How Do Adolescent Students and Their Teachers Conceptualize Classroom Incivility?

Natalie Spadafora*, Anthony A. Volk

Department of Child and Youth Studies, Brock University

Abstract

Civility is an important construct to be addressed in relation to child and youth development. The issue of classroom incivility is of particular interest, given its potential negative impacts to both the psychosocial well-being of adolescents and the overall learning environment. Therefore, the current study sought to investigate similarities and differences between perceptions of middle and high school students and teachers. Participants consisted of 40 intermediate and high school teachers and 52 students in Grades 7–12. Both students and teachers rated uncivil behaviour in the classroom based on how serious they thought it was and how often it occurred in their classroom. Further, participants responded to open-ended questions to allow for a deeper exploration of the viewpoints and lived experiences of both students and teachers. Findings suggest that adolescent students consider uncivil behaviours that may be seen as disrespectful towards the teacher as more uncivil than do teachers themselves. Teachers tended to focus on adolescents engaging in uncivil behaviuor towards each other as being more serious as well as a focus the negative implications of classroom incivility to the learning environment. These differing perceptions of uncivil behaviour in the classroom have important implications for intervention within educational settings.

Keywords: classroom incivility, adolescents, teachers, learning

* nspadafora@brocku.ca

Introduction

Civility is a growing issue among Western democracies that affects children and youth both academically and developmentally. Over the last two decades, incivility has increasingly been studied in both workplace (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Miner et al., 2018) and university classroom settings (Bantha et al., 2020; Bjorkland & Rehling, 2009). Incivility is defined as low-level antisocial behaviours that are in violation of social norms and in which the intent to cause harm is ambiguous (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). This low-level antisocial behaviour is sometimes dismissed a trivial, but it may both cause harm and be a precursor to higher-level antisocial behaviour. These actions might include carrying on a loud side conversation or leaving trash for someone else to pick up (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Further, early research on incivility has established that incivility can be associated with increased violence and crime (Goldstein, 1994; Spratlen, 1994). In fact, while we focus on incivility in adolescence within the classroom, we know that civility is important to consider beyond the classroom, as it can impact political, cultural, and economic matters (Achmadi et al., 2023; Bardon et al., 2023; Kettler et al., 2022).

Due to the potential negative culminating effect of incivility, it makes sense that more recent research on classroom incivility is increasingly a topic of interest within adolescent research (Bingöl et al., 2018; Spadafora et al., 2020; Volk et al., 2016). Specifically, research has demonstrated that adolescent classroom incivility may be associated with other antisocial behaviour and correlates of poorer mental health. This existing research highlights the importance of continuing to increase our understanding of this behaviour.

According to Feldmann (2001) university classroom incivility is defined as "any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom" (p. 137). However, there is a more limited understanding of how incivility in the classroom is defined and understood within adolescent classrooms. Given that uncivil behaviour has the potential to have a negative impact on the learning environment (Feldmann, 2001), an important next step in civility research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how this behaviour is being perceived by adolescent students and their teachers. The majority of research demonstrates that incivility in the postsecondary classroom setting can result in a disrupted learning environment, with less time spent on educational content. In fact, both university students (Bjorkland & Rehling, 2009) and instructors (Feldmann, 2001) have reported that incivility within the classroom setting results in less ideal learning environments. Classroom incivility has the potential to damage the student-teacher relationship and impact the ability of the teacher to teach effectively (Feldmann, 2001; Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). Previous studies focused on adolescence have shown that engaging in classroom incivility in adolescence may be associated with having fewer friends (Spadafora et al., 2021), poorer mental health (Volk et al., 2016), and

antisocial behaviour and traits (Spadafora & Volk, 2021). Despite these potential negative outcomes, there has yet to be research determining how adolescent students or their teachers may be perceiving classroom incivility.

To date, quantitative data has provided important information regarding adolescent classroom incivility (Bingöl et al., 2018; Volk et al., 2016). However, it is unclear whether these findings capture the full scope of classroom incivility as viewed by both teachers and adolescent students. The use of qualitative methods may be advantageous as it enables the researcher to gather a better understanding of behaviours and perspectives of the participants (Morse, 2012). Qualitative methods allow for a deeper exploration of relationships between individuals (in the case of the current study, teachers, and students), and allows the researcher to examine multiple perspectives when trying to understand phenomena that we know relatively little about (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the present study seeks to utilize multiple methods, using both quantitative comparisons and qualitative open-ended questions to allow for a range of exploration into the viewpoints of adolescent students and their teachers.

