

## Toward a More Inclusive Picture of Incivility in the College Classroom: Data from Different Types of Institutions and Academic Majors

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The focus of classroom incivility research thus far has been at the individual discipline and large public or specialty institution level, which limits the generalizability of findings. Surveying undergraduates (N = 150) at different types of schools (2-year public, 4-year public and 4-year private) and majors on their perceptions of incivility in college classrooms found that older students and students planning on attending graduate school rate uncivil behaviors as more serious, and white students who are not gun owners are more likely to report seeing such behaviors more frequently. Suggestions for future research and novel methods to reduce incivility are discussed.

Incivility in the college classroom has been a long-standing topic of research. Boice's (1996) work on this topic is seen as a call to action for the field, and, indeed, there has been a consistent stream of research on incivility since that time. Notwithstanding the longevity of the concept, it is characterized as an area that is under-researched within the literature (Ausbrooks, Jones & Tijerina, 2011; Black, Wygonik & Frey, 2011) despite claims of increasing instances of incivility in the classroom (Alberts, Hazen & Theobald, 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Lashley & DeMeneses, 2001).

Classroom incivility is defined as classroom disruption that is disrespectful or undesirable in nature (Alberts et al., 2010; Clark & Springer, 2007b; Nordstrom, Bartles, & Bucy, 2009). Factor analysis of uncivil behaviors typically yields two factors based on a continuum of active to passive expression of the incivility. Caboni, Hirschy, and Best (2004), for example, factor analyzed uncivil behaviors into categories of "disrespectful disruption" and "insolent inattention" (active to passive expression of the incivility, respectively). Similarly, Meyers, Bender, Hill, and Thomas (2006) confirmed the two-factor active/passive categorization. The first type of student incivility, "inattentive conflict," is characterized as generally passive in nature, such as absence from class, lateness to class, or lack of attentiveness in class. While Meyers et al. (2006) did not specifically determine the prevalence of such behaviors in their sample, other research (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2010; Lashley & DeMeneses, 2001) indicates that the most common incivility incidents fall within this type. The second type of student incivility, "hostile conflict," is more active and vocal on the part of the student, such as complaining about assignments or arguing with the instructor. Some researchers (Clark & Springer, 2007a; Lashley & DeMeneses, 2001) also note increasingly aggressive and potentially violent acts such as verbal and physical altercations, which would certainly fall within the "hostile conflict" type. While this subset of "hostile conflict" behaviors is not necessarily rare, it is

the least common of the uncivil behaviors by frequency. Faculty in Lashley and DeMeneses' (2001) research, for example, reported these behaviors as problematic but least frequent in their sample, occurring 24.8 to 65.8% of the time compared to "inattentive conflict" behaviors which were reported 84.4 to 100% of the time; Ausbrooks et al. (2011) similarly reported that verbal and physical attacks and threats were among the least frequent uncivil behaviors. In her review of the incivility literature, Knepp (2012) reiterates the two-type categorization in discussing the behaviors into more and less serious categories. Although untested, in their review of the incivility literature, Burke, Karl, Peluchette, and Evans (2014) proposed a different typology that included factors of intensity and disruption that range along a continuum from high to low as a way to conceptualize all the ways that incivility can manifest.

The research on incivility in the college classroom has also identified a variety of factors related to incivility (see Burke et al., 2014 and Knepp, 2012 for overviews). One contributing factor could be considered to be societal in nature and has included discussion on generational shifts that foster increased entitlement (Alberts et al., 2010; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Lippmann, Bulanda, & Bagenaar, 2009; Nordstrom et al., 2009) and narcissism (Lippmann et al., 2009; Nordstrom et al., 2009). Burke et al. (2014) and Knepp (2012) also discuss the uses of technology as additional societal and generational differences that may explain incivility in the classroom. Yet another contributing factor in this category has included discussion on the greater societal acceptance of incivility in general (Lippmann et al., 2009). Lawrence (2017) discussed how in this era of campus protests, careful consideration of incivility is necessary as institutions grapple with issues of free speech and student protests, which are often misunderstood by both students (Goldberg, 2018) and administrators (Lawrence, 2017) faced with such issues on campus. Adding to the complexity of this issue, Ben-Porath (2017) asserts that principles of academic

freedom must also be considered when specifically considering civility in the classroom. Greater societal acceptance of incivility as a potential driver for classroom—or, more broadly, campus—incivility has led both to related discussions on the appropriate institutional responses to such incivility on campus (e.g., Ben-Porath, 2017; Lawrence, 2017) and actions on the part of institutions of higher education to address such behaviors. Fordham University, for example, has a ban on using email to mock or insult others (Campbell & Manning, 2014), and New York University bans mocking others in the classroom (Lukianoff, 2014). The multitude of potential factors in this arena make it clear that while incivility in the classroom is an institutional phenomenon, it is also impacted by forces outside the educational environment.

