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THE CIVIL BEHAVIOR OF STUDENTS: A SURVEY OF SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

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Many authors regard education as a way of increasing civility in society, and some have implemented interventions to improve civility in schools. However, very little empirical data exist on the extent and nature of students' civil behavior. The present study systematically gathered data from 251 school professionals regarding their perceptions of students' civil and uncivil behaviors. Participants perceived students' civil behaviors as occurring more frequently than uncivil behaviors; however, they also indicated a need to increase civil behavior in schools. They provided suggestions on how to accomplish this goal, which include providing direct instruction, modeling civil behavior, incorporating positive behavior support, and setting rules and expectations. Implications of this study and directions for future research are included.

The increased focus of public education on academics may have minimized the teaching of civil behavior, which was once prevalent in schools (Peck, 2002). Many suggest that civility is fading both as a virtue and as a behavior (Berman, 1998; Boyd, 2006; Burns, 2003; Feldman, 2001; Hinckley, 2000; Kauffman & Burbach, 1997; Leo, 1996; Marks, 1996; Schaefer, 1995; Stover, 1999) and that incivility can lead to violence (Boxer, Edwards-Leeper, Goldstein, Musher-Eizenman, & Dubow, 2003; Forni as quoted in O'Mara, 2008; Mayer, in press; Skiba et al., 2004). Public concern for safe schools combined with anecdotal evidence of decreased civility has focused attention on ways educators can encourage this important social skill.

Civility Defined

The Latin roots of the word, *civis* (citizen) and *civitas* (city), reflect the connection of civility to maintaining a functioning society, implying to some that civilized people are those who are fit both to enjoy the benefits and carry the responsibilities of citizenship (Boyd, 2006; Peck, 2002). As a code of mutually affirmed social behaviors, civility creates order and focuses on the common good of all citizens. The current use of the word embraces courtesy, politeness, consideration, gentility, respect, caring, looking beyond selfishness, or seeking ways to help those in need (Hinckley, 2000). Civility has also been defined simply as decency (Peck) or as the consideration of others within interpersonal relationships (Ferriss, 2002).

Civility in Education

Many suggest that civility in schools and society has declined in recent years (see e.g., Feldman, 2001; Forni, 2002; Leo, 1996; Peck, 2002). American society is unquestionably far from perfect (Mourad, 2001), and although civil behaviors alone cannot produce an instantly perfected society, these behaviors can improve society. Teaching people to behave more civilly is a step toward a more harmonious and positive society; teaching civility in the schools contributes to obtaining this goal (Hatch, 1998). Children of the rising generation are the leading citizens of tomorrow, those in whom hope for renewed civility must be placed. Teaching values of civility in schools may encourage a more civil society (Peck; Hatch).

Historical purpose. The original purpose of formal public education was to prepare and shape children to be fit citizens for society (Peck, 2002). Preparation for citizenship was the primary goal of public schooling throughout most of the history of the United States (Schaps & Lewis, 1998). Teaching civility and manners carried equal value with academics due to the potential impact on both the student and society (Berman, 1998). In the present day, schools are widely regarded as simply academic institutions teaching purely intellectual material (Berman).

Modern purpose. National concern for school safety has increased as disturbing acts of aggression are widely publicized. Many (Feldmann, 2001; Forni as quoted in O'Mara, 2007; Hatch, 1998; Kahn & Lawhorne, 2003; Kauffman & Burbach, 1997; Mayer, in press; Peck, 2002) have

noted that civility may be an answer to controlling and reducing acts of violence.

