IMPACT ASSESSMENT: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INCIVILITY, SENSE OF
BELONGING, SENSE OF COMMUNITY, AND WELL-BEING AMONGST GRADUATE
STUDENTS

A Dissertation by

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IMPACT ASSESSMENT: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INCIVILITY, SENSE OF BELONGING, SENSE OF COMMUNITY, AND WELL-BEING AMONGST GRADUATE STUDENTS

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DEDICATION

To Granny- Thank you for being my biggest inspiration in life, for all you have endured paving

the way for me to have the opportunities to be where I am today. Dr. Lewis, thank you for

constantly pushing and believing in me. And to Dr. B, thank you for encouraging me to take the

first step.

To little black and brown kids all over the world- Occupy your space

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ABSTRACT

Faculty incivility experienced by graduate students poses a severe threat to universities. Top-down incivility experienced by graduate students impacts students in various individual ways and extends across micro, meso, and macro levels. This study sought to investigate graduate students' overall experience of incivility and the impact faculty incivility has on four concepts that have emerged from the literature that influence graduate student academic experience: sense of community, sense of belonging, subjective well-being, and psychological well-being.

A total of 265 graduate students from Wichita State University (WSU) participated in this study. Graduate students reported moderate levels of faculty incivility ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .633$, $Md = 2$) and experiencing faculty incivility about 46% of the time. This study also asked participants to respond to four narrative items that were themed separately and make up significant concepts of graduate students' experience and beliefs of incivility at WSU: pedagogy or teaching effectiveness, pro-social behavior, and institutional practices. This study also investigated the relationship between sense of community, sense of belonging, subjective well-being, and psychological well-being. Faculty incivility negatively impacted perceived faculty support while positively affecting perceived peer support. Both concepts were constructs measured by subscales of sense of belonging. Ultimately, it is evident that further research is needed to investigate the relationship between faculty incivility and the impact on graduate students and the role that peer support and other demographics serve as both protective and risk factors.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WSU   Wichita State University

IHE-R   Incivility in Higher Education Revised

SOBS   Sense of Belonging Scale

SWLS   Satisfaction with Life Scale

BIT   Brief Inventory of Thriving

SCI-2   Sense of Community Index-2

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Incivility: a range of discourteous or disrespectful actions that may or may not have harmful intent, including failing to act when warranted; these behaviors and inactions often lead to physiological or psychological distress and can escalate to unsafe situations

Psychological Well-Being: level of positive functioning that can include one's relatedness with others and self-referent attitudes that include one's sense of mastery and personal growth

Subjective Well-Being: reflects dimensions of affect judgments of life satisfaction

Positionality Statement

Creswell (2008) refers to positionality as a practice where researchers acknowledge and outline their position concerning the study. Additionally, positionality also lays the researcher's different identities concerning cultural aspects, and different socio-ecological systems one could be embedded in that could influence the analytic process. I am a thirty-five-year-old African American female from Wichita, KS. I attend a primarily white institution, although considered more diverse than most university settings in Kansas. I am also a Licensed Specialist Social Worker practicing clinically for eleven years, specializing in trauma. I also hold a Master's in Public Administration with an emphasis in nonprofit management and finance. My clinical experience enables me to understand better the stories that people are telling, which has made me more efficient in qualitative research and coding. I also supervise newly licensed therapists and provide consultation to therapists in the Wichita area. Practicing trauma and resiliency informed mentorship in this service.

I have experienced incivility during the pursuit of my doctoral degree. These aspects are important because all these identities and experiences influence and shape the coding of the narrative items of this study. All these identities and experiences were kept at the forefront of mind during qualitative coding to reduce the amount of bias during the process. With experiencing incivility while pursuing one of my graduate degrees and not in the other, I have a shared perspective with the participants. Regardless of acknowledging this and other cultural identities, the research process may have been impacted, and it is essential to acknowledge and share in this statement of positionality.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Faculty contribute to the academic climate as much as students, and over the last two decades, incivility in the academic setting has been a growing problem (Nilson, 2003). Clark best described incivility as a range of rude or disruptive behaviors, including failing to act when warranted; these behaviors and inactions often lead to physiological or psychological distress and can escalate to unsafe situations (Clark, 2008, 2013, and 2015). Research on incivility is most frequently examined from the perspective of faculty, and the literature has mainly focused on undergraduate students. However, students are just as likely to experience and witness instructors behaving uncivilly (Center for Survey Research, 2000). Uncivil behavior infringes on the learning process and the understood level of respect in organizations (Knepp, 2012). Research has attributed incivility to adverse psychological effects and lower productivity for entire organizations and members (Samnani & Singh, 2012). Thus, it is essential to determine what role incivility plays on graduate students' overall satisfaction and well-being in the academic setting. Reviewed literature has shown students' school sense of community is related to students' well-being, and sense of community impacts students' mental illness (Prati et al., 2018). Sense of belonging, connection, and the belief one matters to others influence college students' retention and success (O'Meara et al., 2017).

This study examines the specific lived experiences of graduate students and faculty interactions, and the impact faculty incivility has on their sense of community, sense of belonging, subjective well-being, and psychological well-being while in graduate school. Most of the literature in the academic setting examining incivility, sense of community, sense of belonging, and or well-being focus on undergraduate student experiences. Research on graduate

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students typically occurs within specific departments and not across the different graduate

programs in a university setting. There is a lack of literature on incivility in higher education

focusing on graduate students across university programs. This study will contribute to the

existing literature on the treatment of graduate students and examine the relationship faculty

incivility has on a sense of community, belonging, and well-being.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 Incivility

Incivility is on the rise, becoming a more significant issue for many organizations, and higher education has not deviated from the trend (Dentith et al., 2014). Clark (2008) expanded on Berger's (2000) definition of incivility, stating incivility is an indication of "disregard and insolence for others, causing an atmosphere of disrespect, conflict, and stress" (pg. E38). As said by Feldman, incivility is an action, regardless of intent, that interferes with a cooperative and cordial atmosphere of the learning environment (Feldmann, 2001). In addition, Morrissette (2001) distinguished that uncivil behavior harms the target, regardless of intention. This study will utilize Clark's definition of incivility, which has a range of behaviors that are rude or disruptive, including failing to act when warranted; these behaviors and inactions often lead to physiological or psychological distress and can escalate to unsafe situations (Clark, 2009, 2013, and 2015).

Incivility in the Workplace

Andersson and Pearson (1999) were two of the first researchers to examine workplace incivility, defining it as "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (p. 4). The development of incivility in the workplace best defines the concept as a display of behaviors that violate norms and mutual respect (Miner & Cortina, 2016). Cortina et al. (2001) theorized several possible cognitive and affective variables associated with individual outcomes because of workplace incivility, such as cognitive appraisal, cognitive distraction, and damage to social identity

Furthermore, research on workplace incivility theorizes the tendency to retaliate or report uncivil behavior is affected by institutional hierarchy (Pearson et al., 2001; Pearson & Porath, 2004). Research has also shown mental health issues and withdrawal from organizations result from the emotional impact of uncivil behavior (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990). When examining organizational contextual factors, research has demonstrated an increase in withdrawal behaviors as there is a decrease in organizational satisfaction (Wharton & Baron, 1991). Withdrawal behaviors could mean withdrawing from a class, degree program, or completely exiting the university.

2.1.2 *Incivility in Academia*

As the higher education environment has continued to change, there is increased pressure on faculty to produce research (Sabagh, Hall, and Saroyan, 2018). Holis (2015) revealed incivility was more widespread in academia than in the broader workforce, occurring 64% of the time in academia and 37% in the workforce. Incivility in higher education is reciprocal, with both students and faculty contributing to the climate and impeding the learning process (Knepp, 2012). Incivility can be a complex construct when studied in academia—primarily examined through the lens of undergraduate students, neglecting to study graduate students' experiences with the concept widely. Advanced research on incivility has revealed two components of the construct: active faculty incivility and passive faculty incivility; and three types: experienced, witnessed, and instigated (Alt & Itzkovich, 2016; Schilpzand et al., 2015). Active faculty incivility is defined as "serious incivilities, such as personal comments or verbal attacks against students; passive refers to "pertains to more subtle incivilities, such as inadequate communications and avoidance" (Alt & Itzkovich, 2016, pg. 1).

Disruptive behaviors reported by students that occur most often from faculty are typically labeled moderately severe in terms of incivility (Knepp, 2012). Research has also revealed that when faculty have unrealistic expectations for students, violation of these unrealistic expectations fuels faculty incivility (Knepp, 2012). Nilson (2003) attributes negative interactions between faculty and students to faculty specialized interest, stating that when faculty primarily focus on research, interest to invest efforts into teaching and appropriate management techniques is impacted. When incivility occurs, students' connection to the institution will likely decrease (Knepp, 2012). In addition, as graduate students who function as student workers continue to become more impacted by incivility, leaders may be asked to provide strategies and policies that offer both protection and support for those in these vulnerable roles.

Caza and Cortina (2007) developed a conceptual model (Fig. 1) summarizing students' experience with incivility, which will guide this research study. The model explains how students' experience with incivility negatively influences both academic and psychological outcomes. The model suggests that two cognitive mechanisms drive the negative impact of incivility, perceived injustice, and perceived social ostracism. Caza and Cortina (2007) used the model to examine the perception of injustice and social ostracism mediating different academic and psychological outcomes of uncivil encounters. Top-down incivility refers to when the acts occur from higher-status individuals. This study will focus on top-down incivility, examining sense of belonging, well-being, and sense of community as variables related to psychological distress and institutional satisfaction.
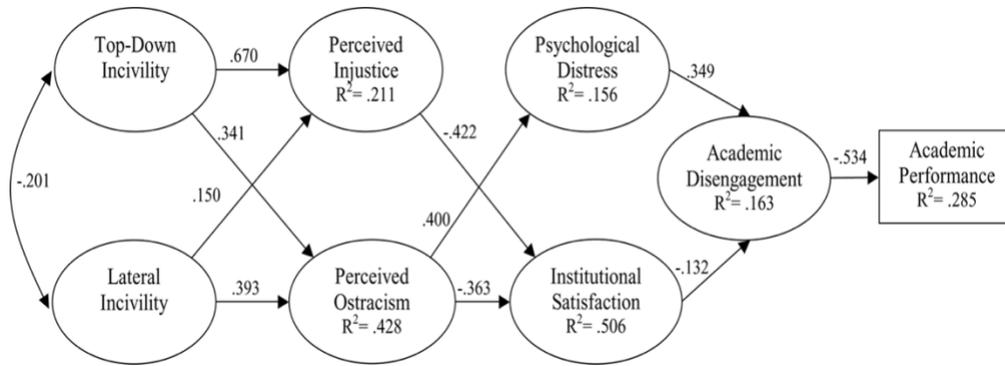
FIGURE 1. Caza and Cortina (2007) Cross-validated structural model, based on the model-confirmation sample (n. 520). Numbers on the arrows represent standardized path coefficients, all of which are significant (p < .05).

2.2 Graduate Students

Graduate students face vast demands on various aspects of their life, such as time, energy, and organizational skills (Jairam & Kahl, 2012). Graduate students' roles at universities often result in increased interaction with faculty, increasing the risk of incivility (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001; Jones & Stevens, 2020). Graduate students function as teaching assistants playing a pivotal role in educating undergraduates students and often serve as primary contact (Gallardo-Williams and Petrovich, 2017). In addition, faculty are responsible for supervising students, which increases interactions and exchanges, and these exchanges between faculty and student workers can potentially escalate into forms of incivility (Jones & Stevens, 2020). A strong theme has emerged from the literature on the importance of graduate students feeling like their department and the professional community cares about their interests and about them as individuals (Lovitts, 2001). Faculty supervisors play an essential role in building students' capacity research and writing. However, when uncivil academic climates persist wand perpetuated by faculty the focus is lost and capacity building is impacted (Jones & Stevens, 2020).