Another factor to incivility in the classroom, however, focuses more closely on the education environment itself. Discussion has included the increasing consumerism of education (Lippmann et al., 2009; Nordstrom et al., 2009), the increasing rates of students with psychiatric issues (Burke et al., 2014; Knepp, 2012), the impact of class size (Alberts et al., 2010; Hirschy & Braxton, 2004; Indiana University Center of Survey Research, 2000; Lashley & De Meneses, 2001), teaching formats (Meyers et al., 2006), and the educational level of the students as a proxy for investment in the education (Meyers et al., 2006; Nordstrom et al., 2009) as causative factors in this realm.

Finally, a third factor focuses on demographic aspects of both students who engage in uncivil behavior and faculty who are targets of incivility. In terms of students, males in general (Caboni et al., 2004; Indiana University Center of Survey Research, 2000; Nordstrom et al., 2009) and, more specifically, males with Greek life involvement (Caboni et al., 2004) have been identified as more likely to behave in uncivil ways. The intersection of gender and political affiliation has also been explored. Verrecchia and Hendrix (2018) examined how college students feel about their fellow students and faculty members carrying concealed firearms on campus. Using a sample of over 1,000 students ( $n=1,126$ ) at one college and one university in the eastern United States, they found that the majority of students (52.5%) felt that qualified students and faculty members should not be allowed to carry concealed firearms on campus, and most (53.5%) would feel unsafe under those conditions, making it a potential incivility since perceptions of safety can negatively impact the learning environment. Those who support concealed carry on campus tended to be politically conservative white males who are gun owners (Verrecchia & Hendrix, 2018). In terms of faculty who experience incivility, the literature is mixed. Burke et al. (2014), for example, argues that faculty behaviors, not demographics, are the causative

factors in incivility, but Knepp's (2012) review of the literature counters this claim.

The harmful impacts of incivility on students has also been examined. The harmful impacts on the learning process range from distraction and annoyance (Ausbrooks et al., 2011) to students' belief about their academic achievement (Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). It appears that incivilities by other students may also lead to other students also behaving in an uncivil manner (Ausbrooks et al., 2011). Impacts of incivility may also reach far beyond the specific classroom environment or relationship with a single faculty member. Although not experimentally tested, Hirschy and Braxton (2004) propose that student incivility may affect the retention of students at the institution where the incivilities take place. While no data was provided with which to understand if and to what extent this might impact retention rates, a significant portion of the discussion sections of the incivility literature (e.g., Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Braxton & Bayer, 2004; Caboni et al., 2004; Hirschy & Braxton, 2004; Lippmann et al., 2009) is devoted to strategies that faculty (and institutions) should implement to reduce incivilities in the classroom.

While there is general agreement on definition, type, factors, and potential harm to students related to incivility, the literature has diverged in terms of how to study incivility. Since Boice's 1996 article, some research (e.g., Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Clark & Springer, 2007a; Clark & Springer, 2007b; Rowland & Srisukho, 2009) has focused on both student and faculty perceptions of incivility, albeit in specific disciplines (social work, nursing, and dental programs, respectively). While faculty and student perceptions are not always compared (e.g., Clark & Springer, 2007a; Clark & Springer, 2007b), when the two groups are compared (e.g., Ausbrooks, et al., 2011; Rowland & Srisukho, 2009), results indicate that students tend to rate incivility as both more serious and frequent than faculty. Rather than comparing students and faculty, however, more researchers have focused separately on either faculty (e.g., Alberts et al., 2010; Black, et al., 2011; Indiana University Center for Survey Research, 2000; Lampman, Phelps, Bancroft, & Beneke, 2009; Lashley & DeMeneses, 2001; Meyers, et al., 2006; Shepherd, Shepherd, & True, 2008; Swinney, Elder, & Seaton, 2010) or students (e.g., Bjorklund & Rehling, 2010; Caboni et al., 2004; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Paik & Broedel-Zaugg, 2006). Regardless of which group (faculty or students) is the target of the research, the majority of the researchers have focused primarily on gauging the seriousness and/or the frequency of uncivil behaviors.