Acts of violence are often the result of an exchange of acts of rudeness that spiral out of control. Disrespect can lead to bloodshed. By keeping the levels of incivility down, we keep the levels of violence down . . . if we teach youngsters of all walks of life how to manage conflict with civility-based relational skills, we will have a less uncivil society, a less violent one. (Forni as quoted in O'Mara, 2007, p. 20)

Others agree that incivility may lead to violence (Boxer, Edwards-Leeper, Goldstein, Musher-Eizenman, & Dubow, 2003; Mayer, in press; Skiba et al., 2004). Mayer found that having experienced uncivil behaviors (e.g., intimidation, bullying, hate language, social rejection) explained students' fear, anxiety, and avoidant behaviors better than did being the victim of theft or attack. He noted that students' anxiety about being safe at school can be harmful to their school performance and suggested that educational stakeholders retarget their priorities to address low-level incivility. Incivility may be more relevant to intervention efforts than high-level aggression and violence because it is a major factor shaping students' perceptions of school safety (Mayer; Skiba et al.).

Low-level aggression seems to have effects on psychosocial functioning similar to those of more severe forms of aggression. Boxer et al. (2003) examined subjects both experiencing and witnessing low-level aggression, and results showed that both have a negative impact on mea-

asures of well-being such as future expectations and perceived safety. This is an important finding given that low-level aggression is much more prevalent in schools than blatantly aggressive acts and that its lesser severity may make it easier to ignore.

Teaching civility in the schools can thus have a twofold purpose. First, as in the early days of education, teaching civility can serve to shape future citizens. Schools can strengthen society now and in the future by teaching children to act with respect toward others and to take responsibility for their environment and social institutions. Second, civility can be a major buffer against school violence. Peace and safety will likely become more prevalent in schools as civil behaviors increase. Educators must work for the remediation of civil behaviors in the same way they would work for the remediation of academic skills (Benton, 2007).

Moral, character, and social skills education. Moral education is defined as the attempt to foster the development of moral reasoning in children and adolescents; it is largely based in theory and tends to come from a liberal background (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). Character education is defined as the attempt to influence the development of desirable qualities or traits in an individual (Hoge, 2002); it is conservative in its background and typically not based in theory (Althof & Berkowitz). Social skills education is the attempt to teach specific behaviors which maximize social reinforcement and are interactive and situation specific; it is based in developmental psychology (Merrell & Gimpel,

1998).

Each of these areas is tied to the others and to civility education; however, distinct differences exist among them. *Civility education* is less clearly defined as a domain: It encompasses parts of each of these areas, but excludes other parts. For example, moral development certainly contributes to the expression of civility and is desirable in its teaching, but is not necessarily vital to it. A person may behave civilly without any moral motivation, but morality would certainly be helpful in increasing civility. Similarly, the development of desirable traits and behaviors through character education or social skills training makes civil behavior more likely but ignores the reason civility is necessary: the common good. Civility education differs from character education and social skills training in that there is a focus on helping others, rather than exclusive self-interest. The goals of civil behavior are to show respect for and to help others. While character education and social skills training could certainly have a similar outcome, their motivation might be mainly the improvement of self.

Strategies for Increasing Civility

Schools have used various programs to create a climate of politeness, including training in problem solving, social skills, conflict resolution, drug use prevention, community service, and anger management (Stover, 1999). Some programs include field trips to the local library, police station, and soup kitchen in order to involve students directly with their community (Stover; Youniss & Yates, 1999). Foster-

ing civility may be enhanced by making students aware of the actual attitudes and beliefs of their peers, letting them know that most do not appreciate violence or any other form of incivility—contrary to popular perception (Stiles & Tyson, 2008). Many students feel a need to conform to their peers and will behave uncivilly because they perceive this as the acceptable behavior (Benton, 2007; Stiles & Tyson).

Another strategy used to improve civility is to build rapport between students and administrators: talking to students in the halls, questioning them about disputes, and providing emotional support (Stover, 1999). Mutual respect is the important component behind this strategy; creating genuine regard among students, teachers, and administrators may result in a positive school atmosphere (Stover). Respectful and civil behaviors in those who lead children are important as they must be an example to those they wish to influence (Ludick, 2001). Indeed those who guide and teach children must themselves be on a higher plane, practicing civility and demonstrating respect. It is unreasonable to expect students to act in ways that they do not see exemplified by adults (Burns, 2003). While all of the above strategies and programs used by schools to foster civility sound attractive, there is a lack of empirical data on the effectiveness of any of them. Indeed, the field of civility in schools is lacking in systematic research.