Graduate students' positions at their universities increase contact with faculty, leading to strong desires to function at advisor capacity with lasting impacts (Kraus & Harris, 2019). Other research has suggested that Ph.D. students are at risk of hazing from advisors, both intentional and unintentional, due to wanting new graduate students to prove themselves worthy, as this is how many of them have been treated (Dominguez & Hager, 2013; Kraus & Harris, 2019). Jairam and Kahl (2012) conducted a qualitative study that revealed that academic friends, family, and faculty are three sources of support that negatively and positively impact graduate students. This same study suggested that doctoral students should (1) align themselves with a small group of academic friends and prepare for the inevitable peer competition, (2) seek assistance from family members on specific tasks and educate family members on doctoral student experience, and (3) establish a good rapport with a doctoral adviser who is professionally active.

2.2.1 *Graduate Students' Faculty Experiences*

Research on graduate students has suggested that mentorships or networking relationships influence sense of belonging and overall institutional satisfaction (Caza & Cortina, 2007). Literature found that when positive mentoring relationships were accessible to graduate students, they reported increased satisfaction levels, high level of academic performance, and overall higher academic skill development (Belcher, 1994; Hill, Castilla, Ngu, & Pepion, 1999; Kelly & Schweitzer, 1999; O'Meara et al., 2017; & Tenenbaum et al., 2001). These positive mentorships could be considered protective factors for graduate students, contributing to improved satisfaction levels.

When assessing factors that influence graduate students in the university setting, it is essential to consider how graduate school faculty impact student learning, satisfaction, and retention (Barnes &Randall, 2012). These could serve as risk and protective factors for the

graduate student experience. Research on the impact of social interactions between faculty and graduate students aligns with Rappaport's person-environment fit theory, suggesting that people are attracted to competent individuals they can benefit from, such as university faculty and staff (Rappaport, 1977). The theory proposes that a person's behaviors and overall psychological function, such as well-being, are influenced by their physical and social environment. Suhlmann et al. (2018) found that sense of belonging in 365 German university students positively predicted well-being and academic motivation. This study utilized the person-environment fit theory to show that students who describe themselves as highly dignified and confident in their ability to be successful regardless of university support also indicated a higher sense of belonging to the university (Suhlmann et al., 2018). This same study suggests that sense of belonging could serve as a protective factor for well-being when students do not feel they belong to their university settings.

When assessing factors that influence graduate students in the university setting, it is essential to consider how graduate school faculty impact student learning, satisfaction, and retention (Barnes &Randall, 2012). Graduate students are often placed in the role of student workers, which results in less social power, increasing their vulnerability to maltreatment and uncivil behavior from those who hold a higher power status (Jones & Stephens, 2020; Miner & Eischeid, 2012). Faculty supervisors are responsible for using authority to help guide graduate student workers in vulnerable roles (Robertson, 2016). The interchanges within the dynamic of graduate student workers and faculty supervisors increase the likelihood of uncivil behavior due to power differential, which creates a risk factor for poor psychological well-being (Jones & Stephens, 2020; Miner & Eischeid, 2012; and Ryff, 1989).

2.2.2 *Graduate Students and Well-Being*

Previous studies have indicated that many graduate students report feelings of distress. However, there are few empirically grounded studies that demonstrate this to be true (Edwards, King, & Ashkanasy, 2019). Higher education institutions worldwide have been tasked with addressing and supporting students' well-being (Gagnon, Gelinas, & Friesen, 2017; Woloshyn, 2019). Mental health issues for graduate students are a significant concern for academia, with 25-40% facing mental health concerns (Barreira et al., 2018; Krause & Harris, 2019). The transition from undergraduate to graduate school for many students is shocking and often met with the questioning of abilities (Dunn et al., 2008). Some faculty understand the difficulty for graduate students. A qualitative study conducted by Woloshyn (2019) revealed that faculty understood their role and the impact of different psychological factors on the well-being of students. Although faculty are responsible for the intellectual development of students, academic development is impacted by psychological well-being, which is impacted by contextual factors such as faculty interactions (Gardner, 2009; Woloshyn, 2019).

2.2.3 *Link Amongst Dependent Variables and Graduate Students*

Sense of belonging is defined as the feeling of being an integral part of a system or environment in which one is personally involved (Hagerty et al., 1992). Sense of belonging in higher education has been referred to as "students perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and essential to the group (e.g., campus community or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (Strayhorn, 2012, p.3). Gopalan & Brady's study on the sense of belonging in college students at four-year schools revealed sense of belonging is positively correlated with academic success and serves as a predictor of persistent engagement and mental health (2020).

Literature has shown a positive correlation between well-being and a sense of community, contributing to various student outcomes. In addition, well-being has been shown to positively affect student academic achievement. Many advocates of school reform support efforts focusing on making the school climate more positive and supporting students' academic achievement (Powell et al., 2015). The findings from this study can empower graduate students, administrators, and faculty to make changes to address incivility and improve factors that contribute to graduate students' school climate and well-being.

To the researcher's knowledge, no studies have examined all these factors, well-being, sense of community, sense of belonging, and incivility among graduate students. Cicognani, Pirini, et al., 2008 conducted a study with a sample of 200 Italian, 125 American, and 214 Iranian University students, male and female. The study examined the different dimensions of social well-being, revealing that a psychological sense of community held a strong relationship with well-being across different time points (Cicognani, Pirini, et al., 2008). Other researchers have discovered, more specifically, the following components of sense of community to be related to the increase in well-being: emotional safety, self-confidence, sense of identity, coping efficacy, magnitude, and quality of social relationships (Pretty et al., 1996; Prezza & Costantini, 1998; Wandersman & Florin, 2000). Like most investigating contextual factors contributing to student experiences, this study focused on undergraduate students.

2.3 Sense of Community

Sense of community is a sense of belonging and feeling that members matter to each other and to the group at large and faith that one's needs will be met due to members' commitment to being together (McMillan, 1986). Sense of community is one of the many lived experiences of college students in their school environments that impact students' overall well-

being (Prati et al., 2018). Several variables have emerged from the research, contributing sense of community to the college experience. Sense of community is used more broadly and investigated concerning neighborhood context, and literature indicates that students' sense of community should be investigated concerning its role in the school context (Prati et al., 2018).

School sense of community can be defined as a "sense of belonging to the school as community, emotional connection and bonds with other students at the school, and the perception that personal needs are satisfied through such membership" (Prati et al., 2017, p. 2). Thus, understanding how sense of community as a concept impacts students is an important concept to study. Graduate students spend a lot of their time in school interacting with department staff for lectures, research, and mentorship. Investigation of these daily experiences of interacting with department staff has shown positive and negative impacts, providing evidence of the importance of such staff relationships and interactions in the academic setting (Feldmann, 2001; Plank McDill, McPartland, & Jordon, 2001). This lends that these lived experiences that graduate students have with faculty could serve as both risk and protective factors to academic achievement. Research examining different factors that impact student academic achievement associated with positive academic settings and school climate has continued to rise (Powell et al., 2015; Thapa et al., 2013). Furthermore, studies have provided evidence showing that school context impacts students' well-being which plays a role in student school sense of community (Prati et al., 2018). Nowell and Boyd (2014) using their need theory as a framework, showed that the increase of well-being from sense of community is due to psychological needs of belonging and membership being met.

2.3.1 *Sense of Community as Theoretical Framework*

Sense of community theory was used to guide the design to determine other variables that should be investigated. This study utilized sense of belonging, subjective well-being, and psychological well-being to further investigate and expand the four elements of sense of community defined by McMillan and Chavis (1986). The four elements of the sense of community framework are: *membership*, the shared feeling of belonging and sense of personal relatedness; *influence,* the sense of making a difference to a group and matter to the group members; *meeting/reinforcement of needs*, which is the feeling that member needs will be met through membership in the group and resources received as a result, and fulfillment of needs; and *shared emotional connection*, belief, and commitment that members have and will share similar experiences, places, and history (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

When examining the constructs of sense of community and interactions, it is important to assess membership and the influence on emotional connection. Membership requires investment and applies boundaries within the community, which aid in producing security and a sense of emotional safety (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Successful integration into institutions and departmental communities is dependent on students' psychological experiences and subjective perceptions of integrating successfully (Lovitts, 2001). Further, Williams and Sommer (1997) found that when students do not feel they belong, reported feelings of ostracism could threaten one fundamental sense of belonging, control, and meaning within an institution. Research has shown that school sense of community increases well-being by providing emotional safety, sense of identity, and positive relationships (Wandersman & Florin, 2000). Although neighborhood sense of community and school sense of community are correlated, literature has revealed that these two constructs are fundamentally different (Pretty et al. 1994, 1996).

School belonging and school connectedness have been investigated as critical factors impacting college students' well-being. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) has defined school connectedness as when students believe adults and peers care about them. Goodenow & Grady (1993) define school belonging as the degree students report feelings of being personally accepted, included, respected, and supported by others in the school setting. Prati & Cicognani (2018) revealed in a longitudinal study that school sense of community was able to remain a predictor for students' well-being even after controlling for the different levels of baseline well-being. Sense of ownership is a crucial factor included in sense of community, which aids in establishing emotional connections with other members of the community and reinforces that one is part of something greater than self (Schreiner, 2013). Examining emotional connections concerning sense of community, it is imperative to understand that within the concept of sense of community, sense of belonging relates to institutional fit and psychological experiences that account for well-being (Lovitts, 2001; Strayhorn, 2018).

2.4 Sense of Belonging

Rosenberg & McCullough (1981) defined sense of belonging as connectedness, importance, and mattering to others. Sense of belonging is the extent individuals believe they are accepted, valued, included, and matter in the community they belong to (Stachl & Barranger, 2020). In terms of college, sense of belonging refers to students' perceived social support on campus (Strayhorn, 2018). Traditionally sense of belonging was not the focus of educational research and most focused on mental and physical health, psychology, nursing, and psychiatry (Hoffman et al., 2002). Literature examining sense of belonging is limited due to the lack of conceptual guidance for researchers attempting to test the construct empirically (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Belonging at a four-year school has been positively associated with outcomes such

as mental health and shown to buffer students from stress and improve mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gopalan & Brady, 2020). Providing further evidence that the construct of sense of belonging serves as a protective factor for college students. Much of the literature lacks an emphasis on graduate students and sense of belonging. Instead, there is an emphasis on sense of belonging as a predictor of success and retention in academia (Freeman et al., 2007; Walton & Cohen, 2011).

College students' success and retention are influenced by feelings of connection to others in an organization, which are also factors of sense of belonging (O'Meaera et al., 2017). Multiple factors have been studied and found to contribute to a sense of belonging in graduate education as research interest continues to grow in investigating college students' academic outcomes. For example, research examining contextual factors for academic outcomes for graduate students suggests decentralized practices in departments such as but not limited to admission standards, academic standards, and control of institutional resources available to graduate students for financial support as factors (Golde, 2005). In addition, sense of belonging in graduate students has been correlated to their overall socialization experience (Lovitts, 2001; Strayhorn, 2012). In a review of studies from 2008 and 2011 across 15 universities, Strayhorn (2012) discovered meaningful engagement with faculty-led to a sense of belonging in most.

2.5 Well-Being

In a longitudinal study, Prati & Cicognani (1986) revealed that well-being was predicted by school sense of community even after controlling for the different levels of baseline well-being. Well-being is creating challenges for academia, with student burnout on the rise and becoming an issue for universities worldwide (Yang, 2004). Overall job satisfaction in higher education is ranked below the workforce's (Clark, 2001; Oshagbemi, 1996; Sloane & 2001).

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Research on well-being has typically investigated the concept through hedonic and eudemonic well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The hedonic well-being approach is a subjective emotional measure and mental state, while eudemonic well-being is the extent psychological and social needs are met (McMahan & Estes, 2011). Measurement of well-being in higher education is not easy and more so for graduate education and the students' multifaced roles. However, Keyes (2005) argues that the combination of the two best informs research on well-being, compromising the definition of positive mental health and the presence of well-being characteristics.