### **Review of the Literature on Student Perceptions of Incivility**

Clark and Springer (2007a) used the Incivility in Nursing Education (INE) survey to determine what

behaviors nursing students perceived as uncivil and to what extent these behaviors were seen as problematic. They surveyed 324 nursing students and 36 nursing faculty at a public university in the Northwestern United States. Using a Likert scale from 1 (always) to 4 (never), respondents were asked to rate behaviors in terms of severity of incivility and then to rank the frequency of the uncivil behaviors on a Likert scale from 1 (often) to 4 (never). "Cheating on examinations or quizzes" was ranked as the most severe uncivil behavior, with 82.4% of the sample saying that it was always uncivil. "Arriving to class late" was seen as the most frequently occurring uncivil behavior with 31.1% percent of the sample saying that it happens often. The most uncivil behavior, ("Cheating on examinations or quizzes," ranked number 1 out of 16 uncivil behaviors) was the second most infrequent (ranked 15 out of 16). Meanwhile, the most frequent uncivil behavior, "Arriving to class late," was ranked toward the bottom (12 out of 16) in terms of seriousness.

Ausbrooks et al. (2011) had 28 social work students from a public university in the Southwestern United States rank uncivil classrooms behaviors in terms of seriousness and frequency, as well as provide a list of the three most troublesome and frequent behaviors and students' preferences on how to address the incivility. Students rated 25 behaviors using a 4- point Likert scale for seriousness and frequency, with higher numbers corresponding to more problematic and frequent behaviors. Verbal attacks on other students were rated as the most serious behavior ( $M = 3.4$ ), and eating was rated as the most frequent behavior ( $M = 3.6$ ). Students identified "texting," "computer use," and "talking to other students at inappropriate times" (Ausbrooks et al., 2011, p. 265) as the most problematic behaviors, and they indicated the largest preference for addressing the issue to be discussing the issue in private with the offending student.

Bjorklund and Rehling (2010) surveyed 3,616 students at a Midwestern public university to determine what behaviors are considered uncivil and how frequently these behaviors occurred. The participants were asked to rank 25 student behaviors using a Likert scale from 1 (not uncivil) to 5 (extremely uncivil) and then to rate how frequently they observed these behaviors from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently). Respondents reported that a student talking after being asked by a professor to stop was perceived by students as the most severe uncivil behavior ( $M = 4.5$ ), and students using their cell phones to text message was the most frequent uncivil behavior ( $M = 4.0$ ). Interestingly, text messaging in class was ranked 10th on the list of severity, which supports previous research (Lashley & DeMeneses, 2001) which indicates that generally lower-level incivilities are most frequently experienced in the classroom.

Nordstrom et al. (2009) surveyed 593 undergraduate students from a large Midwestern university and asked them to rate appropriateness and frequency of uncivil behaviors in the classroom using Likert scales from 1 (very inappropriate) to 7 (very appropriate) and 1 (never) to 7 (often) respectively. The group level data for these ratings were not reported but were instead used to predict whether ratings of incivility appropriateness predicted uncivil behavior. Analyses indicated that attitudes toward incivility, as well as measures of consumerism and narcissism were highly predictive of engaging in uncivil behavior, accounting for 34, 4, and 1% of the variance in the stepwise regression analysis respectively.

Paik and Broedel-Zaugg (2006) surveyed over 130 pharmacy school students at three different points over the course of a four-year period in a six-year program. In general, the same pattern of high-frequency behaviors being typically low-level incivilities was supported in this research. This research provided new information to the literature as well, however, as it is the only study that has followed students over time. Here, students found cheating, sarcastic remarks/gestures, and eating and drinking to be less uncivil than what they perceived them to be in their first year, but conversely, they found shuffling papers/packing up and dominating class discussions to be more uncivil than they did in their first year.

Rowland and Srisukho (2009) surveyed 127 third and fourth-year dental students. Males were more likely than females to endorse items related to challenging a faculty member and consumerism. Interestingly, males were more likely to endorse sleeping in class as more uncivil than females.

