communication is being used to complete tasks (measured by the perceived task interdependence scale), and (3) computer-mediated communication use. However, there is no relationship between computer-mediated communication use and gender or employee class. The correlation analysis revealed relationships between perceived usefulness (.290), perceived ease of use (.140), and perceived task interdependence (.437). Findings also indicate that perceived ease of use (.459), gender (.224) and employee class (.302) significantly influence perceived usefulness. A relationship also exists between gender (.160) and employee class (.175) and perceived ease of use. All were significant at the 95% confidence level. These findings are important because they contribute to the current body of research relevant to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication use by supporting previous findings that a relationship exists between them and illuminating relationships between other factors that should be explored in future research. For example, the study indicates that the relationship between how much employees perceive computer-mediated communication to be simple to use (perceived ease of use) and valuable to their job function (perceived usefulness), the more likely they were to use it to perform job-related tasks (perceived task interdependence). In addition, employees' gender and employee class (i.e. faculty, staff, and administrator) influence their perception of how simple computer-mediated communication is to use (perceived ease of use). Which in turn, collectively influences the extent to which they find computer-mediated communication to be useful (perceived usefulness). These findings warrant an evaluation of similar relationships in other higher education environments and specifically other HBCUs.

7.2 Testing Plausibility

The second phase of inquiry, testing plausibility (Ramsey, 2014) occurs after an action plan is developed and involves the scholar/practitioner evaluating if organizational stakeholders will support the proposed action plan. In this study, we approached this phase of inquiry with the employment of a feasibility questionnaire to evaluate stakeholders' perceptions relevant to the proposed action plan. Additionally, we tested plausibility in three focus group cycles collecting feedback from stakeholders at all levels of the organization (i.e. staff, faculty, and administrators).

7.2.1 Evaluation of the Proposed Action Plan: Findings from Feasibility Testing

The feasibility study revealed that employees view the proposed plan as valuable. However, they suggested that we should make changes to reduce the associated cost and offer a more detailed description of the tasks associated with the proposed plan. Based on feedback from organizational stakeholders in the focus group, the revised plan addresses the issues identified in the feasibility

study and makes it feasible for implementation. Recognizing that the organization does have an issue with workplace incivility that needs to be resolved, organizational stakeholders in the focus group have expressed that they are in support of implementing the proposed plan.

7.2.2 Acceptance of the Proposed Plan: Findings from Focus Group Feedback

The feedback received from the focus groups reveals a consensus among organizational stakeholders at all levels that we need to address workplace incivility and should implement the proposed action plan to do so. It also revealed that, although in support of the plan, some staff had concerns about the proposed action plan being inclusive of evaluations at all levels including non-supervisory leaders. Faculty participants generally appreciated the findings and agreed with implementing the proposed plan. However, administrators unsurprisingly expressed more detailed responses with regard to the implementation of the plan. Though they were in support of implementing the plan, they suggested that there may be some underlying financial implications involved in the implementation that need to be considered to ensure that the plan is cost-effective. They also recommended that we should consider diversity to implement the plan in a manner that translates to all cultures. Additionally, the recommendations support implementation of the plan in a top-down approach as a corrective action plan to promote effectiveness. Administrators were optimistic about the effectiveness of the plan and expressed that it has the potential to promote increased levels of awareness with regard to workplace incivility. For future consideration, they suggested that we should conduct more research to evaluate the impact of email etiquette on workplace incivility given their perception that relevant issues exist.

CHAPTER 8
REFLECTIONS

8.0 Introduction

According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014) and Stringer (2013), reflection is an essential culmination of action research in which the researcher collaboratively analyses and synthesizes the research findings and interprets and explains them to conclude what they have learned and what should be pursued in future research. As an aspiring scholar-practitioner, it has always been my desire to explore research in a practical manner. Therefore, I approached the thesis with a desire to identify a favorable way to balance my knowledge of theoretical and action research to address a practical problem. In doing so, I was able to demonstrate that the application of both theory and knowledge creation are equally relevant to addressing issues related to the evolving business world. In both phases of this study, I was able to use what I have learned in the doctoral coursework and from my experiences to study the organizational issue appropriately. The prior chapter discussed the analysis of the findings. The sections below offer an overview of the research conclusions and reflection that contributed to learning because of this study. It explains how applying what I have learned from the doctoral coursework, my previous professional experiences and knowledge about my organization have allowed me to evaluate a specified organizational issue, offer viable recommendations for resolving the issue examined in the study, and propose action for future research.

8.1 Reflecting on Application of Doctoral Program Learning

In retrospect, I recognize how valuable the knowledge I gained in the doctoral coursework was to my success in evaluating and proposing action towards resolving an identified organizational issue. While conducting this research, I often referred to what I have learned from the doctoral coursework as a point of reference for understanding how to approach my organizational issue. For example, I referenced my understanding of Landry's (1995) assessment of the term "problem" to help me to better understand that (as a doctoral practitioner) it is customary to be faced with issues that involve difficulties with weakened control, the need to address a crisis and/or opportunity, an organization's need to compete for scarce resources and the lack of an action plan. This definition helped me to consider my organizational problem as typical rather than unique and correctable rather than irreversible.

With regard to conducting insider action research, I found Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) proposition about insider action research to be true. Although being an insider to the organization examined made the resources necessary to facilitate the research more accessible, organizational politics and resistance presented a challenge. However, using my knowledge of the potential reasons for resistance, I was able to overcome the obstacles encountered in the examination of the issue. I remained cognizant of previous studies that found avoidance of the issue (Wilkinson and Mellahi, 2005), management's neglect of the problem (Chandler, 1962; March and Simon, 1985), complacency (Hannan and Freedman, 1977), and fear of the potentially negative effects of change (Katz and Khan, 1966) as reasons why organizational leaders often do not adopt proposed change. I thereby avoided neglecting pertinent facts due to overconfidence in my proposed action plan (Bazerman and Moore, 2008) in an effort to encourage support for my proposed plan.

When approached with apprehension about my study, I was equipped with the understanding that leadership issues (Grint, 2005), poor planning and unclear consequences can result in “wicked problems” (Churchman, 1967). Therefore, to promote favorable results, I implemented collaborative efforts (i.e. survey, feasibility study, and focus group) that included individuals from various disciplines engaging in the assessment of the problem. (Weick, 2006). In addition, to overcome resistance to change, I heavily incorporated the use of human resources personnel into the proposed action plan realizing that by enhancing the effectiveness of managing human resources practices (in terms of communication and enforcement of organizational policies and standards), there would be a potential to mitigate resistance to change (Hon, Bloom, and Crant, 2014). This knowledge, along with my awareness that organizational management sometimes views change as a natural condition of the organization (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002) and that action research has the potential to influence how complex adaptive systems will inevitably evolve (Stacey, 2011), helped me to design and propose a plan based on what I determined to be a most effective approach.

I also remained ethical in the development of the proposed plan, realizing that ethical decision-making is essential to action research (Drummond, 2001). I promoted consideration of my research findings and recommendations on the basis that organizational leaders have an obligation to be ethical in their dealing with subordinates by being open and honest (Dench, 2006); they should display integrity to promote the enhancement of organizational quality and longevity by implementing clear policies and goals with related incentives (Verhenzen, 2010).

8.2 Reflection on the Application of Previous Experiences

Considering all that I learned from this research and from my experiences from my corporate background, I have found higher education to be very different in terms of how it is governed. Based on my reflection, organizational politics play a more significant part in the dynamics surrounding the academic environment.

In the corporate setting, organizational entities primarily operate for profit. Therefore, the need to enforce organizational standards with regard to employee conduct are essential to maintaining brand standards. However, in higher education organizational politics like “academic freedom” allow employees to have flexibility in terms of their interpretation and expectations with regard to their obligations to the organization, its mission, and vision. As a result, even those who are affected by the workplace incivility (in the higher education environment) that results from failure to employ standards of conduct, associate reprimands and other corrective actions, resist change given their lack of confidence that their administrators will support it.

With regard to the development of the proposed action plan, I recognized based on my experiences as a corporate employee and now in higher education that employee opinions about the organization are more valued in the corporate sector than in academia. The corporate sector has awards to recognize companies that have value among their employees as ideal places to work. For example, in the United States, *Fortune Magazine* publishes a list yearly of the 100 Best

Companies to Work For. This list recognizes companies that score the highest on an extensive employee survey. The methodology of the recognition program states that *Fortune Magazine* conducts the employee survey in partnership with Great Place to Work. Great Place to Work assigns scores to each company based on a Culture Audit management questionnaire that reports compensation and benefits, hiring practices, recognition, training, and diversity programs. *Fortune's* survey is referred to as the most extensive in corporate America. Employees rank their workplaces based on leadership quality, the company's ability to provide personal and professional support, and employee relationships. The survey is used to score companies on a Trust Index and compare them with comparable organizations. However, in the higher education sector, universities are merely evaluated based on rates like enrolment, retention and graduation. They are rarely evaluated in publicly shared measures based on service quality or the satisfaction of their students or employees. Therefore, it is relatively unreasonable to expect that the rates that are evaluated will change given that the variables that could influence them (i.e. leadership quality, the company's ability to provide personal and professional support, and employee relationships) are not even being considered.

Extant literature indicates that there is a lack of research on university branding (Chapelo, 2010; Gruber et al., 2012; Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). However, developments on this subject would likely help to promote universities' ability to develop their unique identities in the industry, establish a deeper understanding of the importance of brand identity, meaning, image, and reputation that can help foster more effective communication with organizational stakeholders including faculty, staff, students, alumni, etc. Other research suggests that university branding has increasingly become a relevant topic among practitioners with regard to the level of commitment invested in such activities in higher education (Chapelo, 2010). Because of the rise in competition in the higher education industry, universities can benefit from successfully implementing branding techniques (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). Even institutions that have experienced success in brand management, experience issues with the lack of brand engagement. Therefore, given that, previous studies on the subject matter are scarce; more research is needed to assess the success of university branding. Also, in a study of the influence that professor characteristics have on student satisfaction, it was found that organizations should invest in developing the skills and techniques necessary for faculty to develop and maintain a rapport with students (Gruber et al., 2012).