Ryff and Keyes's (1995) psychological dimensions identified positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, and emotional elements. Work-life balance for post-graduate students has become skewed, a contributing factor to exhaustion, and the Council of Australian Postgraduate Association reported that as Ph.D. students get closer to the end of their candidacy, they are near exhaustion (Lane, 2007). Graduate students' well-being and their social interactions with faculty appear to be not as widely studied, which could be attributed to the unstructured and multifaceted nature of graduate students' roles within their programs and the school. Following Keyes's (2005) suggestions, this study will investigate how incivility impacts graduate students' well-being from a psychological safety perspective and satisfaction with life, covering hedonic and subjective components of well-being. It will add to current literature investigating the impact of healthy and warm relationships on positive life functioning and psychological well-being (Ryff,1989).

2.6 School Climate and Academic Achievement

Traditional research on student success has focused on cognitive measures, and studies on graduate students indicate that understanding psychosocial elements related to overall

engagement can impact academic outcomes at the graduate level (Lovitts, 2001). Emotional and attitudinal responses can result when individuals in institutions experience uncivil behavior due to the perception of injustice interactions and unfairness (Pearson & Porath, 2000). Social exclusion in organizational settings denotes that those targeted often are confused as to why, leading to distrust of organizations (Sommer et al., 2001). Faculty, staff, and administrators in higher education represent the institutional community, having a keen impact on students' overall experience and perception of the institutional community (Moran & Volkwein, 1988). It is also essential to remember that departmental climate often plays a more significant role in student success for graduate education, as graduate programs typically operate autonomously from the university at large and have their norms (Lovitts, 200l). Lovitts (2001) also suggested that doctoral programs struggle with retention because of the department's typical focus on incoming characteristics of new students instead of the department climate and organizational culture.

Social scientists have developed and considered several different theories contributing to academic achievement and school climate. Juvonen (2006) proposed a model in which positive relationships between students' sense of belonging to the school and academic achievement were related. Dweck's theory (2006) of academic motivation defines academic hardiness as incorporating commitment, control, and challenge to achieve academic excellence (Benishek, Feldman, Shipon, Mecham, & Lopez, 2005). Commitment is effort and personal sacrifice to obtain academic excellence regardless of demands; control believes one can control emotions concerning academic stress and meet desired outcomes. Challenge perceives difficulty as opportunities academically to become a better learner alluding to coping efficacy and self-confidence (Benishek et al., 2005). Students' emotional safety, magnitude, and quality of

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relationships are influencers like coping efficacy and self-confidence that have been thought to increase well-being through sense of community (Pretty et al., 1996; Prezza & Costantini, 1998).

2.7 CURRENT STUDY

Research examining contextual factors of school climate and academic achievement for graduate students suggests decentralized practices in departments such as but not limited to admission standards, academic standards, and control of institutional resources available to graduate students for financial support as factors that contribute to academic satisfaction and achievement (Golde, 2005). This data aligns with the literature investigating contextual factors of both sense of community and sense of belonging. Overall, when considering all variables for this study, there is a gap in the literature investigating the difference in contributing factors for graduate students' success and, more specifically, incivility, sense of community, sense of belonging, and well-being collectively. This study examined how departmental interactions impact students and compared graduate students' experiences across the different graduate programs at Wichita State University. The following research questions will guide this study:

1. How do graduate students experience faculty incivility?

2. How does faculty incivility affect graduate students' sense of belonging and community?

3. In what ways does faculty incivility affect graduate students' well-being?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

3.1 Participants and Setting

The study was conducted using a sample of graduate students from Wichita State University (WSU), a midsized Urban Research Institution in the Midwest. WSU consists of 15,000 graduate and undergraduate students. Table 1 displays the demographics collected from participants in this study. A mix of both master (N= 174), doctorate (N=64), and specialist (N=1) students participated in this study. Participants from all seven WSU colleges participated in the current study, and most of these participants were first-year graduate students (N=110). The average age of participants in this study was M= 31 years old; participants were primarily white (N=142) and cisgender female (N=155). Our analysis is based on 137 of the 265 participants who completed the entire Incivility in Higher Education Revised Scale with an average ($M = 1.86$, SD= .633, Md= 2).

Table 1

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Graduate Student Participants

	n	*%*
Age		
<=24	81	30.6
25-27	44	16.6
28-35	54	20.4
36 +	58	21.9
Missing	28	10.6
Gender		
Cisgender Male	73	27.5
Cisgender Female	155	58.5
Transgender and Gender Diverse	5	1.9
Prefer Not to Say	4	1.5
Missing	28	10.6
Ethnicity		
White or Caucasian	142	53.6
Racially Diverse	93	35.1
Missing	30	11.3

Table 1 (continued)

Degree		
Master	174	65.7
Doctorate	64	24.2
Specialist	1	.4
Missing	26	9.8
Program Year		
First	110	41.5
Second	52	19.6
Third	29	10.9
Fourth	14	5.3
Fifth	4	1.5
Sixth	2	.8
Missing	54	20.4
College		
Barton School of Business	16	6.0
College of Applied Studies	48	18.1
College of Engineering	62	23.4
College of Fine Arts	5	1.9
College of Health Professions	22	8.3
College of Innovation and Design	1	.4
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	81	30.6
Missing	30	11.3
First Generation		
Yes	110	41.5
No	129	48.7
Missing	26	9.8
Teaching		
Yes	56	21.1
No	184	69.4
Missing	25	9.5
WSU Graduate School Demographics	*Mean*	*%*
Age in Years	31.5	n/a
Female	n/a	58
Male	n/a	42
First Generation	n/a	22
White	n/a	57.9
Racially Diverse (Including International Students)	n/a	40.6

3.2 Procedures

This study was approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee to the Institutional

Review Board (IRB) at WSU. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete, which

varied based on the detail of narrative responses. The Office of Planning and Analysis (OPA)

provided a sample of 2856 graduate students' emails via the survey platform Qualtrics to

distribute the survey. Recruitment emails were sent to all 2856 graduate students from the sample provided by OPA. The link to complete the survey and consent documents were in the recruitment email. Reminders were sent out every Monday for eight weeks. Consent was collected at the time of survey administration, and recruitment emails had a printable version of the consent form. Participants were also asked to give a non-school email, which was kept until the end of data collection, to contact those who won the $25 gift card drawing. At the end of data collection, participants who opted in the drawing for the gift card emails were put into a word document and numbered. An app, "Raffle Name," was used to select eight numbers randomly. Participants whose email numbers matched one of the eight numbers were selected and emailed a virtual $25 gift card.

3.3 Instruments

This study examined the relationship between four variables and utilized a survey format, embedding three validated constructed instruments. This study examined the relationship between sense of well-being, sense of community, sense of belonging, and faculty incivility. The survey consisted of 93 items, not including demographic items and four open-ended questions.

Sense of Community was measured using the Sense of Community Index-2 (SCI-2). The overall scale alpha is .94. Subscales reinforcement of needs, membership, influence, and shared emotional connection coefficient alphas scores of .79 to .86. The SCI-2 measure is often used in social science to quantitatively measure sense of community. It consists of 24 items and uses a Likert scale for participant response. Some example items are: "Being a member of this community makes me feel good" and "I get important needs of mine met because I am part of this community" (Chavis, Lee & Acosta, 2008).

Sense of Belonging was measured using the Sense of Belonging Scale-Revised (SOBS), consisting of four factors: perceived peer support, perceived classroom comfort, perceived isolation, and perceived faculty support. The coefficient alpha for the scale is .87, and the five factors coefficient alphas range from .82 to .90 (Hoffman, Richmond & Salomone, 2002-2003). Some items from this survey are "I feel comfortable talking about a problem with faculty" and "Speaking in class is easy because I feel comfortable".

Faculty Incivility was assessed using the Incivility in Higher Education-Revised (IHE-R) Survey (Clark, 2015). IHE-R was adapted from the Incivility in Nursing Education survey, revised in 2015. The survey is compiled of a series of questions to faculty about student incivility and questions about faculty incivility. The IHE-R measures two components how uncivil respondents believe behaviors are and how often the behavior occurs. For the purpose of this study, participants were only asked to respond to questions assessing faculty incivility. Examples of some items are "Punishing the entire class for one student's misbehavior," "Unfair grading," and "Making condescending or rude remarks toward others." Clark (2015) reports an alpha of .98 for faculty behaviors and .96 for student behaviors.

Well-Being was measured using two scales: The satisfaction with life scale (Diener et al., 1985) and the Brief Inventory of Thriving (Su, Tay & Deiner, 2014). The Satisfaction with life scale is a five-item Likert scale where participants indicate how much they agree or disagree with each item on a seven-point scale ranging from seven strongly agree to one strongly disagree. The scale has good internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .85 (Pavot, Diender, Colvin, & Sandvic, 1991). The structure of this scale is a conceptualization of subjective well-being. This scale will help investigate how the social relationships that graduate students have with faculty influence their satisfaction with life while in school. Some items from

the Satisfaction with Life Scale are: "I am satisfied with my life" and "So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life." The Brief Inventory of Thriving is a self-reported psychological well-being construct with ten items in which respondents use a five-point Likert scale ranging from one strongly disagree to five strongly agree. This scale has a coefficient alpha of .87. An example item for this measure is, "I can succeed if I put my mind to it."

3.4 Analysis

This study used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 28.0.0.0 (SPSS) to complete the analysis. Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine participants' demographic distribution. The totals for Sense of Belonging-R, Sense of Community Index-2, Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT), Satisfaction of Life Scale, and subsequent subscales were calculated for each participant. Means, standard deviations, and medians were also calculated. The Incivility in Higher Education Revised Scale (IHE-R) utilized mean scores for each item and the mean score of each participant's full scale. Due to data not being normally distributed, non-parametric tests were used to analyze the data.

SPSS does not provide an effect size statistic for Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal-Wallis Test. An approximate value can be calculated using the Standardized Test Statistic (z value) and the formula $r = z\ /square\ root\ of\ n$, where n is the total number of cases (Pallant, 2016, pg. 223). Effect size was evaluated using Cohen (1988) criteria of .1 = small effect, .3= medium, and .5= large effect. There was one participant who defined their level of education as a specialist. The variable was recoded, and specialist was counted as missing data for data analysis, not further to skew data. Strength of relationship for correlations will also use Cohen guidelines of small .10 to .29, medium .30 to .49, and large .50 to 1.0 (Cohen, 1988. p. 79-81). A power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1 a priori to determine the sample size for

significance, indicating a sample of $n= 210$. This study sample size exceeded this with a total of 265 participants.

3.4.1 Research Question Analysis

Research Question One

Research question one collected both quantitative and qualitative data through the IHE-R instrument. The instrument was coded by assigning numerical values to response categories ($1=$ *not uncivil*, $2=$ *somewhat uncivil*, $3=$*moderately uncivil*, and $4=$ *highly uncivil*) for student and faculty behaviors (Clark et al., 2015). However, only faculty behaviors were presented to participants to prevent participant fatigue. Scores were created to evaluate the sample as a whole and to conduct comparisons across individual items.

Single items on the IHE-R items were calculated separately by means and overall percentages for each response category. IHE-R was collapsed into two subscales creating higher incivility and lower incivility, as recommended by Clark et al. (2015). Two subscales were created for the IHE-R by summing items 1 to 12, 15, 16, and 18 and dividing by 15 ($[1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9+10+11+12+15+16+18]/15$), for lower incivility. For the higher level of incivility factor, sum items 13, 14, 17, and 19 to 24 and divide by 9 ($[13+14+17+19+20+21+22+23+24]/9$) (Clark et al., 2015).