Purposes of This Study

Although a review of the literature suggests that civility is important, and some

schools have attempted to address this issue, more research is needed on the civil behavior of students. The present study gathered data from school professionals regarding their perceptions of students' civil and uncivil behaviors. For the purposes of this study, civility was defined as behaviors that show respect toward a person in order to maintain social harmony or recognize the humanity of that person. Because this was exploratory research, civility was defined broadly to ensure that no important civil behavior was overlooked. The following specific research questions were investigated:

1. What are participants' perceptions regarding the current level of students' civil and uncivil behaviors?
2. What difference, if any, exists in the percentage of students engaged in civil and uncivil behaviors reported by participants currently working in elementary versus secondary schools?
3. What are participants' perceptions regarding interventions to increase the civil behavior of students?

Method

Participants

The participants for this study were a sample of individuals belonging to the alumni association of the David O. McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University (BYU). A database of information on the alumni was accessed, and 1,638 alumni were sent the questionnaire via email. The one-month data collection period (mid-October to mid-November) yielded a return rate of 15.32%, which is

slightly above a typical return rate for online research (Tourangeau, Couper, & Conrad, 2004). With respect to demographic variables, there were no systematic differences found between those who responded and those who did not respond.

Participants (63.76%) were mostly from Utah; however, 29 states from the U.S. were represented, as were Canada, Korea, and Hong Kong. All participants either were currently working in schools or had previously done so. About 79% of the participants were female, about 94% were White, and the mean age was 38 years. Approximately 67% of participants worked in suburban areas, 17% worked in rural areas, and 16% worked in urban areas. About 48% of the participants were elementary teachers, with 6% secondary teachers, 11% special education teachers, 8% administrators, 5% speech pathologists, 4% school psychologists, and 1% school counselors. The remaining 17% had unspecified professional roles in the school.

Measures and Procedures

A 30 item questionnaire was constructed consisting of items measuring both civil and uncivil behaviors that participants had observed in students. A sliding scale was provided after each item to allow participants to indicate the percentage of students who had engaged in that behavior in the previous two weeks. The final questionnaire item was open ended, asking participants to provide suggestions to increase civil behaviors in schools. The items for the questionnaire (see Tables 1 and 2) were drawn from suggestions in the literature regarding what constitutes civil

or uncivil behavior (Benton, 2007; Burns, 2003; Feldman, 2001; Forni, 2002; Plank, McDill, McPartland, & Jordan, 2001). Because very diverse definitions and examples of civility and incivility were found in the literature, a broad range of behaviors was included in the survey. The *School Social Behavior Scales* (2nd edition) (Merrill, 2002) was also used to generate ideas for questions. The questionnaire was pilot tested with 10 school professionals and feedback was used to revise wording of items. The final version was delivered via email to the sample of alumni, along with a cover letter containing a web link to the survey, explaining why they were being contacted, and describing the purpose of the study. Those who did not initially respond were sent a reminder email two weeks later asking for their participation.

Data Analyses

The first 29 items of the questionnaire, which were quantitative, were analyzed descriptively (means and standard deviations). T-tests and effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) were calculated to examine differences between those working in elementary versus secondary schools. Because this research was exploratory and the purpose was not specifically survey development, no psychometric analyses were conducted on the survey itself.

The final questionnaire item, which was qualitative, was analyzed and coded independently by both the primary researcher (White, female school psychology graduate student) and a research assistant (White, female with a bachelor's degree in psychology) to ensure inter-rater agreement.