Taking a slightly different approach, Caboni et al., (2004) surveyed 214 students from a Research I Carnegie classification university to determine students' perceptions of the appropriateness of uncivil behaviors and therefore their belief of whether such behaviors should be addressed. Participants were asked to rank the inappropriateness of behaviors belonging to either the 'disrespectful disruption' or 'insolent inattention' category using a Likert scale from 1 (very inappropriate) to 9 (very appropriate) with a cutoff of 3.5 set as the point at which inappropriate behavior should not be ignored. Interestingly, students rated the more passive "insolent attention" category, but *not* the more active "disrespectful disruption" category as deserving of attention when such behaviors occur.

At the current time, the literature on student perceptions of incivility is fragmented by focus (frequency, severity, predictive ability, and student perceptions of faculty management of incivility), scope (discipline-specific or general), and range (up to this point, all students have come from either large public education or very specific settings (e.g., dental and pharmacy schools). The interest in understanding

Table 1  
*Participant Demographics (N = 148)*

Demographic	Type of School		
	2-year (n=82)	4-year public (n=24)	4-year private (n=44)
Sex			
Male	23	7	3
Female	59	17	41
Race			
Asian	2	0	0
Black	5	2	0
Latino/a	3	1	0
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	0	1
White	69	18	42
Other	2	3	1
Year in School			
Freshman	36	4	5
Sophomore	42	7	10
Junior	3	4	12
Senior	0	9	15
Graduate Student	1	0	2
Academic Major			
Natural Sciences	7	1	6
Social Sciences	20	13	11
Humanities	3	0	1
Engineering	3	0	1
Business	7	1	5
Other	42	9	20
Student Status			
Full time	58	21	40
Part time	24	3	4
Planning on Graduate School			
Strongly Disagree	6	2	2
Disagree	10	1	8
Neither Agree nor Disagree	24	6	8
Agree	22	6	10
Strongly Agree	20	9	16
Work Status			
31+ hours per week	21	7	4
10-30 hours per week	38	4	18
Less than 10 hours per week	8	0	10
Do not work	15	3	12
Greek Involvement			
Fraternity Member	1	0	1
Sorority Member	0	1	3
None	81	23	40
Typical Class Size			
Under 20 students	24	6	26
Over 20 students	58	18	18
Own a Gun			
Yes	11	2	7
No	71	22	37

Note: Difference from reported *N* are due to incomplete data

incivility is international in scope (e.g., Aliakbari & Hajizadeh, 2018), and yet only certain types of students in the United States, where a majority of the incivility research has been conducted, have been included in the research. The complete absence of community college students from the incivility research is puzzling given the prominence that community colleges now play in the educational landscape. Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2013), for example, report that community colleges account for 40% of all students enrolled in higher education, and recent governmental statistics (US Department of Education, 2017) report that 29% of all undergraduates attended community colleges in the 2015-16 academic year. The review by Burke et al. (2014) highlighted the need to understand the prevalence of incivility by discipline and also to consider both personal and situational factors that are important predictors of incivility.

This study is designed to address those specific calls for research. We surveyed students from a variety of disciplines and institutions to gauge their thoughts about the prevalence and seriousness of classroom incivilities. As such, the current study will be the first to examine student perceptions about academic incivility across both discipline and institution types while also attending to important contributing demographic factors that have been identified in the literature. It was hypothesized that ratings of frequency and severity of incivility would be similar to previous research. While this data will confirm the narrative about academic incivility that is in the literature, the analyses of students from different types of institutions and majors are the true addition to the existing literature, as neither of these aspects has been studied up to this point. There is no guiding literature on these variables; the three studies that surveyed students from potentially more than one major (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2010; Caboni et al., 2004; Nordstrom et al., 2009) neither reported nor included academic major as a variable in their analyses, and to our knowledge, no published research of incivility includes community college students in its sample. As such, the inclusion of both these variables is exploratory in nature.

## Method

### Participants

One hundred and eighty students from three institutions (4-year Pennsylvania private, 4-year Pennsylvania public, and 2-year Maryland public) in the mid-Atlantic region completed surveys, but 32 participants demonstrated inconsistent responding to

two embedded validity checks and were removed from further analysis. The average age of our sample was 22.72 ( $SD=7.2$ ). Most of our sample (23.6%) were 19 years of age, and our sample ranged from 18 years of age to 61 years of age. Our sample was overwhelmingly White (86%) and female (77%). Table 1 provides data related to common areas of interest about participant demographics within the classroom civility literature by institution type.