Kruskal-Wallis, Chi-Square test for independence, and Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to answer research question one. Kruskal-Wallis was conducted to determine the relationship between faculty behaviors with college program, year in program, age grouped, ethnicity, and gender. Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to assess the relationship between faculty behaviors with white vs. racially diverse students, first-generation vs. non-first-generation students, teaching vs. non-teaching students, and master vs. doctorate students. Chi-

Square test for independence was conducted to compare demographics with two ordinal questions from the IHE-R that measured the extent participants believed their department was uncivil and if students or faculty were more likely to be uncivil.

The IHE-R had four narrative items that were analyzed using thematic analysis. All narrative item responses were initially copied and pasted into a word document and separated based on the specific questions being answered. After the first week of data collection, 40 participant narrative responses were used for first cycle coding and the creation of provisional and In Vivo coding to guide the rest of the coding process at the end of data collection. At the end of data collection, familiarization with data occurred, and narrative responses went through the second coding cycle to narrow concepts into subthemes and patterns that answered the corresponding narrative items. Next, subthemes and patterns were clustered together into more prominent themes or remained subthemes coded under main themes and created definitions. This was followed by another round of reviewing both definitions, subthemes, and themes. Lastly, this researcher entered the significant themes into SPSS and placed one in each theme where participants' responses were coded. SPSS was then used to run frequencies to count the number of times each theme was noted to provide a pattern of frequency of responses (Figure 2).

Figure 2
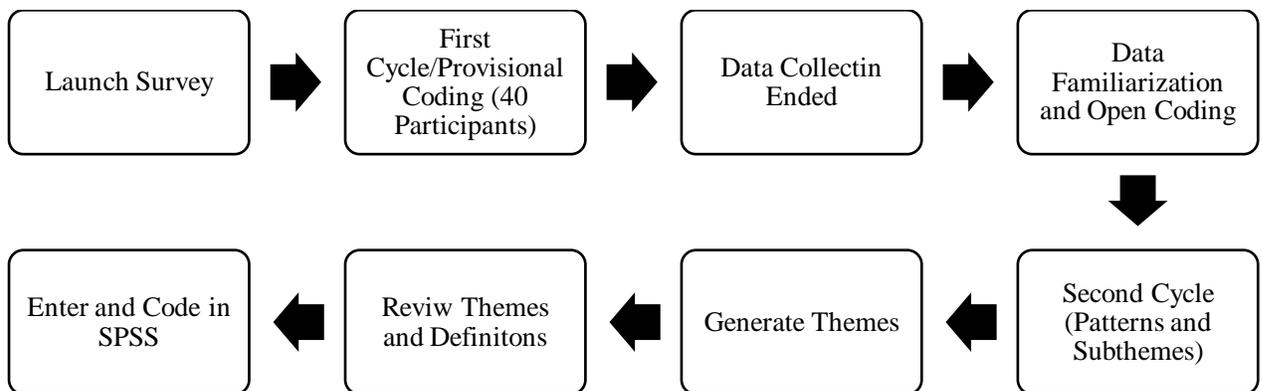
Fig. 2 Graphic representation of the coding process

Research Question Two

Research question two utilized quantitative data from the SCI-2, SOBS, and IHE-R. Spearman rho correlations investigated the relationships between faculty incivility, graduate students' sense of belonging, and community. Each scale was scored based on scale instructions. Sense of Community Index-2 (SCI-2), Sense of Belonging Scale (SOBS), were scored by the total sum of the instrument, and the same was completed for subscales. The range of participant scores for the scales was 1-72 Sense of Community and 0-132 Sense of Belonging. Higher scores indicate stronger feelings of sense of community and sense of belonging.

Research Question Three

Research question three used qualitative data from IHE-R, SWLS, and BIT. Each scale was scored based on scale instructions. Brief Inventory of Thriving (BIT) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were scored by the total sum of the instrument, and the same was completed for subscales. The range of participant scores for these two scales was 0-70 Brief Inventory of Thriving and 0-35 Satisfaction with Life. Spearman's rho correlation investigated the relationship between faculty incivility and SWLS and BIT. SWLS came with predetermined categories indicating how satisfied participants were with life based on their scores. A Kruskal-Wallis test compared faculty incivility to participants' different satisfaction with life levels.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study aimed to explore the relationship between faculty incivility, sense of belonging, sense of community, and well-being among graduate students. Three research questions guided the exploration of the relationship between the variables. The following sections focus on a brief overview of the scales and subscales used for the survey and the statistical analysis used to answer the study's three research questions. Non-parametric tests were used to analyze data because data were not normally distributed and skewed in a bimodal shape.

Scoring for the Incivility in Higher Education- Revised (IHE-R), also referred to as faculty behaviors, was calculated by scoring each item separately by the mean and overall percentage of each response category. Scores ranged from 1to 4, and higher means indicated increased experience and severity of incivility. There were no items in any of the scales that needed to be reverse scored. Missing data were calculated as a variable to determine a relationship between missing data and participants' scale scores. The means, standard deviations, and correlations for the scales and subscales are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviation, Median, and Correlations

Scale/Subscale/Item	Mean (*SD*) total	Median	Correlation with Incivility in Higher Education Revised	*p*	Skew.	Kurt.
Incivility in Higher Education Revised	1.86 (.63)	2	-	-	.15	-.69
Sense of Community Index-2	33.23 (14.82)	32	-.078	.30	.31	-.60
Reinforcement of Needs	8.97 (4.36)	9	-.10	.17	.09	-.68
Membership	7.56 (3.97)	7	-.10	.17	.57	-.08
Influence	8.36 (3.91)	8	-.04	.58	.41	-.32

Table 2 (continued)

Shared Emotional Connection	8.36 (4.14)	8	-.11	.15	.28	-.74
Sense of Belonging Scale-Revised	87.69 (19.89)	89	-.03	.72	-1.45	4.64
Perceived Peer Support	26.77 (9.97)	27.50	.18*	.01	-.48	-.57
Perceived Classroom Comfort	15.42 (4.61)	16	-.09	.23	-1.18	1.42
Perceived Isolation	10.32 (4.78)	10	-.06	.41	.11	-.80
Perceived Faculty Support	34.86 (10.53)	36	-.10	.18	-.61	2.05
Satisfaction with Life Scale	22.63 (7.07)	23	.04	.58	-.50	-.27
Brief Inventory of Thriving	39.07 (10.13)	34	.05	.49	-.28	3.22
Missing Items	34.07 (46.12)	3	-.30**	<.001	1.02	-.67

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

4.1 Research Question One: Quantitative Data: Graduate Students Overall Experience of Faculty Behavior

Research question one examined the impact of graduate students' overall perception of faculty behavior. The Incivility in Higher Education Revised had 24 items outlining different faculty uncivil behavior ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .633$, $Md = 2$). The top three categories selected by participants as occurring at some frequency were: ineffective or inefficient teaching methods, being unavailable outside of class, and refusing or reluctant to answer direct questions (see Table 3).

Table 3

Top 3 Most Often Occurring Behaviors

Behaviors	How Often Experienced Incivility %	Not Uncivil %	Somewhat Uncivil%	Moderately Uncivil %	Highly Uncivil
Ineffective or inefficient teaching method	65.6	27.5	34.1	27.5	10.8

Table 3 (continued)

Being unavailable outside of class (not returning calls or e-mails, not maintaining office hours)	50.3	26.8	19.5	28	25.6
Refusing or reluctant to answer direct questions	45.1	29.5	17.5	26.5	26.5

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to examine the relationship between faculty behaviors and college program, year in the program, age grouped, ethnicity, and gender. Kruskal-Wallis was run using complete categories of ethnicity (prefer not to say, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian, White or Caucasian, Indian, Melting Pot/Mixed/Bi-Racial, Igbo, and Middle Eastern). However, none of these revealed statistically significant differences in perceived faculty behaviors. Although not significant, descriptive statistics showed a trend of third-year students reporting higher mean scores and having the highest median $M= 2.10$. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate mean faculty behavior scores across college programs, revealing that the College of Health Professions had the highest score ($M=2.05, N=17$) (see Table 4). Spearman's rho revealed no statistically significant results with faculty incivility across colleges.

Table 4

Mean Incivility Scores Across Seven Colleges

College	Mean	SD	Median	Range	N
Barton School of Business	1.80	.68	1.73	1-3	13
College of Applied Studies	1.78	.52	1.82	1-3	42
College of Engineering	1.76	.78	1.45	1-4	50
College of Fine Arts	1.90	.44	2.04	1-2	5
College of Health Professions	2.05	.62	2.23	1-3	17

Table 4 (continued)

College of Innovation and Design	1.13	.	1.13	.	1
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	1.95	.59	2.19	1-4	73

Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to assess the relationship between faculty behaviors with white vs. racially diverse students, first-generation vs. non-first-generation students, teaching vs. non-teaching students, and doctorate vs. master level students. There were significant differences in perceptions of faculty behavior among white graduate students (*Md*= 2.15, *n*= 123) and racially diverse graduate students (*Md*= 1.67, *n*= 77) [*U*= 3724.5, *z*= -2.54, *p*= .011, *r*= .18]. Although the results were statistically significant, the effect size was minimal. Post Hoc Bonferroni Correction indicated a significant difference between white and racially diverse students *p*<.03. There were also significant differences in perceptions of faculty behavior between master's degree participants (*Md*= 1.80, *n*= 148) and doctorate (*Md*= 2.01, *n*= 55) [*U*= 4962, *z*= 2.40, *p*= .016, *r*= .17]. Post Hoc Bonferroni Correction indicated a significant difference between master's and doctorate student rates of incivility, p<.03. However, there were no differences in perceived faculty behaviors for teaching vs. non-teaching or first-generation vs. non-first-generation participants.

A chi-square test for independence was conducted to compare demographics with two ordinal questions from the IHE-R, which asked participants the extent they believed their department was uncivil and if students or faculty were more likely to be uncivil. A chi-square indicated a significant association between first-generation students and non-first generations students, investigating if they believed faculty or students are more likely to be uncivil [$\chi 2(2, n= 201) = 8.93, p= .012, phi= .211$], indicating an association between first-generation student status and the proportion of respondents that believed faculty were more likely to be uncivil at 68.3%.

There was no significant association between the first-generation status of students and the extent of incivility experienced in their department. Finally, there was no significant association between teaching and non-teaching participants regarding whether they believed faculty or graduate students to be more uncivil or the extent of incivility experienced in their department.

4.1.1 Qualitative Data for Graduate Students Overall Experience of Faculty Behaviors

The IHE-R had four narrative questions, thematically coded, and content analyzed.

Strategies for Addressing Incivility in Higher Education

An additional question asked participants to select the top three strategies they would suggest for improving civility in higher education. The instrument gave ten options to choose from:

1. Use empirical tools (surveys, etc.) to measure incivility/civility and address areas of strength/growth

2. Establish codes of conduct that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors

3. Role-model professionalism and civility

4. Raise awareness, provide civility education

5. Integrate civility and collegiality into performance evaluations

6. Provide training for effective communication and conflict negotiation

7. Develop and implement comprehensive policies and procedures to address incivility

8. Reward civility and professionalism

9. Implement strategies for stress reduction and self-care

10. Take personal responsibility and stand accountable for actions

11. Other: Please specify_____.

Participants who chose the "please specify option could write in suggestions. Responses from participants who chose to write in a strategy were also thematically coded.

Regarding perceptions of ways to address incivility in higher education, the top three strategies participants provided and the percentage of those who chose each answer are provided in Table 5. Top reported strategies included (1) raise awareness and provide civility education, (2) take personal responsibility and stand accountable for actions, and (3) establish a code of conduct that defines acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.

Table 5

Top Three Strategies to Improve Civility in Higher Education

Strategy	Frequency (Count)
Raise awareness and provide civility education	87
Take personal responsibility and stand accountable for actions	85
Establish a code of conduct that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors	82

The results of all other narrative items will be broken down and presented separately in the following sections. If participated responses included more than one strategy, the item was coded for each of the strategies.