Generally speaking, organizations that have been recognized by their employees as a "great place to work" experience high levels of employee satisfaction and lowered levels of employee turnover. With regard to their customers, these companies are able to establish high levels of customer service, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. These characteristics make them more profitable and competitive in the industry. It is my belief that if some of the same characteristics that are promoted in these organizations are also implemented in a higher education setting, they have the potential to be just as effective with promoting increased levels of employee satisfaction, reduced levels of workplace incivility, enhanced service levels, higher retention rates and an increase in graduation rates.

8.3 Reflecting on Knowledge about My Organization

In general, although many of the potential participants expressed a desire to participate in the research and were interested in its success, they were still apprehensive about participating (or being honest) based on fear that their identity could in some way be detected and they could experience retaliation as a result. In addition, people's sense of urgency with regard to completing the survey and providing feedback on the proposed action plan was very different than I anticipated. Although they found the subject matter important and were interested in the results, they put off completion of the required actions. However, I received a lot of positive feedback from participants about the value of the study and my proposed action.

My findings from Phase 1 of the research revealed that although many were apprehensive about completing the survey due to fear or retaliation, once they were reassured that the responses would remain strictly confidential, many participated and offered valuable feedback. There were even some participants who contacted me directly to voice their opinions on the subject matter and how the study could be enhanced in future research.

In phase 2 of the study, I recognized that, although some participants were eager to see the results from the Phase 1 survey, many were again apprehensive about providing additional information in the feasibility questionnaire, mostly due to their unwillingness to review and consider the proposed action plan. However, the feedback I did receive was very helpful in my examination of an appropriate approach to the organizational issue. Based on the feedback, many (as I anticipated) felt that university administrators' resistance and university funding would be the biggest obstacle to applying the proposed plan. Some subsequently proposed options that would allow for implementing the proposed action without external input to avoid incurring any costs that might hinder implementation of the proposed plan. The focus group feedback also revealed that although the participating organizational leaders were in support of the proposed plan, they also believed that senior leadership would need to collectively support its implementation.

Overall, I have found that employees generally display a willingness to take part in decision making related to organizational change. However, they do not believe that senior leadership is collectively open to their feedback with regard to organizational policy matters. Although members of my organization feel strongly about the issue of workplace incivility and recognize that the problem needs to be addressed, they do not believe that senior leadership will collectively support taking relative action. As a result, I am aware that senior management buy-in will be essential to the success of this or any other action proposed relevant to my organization. As previous studies suggest, until senior leaders buy-in to the proposed change, employees are more likely to adopt behaviors that are displayed and/or tolerated by organizational leaders than to adopt those that are merely documented (Euben and Lee, 2005; Verhenzen, 2010). Therefore, it is highly likely that further action is needed to promote my ideas to senior administrators that did not take part in the feasibility study to ensure that all administrators adopt and support the implementation effort.

CHAPTER 9 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.0 Research Conclusion

This chapter offers a synthesis of the key findings of this research along with the associated recommendations and research implications that have resulted from this study. It also discusses the research contributions and proposes an agenda for future research.

9.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

At the onset of this study, the following research questions were proposed:

1. Does workplace incivility exist at the examined university?
2. How does workplace incivility appear at the examined university?
3. Is computer-mediated communication being used at the examined university?
4. What are computer-mediated communication methods being used for at the examined university?
5. Does computer-mediated communication use influence workplace incivility at the examined university?
6. Which of the examined dispositional factors influence computer-mediated communication use at the examined university?

As a result of the research conducted in this study, the research findings provide the following answers: (1) Workplace incivility exists, (2) Workplace incivility most commonly appears in the form of low-intensity behaviors but sometimes occurs in aggressive forms, (3) Computer-mediated communication is being used at the university, (4) Computer-mediated communication is mostly being used to complete job-related tasks, (5) Computer-mediated communication does influence workplace incivility, and (4) Of the examined dispositional factors, perceived task interdependence, gender, employee class, and perceived usefulness influence the use of computer-mediated communication. Additionally, as a result of further evaluation of the survey data based on focus group feedback, email computer-mediated communication use emerges as a high predictor of workplace incivility.

Therefore, based on the findings of this research and the proposed objectives of the action plan, I recommend that the university should take the following specific actions: (1) revise existing university policies to address the workplace incivility issues found in this study and (2) modify the university's mission, vision and strategic plan to promote the objectives of the proposed plan and the reduction of workplace incivility occurrences.

Addressing the workplace incivility issue will require the university to explicitly define acceptable and unacceptable behavior, promote collaboration on organizational change, and define consequences for contrary behavior (Euben and Lee, 2006). These actions can be undertaken in three phases. The first phase has these steps: First, (1) The university should update the **Ethics Policy** to explicitly state behaviors that will not be tolerated. The current policy vaguely explains what is expected with regard to the university's core values but does not explain what is specifically unacceptable. It also currently states that "*Members of the SSU community are*

expected to exercise good judgment absent specific guidance from this policy or other applicable laws, rules and regulations.” Also, include not only a list of behaviors that will not be tolerated but associated disciplinary actions. The current policy simply states that *“Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action including dismissal or termination.”* (2) Update the **Electronic Mail Policy** to explicitly state the disciplinary actions associated with inappropriate use. The current policy does explicitly list examples of inappropriate use including: *“Offensive e-mail (i.e., fraudulent, harassing, or obscene) must not be sent or forwarded, except as requested in making a complaint of offensive email.”* However, the policy makes no mention of associated reprimands.

This phase is important given that (1) the research findings indicated that 92% of employees have experienced workplace incivility occurrences in the workplace, (2) in the review of extant literature on promoting intended behaviors, the Theory of Assertive Discipline suggests that leaders who establish rules that clearly define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, teach them to subordinates, and (3) these leaders should gain support from other organizational leaders as a way to promote intended behaviors (Canter and Canter, 1976; Canter, 2010; Bergkvist., Hjalmarson, & Mägi, 2016; Dutta., Attila, & Dhruv, 2017). Leadership’s effort to change policies will work towards decreasing occurrences of workplace incivility and promote higher levels of employee satisfaction. The university should make the following policy changes:

Secondly, the research findings also warrant a more collaborative effort relevant to implementing organizational change given that 71% of the employees suggested that resistance to change is prevalent in the workplace. Caldwell (2003) offered that organizational leaders can act as change agents to promote appropriate initiation and implementation of proposed change by advocating for change in a collaborative approach. Therefore, to promote collaborative leadership and face-to-face collaboration across organizational departments, the following university policies should be revised: (1) The **Change Management Policy** should be revised to explicitly state who should be a member of the Change Management Committee and when the establishment of a committee is necessary. The current policy states that *“A Change Management committee should be established as needed, to review and approve change requests and ensure that change reviews and communications are performed.”* The revised policy should state that a representative from all university units be included on the change management committee and a committee should be formed yearly and be responsible for approving all university-wide changes; (2) The **Policy on Policy Formation** should be revised to include the appropriate process for rejection of a proposed policy. Although the steps for approval are included in the policy, the appropriate grounds for rejection of a proposed policy are not included leaving no option for appeal or requirement of explanation for rejection.

Third, although some organizational units have published standards for employee evaluations, the university should consider drafting and implementing a new policy related to employee evaluation to define and promote civility and include standards for usage of required systems based on job function. According to Bandura (1986), actions result from an understanding of expectations. Therefore, clearly outlining expectations and making employees accountable for meeting them has

the potential to promote civil behavior and usage of implemented systems given that over 90% of respondents agree that computer-mediated communication is most commonly used for job-related tasks. By defining civil behavior and requiring usage of specified systems for specified job-related tasks and enforcing accountability based on usage being assessed in employee evaluating, civil behavior and usage of employed computer-mediated systems would likely increase among those who may not be doing so otherwise.

The proposed policy revisions and additions will provide a viable solution to the workplace incivility problem. The revision of the above policies will likely promote the university's ability to begin fostering a more civil environment where employees can be better respected, held accountable for adhering to university policies, more satisfied with their work environment and engage in a collaboration that promotes the success of the organization. Therefore, to promote a lasting impact on the organizational culture, the following action should be implemented to promote the objectives of the proposed plan and reduction in workplace incivility:

First, in an effort to support the objective to decrease occurrences of workplace incivility and increase awareness of the organization's mission, vision and strategic plan, the university should revise the organization's mission and vision to be more inclusive of the university's intentions to embrace diversity and collaboration among both internal and external stakeholders (Needle, 2010, Laubengaier and Hahn, 2019). According to the University System of Georgia "2.6 Presidential Authority and Responsibilities" policy, the university president has the responsibility of governing the university. However, in accordance with the "2.8 Institutional Mission" policy, all changes to the university mission, vision and strategic plan must be approved by the Board. Therefore, the proposed changes to the university mission, vision, and strategic plan would have to be adopted by the internal Strategic Planning Committee (including the university president) and submitted for approval from the Board of Regents. Support for the proposed changes to the mission, vision and strategic plan are highly likely given that changes are typically done as a standard every five years and some of the planning committee members participated in the feasibility study (in which they supported the recommendations). In addition, opportunity exists to propose this research to other committee members via those who have been exposed to this research (Policies Retrieved from: <https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section2/C324>). With regard to promotion of the revised mission and vision, this recommendation requires internal adoption and development of a marketing campaign by the university's public relations department and approval of the university president. The university typically implements new promotions regularly. Therefore, the possibility of adopting this recommendation is highly likely especially if the proposed changes are adopted by the Strategic Planning Committee.

Then, the organization should revise its strategic plan as needed to adjust to organizational needs. As previously stated, the university must follow the University System of Georgia "2.6 Presidential Authority and Responsibilities" policy to obtain Board of Regents approval. Therefore, the proposed changes to the strategic plan would have to be adopted by the University Strategic

Planning Committee and submitted for approval. The likelihood of adopting this change is great given that some of the planning committee members participated in the feasibility study (in which they supported the recommendations) and opportunity exists to propose this research to other committee members given their awareness based on exposure to this research and the associated benefits and adoption. (Retrieved from: <https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section2/C324>)

To increase awareness of diversity (Von Bergen and Collier, 2013) and what workplace incivility is and why it should not occur in the workplace (Zinko et al., 2016; Kaul & Desai, 2017), the university can incorporate training in the professional development days that are currently being held at least twice in an academic year. These types of workshops are approved internally and the university leadership accepts feedback from faculty and staff (via survey) with regard to the workshops that will be offered. Data collection is typically facilitated via the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IRPA) and workshop facilitators are either obtained from the pool of internal resources, based on available grant funding or based on the Academic Affairs budget allocation for professional development.