### Materials

We obtained permission to use two commonly cited surveys (i.e., the *Classroom Civility and Teaching Practices* survey, Black et al., 2011, and the *Incivility Survey*, Indiana University Center for Survey Research, 2000) for use in the research. We took 17 items from these surveys and three additional items from others' (e.g., Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2010; Swinney et al., 2010) work on incivility. Based on research (Verrecchia & Hendrix, 2018) that indicated gun owners favor carrying a concealed firearm on college campuses, we added one additional item that queried about perceptions of carrying guns on campus as it relates to incivility. These items asked students to rate uncivil behaviors on a Likert scale for seriousness (1 = Not at all serious to 7 = Very serious) and frequency (1 = Infrequently (once a semester or less) to 4 = Frequently (at least once a week). Two validity check items were also embedded in the survey to counter inconsistent responding, and one open-ended question was included at the end of the survey to allow students to enter additional uncivil behaviors that had not been included, resulting in a 24-item survey (see Table 2).

### Procedure

Students were recruited electronically at their respective institutions. Requests for participation were sent from each campus's electronic communication system with a link to the survey, which used the *Qualtrics* survey platform. Students from both 4-year institutions were recruited in the first two weeks of the spring semester. Due to the timing of IRB approval and limitations for data collection placed on us by the 2-year institution, however, only students enrolled in courses from the Behavioral and Social Sciences division, which encompasses courses from 11 different disciplines, were approved to participate in the research at the 2-year institution, and recruitment took place in mid-March. The order of question presentation for the 23 Likert-response items was randomized. All data were analyzed using *SPSS*.

Table 2  
*Classroom Incivility Survey*

Instructions: The following items relate to behaviors that may be seen in a college setting. While most of these items are related to behaviors that take place during class, please also consider the time in the classroom immediately before and after class and office hours.

On a scale of 1-7, how serious would you consider the following student behaviors? On a scale of 1-4, how often do you observe the following student behaviors?

1. Sleeping during class<sup>1,2</sup>
2. Using a computer for tasks unrelated to class period<sup>1,2</sup>
3. Arriving late or leaving early or stopping work ('packing up' before class is over)<sup>1,2</sup>
4. Getting up during class (can include leaving and returning to class, discarding trash, etc.)<sup>3</sup>
5. Dominating class discussions<sup>1,2</sup>
6. Using vulgarity/cursing<sup>1,2</sup>
7. Challenging faculty position (this can include questioning faculty knowledge or the value of an assignment/activity or other challenges, such as reluctance/refusal to answer direct questions)<sup>1,2</sup>
8. Verbally harassing/making offensive/disrespectful comments to faculty or other students (this can include groans/sighs, sarcastic comments, etc.)<sup>1,2</sup>
9. Physically attacking faculty or other students<sup>2</sup>
10. Sending inappropriate emails to faculty<sup>1,2</sup>
11. Making threats to faculty or other students<sup>1,2</sup>
12. For validation purposes, please choose '3'
13. Phone use (ringing, talking, texting, using apps, etc.) during class<sup>1,2</sup>
14. Talking/fidgeting that distracts other students or faculty<sup>1,2</sup>
15. Engaging in non-class related activity such as reading the newspaper, doing homework/studying/reading for other classes during class<sup>2</sup>
16. Coming to class under the influence of drugs or alcohol<sup>3</sup>
17. For validation purposes, please choose '5'
18. Not paying attention/taking notes/acting bored/apathetic<sup>1</sup>
19. Joking inappropriately<sup>4</sup>
20. Cutting class<sup>1</sup>
21. Plagiarism/cheating on assignments, exams or quizzes<sup>1</sup>
22. Demanding make-up exams, extensions, grade changes, or special treatment<sup>1</sup>
23. Carrying a gun on campus
24. Other: Open response

Note: Question presentation for the 23 Likert-response items was randomized. 1 = item from the *Incivility Survey* (Indiana University Center for Survey Research, 2000); 2 = item from *Classroom Civility and Teaching Practices* survey (Black et al., 2011); 3 = item from both Bjorklund & Rehling, 2010 and Swinney et al., 2010; 4 = item from Ausbrooks et al., 2011.

## Results

Table 3 presents data for students' perceptions of the seriousness and frequency of various classroom behaviors. Over half of our sample rated the following behaviors as very serious: physically attacking faculty or other students (82.4%); making threats to faculty or other students (79.7%); carrying a gun on campus (67.6%); plagiarism/cheating on assignments, exams or quizzes (57.4%); sending inappropriate emails to faculty (56.8%); verbally harassing/ making offensive/disrespectful comments to faculty or other students (54.7%); and coming to class under the influence of drugs or alcohol (52.7%).