Narrative Item One: Example of Uncivil Encounter

Participants were prompted to describe an example of incivility they had encountered in the last twelve months (see Table 6). Four themes emerged from this narrative item: (1) not witnessed, (2) discrimination, (3) social conduct, and (4) teaching effectiveness. Participant reports of incivility included both behaviors experienced and witnessed by faculty and other students and there were no reported examples of incivility instigated by participants themselves.

In instances where participants mentioned student incivility, they also spoke about passive

incivility with faculty failing to act.

Table 6

Qualitative Themes and Descriptions for Example of Uncivil Encounter Narrative

Theme *(Subthemes)*	Description	Example(s)	Count
Have Not Witnessed	Responses that specifically mentioned incivility had not been witnessed or explicitly reported positive experiences with faculty	*"I have not encountered an example of uncivility"* *"I haven't. In fact, Dr.(redacted) has played a significant role in advocating for my success as an ADHD, sensitive student. She has gone above and beyond her 'duties' as a professor to make sure I am supported, cared for, and encouraged to thrive in the most civil and humane ways possible"*	29
Discrimination • *Gender Discrimination* • *Racial Discrimination* • *Sexism* • *Microaggression*	Responses that discussed respect, treatment, or behaviors based on gender, race, sex, and other individual differences	*"Racial bias, transphobic comments, disregarding students, insulting students"* *"A professor was dismissive of a female student's questions and comments but engaged with male students' similar questions and comments"*	13
Social Conduct • *Verbal Aggression of Abuse* • *Poor Pro-social Skills*	Responses that involved social interaction with faculty described as aggressive, abusive, or poor social skills	*"I have seen a faculty member say rude things regarding a students' abilities to answer questions before. I don't think there was the intention to be rude, but the execution at the very least has come off as tone-deaf"* *"Professors talking poorly about other professors"*	35
Teaching Effectiveness • *Expectations* • *Classroom Management* • *Professionalism*	Responses that alluded toward conduct about classroom behavior or job performance and conduct	*"Several times in some classes, professors ignore disruptive students which leads to confusion later on when people haven't heard what was said and need it repeated."* *"A professor not answering an email to them and failing the student"*	73

Theme 1: Have Not Witnessed. When asked to reflect on incivility, some participants

indicated they had not encountered uncivil behavior during their time at WSU. Several

participants specified they had *not* witnessed or experienced incivility, and some gave praise

and/or thankfulness instead. For example, one participant wrote, *"I have been impressed with the professionalism and lack of inappropriate behavior with my professors. It is refreshing"* (Participant 225). Another participant indicated,

> I haven't. In fact, Dr.(redacted) has played a significant role in advocating for my success as an ADHD, sensitive student. She has gone above and beyond her 'duties' as a professor to make sure I am supported, cared for, and encouraged to thrive in the most civil and humane ways possible. (Participant 147)

As these two examples illustrate, graduate school has been a positive and supportive space, with faculty members providing support for participants responding to this item. While several participants within this category stated they had not experienced incivility at all, others stated they had not experienced it in the last twelve months, indicating they may have experienced or witnessed uncivil behaviors earlier in their educational careers.

Theme 2: Discrimination. A central theme that emerged from participants' incivility examples included acts based on gender, race, sex, and/or individual differences. In addition, participants gave various examples of discriminatory comments and actions by faculty members that they attributed to one of four subthemes: Gender discrimination, Racial Discrimination, Sexism, and Micro aggressive.

Gender Discrimination. Participants who reported instances related to gender discrimination frequently gave examples in which faculty refused to use their preferred pronouns. One example from a participant, *"A professor did not respect a student's pronouns"* Participant 74. Another participant also gave the example

> Negative comments about diverse gender spectrum and how it is "annoying" to make gender accommodations (pronouns, not separating class by males and females, removing gendered language from content, etc.) Participant 20

This was one of many examples in which faculty made negative comments about individuals across the gender spectrum. Most frequently occurring examples of gender discrimination were passive acts in which faculty would not use proper pronouns. Gender discrimination, like other subthemes for discriminations acts, was often passive acts of incivility.

Racial Discrimination. There were also examples of witnessed and experienced incidents involving race or ethnicity; these acts discussed were primarily passive and indirect. For example, one participant stated, "On the low end of things, students have made racist remarks regarding one of our minority professors…." Participant 8. It is important to note that although this excerpt highlights students' uncivil behavior, it also alluded, like most responses concerning other students, to passive incivility. There was an expectation for faculty to intervene in behavior that did not occur.

Sexism. Sexism was not coded frequently, and although it could have been included in the subtheme of gender discrimination for inclusivity purposes, it was not. These cases of sexism included acts in which assumptions and statements were made about individual sex. While gender discrimination was defined as an incident involving discriminatory acts due to gender identity. Responses were coded as sexism and then brought under the theme of discrimination if participants reported behavior by faculty that was not illegal, but the incident was contributed to the sex of the participant. An example of this from a participant is

> A teacher made a sexually inappropriate joke to a student during class; there was
> already some slightly inappropriate joking among students, but the instructor
> escalated the conversation instead of letting it be or shutting it down. Participant
> 99

Sexism was not just about unwanted or inappropriate comments. There were instances in which students made reports regarding discouragement from faculty based on sex. Sexism, like other subthemes under discrimination, was reported as witnessed and experienced acts of incivility.

Micro aggressive. There are examples in which participants labeled their encounters as micro-aggressive. While in other examples, it was coded as micro-aggressive if examples were slights and not blatant acts due to being marginalized or belonging to a stigmatized group. For example, participant 83 described the following encounter:

> A group project in which I was the only minority. I made attempts to participate and try to set up meeting times with the other three members of which they all said they were unavailable to three different dates and times. I then found out they met together the next day, which was one of the days I suggested. Then during the presentation, they presented the information that I included on the project instead of allowing me to speak regarding my section as discussed prior to the presentation. It was evident that microaggression was at play, which I brought it to the professor's attention, and it was immediately addressed.

Although this example outlines a microaggression that was peer to peer, which is considered lateral incivility, most occurrences were reported as faculty members as instigators of the uncivil acts. Although there is a focus on faculty incivility, like the code of not being witnessed, it was necessary to note instances when students behaved uncivilly, and faculty stepped in to intervene or address the behavior. This shows the importance of faculty's appropriate use of authority and how it can aid in making campuses more psychologically safe. Instances like these were also cases in which participants were likely to contribute the cause of incivility to institutional contextual factors rather than individual differences.

Theme 3: Social Conduct. A third theme that emerged from encounters that participants described as social conduct. In these instances, participants told stories about faculty behaviors concerning socializing. Two distinct subthemes emerged in relation to social conduct.

Verbal Aggression or Abuse*.* Several encounters involved insults, threats, and yelling, which led to the subtheme of verbal aggression. These examples were explicit to active incivility, which is a more direct than passive act. Passive acts were most likely to be coded as poor pro-social behavior. Participants gave examples of verbally aggressive encounters with both faculty and other students. Participant 53 explains,

> A classmate has repeatedly complained about various issues they are having with their time at WSU. These complaints are delivered in a combative and intimidating manner. This person has no interest in discussing how these issues could be resolved or even what those resolutions could look like. This has happened at least 4 times since classes started.

Instances of abuse reported by participants were also emotionally abusive and verbal aggression consisted of both passive and direct verbal aggression. When considering the impact that alleged abuse has on one's mental health, it was essential to distinguish that from poor prosocial behavior and skills. Examples of peer-to-peer incivility create a perspective of the climate in academia, but more importantly, the role that passive incivility plays in which faculty fail to intervene.

Poor Pro-Social Skills*.* Many participants discussed instances in which faculty or peers were uncooperative, lacked empathy, and overall actions were counterproductive to the well-being of others. These acts did not cross the threshold of verbal aggression or other abuse but still posed the potential of harm and caused discomfort for those witnessing or experiencing them. For example, one participant described an uncivil encounter concerning social interaction, reporting, *"A professor putting a student on the spot and then laughing at the answers they provided"* (Participant 141). Various social interactions align with the overall concept, such as lying, being snarky, and not being helpful, varying in forms of poor pro-social behavior distinct from verbal aggression and abusive incidents.

Theme 4: Teaching Effectiveness. The fourth and final theme that emerged from the encounters alluded to teaching effectiveness, with three subthemes contributing to the overall theme. When considering the perceived effectiveness of a teacher, it is essential to acknowledge the distinction between conduct and how participants perceived and expected faculty should behave. This distinction resulted in the following subthemes.

Expectations. Encounters related to participants' beliefs about expectations that faculty had for them or how they expected faculty to behave outside of classroom conduct and professionalism were classified here. An example from participant 63, *"Instructor not being clear with instructions of the assignment, then adding more assignments due to not understanding the assignment."* Instances about the preference or expected pedagogy came up throughout the coding process and were coded separately from instances in which participants discussed how faculty managed the classroom environment and other students.

Classroom Management. Participants often discussed encounters about how faculty managed the classroom and made decisions regarding course instruction. One participant reported,

> After a group presentation, the professor called out the group and embarrassed us by saying we did the project completely wrong. We followed their instructions and included the requirements, yet she blamed us. This was the second group that didn't follow her instructions. (Participant 69).

Classroom conduct examples often included double codes with professionalism and expectations but emerged alone, making it essential to be acknowledged separately.

Professionalism. Outside of classroom management, encounters also discussed how faculty behaved concerning their role. These instances took place in course instruction and classroom management. An example of this is from Participant 81, *"telling students to be kind to*

them on their evaluations when they have previously given you a harsh and untrue/

unsubstantiated evaluation." Professional conduct code differed from social conduct due to the

difference in the behaviors concerning expectations of faculty behavior in their professional role.

When considering professional conduct, this also included responding to emails and advising.

Narrative Item Two: Primary Reason or Cause

Participants were asked, in their opinion, what was the primary reason or cause of

incivility in higher education. Two themes emerged from this question: individual differences

with 107 occurrences and work conditions with 59 (see Table 7). A variety of different reasons

and causes for incivility emerged from participant responses. Many of these that emerged were

not frequent enough to become themes resulting in multiple subthemes for the two themes.

Table 7

Qualitative Themes and Descriptions for Primary Reason or Cause Narrative

Theme *(Subthemes)*	Description	Example(s)	Count
Individual Differences • *Superiority Complex* • *Lack of Pro-Social Skills* • *Personal Capacity* • *Difference Intolerance*	Participant responses when they attributed uncivil behavior to various personal attributes	"*Abuse of power"* *"Inflexible thinking/rigidity, stress, failure to openly communicate"* *"Lack of respect. Habits that were formed in a time when discrimination was tolerated.*	107
Work Conditions • *Personal Balance* • *Organizational Contextual Factors*	Participant responses that attributed incivility to work conditions both organizational level and personal level	"*My guess would be stress"* "*People aren't paid enough*" *"I think that a lot of people are really stressed out from COVID-19, I attended a webinar this evening on 'fostering self-care,' I think that this is important for all of us, humans are often difficult, important to stay in our own lane"*	59

Theme 1: Individual Differences. Participants described various personal attributes of those who behave uncivilly in higher education. Three subthemes emerged, which accounted for overall perceptions of individual differences.

Superiority Complex. Words like ego, power, and entitlement were often used as participants explained their beliefs about the cause of incivility. For example, participant 83 shared, "*they [faculty] think they are superior because of the high levels of education they have.*" Another participant said, "*Tenure. Once this goal is reached, they are untouchable*" (Participant 90).

The feeling of power differences between faculty and participants appeared to be one of the biggest contributing factors to superiority complex themes. Participants assumed that faculty believed they could behave this way because they had more power.