With regard to promoting collaborative leadership (Raelin, 2013), leadership styles are adopted internally based on the direction set by the university president. Therefore, success of this recommendation would require acceptance by the university president. However, changes to the internal policy as it relates to expectations of committees can be proposed to promote adoption of this recommended change. According to the “1.7.2 Legislative, Rule Making and Regulatory Authority of the Faculty”, the faculty senate by designation of the Board of Regents and the Faculty Senate By-Laws has the authority with the approval of the president to make rules and regulations for internal governance related to academics. Therefore, as a member of the faculty, I can propose that a change to committee structure to be inclusive of a department representative be voted on and adopted by the Faculty Senate as a university committee standard. This change to structure can be voted on by the Faculty Senate and adopted.

Face-to-face collaboration across organizational departments should be promoted internally (Clark, 2013). Collaboration efforts do not have to be approved. However, changes to the internal “1.7.2 Legislative, Rule Making and Regulatory Authority of the Faculty” policy can be proposed to promote adoption of this recommended change. According to the “1.7.2 Legislative, Rule Making and Regulatory Authority of the Faculty”, the Faculty Senate by designation of the Board of Regents and the Faculty Senate By-Laws has the authority with the approval of the president to make rules and regulations for internal governance related to academics. Therefore, as a member of the faculty, I can propose a change to committee expectations that suggests a standard number of face-to-face meetings to be voted on and adopted by the Faculty Senate as a university committee standard. This can, therefore, be voted on by the Faculty Senate and adopted.

To promote higher levels of employee satisfaction, satisfaction concerns should be raised in faculty senate meetings for consideration (Armstrong, 2017, Zinko et al., 2016; and Kaul & Desai, 2017). According to the “1.7.2 Legislative, Rule Making and Regulatory Authority of the Faculty”, the faculty senate by designation of the Board of Regents and the Faculty Senate By-Laws has the

authority with the approval of the president to make rules and regulations for internal governance related to academics. Employee satisfaction surveys are currently being conducted. However, as a member of the university faculty, I can propose that the results of employee satisfaction surveys be shared and consideration be given (and disclosed) on how subsequent changes are implemented. This can be voted on and adopted by the Faculty Senate.

With all of the above points considered, along with my continued efforts towards promoting awareness of my research findings (including its potential benefits) to university leaders and other employees, it is highly likely that I will gain full support of organizational stakeholders at all levels to promote adoption of the proposed action plan and relative recommendations.

CHAPTER 10 IMPLICATIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

10.0 Introduction

This study has several implications for practice, contributions to the current knowledgebase relevant to the subject matter and propositions for future studies. This chapter discusses the suggestions made because of this research.

10.1 The Importance of Organizational Culture: Higher Education vs. Corporate Practice

The organization examined in this study has done a favorable job of increasing enrollment and graduation rates considering its external forces. However, it has experienced declining rates of retention. This implies that something is lacking between the time of enrollment and graduation that causes students to leave. Therefore, it may be beneficial to the organization to explore options that will enhance the internal environment.

Organizational culture describes the nature of the associated environment including its values and behaviors (Needle, 2010; Laubengaier and Hahn, 2019). Many corporate organizations have experienced success with regard to customer loyalty based on their implementation of consistent organizational standards related to culture. Therefore, it may be beneficial for higher education to adopt a similar approach to student retention. It is evident based on the findings of this research that the importance of and approach to organizational culture differs in higher education from that of the corporate setting. Although the desired organizational culture is described in the mission and vision of the higher education organization, it is often not translated into day-to-day operations, given that resources are limited and being allocated towards supporting enrollment by investing heavily in recruitment efforts while neglecting retention. Although higher education organizations may not be able to invest as heavily in branding as corporate organization, they may want to consider the implications of the organizational culture theory as proposed by Schein (1990), the administrative implications relevant to promoting a favorable organizational environment (Clark, 2013) and potentially investing some resources to establish and maintain organizational culture standards.

Corporate organizations typically invest in promoting their organizational culture both internally and externally to promote profitability, customer loyalty, and competitiveness in their industry. Given that state-funded universities are not in business for profit, they often neglect the importance of customer loyalty and competitiveness. However, it is evident based on retention rates and findings related to workplace incivility that more attention needs to be given to internal branding to promote a consistent organizational culture.

Therefore, in consideration of all of these factors, the proposed action plan offers a solution that will allow the university to apply organizational methods that have been successful in the corporate setting as a means to enhance the internal environment at the university as well.

10.2 The Role of Organizational Politics

Organizational politics has the potential to promote the success or failure of an organization (Vince, 2004; Coughlan and Brannick, 2014; Lewis, 2019). Based on the research findings, the

organization being examined needs to evaluate the current implications of organizational politics and how it affects the organization's ability to promote favorable change with regard to culture and retention. This effort may expose the root causes for the negative impact organizational politics has had thus far and promote the organization's ability to evolve in a manner that demonstrates a more productive use of power and influence (Bjorkman and Sundgren, 2005).

10.3 Contributions to Knowledge

Given that previous literature suggests that knowledge is one of the most essential components of creating a competitive advantage (Watson and Hewett, 2006), it is important to review the knowledge that has been gained from this study. The primary contribution of this thesis offers evidence based and context related recommendations for historically black universities in the United States (US) who are seeking to reduce occurrences of workplace incivility and enhance levels of computer-mediated communication use. However, the findings and implications of this study additionally offer contributions with regard to specifically understanding and addressing the organizational issue examined in this study. These implications are revealed within the analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative research and offer insight that has been applied to management and practice, contributes to extant theory, and enhanced understanding of society.

The quantitative research conducted in this study revealed several insights about employees' perceptions of workplace incivility and computer-mediated use. Contrary to the inference made by the university administrator in the Spring Institute meeting, employees reported that they are in fact using the computer-mediated systems. Employees have also reported that they primarily use computer-mediated communication systems when they are required for job-related tasks. This has influenced my approach and that of others as it relates to promoting the use of technology.

Upon statistical analysis of the data collected in this study, I was able to identify evidence that (in alignment with what university administrators believe) the use of computer-mediated systems does have an impact on workplace incivility at this university, and, aligns with the university administration's perception about the organizational environment, that workplace incivility is prevalent in the organization. However, employees have expressed that workplace incivility rarely occurs in the form of direct, aggressive attacks and most commonly occurs in the form of indirect acts. Employees also believe that resistance to change is displayed prevalently as a form of incivility in the workplace. In addition to the factors identified in previous studies, statistical analysis of the quantitative data collected in this study suggests that computer-mediated communication use is also influenced by perceived task interdependence, perceived ease of use, gender, and employee class. The statistical analysis also reveals that employees perceive computer-mediated communication to be essential to most job tasks, useful and simple to use.

Based on the qualitative findings from the feasibility testing and focus group discussions, I was able to establish support for the quantitative research and identify factors for further investigation. For example, feedback received from testing the feasibility of the proposed action plan suggested that participants believed that the originally proposed action plan was feasible. However, it could be implemented with the appropriate changes, including a more detailed description of the plan and reduction in the associated costs to promote administrative buy-in.

Focus group responses to the revised plan indicated that organizational stakeholders recognize that there is an issue with workplace incivility at the university that needs to be addressed. They also believe that the proposed action plan will be effective in addressing the identified issue. Participants are in support of implementing the proposed plan. However, they recommended that the plan needs to be implemented in a manner that ensures its effectiveness by promoting senior level buy-in, employing a top-down approach, and being inclusive of evaluation of non-supervisory leaders (i.e. department coordinators). They also suggest that a follow-up study should be conducted to evaluate specifically a linkage between a lack of email etiquette displayed in the organization and workplace incivility. Because of the consistent feedback received regarding the need to further investigate email specifically as an influencer of workplace incivility, I re-examined the collected data to specifically evaluate relationships between computer-mediated communication use survey items relating to email communication and overall workplace incivility. The results revealed that significant relationships do in fact exist.

Ultimately, the finalized action plan proposal and associated recommendations were developed based on the knowledge gained from data collection to offer a possible means for addressing the concerns and needs of the organization based on the knowledge that has been gained at all phases of this research. The proceeding sections offer a synopsis of the many contributions this research makes to management and practice. It also explains how the contributions to knowledge contribute to the extant theories relevant to the subject matter and the society.

Anderson et al (2015) offers that the results of management science help organizational managers with more effective decision-making. The findings of this study contribute to the extant understanding of management and practice, (like that proposed by Chandler (1962) and March and Simon (1958)) that suggests that necessary organizational change often does not occur due to management's failure to address problems, by offering an understanding of employees' perceptions of the role that management plays in influencing organizational behavior. The findings of this study indicate that the employees examined in this research perceive workplace incivility in the higher education environment mostly as passive-aggressive in nature. In addition, they believe that administrators play a significant role in influencing acceptable behavior and fostering the organization's ability to address identified behavioral issues and proposing changes to organizational culture. The research findings also support Raelin's (2003; 2010) proposed "leaderful" approach to organizational leadership given that respondents imply that leadership should be collaborative and inclusive of all organizational departments to promote acceptance of proposed organizational action plans relevant to the organizational issue.

With regard to the theoretical contributions of this research, the findings offer a more inclusive perspective of employee perceptions of workplace incivility by including staff and administrators. This research is unlike previous studies that focused primarily on perspective of workplace incivility among faculty and students (Kettinger and Grover, 1997; Clark, 2013; Peters, 2014; Wagner, 2014; Wright and Hill, 2014; King and Piotrowski, 2015; and Bartlett and Bartlett, 2016). In addition, this study contributes to the work of Clark (2013), Bartlett, and Bartlett (2016) that indicates that the use of technology can increase workplace incivility by offering an alternative perspective that suggests that the two can potentially be independently motivated.

With regard to the contributions this research makes to society, it offers a perspective from which to evaluate the higher education workplace. It promotes understanding of the differences between the higher education and corporate work environment. In addition, it benefits society by fostering an environment where students are exposed to a culture that models ways to be “civil”.