Using our demographic data as independent variables, we then combined these results into a

seriousness index to use as one of our dependent variables. The index would range from a low of 22 (each behavior was not serious at all) to a high of 154 (every behavior was very serious). The mean score on the serious index was 98.52 ( $SD=26.36$ ). The Cronbach's alpha for this index was a robust .931.

Our survey also asked respondents to rate the same 22 behaviors on how often they occurred in a college classroom. Over a quarter of our sample observed the following behaviors occurring frequently: phone use (ringing, talking, texting, using apps, etc..., 41.2%) and getting up during class (leaving and returning, discarding class, 25.7%). Similar to past research, the serious uncivil behaviors listed above were also the least frequent. The most serious behaviors (physically attacking faculty or

Table 3  
*Student Perceptions of Classroom Incivility Ranked by Seriousness and Frequency*

Behavior	Seriousness		Frequency	
	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>
Physically attacking faculty/students	6.10	(2.07)	1.11	(0.44)
Making threats to faculty/students	6.10	(2.03)	1.13	(0.39)
Plagiarism/cheating	5.80	(1.86)	1.65	(0.78)
Sending inappropriate emails	5.79	(2.00)	1.11	(0.33)
Carrying a gun on campus	5.68	(2.27)	1.11	(0.37)
Coming to class under the influence	5.62	(1.98)	1.48	(0.77)
Verbally harassing/offensive/disrespectful comments	5.61	(2.09)	1.41	(0.74)
Challenging faculty position	4.65	(2.05)	1.53	(0.74)
Demanding make-up exams	4.53	(1.97)	1.63	(0.84)
Joking inappropriately	4.21	(1.95)	1.81	(0.84)
Sleeping during class	4.09	(2.00)	1.72	(0.79)
Talking/fidgeting that distracts others	4.00	(1.80)	2.22	(1.05)
Phone use	3.94	(1.83)	2.93	(1.07)
Cutting class	3.84	(2.06)	2.31	(1.00)
Engaging in non-class related activities	3.64	(1.73)	2.34	(0.95)
Using vulgarity/cursing	3.60	(1.96)	2.29	(1.11)
Arriving late or leaving early	3.59	(1.87)	2.63	(0.99)
Not paying attention	3.49	(1.71)	2.64	(1.02)
Using a computer for tasks unrelated to class	3.47	(1.71)	2.42	(1.06)
Dominating class discussions	3.19	(1.60)	2.05	(0.96)
Getting up during class	2.43	(1.58)	2.65	(1.05)

students and making threats to faculty or students) were the least frequent (93.2 and 89.2% ranked these behaviors as infrequent, respectively).

We combined these results into a frequency index to use as our other dependent variable. The index would range from a low of 22 (once a semester or less or each behavior) to a high of 88 (at least once a week). The mean score was 43.13 ( $SD=10.71$ ). The Cronbach's alpha for this index was a robust .903.

We then dichotomized our dependent variables in order to run logistic regression models because our goal is to predict the probability of membership in one of two groups for each index. These behaviors are seen as either serious or not, and these behaviors occur infrequently or frequently. Logistic regression does not require stringent assumptions about the distribution of the predictor variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), and we wanted to learn what combinations of our twelve independent variables would accurately predict the probability of perceiving the seriousness and frequency of these uncivil behaviors in a college classroom.

A logistic regression model was created to determine which independent variables were predictors of perceptions of the seriousness of uncivil behaviors in a college classroom.

Regression results for the first model indicate that the overall model was not statistically reliable (Model  $\chi^2(12)=13.916$ ,  $p > .05$ ). The model for our first dependent variable correctly predicted 61.5% of the responses. This first model revealed that older students were more likely to see these behaviors as serious ( $\beta=.338$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and they were almost one and a half times more likely to see these behaviors as serious than younger students ( $\text{Exp}(B)=1.403$ ). Additionally, students who are planning on attending graduate school were more likely to see these behaviors as serious than students who are not planning on attending graduate school ( $\beta=.261$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and they were almost over one and a quarter times more likely to see these behaviors as serious ( $\text{Exp}(B)=1.298$ ). The results of the first model can be found in Table 4.

A second logistic regression model was created to determine which independent variables were predictors of perceptions of the frequency of uncivil behaviors in a college classroom.