Lack of Pro-Social Skills. Lack of pro-social skills aligned with the literature reviewed. Participants discussed characteristics and behaviors aligned with the lack of overall pro-social skills. One participant describes in detail,

> Primarily, it might be the feeling of disconnection that leads to a lack of closeness in relationships. This disconnection could increase incivility. People struggle to connect, and a lack of civility could be a factor. As a person with ADHD, I have always struggled to understand social norms. Now that I am doing my dissertation on ADHD college students, I understand so much more about how unintended social slights or misperceived intentions impact relationships. From my neurodivergent perspective, incivility has many more layers of misunderstanding piled on top of "normal" expected social behaviors. Participant 148

Lack of prosocial skills and behaviors is cited in the literature as a common characteristic of faculty who are more likely to behave uncivilly. However, narrative responses for participants who discussed situations of lack of prosocial skills varied from those who discussed the capacity of faculty members that influenced behaviors.

Personal Capacity. Personal capacity was used to describe participant reasons that mentioned words such as understanding capabilities or other personal characteristics or beliefs impacting capacity. For example, participant 288 explains

> that in the case of the professor mentioned above she is not organized. In the case of the other professor, she has way too much going on and is trying to do way too much. Selfishness, the professors being too focused on their carrier [*sic*], their research, THEMSELVES.

The personal capacity theme mainly appeared when participants qualified reasoning due to faculty ability to behave appropriately and at times contributing this to pressure faculty may be under but not citing work or institutional conditions as the cause.

> ***Difference Intolerance***. Difference intolerance emerged as participants attributed
>
> reasons for incivility to tolerance concerning thinking, feeling, or belonging to a different
>
> group. One participant reported that faculty incivility was due to "*A lack of cultural*
>
> *sensitivity and awareness. Bureaucratic and university politics being prioritized over the*
>
> *sincere well-being of students"* Participant 87

It should be noted that difference intolerance differed from discrimination, for participants did not discuss acts that took place but attributed incivility to faculty's differing beliefs.

Theme 2: Work Conditions. The third theme that emerged was related to different aspects of work conditions, from both organizational and personal levels. Although like personal capacity, personal balance was utilized in instances in which participants attributed incivility to faculty burnout, stress, or other similar sentiments.

Personal Balance. In cases where stress, burnout, and other personal effects were due to work, personal balance was applied. One participant stated, "*instructors and professors are stressed and wear too many hats"* (Participant 265). It should be noted that the coding of

personal capacity was about limited ability rather than emotional experience brought on by

work-related factors, which was utilized for personal balance.

Organizational Contextual Factors. This code was used to describe reasons from

participants about different factors that impact the work environment outside of direct impact on

individuals, such as personal balance, burnout, and stress. These examples were about

management, accountability, oversight, autonomy, and expectations. An example of this from the

data is from Participant 142 reflects, "*lack of accountability for faculty towards students. This*

then results in students treating other students in incivil [*sic*] *ways*". Contextual factors expand

outside the individual level, suggesting that incivility impacts expand across the different levels

of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

Narrative Item Three: Consequence of Incivility. The third question asked participants to

respond to what they believed was the most significant consequence of incivility in higher

education. Three themes emerged from participant responses self-efficacy, well-being, and

institutional. All three primary themes also had subthemes (see Table 8). Most narrative items in

these sections were coded under more than one theme.

Table 8

Qualitative Themes and Descriptions for Consequences of Incivility Narrative

Theme *(Subthemes)*	Description	Example(s)	Count
Self-Efficacy • *Motivation* • *Skill Development* • *Productivity*	Responses that discussed individual's beliefs and capacity to produce and perform, including the ability to control motivation, behavior, and social environment (Bandura, 1997)	"*Effect of incivility on student's mental health and will to succeed in their program. For faculty members they lose the desire to teach and passion for their subject.*" "*Negative personal experiences and loss of educational value*" "*It affects the performance of the students negatively*"	58

Table 8 (continued)

Well-Being • *Emotional Well-Being* • *Psychological Well-Being*	When participants discussed various emotional and psychological consequences of incivility in higher education	"*Increased student burden/stress*" "*Anger, frustration, and resentment*" "*Students and faculty experiencing emotional distress/mental health issues; students leaving school and not continuing their education*"	42
Institutional • *Enrollment* • *School Climate*	Responses that discussed outcomes that were related to the academic setting at large	"*Perpetuation of discriminatory behavior, attrition of minority students*" "*Losing good students who are valuable to their departments*" "*Students becoming discouraged and no longer wanting to pursue an education*"	69

Theme 1: Self-Efficacy. The theme of self-efficacy that emerged was not just about an individual's beliefs but also the capacity to produce and perform. Therefore, the following subthemes reflect self-efficacy with one's ability to control motivation, behavior, and the social environment (Bandura 1997).

Motivation. Participants discussed motivation in terms of not just lack of motivation but prioritizing learning overall. For example, one participant stated, "*Demotivates the student*" (Participant 7). Another participant stated, *"loss of student engagement in class"* (Participant 45). Participants often spoke about incivility leading to discouragement and often explained the consequences. This led to responses often being coded under one or both of the two other main themes for this narrative response.

Skill Development. Learning and skill development were discussed due to incivility in higher education. An example of this from Participant 34 is "*Students being unable to learn effectively*." Skill development varied from motivation and productivity, emerging when participants discussed learning outcomes.

***Productivity*.** Productivity was separated from motivation and skill development due to responses at times speaking toward completing work. In comparison, motivation is the willingness, and skill development refers to statements about ability. For example, one participant (118) reported, "*Grades changed*" and another stated, "*I missed most of a class bc* [*sic*] *of this students temper tantrum as I did not feel comfortable staying in the class*" (Participant 53).

Participants discussed consequences not related to learning outcomes or efficacy. In these incidents maintaining and keeping up with coursework or class demands were coded as productivity. Although the focus of this study is on faculty uncivil behavior, it is essential to note that when student behavior goes unaddressed in the classroom setting, it leads to unsafe psychological classroom environments.

Theme 2: Well-Being. Participants discussed various emotional and psychological consequences of incivility in higher education.

***Emotional*.** Emotional responses were those that labeled emotions or statements about general mental health. Most of these were short phrases or single words. Participant 92 provides an example with "*Mental health decrease*" or another simply stated, "*depression*" (Participant 78). Emotional consequences responses from participants varied. However, often they were simple statements referring to mental health status and followed by one or both other main themes.

***Psychological*.** Psychological subthemes were often coded with the institutional theme as participants often followed up with outcomes of students leaving or faculty being fired. An example from Participant 148,

Lack of connection, isolation, loneliness, rejection sensitivity dysphoria (ADHD people freak out emotionally when we feel rejected), and possibly leaving the learning community to find acceptance elsewhere.

Psychological responses often carried more detail and were followed in the aftermath of the psychological impact.

Theme 3: Institutional. The third theme of institutional consequences appeared the most for participants. A variety of different responses that showed up concerning institutional consequences of incivility. It took quite some time to develop original subthemes to get to the heart of the overarching theme of institutional impacts.

Enrollment. Narrative answers that discussed students not enrolling in programs or dropping out of programs were included in this subtheme. Examples of this are *"lack of enrollment in program and retention"* (Participant 145) and

Grad students wanting to flee academia, even if it means not getting a PhD. In conversations that I've had over the last week or so, I have heard: two psych students, a handful of engineering and bio students, and math students express a desire to leave academia. Some have even gone so far as to suggest their programs should be shutdown [*sic*]. We have become little more than work horses. Extensions of our professor. Our career goals and interests are insignificant if it means tending to or even hearing them gets in the way of "progress" (Participant 111).

Enrollment was often discussed due to one or both other main themes. However, participants rarely mentioned enrollment as a sole consequence of incivility.

School Climate. Responses from participants that were part of the school climate subtheme were often double coded with other items. For example, school climate included consequences mentioned outside of enrollment and impacted experience at the university. An example of a double coded item and additional responses are:

Adding stress on grad students who are already under a significant amount of stress, as well as disrupting the learning environment and not provided a quality education/

neglecting to teach topics that are needed to be taught, that most grad students are scrounging up nickels and dimes to pay for (Participant 68).

An example from another participant was the impact that could lead to *"the dissolution of the university"* (Participant 39). School climate examples often discussed the lasting impact on the university in general, deviating outside of enrollment and often alluding to the satisfaction of the academic experience.

Narrative Item Four: Most Effective Way to Promote civility. The final narrative question asked participants their opinions about the most effective way to promote civility in higher education. Five themes emerged from the participants' responses: punishment, prevention, institutional practice, empirically/data, and individually (see Table 9).

Table 9

Qualitative Themes and Descriptions for Most Effective Way to Promote Civility Narrative

Theme *(Subthemes)*	Description	Example(s)	Count
Punishment	Participant responses that discussed ramifications of any form for uncivil behavior	"*Explicitly outline civility and incivility (students and faculty) with disciplinary procedures for incivility in both*" "*penalize appropriately*"	11
Prevention • *Awareness* • *Training*	Responses in which participants discussed education or intervention or some form of awareness for uncivil behavior	"*Teach students and faculty about harmful consequences of incivility*" "*Provide trainings and implement policies*" "*Provide this in the syllabus*"	27
Institutional Practice	Responses that participants discussed an organizational change in policy, processes, or resources	"*To have accountability and let students have a clear path of people they can go to if there are issues*" "*Create a positive and encouraging learning environment that is diverse*"	66
Empirically/Data	Responses that explicitly mentioned the implementation of empirical strategies and collection of some form of data or tracking of uncivil behavior	"*Make it clear what is considered professional/civil behavior and integrate poor behavior in reviews reports*"	5

Table 9 (continued)

Individually	Participant responses that suggested that individuals make an individual change of behavior or take personal responsibility	"*Communicate.*" *"Be civil to others and set the example you wish others to be*"	41

Theme 1: Punishment. Participants had several ideas about the various ways to punish uncivil behavior. For example, one participant reported, "*enforcing consequences to these actions and educating faculty and students*" (Participant 75). Another participant stated, "*penalize appropriately*" (Participant 7). As illustrated in both examples, students believed that the university should hold faculty/students engaging in uncivil behaviors accountable through policy and formal procedures.

Theme 2: Prevention. Like punishment, there were various methods participants mentioned regarding possible prevention efforts. Two subthemes emerged from the data: raising awareness and providing training.

Awareness. When participants discussed awareness, they often spoke about appropriate modeling behavior. An example of this from Participant 17 is "*raise awareness of what academic civility is and appropriate behavior*." Another participant stated,

> Awareness of the human aspect, many professors, seem to believe students are not people too but only their subjects who they are able to exercise power over. (Participant 54).

Training. Like many other subthemes and themes, when participants discussed training, they also discussed institutional practices that should be changed. This resulted in double coding of some items. An example of this follows, "*I think promoting the behavior you want and developing trainings to identity strategies in managing conflict*" (Participant 15). Another participant stated, "*Provide trainings and implement policies*" Participant 67.

Training was discussed in conjunction with raising awareness, modeling, and policy

implementation as the delivery method or a component of other promotion solutions for

incivility.

Theme 3: Institutional Practice. Institutional practice was the primary theme that emerged the

most from the data on promoting civility. Items coded as an institutional practice were frequently

double coded with the prevention code. Examples of responses that described institutional

practices included:

> Give students access to an unbiased party that can help them out of situations like the one
> I'm facing. Also, making sure that students are informed of these options (Participant 9).

and

> Increase reporting on incivility in an anonymous manner without the fear of
> repercussions. Helping graduate students feel like they are free to complain to other
> graduate students within the department to help process situations and gain outside
> perspective when there is no one else in their lab to talk to. Faculty/faculty or even
> Student dean/faculty pressure to address concerns of incivility (Participant 71).

Participants appear to want outside support from the university and be made aware of their rights

and procedural processes for such resources.