Perceptions of Classroom Incivility

Previous research investigating perceptions of classroom incivility to date has largely focused on postsecondary settings. These studies have focused on factors such as the age of faculty or differences among disciplines (Strassle & Verrecchia, 2019; Wagner et al., 2019). Specifically, research exploring the university classroom has highlighted that there may be differences in perceptions of uncivil behaviour between students and instructors (e.g., Baker et al., 2012; Bray & Favero, 2004). For example, research that explored perceptions of incivility of students and faculty in nursing education found that students reported higher incidences of classroom incivility, compared to faculty (Ibrahim & Qalawa, 2016). On the other hand, Feldmann (2001) found that perceptions of incivility of students and faculty were more similar than different. One consideration that may be relatively unique for incivility may be the importance of how individuals rate various behaviours that may be considered civil in some contexts by some people but not in others. For instance, over 50% of university students reported that it was sometimes or always appropriate, and only 2% reported that it was never or seldom appropriate, to not take notes in class or to leave class to make a phone call (Turnipseed & Landay, 2018). However, it is possible that the classroom instructor may perceive this action as being uncivil. This idea requires further exploration, as actions that may be considered uncivil to the instructor may not be perceived in the same way by the students, having implications for the educational environment.

Whereas previous research has examined attitudes and frequency of uncivil classroom behaviour within university settings and from the perspective of instructors, there has not been similar research from the perspective of adolescents' teachers. Adolescents may not only have

differing understandings of classroom incivility but may also differentially report how often these behaviours are occurring, as well as how serious they deem the uncivil actions to be. The postsecondary learning environment is substantially different from the intermediate and high school environment, which may implicate potential differences in perceptions of classroom incivility. University and college students have increased levels of student autonomy and tend to lack direct relationships with the instructors (Könings et al., 2008). This may result in a wider range of tolerance for what these students consider to be uncivil behaviour within the learning environment compared to adolescent students.

In contrast, adolescents spend increased time in the classroom setting and their teachers are consistently interacting with them and their families. Further, adolescent students tend to accept the authority of teachers (Yariv, 2009), which may impact behaviours they view as uncivil within the classroom, given their increased levels of respect towards authority. Adolescents' teachers have greater control and responsibility with regards to student behaviour, compared to in university. Differing conceptualizations of "how wrong" uncivil behaviour is within the classroom, may not only impact the classroom environment but also how and when teachers may be choosing to intervene in such behaviour (Feldmann, 2001; Gregory & Ripski, 2008).

Need to Expand Methodologies

Since there may be differing perceptions regarding uncivil behaviour between adolescents and their teachers, further exploration into these viewpoints and why they might be manifesting is needed. One way to effectively do this is to add the use of qualitative methodologies, to existing quantitative methods, within the adolescent incivility literature. Given that there has been limited research into the area of adolescent classroom incivility, the addition of qualitative data through open-ended questions allows for a broader exploration of unknown factors (Cypress, 2015). This can also allow for a better understanding of the nuances of the differences of perceptions between students and teachers. In the current study, quantitative data will allow for direct comparisons between students and teachers, whereas the addition of open-ended questions allows for teachers and students to describe their experiences and perceptions.

Qualitative methodologies in studies regarding incivility are useful in giving us insight of why certain individuals may engage in uncivil behaviours, have uncivil beliefs, or tolerate either (Gallo, 2012). For example, previous qualitative research used interviews to ask university nursing students what they felt were the causes of incivility in the classroom (Rad et al., 2016). Other previous research has used open-ended questions to allow for a deeper comparison of perceptions between students and faculty. Specifically, Ausbrooks et al. (2011) found that faculty reported uncivil behaviour as less serious than university students using quantitative data, however, the addition of open-ended questions allowed for faculty to discuss nuances such as texting not generally being disruptive but could be if students do it constantly and openly (Ausbrooks et al., 2011). Whereas previous research has been successful at utilizing

qualitative open-ended questions when examining classroom incivility in older student or workplace samples, this approach has yet to be used to explore this behaviour in adolescents.

Current Study

Previous studies have examined how uncivil behaviour is defined and experienced in other environments—for example the workplace (Clark & Springer, 2007)—but research has yet to specifically explore classroom incivility in adolescents and the implications associated with various definitions. Recent research exploring classroom incivility in intermediate and high school students have been focused on measuring attitudes towards or engagement in such behaviour in relation to individual differences or other behaviour (Spadafora et al., 2020). However, there has not been a study exploring the experiences and perceptions of adolescent students and teachers regarding uncivil behaviour.

Therefore, the goal of this study was to explore how classroom incivility is conceptualized by adolescent students and their teachers. Given differences in the classroom environment and relationship of adolescent students and their teachers (Yariv, 2009), we expected that the findings of our study may be different than studies comparing university instructor and student perceptions (Ausbrooks et al., 2011). Specifically, we hypothesized that adolescent students would perceive uncivil behaviour as being less serious than their teachers. However, we expected that both teachers and students would have similar ratings of incidences of uncivil behaviour in the classroom. Further, we predicted that both teachers and students would report that classroom incivility was an issue in their teaching or learning, but that there would be differences in which behaviours they would deem as acceptable versus uncivil. Specifically, we expected that teachers would discuss issues such as talking out of turn or not paying attention to a lesson as disruptive behaviours that impact their ability to teach (Sun & Shek, 2012), while students would report they most often engaged in talking to their friends or texting during class, since cell phone use has been on the rise in youth (Lenhart, 2012).

Method

Participants

Two samples were collected for the present study. One sample consisted of adolescents' teachers, and the second sample was adolescent students.