Knowledge gained from this research has also benefited me personally. It has not only allowed me to recognize my abilities to perform as a scholar-practitioner, but it has also developed my thinking as an information technology professional and aspiring professor. Because of this research, I am able to influence current work practices in my organization. By developing my knowledgebase as it relates to understanding the higher education environment, and human behaviors related to change and technology use, I am now able to make valuable contributions to discussions and decision-making related to future organizational success. Since undertaking this study, I have applied my learning towards promoting understanding of current higher education trends and their impact on student and institutional success to my service on organizational committees and in leadership roles. I have also applied my knowledge of influencing human perceptions and behaviors as it related to civility and technology use among my students and peers in my organization. In addition, I have used what I have learned from this study to better approach change management as a leader in my organization.

10.4 Future Research Agenda

Previous literature suggests that it is important to understand the limitations associated with research (Newman, 2016). Based on the limitations of this study, future research should include a larger sample size, a study of computer-mediated communication software independently, longitudinal studies, evaluate responses based on demographics, include more qualitative data collection and evaluate application of the proposed action plan.

The survey data collected using the computer-mediated communication use survey evaluated a comprehensive listing of all computer-mediated communication applications used in the organization. Therefore, respondents were not able to distinguish their responses based on application; they merely assessed all applications collectively. Future studies should evaluate each application independently with regard to the use of computer-mediated communication.

Future research should explore a longitudinal approach to evaluating the factors included in this research. Studying the subject matter over time may allow for a better perspective with regard to how the applied action towards addressing related issues addresses change in computer-mediated communication usage, the factors that influence it, and workplace incivility (Fraley and Hudson, 2014).

It would also be beneficial to evaluate responses based on demographics. This study only evaluated gender and employee class specifically with regard to its impact on the usage of computer-mediated communication despite that the study obtained a number of demographic responses. In addition, it did not expose and significant findings with regard to gender. Therefore, future studies should explore the remaining items (race, age, years of employment, faculty rank, faculty

classification, employee classification, and department) and gender to evaluate their ability to influence computer-mediated communication use and workplace incivility.

Given the lack of accessibility of appropriate resources to evaluate such data types, this study did not apply qualitative research methods to Phase 1. However, future studies should incorporate qualitative data in an effort to achieve a more in-depth understanding of employees' perceptions of workplace incivility and the use of computer-mediated communication in the workplace (Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault, 2015).

Lastly, upon implementation of the proposed action plan, future research as a follow-up to this study future research should evaluate the application of the proposed action plan in accordance with the final phase of action research proposed by Coghlan and Brannick (2014). This research phase will allow the researcher to assess the effectiveness of the action plan. The results of this assessment can contribute to the researcher's ability to reframe the organizational issue with regard to any new context, to the development of the previously applied action, or to formulation of a new, more effective plan.

CHAPTER 11
LIMITATIONS

With all research methods there are some limitations. Given that I applied action research to this study, there is a lack of generalizability (Bradbury-Huang, 2010) given that the results of this study and action plan are specific to the organization examined. In addition, although I applied the most appropriate and effective data collection method based on the organization examined and the subject matter, some limitations are associated with survey data. Specifically, Podsakoff et al (2012) suggests that by relying on a single source of data collection that is self-reported, common method biases could occur. Given that we used a survey to collect data relevant to identifying the organizational issue, we must consider the limitations associated with survey data, including: the possibility that responses are not accurate or honest; the possibility that respondents did not understand the survey items; data errors due to missing data; and improper interpretation of answer options. However, to address issues of generalizability, most of the items and instruments used to collect data related to the organizational issue were validated previously in relevant studies (Clark, 2013; and Kettinger and Grover, 1997). Additionally, our survey items and constructs were also assessed for validity and reliability in this study using various tools to determine the validity and reliability of each items/measure and constructs (Hair et al., 1999; Nunnally, 1978).

Given that we conducted this research for completion of a doctoral program, we proposed a timeline for completion of the thesis stage. Therefore, in keeping with the proposed timeline, evaluation of the organizational issue had to be completed expeditiously. As a result, we applied the most effective approach that would allow for data collection to the action research to ensure completion in a timely manner. Previous literature related to action research suggests that the use of a questionnaire in action research is relevant and can be applied where appropriate (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

The timing of data collection was also problematic in this study. Given the length of the ethical approval process, there was a span of time between the issue being introduced to the organization, obtaining local approval and approval from the University of Liverpool where I was unable to evaluate the issue. Research suggests that in strategic interactions, timing of communication is a critical determinant of cooperation (Bhattacharya, Nielsen, and Sengupta, 2019). This resulted in a decreased level momentum with regard to support given the amount of time that had lapsed between when the organization was notified of the issue, accepted my intent to evaluate and when I was actually able to begin collecting data.

Based on my understanding of the organizational issue, I recognize that there is a need for follow-up studies to explore deeper understanding of the organizational issues. Therefore, it is important to state that the current findings are provisional in nature

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Local Approval Letter

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD




Box 40289
Savannah, GA 31404
P: (912) 358 - 4292
F: (912) 353 - 3093

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: January 26, 2017

To: Ms. Shetia Butler-Lamar
College of Business Administration
3219 College St
Savannah, GA 31404

From: Dr. Deden Rukmana, Chair 

Re.: Application number 17-1-518
Use of Human Subjects of Research
Effects of Dispositional Factors on Computer Meditated Communication Use and Employees' Civility: A Study of Historically Black University, United States

The documentation that you submitted to this office in regards to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Chair and one member of the Institutional Review Board. Your research project has been approved by an exempt review process.

The Institutional Review Board has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit.

You are advised that you need to ensure the confidentiality of the respondent so their responses will not impact their well-being. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to respondents or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the head of your department and mentor are reminded that they are responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution regulations.

cc: Dr. Mostafa Sarhan, Dean of College of Business Administration
Dr. Anshu Arora, Associate Professor
Ms. Shetia Butler-Lamar

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Appendix B. Appeal to Participate

Greetings SSU Faculty\Staff,

My name is Shetia C. Butler Lamar. I am a member of the COBA Faculty and a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Liverpool. I would greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in my research. Please read the information below regarding the opportunity to participate in a study that has the potential to produce findings that can enhance our awareness of the organizational environment.

Researcher:

Mrs. Shetia C. Butler Lamar
Doctoral Candidate, University of Liverpool
Lecturer of Computer Information Systems and Business
College of Business Administration
Anonymous State University

Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this proposed study is to identify and evaluate the influence of dispositional factors (or personal characteristics) on computer-mediated communication usage and incivility among university faculty and staff at Anonymous State University in an effort to provide feedback to the organization and develop an action plan towards addressing related issues. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation requirement for completion of the Doctor of Business Administration degree at the University of Liverpool. Per the program's thesis requirements, an action research approach will be applied to address an identified organizational issue. Therefore, upon identification of the organizational issue to be examined in this study and development of an appropriate approach to data collection based on what has been applied in extant literature, quantitative data will be collected from members of the identified organization using an electronic (Qualtrics) survey. The electronic data from the survey will then be exported from Qualtrics and imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to be analyzed for descriptive statistics and using regression analysis to estimate relationships between the examined variables. The results will then be documented and compared to results from extant literature. Findings of this research will be translated into a list of recommended actions to be applied towards addressing the examined organizational issue. Feasibility testing will be conducted to validate the proposed actions. Feasibility testing will be conducted in a five-step process including a theoretical evaluation of the proposed actions, SWOT Analysis, evaluation of financial implications, identification of available resources, and translation of feasibility\development of final proposal. It will evaluate the constraints and expectations of the proposed actions with regard to time, cost, the impact of personal characteristics, and the potential social, cultural, and political impacts associated with implementing the proposed change. As a part of the feasibility testing phase, upon analysis of the collected data relevant to the issue and development of a proposed action plan, an electronic (Qualtrics) questionnaire will be emailed to all participants to obtain feedback on the proposed action plan. No one will be specifically excluded from providing feedback. Finally, all findings relevant to the study will be compiled into a final proposal and PowerPoint presentation to be presented to organizational leaders for consideration and as a part of the doctoral thesis. All parts of this research will subsequently be used for academic publication.

Appeal for Participation:

You are invited to participate in a study of how various factors influence the use of computer-mediated communication (i.e. DegreeWorks, GradesFirst, Student Success Collaborative, Ad Astra, Footprints, etc.) and workplace incivility being conducted by Mrs. Shetia C. Butler Lamar. The findings of this study can be used to identify ways to enhance the use of computer-mediated communication as a useful tool and reduce the occurrence workplace incivility in the organizational environment.

Why You Were Selected:

The researcher is inviting all Anonymous State University faculty and staff to participate in this study. The research will examine the effects that factors like gender, department, and work-related tasks among university faculty and staff have on the use of computer-mediated communication and employee civility in a university setting. Your participation will help to achieve the attended objective of the study.

How to access the survey:

The survey is brief and will take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Click below to access the survey on the web (or copy and paste the link to you internet browser).

Clickable Link:

Survey link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XXXXXXX>

Confidentiality Statement:

No information will be obtained that could identify the subject. To minimize the risks associated with revealing the identity of participants, an electronic survey platform will be employed to allow for electronic consent that does not require a signature and an anonymize responses feature will be enabled to ensure that identifying data (i.e. IP Addresses) are not collected.

Appendix C. Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Project: Effects of Dispositional Factors on Computer-mediated Communication Use and Employees' Civility: A Study of a Historically Black University, United States

Version Number and Date: Version 1.4 April 2017

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in a study of how various factors influence the use of computer-mediated communication (i.e. DegreeWorks, GradesFirst, Student Success Collaborative, Ad Astra, Footprints, etc.) and workplace incivility (i.e. unfavorable workplace behaviors) being conducted by Mrs. Shetia C. Butler Lamar; a candidate for the Doctor of Business Administration degree at the University of Liverpool.

Prior to accepting this invitation to participate, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and feel free to contact any of the contacts at the bottom of this form if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Basis for Subject Selection: The researcher is inviting all Anonymous State University faculty and staff to participate in this study. The research will examine the effects that factors like gender, department, and work-related tasks among university faculty and staff have on the use of computer-mediated communication and employee civility at Anonymous State University. Your participation will provide feedback to the organization and help to achieve the attended objective of the study.