Theme 4: Empirically/Data. Participants explicitly mentioned the need to better understand the

issue by implementing empirical strategies and data collection. There was one instance in which

a participant suggested a method for the collection of data,

> To promote it... I don't think you can "promote" it without addressing the primary cause
> of it. But if you really want to get an idea for how to address it at WSU, organize a
> meeting with all the grad students and provide us the opportunity to vent our frustrations
> and share our experiences... They are many. (Participant 111)

Theme 5: Individually. Finally, participants believed that individuals should take responsibility

for changing behavior to promote civility in higher education. This was often discussed in

modeling behavior and communication to increase insights into individual functioning. For

example, participant 46 reported, "*Lead by example. It all flows down from somewhere.*" Another

participant reported, "*be respectful and be educated on what respectful behavior is*" Participant

147.

Qualitative Results Summary

It is important to note that although there were responses that participants reported

students as behaving uncivil, faculty incivility behaviors were most prevalent in participant

responses. In instances where students were mentioned, participants also discussed faculty

engaging in passive incivility and not responding or intervening with students' uncivil behavior.

Overall graduate students expressed awareness of the different aspects of individual

faculty and institutional contextual factors that can impact incivility experiences. This also held

true as participants reported the consequences of incivility and how to promote civility. Graduate

students' responses to the narrative items addressed both the impact of incivility and how to

promote civility. Results of qualitative data extend across the university, mentioning individual

faculty, department, university administration, academia at large, and prospective professional

fields.

4.2 Research Question Two: Perceptions of Faculty Behaviors and Sense of Community

Research question two aimed to investigate the relationship between faculty incivility and

sense of community. A Spearman's rho correlation was used to investigate the relationship

between faculty incivility and sense of community, and there was no statistically significant

correlation between sense of community and the subscales with faculty incivility (Table 2).

However, the descriptive ran on the sample showed a moderate level of sense of community with

a mean score of $M= 33.23$ for participants that completed the measure ($N=176$). The sense of

community scale came with a validating question that was not part of the scale that asked participants, "how important is it to you to feel a sense of community with other community members" that provided six options: prefer not to be part of this community, not important at all, not very important, somewhat important, important, and very important. Descriptive statistics were used to get an overview of if participants cared about being part of WSU. Review of the frequency of participation selections it was shown that over 90% of the participants that responded to this question reported that they preferred not to be part of WSU, not important all to be part of WSU, or it was not very important to be part of WSU (N= 186).

4.3 Research Questions Two Continued: Perceptions of Faculty Behaviors and Sense of Belonging

The second part of research question two explored the relationship between faculty behaviors and sense of belonging. Descriptive statistics were conducted, and the Sense of Belonging Scale ($M = 87.69$, $SD= 19.88$) indicated a mild sense of belonging according to a generic score range using the max scale score and standard deviation created by the researcher. According to the generic score range, this score indicates a trend that participants leaned toward a strong sense of belonging, with no one indicating a complete absence of it. A Spearman's rho correlation revealed a significant positive relationship between faculty behavior and the Perceived Peer Support Subscale of Sense of Belonging ($r= .18$, $p<.05$), indicating a small relationship and suggesting that as students experienced increased potentially harmful faculty behavior, they also perceived greater support from peers. A significant negative relationship between lower faculty incivility and perceived faculty support subscale was also revealed ($r= -.19$, $p<.05$), indicating an inverse relationship between lower levels of faculty incivility behaviors and participants' perceived feeling of faculty support.

4.4 Research Questions Three: Perceptions of Faculty Behaviors and Well-Being

Research question three examined the relationship between students' perceptions of faculty uncivil behaviors and their well-being. Well-being was measured using two instruments SWLS for subjective well-being and BIT measuring psychological well-being. A Spearman's rho correlation revealed no significant relationships between SWLS or BIT with faculty behaviors. SWLS came with predetermined categories of scores:

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied
- 26 - 30 Satisfied
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral
- 5 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

Predetermined scores were used to perform a Kruskal-Wallis Test to compare perceptions of faculty behaviors across the different levels of life satisfaction, which yielded no significant results.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This research investigated how faculty incivility impacts graduate students at Wichita State University. This study specifically examined the relationship between faculty incivility with sense of community, sense of belonging, and well-being amongst graduate students. This study utilized the Sense of Community theoretical framework and Caza and Cortina's (2007) top-down incivility to guide the design and results of this exploratory study. Three research questions were posed: (1) How do graduate students experience faculty incivility? (2) In what ways does faculty incivility affect graduate students' sense of belonging and sense of community? (3) In what ways does faculty incivility affect graduate students' well-being?

The literature on the relationship between faculty incivility, sense of belonging, well-being, and sense of community among graduate students was limited. The current study found a connection between faculty incivility and perceived peer support, a subscale of sense of belonging. Descriptive statistics suggested that as faculty incivility increased, the overall sense of belonging decreased. This study showed that graduate students relied more on their peers for support to deal with faculty incivility. Aligning with existing literature that suggests social support can help graduate students overcome stress and peer support functioning as emotional support (Tompkins, Brecht, Tucker, et al., 2016; Park, Kim, Kwon, et al., 2018).

Furthermore, it suggests social support from peers could be vital to overcoming negative graduate school experiences. Overall, this study didn't find that faculty incivility impacts the overall constructs of sense of community, belonging, and well-being of graduate students. We found faculty incivility significantly affects the construct of sense of belonging and sense of community.

Such as feelings of closeness with peers and graduate students' feelings of support from faculty. According to narrative items responses, faculty incivility could be due to frequent contact with program advisors and the requirement of communication and cooperation to navigate programs successfully.

Descriptive statistics revealed that graduate students reported experiencing incivility to some degree at some point in the last twelve months 46% of the time. Participants' frequency and severity of incivility were moderate, aligning with research on incivility in higher education across college programs (Wagner et al., 2019). There were few significant results concerning the impact of faculty incivility across different demographic variables (i.e., program major, white and racially diverse students, direct graduate teaching duties, first-generation, and gender). We found White students reported higher rates of incivility compared to their racially diverse peers. Significant results could be due to white privilege and academic entitlement. Research investigating academic entitlement has shown that racial minorities report lower levels of academic entitlement (Carollo, 2020). Descriptive statistics show that students in Health Professions reported higher mean scores for IHE-R than any other college on campus, although not statistically significant. This result is to be expected as the specific college houses nursing students. Studies investigating incivility across disciplines have shown nursing students to report higher rates of incivility, which is also where most incivility in higher education research occurs (Clark et al., 2015 & Wagner et al., 2019)

When considering the level of incivility, participants' scores did not align with qualitative data from the Incivility in Higher Education Revised Scale narrative questions. Students reported a moderate level of incivility but described examples and consequences that could be considered more severe than the participant's average score on the IHE-R. Suggesting

the potential for a quantitative measure specifically designed based on individualized experiences that graduate students have that may not be true for undergraduate students. Narrative items may have increased feelings of openness as they were asked to share personal beliefs and experiences. Further supporting the need for qualitative research to gather in depth understanding of graduate student experience of faculty incivility.

5.1 Research Question One Overall Experiences with Faculty Incivility

Quantitative IHE-R scores concerning the frequency and severity of incivility did not align with participants' narrative item responses, which investigated 1) example of uncivil encounter, 2) the primary cause of incivility, 3) most significant consequence of incivility, and 4) how to promote civility. When comparing quantitative and qualitative data, there is a need for further investigation and development of incivility instruments. Development of these instruments would allow for a more in-depth assessment of incivility in graduate school education across disciplines and a more qualitative investigation of the concept in higher education. Overall concepts that emerged from the thematic analysis of narrative items were pedagogy or teaching effectiveness, pro-social behavior, and institutional practices. The following sections will break down each narrative item and the emerging themes.

5.1.1 *Qualitative Analysis Graduate Students' Experience with Faculty Incivility*

The impact of faculty incivility goes beyond the individual level impact, reaching microsystems and organizations. Additionally, to decrease the occurrence of faculty incivility, there must be different solutions at the different levels of Bronfenbrenner's ecological level of analysis. The university must not only address individual, departmental, and college contributions to incivility through increased accountability and formal reporting practices for graduate students. There is a need to address procedural and policy inequities, both formal and

informal. Qualitative data suggests these policies and procedures, or lack thereof, produce a variety of contextual factors that impact faculty expectations, affecting faculty, which trickle down to graduate students, who pay the ultimate cost.

Example of Incivility

Participants were asked for examples of uncivil encounters they experienced, which resulted in four themes. The first theme was incivility not being witnessed due to the explicit language of discussing connections with faculty. Several participants did not answer this question and left it blank. In contrast, others wrote that they had not experienced faculty incivility while at WSU. Some participants wrote stories about how faculty in their department provided support and resources for overall needs while at WSU. Supportive relationships with faculty could improve the graduate school experience for those participants. Research on school sense of community has revealed that such positive relationships increase overall well-being through providing emotional safety (Wandersman & Florin, 2000). Discrimination, social conduct, and teaching effectiveness were the other themes that emerged from examples of uncivil encounters with students. Suggesting that a lack of pro-social behavior, pedagogy, and or teaching effectiveness may be primary sources of uncivil interactions with faculty for graduate students.

Trends from means reviewing descriptive data suggested that graduate students who taught classes reported nonsignificant higher mean scores of faculty incivility than those who did not. However, the narrative data revealed few encounters concerning faculty supervisors and oversight of teaching duties. Most of the reported experiences related to class instruction, research guidance, and advisor communication, and although not statistically significant, it is an observation that should be noted for implications for future research. The current study did not

directly measure student incivility, leaving the possibility that peer and undergraduate uncivil behavior could contribute to the higher mean score, which could account for the nonsignificant result of faculty incivility with teaching non-teaching students.

Primary Cause of Incivility

Participants were also asked to write a narrative on the primary cause of incivility in higher education. Two themes emerged from the data: individual differences and work conditions. Individual differences were the most frequent theme that participants wrote about, nearly doubling the second most frequently occurring theme. Individual differences had three subthemes: a superiority complex, pro-social skills, and personal capacity. Knepp (2012) revealed that faculty with fewer pro-social skills are more likely to behave and are viewed as uncivil by students. When participants' responses aligned with personal capacity, they often spoke with an understanding of the behavior that had taken place. However, they disapproved of the behavior, reporting negative emotional or mental experiences. This also held for narrative items aligned with the personal capacity subtheme. The subtheme of superiority complex narratives was much more critical and assumptive of faculty. Primary causes of incivility aligned with overall concepts from themes of the other narrative items, further suggesting a lack of pro-social behavior and institutional practices being primary influences of incivility.

Most Significant Consequence

The third narrative item asked participants to write about what they believed was the most significant consequence of incivility in higher education. Three themes emerged from the consequences of incivility for participants: self-efficacy, well-being, and institutional. The themes that emerged suggest that the consequence of incivility extends beyond just the individual level of the ecological perspective, impacting departments, the university at large, and

the overall climate of academia. Like results from the other narrative items, this indicates the need for solutions to address the specific impact at the different levels of Bronfenbrenner ecological systems to address the problem. The most concerning the observation of this narrative item were the psychological impact that students discussed. Graduate students are people outside of school, often with their own families. Psychological damage does not go away at the mere exit of the environment or distance from the person. Psychological harm is more complex and leaves the question of the long-term impact of incivility in higher education on both students and faculty.

Promote Civility

The fourth and final narrative item on the IHE-R asked participants what they believe to be the most effective way to promote civility in higher education. Like the third narrative item, participants' responses suggested an ecological perspective to address experiences of injustice. Qualitative themes from participants' responses aligned with Caza and Cortina's (2007) research investigating top-down incivility and increased perceptions of the university as unjust and unfair.

When considering responses for promoting civility in higher education and the significant results of faculty incivility increase perceived peer support on the sense of belonging scale. Interestingly, participants did not explicitly mention promotion efforts related to increased peer support. Instead, the focus was more on individual responsibility through modeling positive behaviors and treating people civilly and institutionally over changes such as policies and processes. Even instances where participants discussed the need for additional resources it was for addressing contextual factors. It is also possible that considering the small significant relationship between faculty incivility and a decrease in perceived faculty support, those students

feel that faculty behaviors are more likely to change if the institutional climate change as it is a contributing factor to the individual behavior.