Regression results for the first model indicate that the overall model was statistically reliable (Model  $\chi^2(12)=22.412$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The model for our second dependent variable correctly predicted 63.5% of the responses. This second model revealed that white students were more likely to see these behaviors

Table 4  
*Logistic Regression Results for Seriousness of Uncivil Behaviors*

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Race	-.140	.207	.459	1	.575	.869
Age	-.004	.027	.020	1	.767	.996
Sex	.254	.446	.324	1	.228	1.289
Major	.146	.094	2.398	1	.443	1.157
Year in School*	.338	.208	2.647	1	.045	1.403
Graduate School*	.261	.147	3.148	1	.049	1.298
Type of School	.062	.262	.056	1	.112	1.064
Student Status	.263	.465	.321	1	.974	1.301
Work Status	.040	.176	.053	1	.986	1.041
Greek Involvement	-.307	.646	.225	1	.514	.736
Class Size	-.194	.375	.269	1	.203	.823
Own a Gun	.780	.569	.725	1	.189	2.183
Constant	-2.655	3.117	.725	1	.394	.070
Model Chi-Square	13.916					
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> .120						

Note: \*  $p < .05$

frequently ( $\beta=.563$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and they were almost two times more likely to see these behaviors as occurring frequently than students of color ( $\text{Exp}(B)=1.755$ ). Students who are not gun owners were more likely to see these behaviors as occurring more frequently than gun owners ( $\beta=1.321$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and they were almost over four times more likely to see these behaviors as occurring frequently ( $\text{Exp}(B)=3.746$ ). It is noteworthy that the two variables that were significant in our first model approached significance in the second model, year in school ( $\beta=.408$ ,  $p = .066$ ) and planning on attending graduate school ( $\beta=.300$ ,  $p = .05$ ), and in the same direction. The results of the second model can be found in Table 5.

### Discussion

This is the first study to heed Burke et al.'s (2014) recommendation to investigate classroom incivility across different disciplines and institutions for significant predictors of seriousness and frequency of uncivil classroom behaviors. It was hypothesized that ratings of frequency and severity of incivility would be similar to previous research, and, indeed, our findings are similar to previous research about *which* uncivil behaviors are considered the most serious (e.g., Ausbrooks et al., 2011) and frequent (e.g., Clark & Springer, 2007a) in the college/university setting. Our results also reiterate the general finding that while incivility in the college/university is not uncommon, the typical demonstration of incivility is made up of behaviors that are rated as low in seriousness.

The inclusion of institution type and academic major variables were novel additions to the incivility research based on the complete lack of data on these variables and the field's (e.g., Burke et al., 2014) recommendation to actively consider these variables in relation to incivility. This is the first research on student incivility to report on either of these factors beyond a single discipline, and the recommendation in the literature (Burke et al., 2014) to include institution type and academic major is pertinent given the wide range of institutions and types of students engaging in higher education. Because no prior research exists on either academic major or type of institution, the inclusion of the variables was exploratory, and no specific hypotheses were made. Neither institutional type nor academic major were significant predictors in our models for either seriousness or frequency of uncivil behaviors. These results provide preliminary data pursuant to the call for specific research by discipline and academic major and would seem to suggest that issues surrounding incivility are of similar concern at every level and discipline within the college/university setting.

This study is also unique in that it is the first one to combine items from commonly used measures into a student incivility survey for common use. To date, a fair portion of the research on classroom civility has been disseminated in discipline-specific pedagogical journals, which limits the potential reach of the research. There is clear interest in the literature for a standard scale, based on the use and modification of both the *Classroom Civility and Teaching Practices* survey (Black et al., 2011), and the *Incivility Survey*,

Table 5  
*Logistic Regression Results for Frequency of Uncivil Behaviors*

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Race*	.563	.265	4.50	1	.034	1.755
Age	-.042	.034	1.497	1	.221	.959
Sex	.029	.469	.004	1	.951	1.029
Major	-.052	.094	.304	1	.581	.950
Year in School <sup>A</sup>	.408	.222	3.379	1	.066	1.504
Graduate School <sup>A</sup>	.300	.153	3.849	1	.050	1.350
Type of School	-.451	.285	2.496	1	.114	.637
Student Status	.194	.472	.168	1	.681	1.214
Work Status	.175	.189	.849	1	.357	1.191
Greek Involvement	-.499	.675	.546	1	.460	.607
Class Size	.108	.394	.075	1	.784	1.114
Own a Gun*	1.321	.667	3.919	1	.048	3.746
Constant	-5.407	3.583	2.278	1	.131	.004
Model Chi-Square	22.412					
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	.188					