Overall Purpose of Study: The purpose of this proposed study is to identify and evaluate the influence of dispositional factors (or personal characteristics) on computer-mediated communication usage and incivility among university faculty and staff at Anonymous State University in an effort to provide feedback to the organization and develop an action plan towards addressing related issues. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation requirement for completion of the Doctor of Business Administration degree at the University of Liverpool. Per the program's thesis requirements, an action research approach will be applied to address an identified organizational issue. Therefore, upon identification of the organizational issue to be examined in this study and development of an appropriate approach to data collection based on what has been applied in extant literature, quantitative data will be collected from members of the identified organization using an electronic (Qualtrics) survey. The electronic data from the survey will then be exported from Qualtrics and imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to be analysed for descriptive statistics and using regression analysis to estimate relationships between the examined variables. The results will then be documented and compared to results from extant literature. Findings of this research will be translated into a list of recommended actions to be applied towards addressing the examined organizational issue. Feasibility testing will be conducted to validate the proposed actions. Feasibility testing will be conducted in a five-step process including a theoretical evaluation of the proposed actions,

SWOT Analysis, evaluation of financial implications, identification of available resources, and translation of feasibility\development of final proposal. It will evaluate the constraints and expectations of the proposed actions with regard to time, cost, the impact of personal characteristics, and the potential social, cultural, and political impacts associated with implementing the proposed change. As a part of the feasibility testing phase, upon analysis of the collected data relevant to the issue and development of a proposed action plan, an electronic (Qualtrics) questionnaire will be emailed to all participants to obtain feedback on the proposed action plan. No one will be specifically excluded from providing feedback. Finally, all findings relevant to the study will be compiled into a final proposal and PowerPoint presentation to be presented to organizational leaders for consideration and as a part of the doctoral thesis. All parts of this research will subsequently be used for academic publication.

Explanation of Procedure: This will primarily be a quantitative study. Participants will be asked via email to complete an electronic survey concerning workplace incivility, computer-mediated communication usage, perceived tasks, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use and demographic information, which will take approximately 10 minutes. Contact information of participants will be obtained from the Anonymous State University email directory. An email will be sent to all university faculty and staff. The initial contact with participants via email will include a link to the survey instrument which is formatted in Qualtrics. The Informed consent will be obtained in the electronic survey by selecting “YES” on the consent form and Participant Information Sheet to indicate willingness to participate and proceed with completion of the survey. If “NO” is selected, the survey will be ended. Participants can decide to skip a question or discontinue completion of the survey at any time. After data collection, the data will be exported from Qualtrics into SPSS to be analysed. After analysis of the collected data and completion of feasibility testing, results will be compiled into a list of proposed action items that will be shared with stakeholders in the form of a PowerPoint Presentation. Feasibility testing will be conducted in a five-step process including a theoretical evaluation of the proposed actions, SWOT Analysis, evaluation of financial implications, identification of available resources, and translation of feasibility\development of final proposal. It will evaluate the constraints and expectations of the proposed actions with regard to time, cost, the impact of personal characteristics, and the potential social, cultural, and political impacts associated with implementing the proposed change. This process will be facilitated via an emailed questionnaire including the proposed action plan and questions requesting feedback related to each step of feasibility testing. No one will be specifically excluded from providing feedback. Additionally, a copy of this Participant Information Sheet can be provided to participants upon request. The data collected from this study will be used to propose actions for addressing civility and computer-mediated communication usage issues in the organization.

Potential Risks and Discomforts: The risks associated with this research include the sensitivity of the subject matter being examined, minimal time commitment and the possibility that participant’s identities are revealed. Therefore, to minimize the risks associated with the sensitivity of the subject matter, participants will not be asked to specifically disclose any information about instances of workplace incivility. With regard to the time commitment, the survey has been limited to ensure a possible completion time within 10 minutes and to protect from revealing the identity of participants, an electronic survey platform will be employed to allow for electronic consent that does not require a signature and the used of an enabled anonymize responses feature will also

ensure that identifying data (i.e. IP Addresses) are not collected. With regard to the feasibility testing feedback, completion of the questionnaire will take less than 10 minutes and statements from respondents will be included in the final action plan and thesis as a summary. However, the names of respondents will be omitted to ensure anonymity.

Potential Conflicts of Interest: The researcher is a member of the organization's faculty. However, the researcher's role does not present a conflict of interest for any of the participants. All data will be collected electronically and analysed by the researcher and conflicts of interest will be proactively managed to ensure that the research findings are not compromised.

Potential Benefits: The potential benefits of this research outweigh the minimal risk and burdens. The findings of this study can benefit the organization as a whole by identifying ways to enhance the use of computer-mediated communication as a useful tool and methods for reducing the occurrence of workplace incivility in the organizational environment. The findings will be directly applicable to the preparation of an action plan to address associated issues in the examined organization. It also offers indirect implications for other organizations that have experienced issues with computer-mediated communication usage and workplace incivility. Finding may also be applicable to other higher education environments and historically black colleges and universities. Additionally, findings may be used as a basis for future studies.

Alternative to Participation: Given that participants of this study will not receive compensation (in any form) for participation, there are no alternatives (for which to obtain compensation) to participation.

Compensation for Participation: Participants will not be compensated in any way for participation in the study.

Assurance of Confidentiality: No information will be obtained that could identify the subject. Signatures for consent will not be required. Additionally, the electronic survey will have anonymize responses feature enabled to ensure that identifying data (i.e. IP Addresses) are not collected. Therefore, participants will remain confidential and data collected from this study will be disclosed only with the subject's permission. With regard to the feasibility testing, responses will be summarized and participants' names will be withheld in the action plan and thesis to ensure anonymity.

Statement of Injury or Special Costs: There is no potential for injury and there are not special costs to participants.

Withdrawal from the Study: Your participation is voluntary. Participants may answer any, all or none of the questions. Refusal to participate carries no penalties. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. Discontinuing or declining participation will not negatively impact the relationship between the researcher and participant. Any data that is obtained up to the time that the participant withdraws from the study will be omitted from the findings.

Offer to Answer Questions: If you have any questions, you can contact the student researcher, principal investigator, local IRB Chair, or Research Participant Advocate using the contact information below.

Student Researcher (Doctoral Candidate) Anonymous State

Shetia C. Butler Lamar, MBA **Subjects**
Doctor of Business Administration Candidate
Lecturer of Computer Information Systems & Business
College of Business Administration
Anonymous State University
XXXX XXXX Street
XXXXXX, GA XXXXX
Tel: XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email: butlers@anonymousstate.edu
Shetia.lamar@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Contact Person for Rights Regarding

Dr. XXXXX XXXXX
Chair, Institutional Research Board
XXXXXX, GA XXXXX
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science
Public Administration, and Urban Studies
Anonymous State University
XXXX XXX Street
XXX Hall
Telephone (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Principal Investigator (DBA Supervisor)

Dr. Olawumi Awolusi
DBA Supervisor
University of Liverpool
Graduate School of Business and Leadership
University of KwaZulu Natal
Durban, South Africa
Tel: +2767589658
Email: olawumi.awolusi@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Research Participant Advocate

University of Liverpool
USA Tel: 1-612-312-1210
email address
liverpooethics@ohcampus.com

Appendix D. Participant Consent Form and Survey Packet

Committee on Research Ethics

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Title of Research Project: | Effects of Dispositional Factors on Computer-mediated Communication Use and Employees' Civility: A Study of a Historically Black University, United States | Please initial box |
| Researcher(s): | Shetia C. Butler Lamar, DBA Candidate Dr. Olawumi Awolusi, DBA Supervisor | |
| 1. | I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated April 1, 2017 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. | |
| 2. | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. | |
| 3. | I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish. | |
| 4. | I agree to take part in the above study. | |

Participant Name _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Name of Person taking consent _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Researcher _____ Date _____ Signature _____

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Olawumi Awolusi
DBA Supervisor
University of Liverpool
Graduate School of Business and Leadership
University of KwaZulu Natal
Tel: +2767589658
Email: olawumi.awolusi@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Student Researcher:

Mrs. Shetia C. Butler Lamar
DBA Candidate
XXXX XXXX Street
XXXX, GA XXXXX USA
XXX-XXX-XXXX
Email: butlers@ANONYMOUSstate.edu
Shetia.lamar@online.liverpool.ac.uk

Appendix E. Survey Packet

| Workplace Incivility | | | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| | NEVER | RARELY | SOMETIMES | ALWAYS |
| Please circle the one number for each statement that comes closest to reflecting your opinion about it. | | | | |
| 1. Set you or a coworker up to fail | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Made rude remarks or put-down toward you or others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Made personal attacks or threatening comments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Abused his or her position of authority | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Withheld vital information necessary to perform job duties | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Made a racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, or religious slurs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Gossiped or started rumors about you or other people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Encourages others to turn against you or another co-worker | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Made physical threats against another faculty/staff member | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Made rude nonverbal behaviors (gestures) towards you or others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. Took credit for another faculty/staff member's work/contribution | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. Called you or others names | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. Consistently demonstrated an "entitled" or "narcissistic" attitude towards others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. Sent inappropriate emails to you or other faculty/staff | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. Consistently interrupted you or other faculty/staff | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. Breached a confidence (shared personal or private information about you) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. Refused to listen or openly communicate on work-related issues | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. Circumvented the normal grievance process (e.g. going above someone's head and failing to follow procedures to resolve conflict) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. Used the "silent treatment" against you or another faculty/staff member | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. Forwarded private e-mails to someone else without your knowledge or permission | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. Intentionally excluded or left others out of activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. Used vulgarity of profanity in meetings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | NEVER | RARELY | SOMETIMES | OFTEN |
| 23. Resisted change or were unwilling to negotiate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. Consistently failed to perform his or her share of the workload | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. Distracted others by using media during meetings (computers, cell phones, handheld devices, work, or newspapers) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 26. Refused to listen or openly communicate on work-related issues | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. Made rude remarks or put-downs toward you or others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. Engaged in secretive meetings behind closed doors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. Gossiped or started rumors about you or other people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. Intentionally excluded or left others out of activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. Consistently interrupted you or other faculty/staff | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. Abused his or her position or authority | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 33. Made unreasonable demands | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34. Challenged another faculty/staff member's knowledge or credibility | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Clark, C. M., Olender, L., Kenski, D., & Cardoni, C. (2013). Exploring and addressing faculty-to-faculty incivility: A national perspective and literature review. *Journal of Nursing Education, 52*(4), 211-218.