Table 1

Participant Responses to Questionnaire Items Regarding the Percentage of Students Who Engaged in Civil Behaviors

Civil Behavior	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Arrived to class on time	83.28%	15.99
Dressed and groomed themselves in ways that were appropriate for school	78.83%	21.65
Appropriately greeted me at school	74.13%	23.59
Understood the importance of civil behavior	69.24%	22.30
Valued civil behavior	67.14%	22.56
Sincerely listened to their teachers	64.48%	21.63
Used polite expressions and greetings with others	62.54%	22.75
Left public areas in the school neat and clean	60.71%	23.17
Showed awareness of the needs of others	60.27%	22.21
Responded respectfully to the opinions of others	59.49%	22.25
Responded to situations in which they might help others	58.17%	22.58
Responded appropriately to the needs of others	57.10%	21.62
Had the skills to successfully manage conflict with others	51.20%	22.54
Considered how their behavior might affect others	45.02%	22.69
Sincerely complimented others	41.12%	23.98
Went out of their way to include others in their activities	36.94%	21.60
Held the door open for me at school	31.63%	26.93

The researchers met after an initial review of the data and agreed on categories, then each coded the responses into those categories, after which they met together again to compare. The researchers agreed on cat-

egory placement over 90% of the time. They also noted where their opinions differed, discussing these differences until they reached consensus, sometimes referred to as check coding (Miles &

Table 2

Participant Responses to Questionnaire Items Regarding the Percentage of Students Who Engaged in Uncivil Behavior

Uncivil behavior	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Shifted responsibility and blamed others for their actions	45.27%	25.88
Argued or quarreled with others	44.54%	25.26
Complained about common school experiences (grades, schedules, homework, tests, etc.)	44.05%	30.36
Responded inappropriately when they did not get what they wanted	37.68%	26.35
Made sarcastic remarks to others	36.93%	28.40
Expected teachers to grant them special favors	36.20%	29.06
Were inconsiderate of others in their use of classroom supplies	33.04%	24.99
Littered hallways, classrooms, or school grounds	31.97%	22.48
Called others offensive names	25.35%	21.12
Used offensive language on school grounds	24.38%	23.11
Inappropriately used a cell phone or other electronic device in class	12.46%	22.49
Vandalized property of the school or other individuals	10.70%	13.79

Huberman, 1994). After some discussion, they were able to agree on category assignment for 100% of the responses.

Results

Participants' Perceptions

Civil behaviors. Table 1 provides the average responses for each of the questionnaire items regarding civil behaviors. A relatively large standard deviation was

associated with the calculated means, indicating variability among responses. Participants indicated that the majority of students arrived to class on time, dressed and groomed themselves appropriately for school, appropriately greeted the participant, understood the importance of civil behavior, and valued civil behavior. However, participants perceived that fewer than half of the students considered how their behavior might affect others, sincerely

Table 3

Differences in Mean Percentage of Students Engaged in Civil and Uncivil Behaviors Reported by Participants Involved in Elementary and Secondary Schools

Questionnaire Item	Elementary		Secondary		<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Value civil behavior	69.04%	21.61	63.68%	26.27	1.36*	0.22
Held the door open for me at school	32.51%	27.95	29.33%	23.68	0.67*	0.12
Dressed and groomed themselves in ways that were appropriate for school	81.84%	19.92	67.85%	27.24	3.73***	0.56
Argued or quarreled with others	44.69%	25.87	38.73%	21.93	1.35*	0.25
Shifted responsibility and blamed others for their actions	44.85%	26.46	40.38%	21.75	0.99*	0.18
Inappropriately used a cell phone or other electronic device in class	6.50%	16.62	31.15%	29.90	-7.15***	-1.02
Used offensive language on school grounds	18.75%	19.73	36.03%	26.13	-4.69**	-0.75

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

complimented others, went out of their way to include others in their activities, or held the door open for the participant at school.

Uncivil behaviors. Table 2 provides the average responses for each of the questionnaire items regarding uncivil behaviors. A relatively large standard deviation was associated with the calculated means, indicating variability among responses. Participants indicated that almost half of the students shifted responsibility and blamed others for their actions, argued or

quarreled with others, and complained about common school experiences. Participants indicated that about a third of the students responded inappropriately when they did not get what they wanted, made sarcastic remarks to others, expected teachers to grant them special favors, were inconsiderate of others in their use of classroom supplies, and littered hallways, classrooms, or school grounds. Participants reported that about one fourth of students called others offensive names and used offensive language on school grounds. A

Table 4

Intervention Ideas Reported by Participants and Percentage of Comments Included in Each

Category

Category	Percentage	N
Direct instruction	62.53%	53
Home and societal influences	43.53%	37
Modeling by school professionals	36.47%	31
School-wide positive behavior support	31.76%	27
Rules, expectations, and classroom structure	29.41%	25
Character education	7.06%	6
Zero-tolerance policies	5.88%	5

smaller percentage (12.46%) of students inappropriately used a cell phone or other electronic device in class or vandalized property.