5.2 Research Question Two: Faculty Incivility and Sense of Community

Research question two found that there was no statistically significant relationship between faculty incivility and the overall concept of sense of community. The SCI-2 came with a validating question asking participants how important it was to feel a sense of community with other community members? Most participants reported that it was not necessary for them to be part of the WSU community, which could account for the nonsignificant relationship. Another explanation could be that full-scale items were not calculated for overall comparisons if the scale was missing any responses. Successful integration for students is dependent on students' psychological experiences and subjective perceptions of these experiences (Loviitts, 2001). Nearly half of the participants were in the first year of their program and were first-generation students. It is possible that graduate students had not fully integrated into WSU, which could influence the sense of community construct and nonsignificant results. Nearly half of the study participants were first-year graduate students in their first semester in the middle of a pandemic. It is essential to acknowledge that COVID produced a lot of contextual factors for all universities that impacted both students and faculty. The recognition of the impact of these contextual factors could be shown in narrative responses in which students discussed COVID as being a cause of uncivil behavior.

Evaluation of the impact of faculty incivility on the overall impact sense of community revealed no significant results. Narrative items from IHE-R suggest that graduate students do not feel their needs are being met, nor are adequate resources provided. Even though there were no difference with sense of community or it's subscale reinforcement of needs, this study

demonstrates graduate students feel their needs are not being met and lack adequate resources. However, there were some positive findings from some students who felt very supported by their faculty and expressed this during their interviews. More research is needed to sort out specific differences out that could be contributing to these scores. Critically examining this result through the sense of community theoretical framework suggests the possibility that students' overall needs are not being met and resources to fulfill needs are lacking or nonexistent (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Narrative items of incivility through the lens of sense of community framework allude to the fact that More resources are needed, such as training for faculty, healthier work environments, and overall psychological safety on campus.

5.3 Research Question Two: Faculty Incivility and Sense of Belonging

The second part of research question two examined the relationship between faculty behavior and students' sense of belonging. Graduate students that participated in this study reported a mild sense of belonging. A mild sense of belonging indicates that students had neither absent nor high feelings of sense of belonging but slightly below the median possible score for the scale. No significant results were found with faculty incivility and the overall sense of belonging scale. As sense of belonging is embedded in the construct and theoretical framework of sense of community, participants not desiring to be part of WSU should be expected. Many participants reported that they preferred not to be part of WSU, not important all to be part of WSU, or it was not very important to be part of WSU. Considering that sense of belonging is a core construct of sense of community, this could contribute to the nonsignificant result. It is also possible that the sense of belonging measure is more of a classroom measure, contributing to the nonsignificant results.

This study found as faculty incivility increased, participants believed they had more support from their peers. Suggesting perceived peer support could serve as a buffer to the impact of faculty incivility on an overall sense of belonging. When faculty incivility was collapsed into a dichotomous variable looking at lower and higher faculty incivility, a small significant relationship with perceived faculty support was revealed—demonstrating that the more exposure to lower or passive acts of incivility, the students were more likely to feel like they were not supported by faculty. IHE-R items considered lower acts of incivility were more likely to occur due to graduate students and faculty roles. Some of these were items: not being available, expressing disinterest, or being distant and cold. This should be expected, as these behaviors would be consistent with outcomes of increased interactions with graduate students and faculty advisors. It is crucial to keep in mind that, like teaching effectiveness, which appeared in narrative items about incivility, these behaviors could be due to expectations of faculty behaviors from students vs. inappropriate behavior. As research on student entitlement in academia continues to grow, it will be necessary for future research to consider the role it has on perceived faculty incivility.

5.4 Research Question Three: Faculty Incivility and Well-Being

The third research question of this study examined the relationship between faculty incivility with subjective and psychological well-being. Subjective well-being was measured using SWLS, revealing that participants felt slightly satisfied with their lives. This study showed there was not significant relationship between faculty incivility and well-being. It is unclear why well-being was insignificant; perhaps other factors influenced this construct. For example, there was an increase in graduate students perceived peer support as they reported increased experience of faculty incivility. Results suggest peer support could be a moderating variable

between faculty incivility and graduate students' sense of belonging. O'Meara et al. (2017) found that feelings of connection to others for college students and success were factors of sense of belonging. Comparing the current study with previous research on graduate students' college experiences raises the question of whether increased positive peer interaction buffers the impact of faculty incivility.

Psychological well-being was measured using BIT, which showed that participants reported slightly over average feelings of psychological well-being. Both BIT and SWLS scores for participants were significantly positively correlated with the sense of belonging scale, sense of community scale, and most subscales for each of the total scales. There were minor significant differences for SWLS and BIT with the sense of belonging subscale perceived isolation. Indicating that students' psychological and subjective well-being increased as their sense of community and sense of belonging grew. While both subjective and psychological well-being decreased, participants experienced increased levels of perceived isolation, suggesting that sense of community and sense of belonging could serve as a buffer to faculty incivility and its impact on well-being. While potentially being a catalyst to increase perceived isolation due to uncivil faculty behaviors.

5.5 Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. First, the survey instrument was self-reported, increasing social desirability responses, nonresponsive, and selection bias. Second, however, it was essential to ensure that the survey was anonymous and confidential. Third, the cross-sectional study nature of the study eliminated the ability to track how feelings change over time. Fourth, it is also important to note that there are no additional raters for qualitative data

collected from narratives on the IHE-R. Additionally, missing demographic data also suggested that some participants were afraid to be identified, which could have influenced responses.

The data was not normally distributed, utilizing both master's and doctorate students was possibly the contributor to this limitation, and the amount of master's vs. doctorate degrees in each college is not equal. The generalizability of the findings from this study is limited because of the imbalance of participants across the different colleges at the university. In addition, the demographics of the sample were not representative of the demographics of the WSU graduate student population. Participants' narrative responses were not congruent with overall IHE-R scores, implying confusion about answering instrument non-narrative items. The final limitation of the study was that the scale used to measure a sense of belonging is more of a class-level measure versus a school-level measure. Therefore, the results may not have been a true reflection of sense of belonging at an individual level.

5.6 Future Directions

This study's exploratory nature lends to various directions for future research. Further investigation should consider qualitative interviews with students to understand how they experience faculty incivility. Different departmental structures and relationships with advisors could positively or negatively influence the overall perspective of incivility. This study revealed minor implications of a relationship between graduate students' experience with faculty incivility and sense of belonging subscales: perceived peer support and perceived faculty support. Further investigation of the relationship between these variables and academic outcomes is needed. In addition, there is a need to determine if certain demographic variables can predict graduate students who experience incivility, which could allow WSU and other institutions to address and investigate the problem more widely. Another direction is to examine if peer connections serve

as a buffer for graduate students' well-being concerning their negative interactions with staff. As well as consider the relationship support of faculty has on well-being and other academic outcomes when controlling for peer support. It is possible that perceptions of peer connections increased due to the focus on negative faculty behavior. Research investigating incivility in academia should assess faculty views of incivility among graduate students and other faculty. This leads to a more in-depth understanding of incivility in academia and its impact on the climate. Consideration should also be made for future research to determine if faculty self-report uncivil behaviors and awareness of their behaviors and the impact.

Future studies should investigate departments or colleges within universities separately to determine specific factors in disciplines that contribute to incivility. The current study's insignificant results also indicate it could be helpful to investigate doctorate and master students separately as there were differences in mean scores. It may also be beneficial for future studies to analyze and compare first-year graduate students with those who are exiting their programs, as results from the current study revealed differences between the experience of incivility and time in graduate education. Most importantly, this study's narrative items suggest a need for a more comprehensive measure to assess incivility in higher education. Participant reports of uncivil encounters happening under 50% of the time were incongruent with narrative accounts of incivility.

5.7 Recommendations

Four concepts emerged from this exploratory study investigating faculty incivility and its impact on graduate students: peer support, pedagogy or teaching effectiveness, pro-social behavior, and institutional practices. Using the results of this study along with Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, it is recommended that WSU evaluate the appropriateness of several

recommendations. Community psychologists in prevention have indicated that intervention at the inappropriate level renders interventions unsuccessful. Results of the qualitative data of this study have revealed that faculty incivility in higher education has impact across the ecological model, and solutions must do the same.

The innermost part of the system is both individual graduate students and faculty members. suggest that WSU should consider evaluating and reallocating resources geared explicitly toward faculty and graduate students that support well-being, balance, and collaborative networks with peers for support.

Results of this study also suggest micro and mesosystem recommendations for WSU. Departments and the entire university should implement regular training on incivility and its impact on students, departments, institutions, and respective professional fields. Additionally, it is recommended that WSU re-evaluate and refocus current faculty advising roles, from publishing to connecting with students and helping them meet individual goals. There is also a need to implement official reporting protocols, procedures, and consequences for uncivil incidents concerning graduate students. These procedures and processes should be accessible in departments and the graduate school. More importantly, there need to be protections in place from retaliation

Lastly, the results of this study provide the following recommendations for future exploration of macro-level change that extends beyond WSU and to its governing board, the Kansas Board of Regents. WSU should consider re-evaluating the tenure process for faculty and its impact on faculty well-being and the secondary impact it has on graduate students. The work done at the university level to evaluate these standards should be communicated to governing bodies, in hopes for future recommendations for changes in academia. Overall, this study has

suggested the need for WSU to become a more psychologically safe campus with individualized strategies for graduate students due to their unique role. When examining qualitative themes concerning the consequence of incivility, promotion of civility, consequences of incivility, and the faculty incivility impact on perceived faculty and peer support. Results suggest psychological unsafety on campus for some students and potentially faculty. Many other service institutions continue to move toward trauma-informed and resiliency-informed systems to create healthier climates. This study suggests that it could be time for universities such as WSU to consider implementing trauma-informed and or resiliency-informed strategies throughout the university, including comprehensive education and training on incivility and its impact across the different ecological levels. When looking at procedural and policy inequities to be addressed, it is recommended to implement SAMHSA's six fundamental principles to trauma-informed approaches: 1) safety, 2) trustworthiness and transparency, 3) peer support, 4) collaboration and mutuality, 5) empowerment, voice, and choice, and 6) cultural, historical, and gender issues (SAMSHSA 2014). Implementation of such principles could be the first step to improving the graduate student experience and addressing the toxic climate perpetuated through academic traditions.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Graduate students play important roles not just on campuses but also in their prospective future professions. The graduate school experience plays a crucial role in this, and faculty relationships often determine the graduate school experience. Faculty and faculty advisors often socialize and guide graduate students in their professional lives. While also being responsible for meeting university expectations for their research productivity. Placing excess pressure and strain on faculty and student relationships directly impacts students' graduate school experience and well-being, skill development, and the university.

Findings from this study revealed that graduate students' experiences with faculty have the potential to be destructive to individuals, universities, and prospective field and overall contributing to university climates as well as academia as a whole. However, these relationships can also serve as support through mentorship and positively influence graduates' students' well-being and overall graduate school experience. Results also demonstrated that graduate students experience incivility in various ways and need: access to supportive mentorships, reporting procedures and protocols, and trained faculty on their behaviors, regardless of intent, have on graduate students.

This study adds to existing research regarding incivility in higher education and contributes to the gap in the literature on graduate students and incivility and the relationship it has with sense of community, sense of belonging, and well-being. Further research is needed to understand better how graduate students define incivility in their unique roles and its impact on graduate school success, mental health and well-being, professional development, and professional trajectory. As more systems become trauma-informed, these results and other

research could show the need for higher education systems to follow suit. This study and other studies suggest that universities should offer training and resources to support the faculty and graduate student mentor model. The higher educational system must take heed and adjust for "education extends beyond an intellectual pursuit" (Woloshyn, 2019, p. 408).

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