| Computer-mediated Communication Use | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| Indicate the extent to which you use computer-mediated communication (i.e. SSU website, email, Student Success Collaborative (SSC), GradesFirst, Ad Astra, Footprints, etc.) for the following: | NEVER | | | | | | ALWAYS |
| | Task Use | | | | | | |
| 1. Coordinate activities of projects | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. Schedule meetings/appointments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. Monitor progress of projects | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. Send a message in place of a phone call | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. Distribute/provide information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. Keep a record of interactions/agreements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. Seek task information from people I know | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. Give and receive feedback on reports and ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Brainstorm/generate ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Send/receive directions concerning files or programs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Social/Entertainment Use | | | | | | | |
| 11. Take a break from my work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. Fill up free time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. Learn about event/things | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. Participate in entertaining events or conversations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 15. Keep in touch/maintain relationships | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 16. Organize/coordinate a social activity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Broadcast Use | | | | | | | |
| 17. Broadcast requests for information | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18. Poll opinions on a topic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 19. Ask questions in a public setting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| Other Use | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20. Resolve conflicts/disagreements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 21. Get to know someone | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 22. Carry on a negotiations/bargaining | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. Discuss confidential matters | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24. Solve problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Kettinger, W. J., & Grover, V. (1997). The use of computer-mediated communication in an interorganizational context. *Decision sciences*, 28(3), 513-555.

| Perceived Task Independent Variables | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| | Never | | | | | | Always |
| How much do you agree with the following statements in describing computer-mediated communication compared with other communication options available to you? | | | | | | | |
| Task Analyzability | | | | | | | |
| 1. Clearly known way to do the major types of work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. Clearly defined body of knowledge or subject matter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. Understandable sequence of steps | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. Reliance on established procedures and practices | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Task Predictability | | | | | | | |
| 5. Tasks the same from day-to-day | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. Work is routine | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. Do the same job in the same way | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. Perform repetitive activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Task Interdependence | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Job is independent of others' work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Job requires input from someone else's work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. Products of job feed someone else's work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. Job completed with others as a team | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Task Uncertainty | | | | | | | |
| 13. How often do techniques/skills in the job change? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Kettinger, W. J., & Grover, V. (1997). The use of computer-mediated communication in an interorganizational context. *Decision sciences*, 28(3), 513-555.

| Perceived Usefulness | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| How much do you agree with the following statements in describing inter-organizational email compared with other communication options available to you? | | | | | | | | |
| 1. My job would be difficult to perform without information technology. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 2. Using information technology gives me greater control over my work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 3. Using information technology improves my job performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 4. Information Technology addresses my job-related needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 5. Using information technology saves me time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 6. The use of information technology enables me to accomplish tasks more quickly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
| 7. The use of information technology supports critical aspect of my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Using information technology allows me to accomplish more work than would otherwise be possible. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Using information technology reduces the time I spend on unproductive activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. Using information technology enhances my effectiveness on the job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. Using information technology improves the quality of work I do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. Using information technology increases my productivity. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. Using information technology makes it easier to do my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. Overall, I find that information technology is useful in my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Davis, F.D. , Bagozzi, R.P. and Warchaw, P.R. User Acceptance of Computer Technology: A Comparison of Two Theoretical Models, " Management Science (35:8), August 1989, pp.982-1003.

| Perceived Ease of Use | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
| How much do you agree with the following statements in describing inter- organizational email compared with other communication options available to you? | | | | | | | |
| 1. I often become confused when dealing with information technology. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I make errors frequently when using information technology. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. Interacting with information technology is often frustrating. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I need to consult the user manual often when using information technology. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. Interacting with information technology requires a lot of my mental effort. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. I find it easy to recover from errors encountered while using information technology. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. Information technology is rigid and inflexible to interact with. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. I find it easy to get information technology to do what I want it to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9. Information technology often behaves in unexpected ways. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. I find it cumbersome to use information technology. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. My interaction with information technology is easy for me to understand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. It is easy for me to remember how to perform tasks recommended by information technology. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. Information technology provides helpful guidance in performing tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. Overall, I find that information technology is easy to use. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Davis, F.D., Bagozzi, R.P. and Warshaw, P.R. User Acceptance of Computer Technology: A Comparison of Two Theoretical Models, "Management Science (35:8), August 1989, pp.982-1003.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM (BIF)

Confidentiality Statement: Information obtained from this study shall be held in the strictest confidence.

Gender

_____ Male (1) _____ Female (2)

Race

_____ African American (Black) (1) _____ Caucasian (White) (2)

_____ Asian (3) _____ Hispanic (Black) (4)

_____ Hispanic (White) (5) _____ Native American (6)

_____ Other (7)

Age (PLEASE WRITE YOUR AGE ON THE APPROPRIATE LINE)

_____ 18-23 (1) _____ 36-41 (4) _____ 54-59 (7)

_____ 24-29 (2) _____ 42-47 (5) _____ 60 and over (8)

_____ 30-35 (3) _____ 48-53 (6)

Years of Employment at SSU

_____ 0-5 (1) _____ 6 – 10 (2) _____ 10+ (3)

Employment Classification

_____ Faculty (1) _____ Staff (2) _____ Administrator (3)

Faculty Ranking (*faculty respond only*)

_____ Tenured (1) _____ Non-Tenured (2)

Faculty Employment Classification (*faculty respond only*)

_____ Tenured track (1) _____ Non-Tenured track (2)

Employment Status

_____ Full-time (1) _____ Part-time (2) _____ Visiting (3)

University Department

_____ COBA (1) _____ CLASS (2) _____ COST (3) _____ SOTE (4)

_____ ADMIN (5) _____ SUPPORT (6) _____ Other

Appendix F. Feasibility Testing: Feedback Questionnaire

Feasibility Testing: Feedback Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to offer your feedback on the proposed action plan described above.

1. What would you say are the strengths of the proposed actions with regard to addressing the organizational issues relevant to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication usage?
2. What would you say are the weaknesses of the proposed actions with regard to addressing the organizational issues relevant to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication usage?
3. What opportunities do the proposed actions offer with regard to addressing the organizational issues relevant to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication usage?
4. What would you say are the threats associated with applying the proposed actions with regard to addressing the organizational issues relevant to workplace incivility and computer-mediated communication usage?
5. What are the financial implications associated with applying the proposed actions?
6. What resources do you think will be needed to apply the proposed actions?
7. Do you believe that the resources needed to apply the proposed actions are readily available? If not, why?

Appendix G. Presentation of Preliminary Results, Findings, and Proposed Action Plan

EFFECTS OF DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS ON COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION USE AND EMPLOYEES' INCIVILITY: A STUDY OF A HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Preliminary Results and Proposed Action Plan

Shetia C. Butler Lamar, DBA Candidate

Demographics of Survey Participants

GENDER

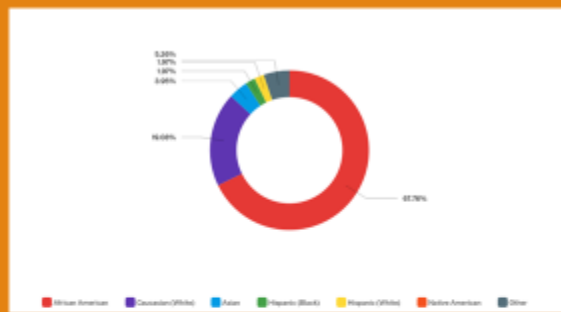
Participants were majority female



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Male | 38.30% | 54 |
| 2 | Female | 61.70% | 87 |
| | Total | 100% | 141 |

RACE\ETHNICITY

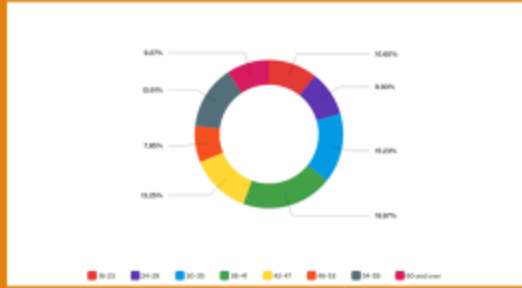
Participants were majority African American



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | African American | 67.76% | 103 |
| 2 | Caucasian (White) | 19.08% | 29 |
| 3 | Asian | 3.95% | 6 |
| 4 | Hispanic (Black) | 1.97% | 3 |
| 5 | Hispanic (White) | 1.97% | 3 |
| 6 | Native American | 0.00% | 0 |
| 7 | Other | 5.26% | 8 |
| | Total | 100% | 152 |

AGE

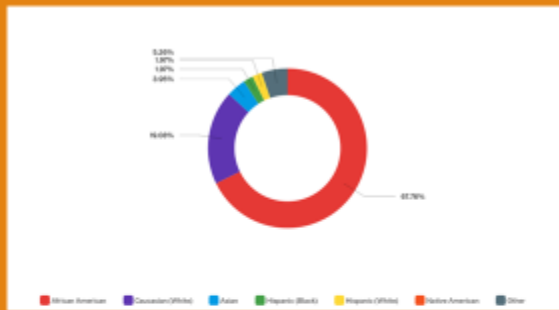
Most respondents were between the ages of 36 to 41



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 18-23 | 10.60% | 16 |
| 2 | 24-29 | 9.93% | 15 |
| 3 | 30-35 | 15.23% | 23 |
| 4 | 36-41 | 19.87% | 30 |
| 5 | 42-47 | 13.25% | 20 |
| 6 | 48-53 | 7.95% | 12 |
| 7 | 54-59 | 13.91% | 21 |
| 8 | 60 and over | 9.27% | 14 |
| | Total | 100% | 151 |

RACE\ETHNICITY

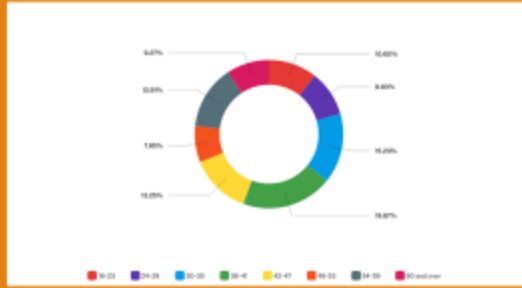
Participants were majority African American



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | African American | 67.76% | 103 |
| 2 | Caucasian (White) | 19.08% | 29 |
| 3 | Asian | 3.95% | 6 |
| 4 | Hispanic (Black) | 1.97% | 3 |
| 5 | Hispanic (White) | 1.97% | 3 |
| 6 | Native American | 0.00% | 0 |
| 7 | Other | 5.26% | 8 |
| | Total | 100% | 151 |