Elementary and Secondary School Differences

The second research question examined what difference, if any, existed between the percentages of students engaged in civil and uncivil behaviors reported by participants currently working in elementary versus secondary schools. When asked to indicate the grade levels(s) with which they consistently interacted, participants were allowed to check as many as applied. Participants who indicated having interaction with both elementary (grades pre-k to 6) and secondary (grades 7 to 12) students were not included in this portion of the analysis.

Responses of participants who indicated interacting only with elementary grade level(s) ($n=178$) were compared to those of participants who indicated interacting only with secondary grade level(s) ($n=40$). An independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in reported percentages for seven questionnaire items (see Table 3). Participants reported a higher percentage of elementary than secondary students who valued civil behavior, held the door open for the participant at school, dressed and groomed themselves appropriately for school, argued and quarreled with others, and shifted responsibility and blamed others for their actions. However, all of these items had a small effect size, except the item regarding dressing and grooming which had a moderate effect size. Participants also reported a higher percentage of secondary than elementary

students who inappropriately used a cell phone or other electronic device in class and used offensive language on school grounds. Both of these effect sizes were large.

Suggested Interventions

The final research question addressed the ideas participants had for improving students' civil behaviors. Unfortunately, only 85 (33.86%) of the participants answered the open-ended question asking for intervention suggestions. Eight distinct categories emerged from the analysis of responses: direct instruction; home and societal influences; modeling by school professionals; school-wide positive behavior support; rules, expectations, and classroom structure; character education; zero-tolerance policies; and other ideas. Many participant responses included several ideas, and some were labeled under two and occasionally three categories, given that the categories were not mutually exclusive and overlapped in many ways. Nevertheless, the ideas were determined to be different enough to justify separate categories (see Table 4).

The *direct instruction* category had as a central theme the idea that if children are to learn civil behaviors they must be directly taught. The majority of the responses in this category were aimed at direct instruction for students, but a few mentioned instructing educators or parents on how to teach these behaviors to their students. Examples included "[provide] explicit instruction on civility" and "help young children understand how their actions affect others."

The main idea of the *home and societal influences* category was that children learn both civil and uncivil behaviors in the home and in society. Many of the responses in this category blamed parents for bad student behavior, with some commenting that teachers could not do fully what the home should. Examples of these responses stated, "Students need to be taught values in the home" and "[We must] work on increasing civil behavior in the homes and other areas of society. School, alas, is a reflection of what children see and observe at home and in the media." Some, however, recommended correspondence from the school to the homes: e.g. "Involve parents by letting them know what the classroom rules are."

The central theme of the *modeling by school professionals* category was that children learn from models and imitate what they see adults doing; therefore, in order to increase student civility, school professionals must also increase their levels of civility. The responses in this category encouraged school faculty members to display civil behaviors: for example,

I found that by giving my students the same courtesies I expected I saw a great amount of civility. Also, by providing an example I was able to teach many of the behaviors that do not always come naturally for children.

Similarly, another respondent affirmed, "As teachers/administrators we need to take note of our own civility inside and outside of class and create a civil environment by exemplifying such behavior."

The next category grouped responses

around a theme of *school-wide positive behavioral support* (PBS), which is directly tied to using praise and other proactive strategies. Recommendations included “have positive behavior supports school-wide” and “[reward] with positive recognition those displaying appropriate behaviors.”

The *rules, expectations, and classroom structure* category included statements that maintaining expectations for students to behave civilly and providing classroom structures to support those expectations can help increase civility. Examples included “[make] expectations explicit [to help] students to know what is expected with civility” and “set the bar and let them know what is expected and then encourage them to do the right thing.”