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; <sup>A</sup> $p < .10$

(Indiana University Center for Survey Research, 2000) in the literature. There is overlap between the two scales (11 common items across the scales), so efforts to combine them would be useful. Our research combined the common items from these two oft-cited scales and added other items that had been used in previous research or might be of interest in studying incivility. The indexes we created using items from these surveys yielded very strong alpha coefficients (.931 for seriousness and .903 for frequency, respectively), which further validates these items for use in examining classroom incivility. By publishing the survey in a more general pedagogical journal, it is our hope that it can be used as a tool to collect data that can be compared across disciplines.

While results in relation to academic major and type of institution were not significant, our first model measuring the seriousness of classroom behavior found that both older students and students who are planning on attending graduate school rated the behaviors listed in the survey as more serious instances of incivility when compared to younger students and students who do not intend to attend graduate school. These findings are similar to research (Nordstrom et al., 2009) that found that graduate school-oriented students were less likely to view uncivil behaviors as appropriate, but are contrary to the results of Paik and Broedel-Zaugg (2006), which found that fourth-year students were less likely to view behaviors of cheating, sarcastic remarks/gestures, and eating and drinking as uncivil as compared to when those same students were in their first year. In their discussion, Paik and Broedel-Zaugg (2006) opined that perhaps the students were more comfortable in the setting and knew what actions would

be tolerated by the faculty. Our results, on the other hand, suggest that perhaps older students take their education a little more seriously and are more attuned to behavior that would distract from the learning process. Another possible reason for this finding is that older students should be better socialized to behavior that is both expected and appropriate in a college classroom than younger students who are newly arrived. The findings of our research indicate that factors related to age and investment in education are ripe for further exploration.

In our second model related to the frequency of incivility, only race and owning a gun were significant predictors, with white students and non-gun owners endorsing higher frequencies of perceived uncivil behavior than their comparison groups. In both cases these findings could be due to the skewness of both of those variables; future research should explore the effect of these two variables on the perception of classroom incivility frequency.

This is an exploratory study with methodological limitations. We used a convenience sample with 150 participants; one method to increase response rate in the future would be to incentivize participants. In addition to issues with response rate, our first logistic regression model was not significant, so while we found two predictors of the seriousness of uncivil behavior in a college classroom, our combination of independent variables was not reliable. Other methodological drawbacks include that our sample was heavily skewed towards whites and females and was not representative of the student populations at their respective schools.

In addition to reporting data about the occurrence of incivility in the classroom, the incivility literature is

replete with suggestions for how to reduce incivility. Boice's (1996) seminal article implored faculty to engage in behaviors that convey "warmth, friendliness, and liking" (p. 458), particularly at the beginning of the semester. In their reviews of the literature, both Burke et al. (2014) and Knepp (2012) discuss strategies to combat incivility and reiterate the importance of directly addressing incivility early in the semester, such as through the syllabus. While the importance of clearly stating expectations of student behavior in syllabi is universally accepted, we also know that not all students read the course syllabus and that no single method to reduce incivility will be enough. Our findings related to older and graduate-school bound students provides another method by which incivility can be addressed. Older students and students planning to attend graduate school can be recruited to socialize younger students on appropriate classroom behavior in order to reduce classroom incivility. As an example, inviting older, more serious students to talk to new students about proper classroom behavior in an orientation session where faculty are not present would present civil behavior, not so much as a rule, but as a norm. Based on our results, finding ways to actively involve students might be beneficial and should be explored directly and empirically. To date, the suggestions for addressing incivility have not been empirically investigated to determine whether application of one or more of these suggestions produces a measurable change in either seriousness or frequency of incivility. Clear empirical attention to the numerous suggestions within the literature could clarify best practices so that faculty and institutions could use time and resources wisely.

The growing body of literature points to classroom incivility as not only a serious issue but one that is increasing in its frequency. This research was the first to provide data on students within different academic majors and types of institutions and indicates that perceptions of incivility are generally universal regardless of academic major or type of institution attended. It has provided the field with a survey created from common items used in the literature and has identified potential student factors to harness in order to reduce incivility. Future research on incivility should continue to collect data from students attending different types of schools and majoring in diverse disciplines to best understand this phenomenon.

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