AGE

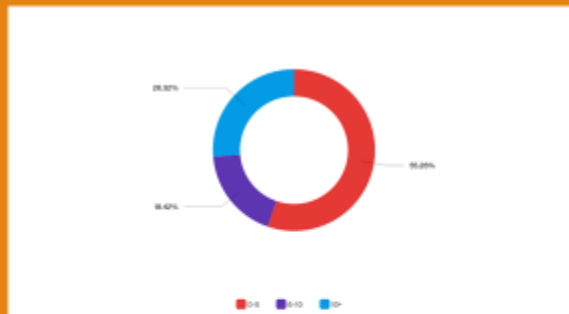
Most respondents were between the ages of 36 to 41



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 18-23 | 10.60% | 16 |
| 2 | 24-29 | 9.93% | 15 |
| 3 | 30-35 | 15.23% | 23 |
| 4 | 36-41 | 19.87% | 30 |
| 5 | 42-47 | 13.25% | 20 |
| 6 | 48-53 | 7.95% | 12 |
| 7 | 54-59 | 13.91% | 21 |
| 8 | 60 and over | 9.27% | 14 |
| | Total | 100% | 151 |

YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT

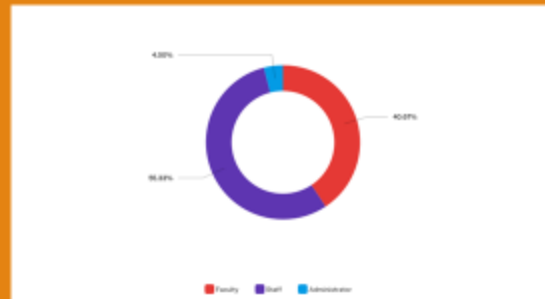
Most participants have been employed at the university 5 years or less.



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 0-5 | 55.26% | 84 |
| 2 | 6-10 | 18.42% | 28 |
| 3 | 10+ | 26.32% | 40 |
| | Total | 100% | 152 |

EMPLOYEE TYPE

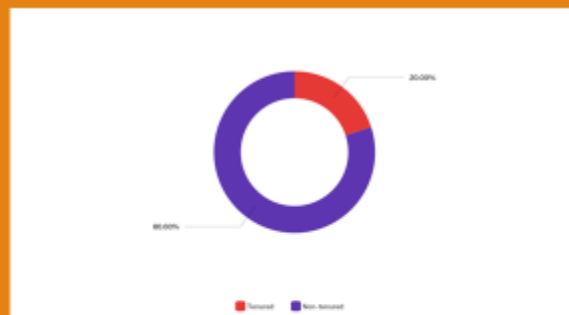
Staff made up the majority of participants



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Faculty | 40.67% | 61 |
| 2 | Staff | 55.33% | 83 |
| 3 | Administrator | 4.00% | 6 |
| | Total | 100% | 150 |

FACULTY RANK

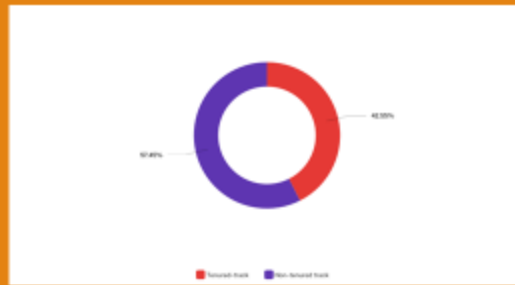
Most faculty respondents were non-tenured



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Tenured | 20.00% | 22 |
| 2 | Non-tenured | 80.00% | 88 |
| | Total | 100% | 110 |

FACULTY STATUS

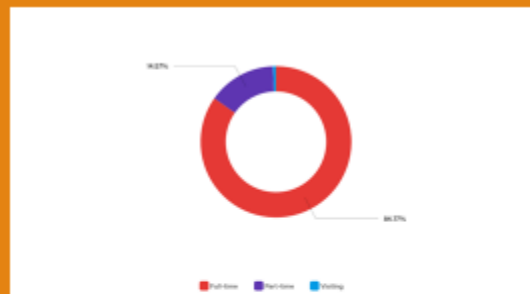
Most faculty respondents were in a non-tenured track position



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Tenured-track | 42.55% | 40 |
| 2 | Non-tenured track | 57.45% | 54 |
| | Total | 100% | 94 |

EMPLOYEE STATUS

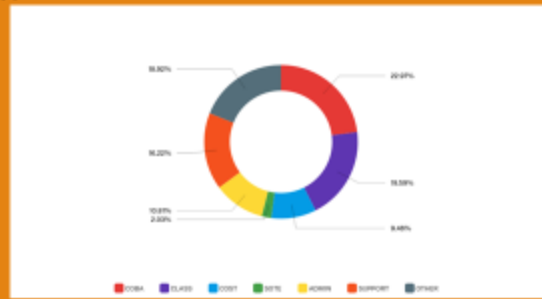
The majority of participants were employed at the university full-time.



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|-----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Full-time | 84.77% | 118 |
| 2 | Part-time | 14.57% | 22 |
| 3 | Visiting | 0.66% | 1 |
| | Total | 100% | 151 |

DEPARTMENT

The majority of respondents were from COBA



| # | Answer | % | Count |
|---|---------|--------|-------|
| 1 | COBA | 22.97% | 34 |
| 2 | CLASS | 19.59% | 29 |
| 3 | COST | 9.46% | 14 |
| 4 | SOTE | 2.03% | 3 |
| 5 | ADMIN | 10.81% | 16 |
| 6 | SUPPORT | 16.22% | 24 |
| 7 | OTHER | 18.92% | 28 |
| | Total | 100% | 148 |

Survey Results

ITEMS WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSES OF "NEVER" ON WORKPLACE INCIVILITY SCALE



The results indicate no report of most actions that are physically or directly threatening.

ITEMS WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSES OF "OFTEN" ON WORKPLACE INCIVILITY SCALE CONT...



The results indicate high levels of occurrence of uncivil actions that are indirect in nature. Although, as you can see in the table most responded "NEVER". However, these items had the highest rate of responses of "OFTEN".

ITEMS WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSES ON COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION SCALE



Items with high levels of use included:

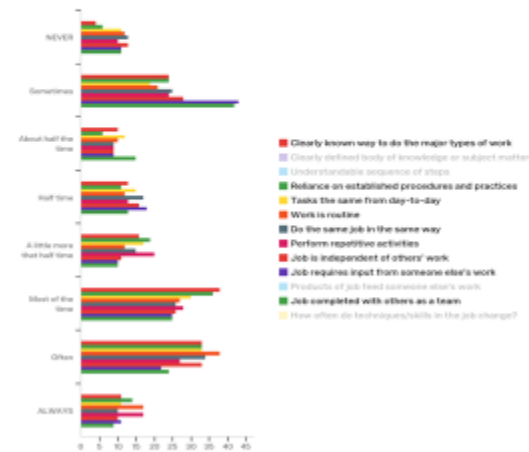
- Coordinate activities of projects
- Schedule meetings/appointments
- Monitor progress of projects
- Send a message in place of a phone call
- Distribute/provide information
- Keep a record of interactions/agreements
- Seek task information from people I know
- Give and receive feedback on reports and ideas
- Seek task information from people I know
- Send/receive directions concerning files or programs
- Take a break from my work
- Put up the files
- Learn about event/things
- Participate in entertaining events or conversations
- Have in touch/informal relationships
- Organize/coordinate a social activity
- Send/receive directions for information
- Participate on a topic
- Ask questions in a public setting
- Discuss confidential matters
- Get to know someone
- Carry on a negotiations/bargaining
- Discuss confidential matters
- Enter problems

Items with low levels of use included:

- Participate in entertaining events or conversations
- Poll opinions on a topic
- Ask questions in a public setting
- Get to know someone
- Carry on a negotiations/bargaining
- Discuss confidential matters

The results indicate that computer mediated communication is being applied significantly in the organizational environment. Mostly for tasks related to day-to-day processes and minimally to almost never for inappropriate uses.

ITEMS WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSES ON PERCEIVED TASK INTERDEPENDENCE SCALE



The results on this scale measure the extent to which computer mediated communication is being applied over other communication options to the following types of tasks. Results indicate that computer mediated communication is being used significantly in the organizational environment to perform repetitive and collaborative day-to-day processes and work related tasks.

ITEMS WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSES ON PERCIVED USEFULNESS SCALE

The results from this scale indicate that computer mediated communication is generally viewed as useful with regard to the completion of tasks.



ITEMS WITH SIGNIFICANT RESPONSES ON PERCIVED EASE OF USE SCALE

The results from this scale indicate that computer mediated communication is generally viewed as fairly simplistic to use with regard to the completion of tasks.



Relationships Identified between variables

Relationships Identified

(based assessment of preliminary results)

- NO relationship exists between **computer mediated communication use** and **workplace incivility**.
- There is a significant relationship between the extent to which computer mediated communication is being used to complete tasks (measured by the **perceived task interdependence scale**) and **computer mediated communication use**.
- A significant relationship exists between **perceived ease of use** and **computer mediated communication use**.
- A significant relationship exists between **employee classification** (i.e. faculty, staff, administrator) and **computer mediated communication use**.

Summary of Findings

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS (DEMOGRAPHICS)

- With regard to the demographics of participants, most were:
 - Female 61.70%
 - African American 67.76%
 - Age 36 to 41 19.87%
 - Employed for 5 years or less 55.26%
 - Staff 55.33%
 - Non-tenured faculty 80.00%
 - Faculty in tenured track positions 57.45%
 - Full-time employees 84.77%
 - Work in COBA 22.97%

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

(Survey Results)

- Actions that are physically or directly threatening generally do not occur.
- However, uncivil actions that are indirect in nature often occur.
- Computer mediated communication is being applied significantly in the organizational environment to complete day-to-day processes and is almost never used inappropriately.
- Computer mediated communication is being used significantly in the organizational environment to perform repetitive and collaborative day-to-day processes and work related tasks.
- Computer mediated communication is generally viewed as useful with regard to the completion of tasks.
- Computer mediated communication is generally viewed as fairly simplistic to use with regard to the completion of tasks.