Character education appeared often enough to become one of the response categories. As discussed in the literature review, character education is similar to civility in that it fosters prosocial behaviors and characteristics. Examples of participant responses included “implement behavior and/or character curriculum as part of the state and national curriculum” and “[begin] character education at the kindergarten level.”

The central idea expressed in the *zero-tolerance policies* category was that schools should not tolerate incivility in any form. One respondent stated, “Schools can foster civility by not tolerating . . . uncivil behavior.” Another participant confirmed, “Our school has an aggressive no-tolerance approach to bullying, foul language, or otherwise blatant uncivil behavior.”

Discussion

The data gathered in this study provide some evidence that civil behaviors are occurring in schools to a higher degree than uncivil behaviors, which may appear to contradict anecdotal reports of decreasing civility (see e.g., Boyd, 2006; Hinckley, 2000; Peck, 2002). Perhaps the reason anecdotal reports indicate a loss of civility is that incivility is more noticeable and civility is the expected norm, an essential part of creating a positive and effective learning environment (Boxer et al., 2003; Feldmann, 2001; Mayer, in press; Skiba et al., 2004; Stiles & Tyson, 2008). It may appear from anecdotal reports that incivility exists to a greater degree than it actually does because it is so disrupting and harmful to the school environment when it does occur.

While the current study suggests that civil behaviors are more common in schools than uncivil behaviors, it should also be noted that the school environment could improve if civil behaviors occurred more frequently and uncivil behaviors occurred rarely, if at all. For example, participants reported that a relatively small percentage of students complimented others or went out of their way to include others in activities. While civil behaviors are not directly addressed by typical school rules and failing to perform them is not necessarily mean or rude, the school could be a more positive and nurturing environment if such behaviors were regularly taught and reinforced. However, it may be more challenging to teach students how to proactively engage in such civil behaviors, as compared with simply teaching them

uncivil behaviors to avoid. Participants also indicated that a relatively high percentage of students shifted responsibility or blamed others, argued or quarreled with others, and complained about common school experiences. Such behavior in the school is damaging to a positive environment. Although vandalizing property was reported as occurring at a relatively low rate, this could be a very damaging and severe behavior when it occurs at all.

The range in participants' reports for each civil and uncivil behavior makes it difficult to identify specific behaviors to be targeted in a universal intervention. Perhaps the best approach would be to assess the individual needs of each school and target interventions based on those needs (Marchant et al., 2009). Teachers and other school professionals should consider using direct instruction and modeling to target specific civil or uncivil behaviors of concern for a particular classroom or school.

Elementary vs. Secondary Schools

Results support assertions that civility interventions are particularly important to implement with adolescent-age students (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Hatch 1998; Ludick, 2002; Schaefer, 1995). Participants working in secondary schools reported a higher percentage of students who inappropriately used a cell phone or other electronic device and used offensive language than did participants working in elementary schools. It was also noteworthy that participants working in secondary schools did not perceive any civil behaviors as occurring more frequently than did participants working in elementary schools.

Participants working in elementary schools reported a higher percentage of students who engaged in some civil behaviors (i.e., held the door open for adults, dressed and groomed themselves appropriately), but also noted some uncivil behaviors (i.e., argued and quarreled with others, shifted responsibility or blamed others) which occurred more frequently than in secondary schools. This higher reported percentage of uncivil behaviors was somewhat surprising, but might be due to the fact that elementary school faculty typically supervise students for longer periods of time and thus may have a greater opportunity to observe such uncivil behaviors.

Suggested Interventions

Many participants noted that civility needs to be addressed in the home first and indicated that students lack civility because it is not taught at home. Though teaching civility at school may not be as effective as teaching it at home, study participants suggested a variety of ways that civility can be taught in the classroom. Many participants indicated that direct instruction would be a very effective way of teaching and encouraging civil behavior in school. Direct instruction was supported by the data gathered from several of the early items on the questionnaire reflecting school professionals' perceptions that while about 70% of students understand the importance of civil behavior and value civil behavior, only about 50% have the skills necessary to manage conflict with others. Several authors (Berman, 1998; Burns, 2003; Evans, 1998; Kauffman & Burbach, 2003;

Nilsen, 2008) also mention direct instruction as an effective method for instilling civility in students.

Results suggested that modeling and positive adult examples are important aspects of teaching students civil behaviors. Several authors (Burns, 2003; Evans, 1998; Feldmann, 2001; Hatch, 1998; Nilsen, 2008; Stover, 1999) specify that the civil behaviors of school faculty influence student behaviors. Civil behaviors could be strongly reinforced by visible examples of those behaviors. Similarly, if adult role models (teachers, principals, other school personnel) avoid using uncivil behaviors with each other or with students, children will have fewer opportunities to observe and mimic these negative patterns.

Participants viewed school-wide positive behavior support (PBS) as effective in encouraging civil behaviors. PBS is meant to increase the likelihood of students experiencing success and personal satisfaction when they engage in positive behaviors (Carr et al., 2002), a goal that could be facilitated through civility, especially if it is taught and reinforced at a school-wide level. A program to teach civil behaviors is more likely to succeed if all school personnel are aware and involved in its implementation (Hatch, 1998). The principles behind PBS may contribute to the positive school environment which is the goal of civility instruction; integrating civility instruction into a PBS framework could potentially make both more effective.

Results suggested that setting rules and expectations may encourage civil behaviors. By providing rules, faculty can help

create a positive school environment where students are confident about what they are expected to do (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Taylor-Greene et al. (1997) suggested that when specific rules are given, examples should be provided demonstrating what each rule looks like in various school locations. Such examples can make expectations and rules very clear, ensuring that students are aware of which civil behaviors are expected.

Participants also indicated that character education could effectively increase civility in schools. Character education would likely teach students prosocial characteristics, but would ultimately focus on self-improvement rather than strengthening society and helping others. Prosocial characteristics learned from character education, however, could lead to students helping others, especially if educators are aware of the importance of expanding the focus beyond the individual.

A relatively small percentage of respondents recommended zero-tolerance policies as an important way of maintaining civility in schools. Research has shown that zero-tolerance programs (e.g., metal detectors, physical precautions, school policies of expulsion) are not very effective in preventing or reducing school violence (Mayer, 2008). However school faculty may sometimes try to improve civility by using methods shown by research to be ineffective.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study systematically gathered data regarding civility and incivility in schools. However, several limitations

should be noted. First, participant perceptions may have differed from actual occurrence. Future research would be improved if actual counts of civil and uncivil behaviors were collected through direct observation in addition to school faculty report. Second, the majority of participants were White females from the western United States who had graduated from Brigham Young University, which may have introduced bias into responses. Future research should include a more diverse sample in order to determine whether the results generalize to a wider population. Third, the questionnaire used to gather data was created solely for this study. All questionnaire items were included based on the literature; however, without large scale psychometric analyses, the reliability and validity of the instrument are unknown. Finally, intervention ideas gathered in this research are helpful in promoting the teaching of civility in schools, but they are anecdotal. While many of these suggestions have been shown to be effective for improving social skills (Merrell & Gimpel, 1998), future research should be directed toward discovering the effectiveness of these interventions for improving civility.

Conclusions

Those who are currently working in schools or who have extensive contact with youth are encouraged to take opportunities to model and directly teach civil behaviors. Any exposure students could have to learning civil behavior in schools would be valuable, a point appreciated in the early history of the United States when

training in civility and manners carried equal value with teaching academic material because of the potential impact on both the student and society (Berman, 1998). Although this research does not provide any definitive answers for specific behaviors that need to be addressed universally in schools, it does examine the perceptions of school professionals regarding student civility and incivility, as well as suggest ideas for what might be done to increase students' civil behaviors. Some of these ideas were school-wide initiatives (like PBS) that would require much time and effort, but others were simple interventions (such as modeling) that would be easier to implement.

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