Proposed Action Plan

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

| OBJECTIVES <i>What is the goal?</i> | PROPOSED ACTION <i>What needs to be done to achieve the goal?</i> | TASKS <i>What are the associated tasks?</i> | TARGET GROUP <i>Who does the action focus on?</i> | PARTICIPANTS <i>Who needs to be involved in implementation?</i> | SUCCESS CRITERIA <i>How will we determine if the goal has been achieved?</i> | TIME FRAME <i>How long should the task take to complete?</i> | RESOURCES <i>What is needed to apply the proposed action?</i> |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| Decrease occurrences of Workplace Incivility. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness of the organization's mission, vision and strategic plan. Revise the organization strategic plan as needed to adjust to organizational needs. Increase awareness of what workplace incivility is and why it should not occur in the workplace. Implement organizational core values. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hire a Business consultant to make recommendations on how to promote awareness of workplace incivility in the organizational environment. Train employees on the organizational mission, vision, and strategic plan. Work collaboratively with employees to develop the strategic plan. | All employees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources University Administrators Supervisory Staff Department Heads Deans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a follow-up employee survey to evaluate occurrences of workplace incivility. | TBD | Business Consultant Training Facilitator |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|---|--|-----|---|
| | recognition program. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an organizational Code of Conduct. Conduct a mandatory training for all employees on workplace incivility and the Code of Conduct. Implement the organizational Code of Conduct. Implement an internal branding campaign to promote the Code of Conduct, Core Values, mission and vision. Enforce the organizational Code of Conduct. Reintroduce organizational Core Values. Recognize outstanding employees by a maximum of yearly. | | | | | |
| Promote Collaborative Leadership | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a mandatory leadership training for all supervisory staff and administrators. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hire a Business consultant to make recommendations on how to promote collaborative | Supervisory Staff Administrators Department Heads Deans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct periodic surveys for employees to evaluate their | TBD | Business Consultant Training Facilitator |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|-----|---|
| | 2. Implement a university leadership recognition program for organizational leaders including supervisory staff, deans, and department chairs. | <p>leadership in the organizational environment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Contact outside authority on leadership to conduct leadership training workshop (s). Recognize outstanding leadership a minimum of yearly. | | | immediate supervisor (s). | | |
| Promote Face-to-face collaboration across organizational departments | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Require a representative from all affected departments to serve on project implementation committees. Require a minimum number of face-to-face meetings for all departments and project related committees (including those implementing new processes, policies, procedures, etc.) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hire a business consultant to make recommendations on how to promote collaboration <u>in</u> the organizational environment. Contact outside authority to conduct training on collaborating in the work environment. Host quarterly or at minimum yearly university team building events. | Supervisory Staff Administrators Department Heads Deans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources University Administrators Supervisory Staff Department Heads Deans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of meeting minutes for university, college, and departmental meetings to evaluate attendance and participation. | TBD | Business Consultant Training Facilitator |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---------------|--|--|-----|-------------------|
| Promote Higher Levels of Employee Satisfaction | 1. Implement mechanisms to evaluate employee perception of the organizational environment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hire a consultant to develop an appropriate employee opinion survey and analyze results. Conduct periodic surveys on overall employee satisfaction. Communicate proposed action plans based on findings. Implement action plan to promote enhanced levels of employee satisfaction. Implement benchmarks to evaluate success. Report employee satisfaction results. | All employees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Resources University Administrators | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct employee opinion survey a minimum of yearly to examine progress with regard to improving employee perceptions of the organizational environment. | TBD | Survey Consultant |
|--|---|--|---------------|--|--|-----|-------------------|

THANK YOU FOR REVIEWING THESE
RESULTS

Please give your feedback on the proposed
action plan by clicking the link below:

[https://savannahstateedu.co1.qualtrics.com/
jfe/form/SV_a5ZajjKykEyo2KV](https://savannahstateedu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_a5ZajjKykEyo2KV)

Appendix H. Figures and Graphs

Figure 2.0 Understanding Workplace Incivility in Higher Education

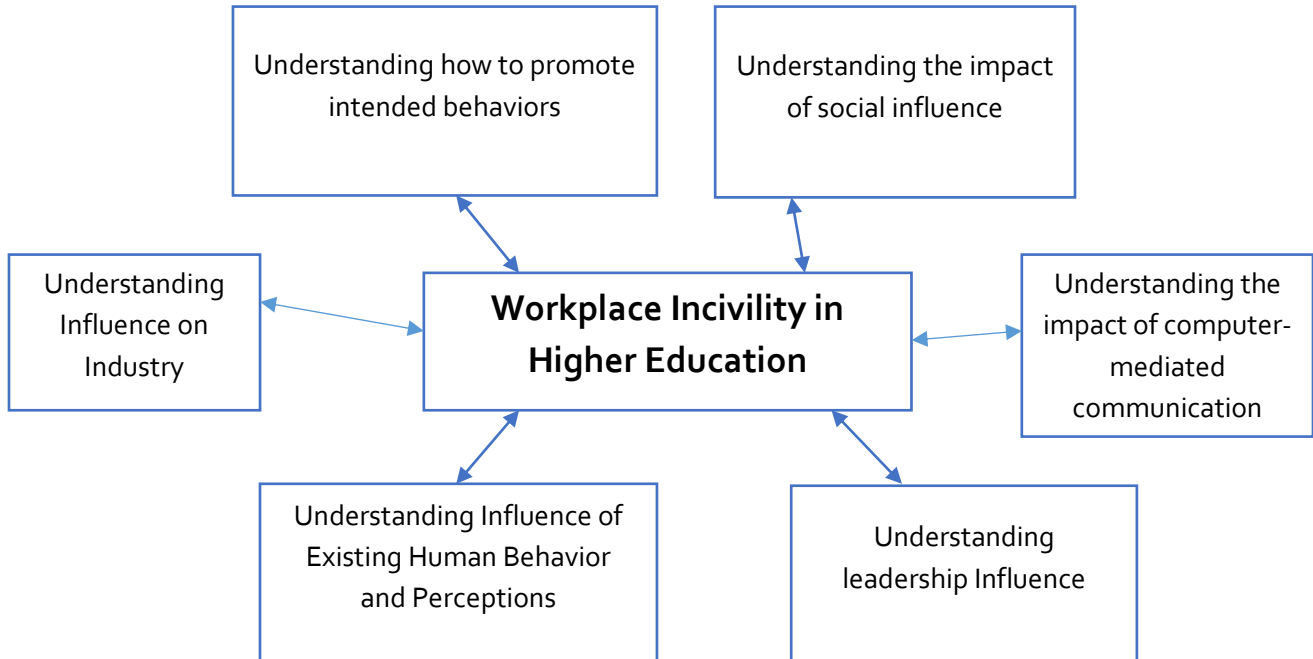
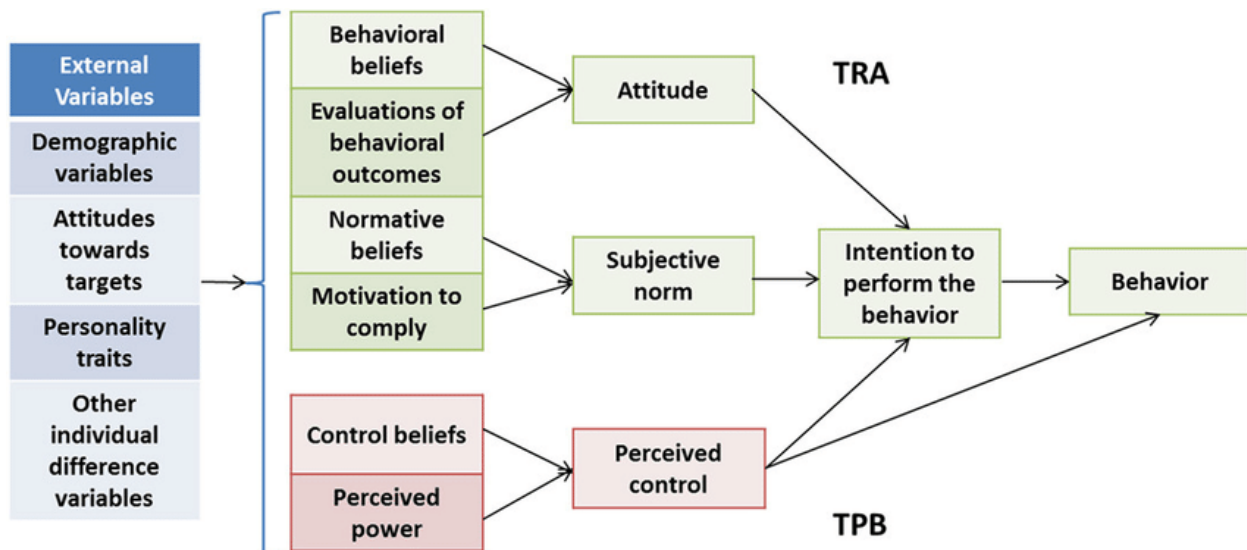
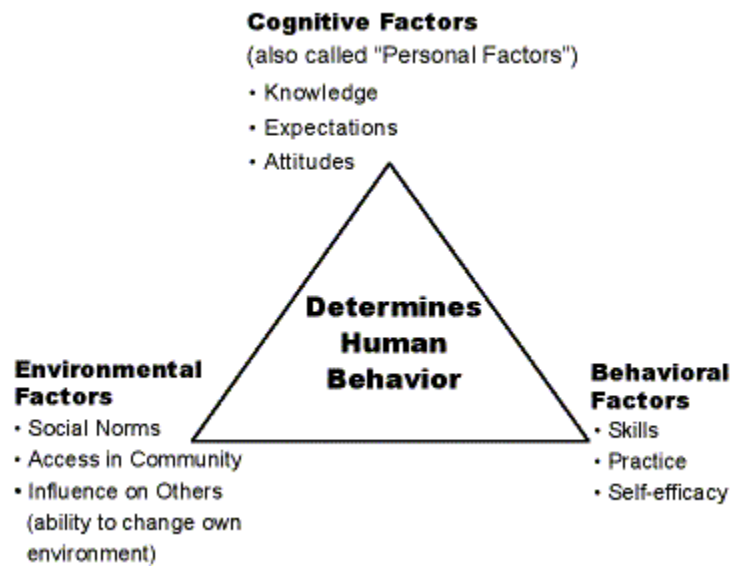


Figure 2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior



The theory of reasoned action and planned behavior. Revised from Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice [(65), 4th ed., pp. 67–96].

Figure 2.2 Social Learning Theory



(Social Learning Theory, 1977)

Figure 2.3 Technology Acceptance Model