Teachers

This sample consisted of 40 Ontario middle and high school teachers who were most recently teaching Grades 6–12. Of the teachers, 29 (72.5%) identified as female and 50% were between the ages of 30–39. Self-reported ethnicities were: 35 teachers (87.5%) identified as being White, three (7.5%) Mixed, and two (5.0%) South Asian. With regards to teaching experience, 60% had 11 years or less of experience

Students

The student sample comprised 52 students in Grades 7–12 who attended intermediate elementary and high school in Ontario. Of the students, 27 (51.9%) identified as being a boy, 24 (46.2%) identified as a girl, and one person identified as Other. Self-reported ethnicities were: 38 (73.1%) White, one (1.9%) South Asian, one (1.9%) West Asian, four (7.7%) Black, three (5.8%) Latin American, and five (7.7%) Mixed. Participants were asked what grade on average they typically received in school: 28 (53.8%) reported their average grades were As (80–100%), 20 (38.5%) reported their average grades were Bs (70–79%), and four (7.7%) reported their average grades were Cs (60–69%).

Measures

Demographics

Both samples reported demographic information including age, gender, and ethnicity. Students reported their current grade and average grades received in school. Teachers reported their teaching status, years of experience and current grade they were teaching.

Classroom Civility and Teaching Practices Faculty Survey (Adapted From Frey, 2005)

We modified this questionnaire to contextualize the questions to be specific to a classroom setting as opposed to in a postsecondary institution. Specifically, this survey asked participants to rate how often various uncivil behaviour in the classroom are occurring and how serious they deem each behaviour. To align with our previous work, we modified the list of uncivil classroom behaviours to match the items in our recently validated incivility scale (Spadafora & Volk, 2021). A student version of this scale was also created to mirror the teacher survey. Participants also responded to six open-ended questions focused on their experiences and perceptions of classroom incivility.

Procedure

Both teachers and students were recruited online using advertisements on social media. All data was collected via Qualtrics, an online survey platform. Interested participants contacted the principal investigator to notify of their interest to participate and were given a unique ID code and the link to the appropriate survey. Adolescents required both parental consent and their own assent prior to participating in the study. Adolescent participants completed self-report questions about themselves as part of a larger study, as well as the current study questions, receiving $15 in compensation. Teachers who completed the current study survey received $10 in compensation for completing the survey. All methods and procedures were approved by the University ethics board.

Results

Data Analysis

First, we compared frequencies of the scale responses regarding how often uncivil behaviours were reported as occurring in the classroom and how serious each action was deemed by each group. Quantitative analyses were conducted on SPSS version 25. We used descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, means) and conducted two Mann Whitney U tests to compare seriousness and reported frequency of behaviour between teachers and students. This type of test was appropriate given the ordinal nature of the data (Field, 2013).

For the open-ended questions, we organized all responses by question. First, responses were coded at the question level for both teacher and student groups. That is, common responses were grouped together to determine how student responses compared to teacher responses to the questions. Next, we went through the responses a second time, coding the responses for emergent themes (Creswell, 2013) that emerged above the question level themes. All themes were agreed on by both researchers.

Quantitative Results

First, both groups were asked how serious the problem of classroom incivility was in their teaching/learning in general. Responses from teachers and students were relatively similar (see Table 1).

Table 1

Seriousness/Frequency of Classroom Incivility

Question	Teachers	Students
In general, how serious is the problem of classroom incivility in your teaching/learning?		
Extremely serious	1 (2.5%)	3 (5.8%)
Very serious	7 (17.5%)	11 (21.2%)
Moderately serious	14 (35.0%)	17 (32.7%)
Slightly serious	13 (32.5%)	17 (32.7%)
Not at all serious	5 (12.5%)	4 (7.7%)
In general, how frequently do students behave in an uncivil way in your classroom?/How frequent are classroom incivility disruptions to your learning?		
Once a week or more	12 (30.0%)	24 (46.2%)
Several times per term	17 (42.5%)	18 (34.6%)
Once per term or less	10 (25.0%)	9 (17.3%)
Does not occur	1 (2.5%)	1 (1.9%)

Next, 55% of the teacher sample agreed that students who get grades that are typically Cs and Ds are more likely to engage in uncivil behaviour in the classroom than students who get As and Bs, compared to 38.5% of the student sample who agreed with this statement. Both teachers and students reported that boys engage in classroom incivility more often than girls.

Both samples rated how serious they felt various uncivil behaviour was on a scale from 1 (*not at all serious*) to 5 (*very serious*). With regards to differences between the teacher and student groups, 55% of teachers reported that "sending text messages during class" was "serious" or "very serious," compared to 34.6% of students. For the item "talking when you shouldn't during class," 48.1% of students reported that this was "serious/very serious," whereas 22.5% of teachers reported this to be the case. In addition, 72.5% of teachers reported that "eating during class" was "not at all serious" compared to only 23.1% of students.

A Mann Whitney U test revealed that teachers significantly ranked the following behaviour as more serious than students: "posting mean comments online about classmates," "calling a classmate names because they did not agree with your opinion" and "fighting with another student (physical or verbal)." Students significantly ranked these items more serious: "eating during class" and "students talking when they shouldn't during class" (see Appendix: Table 2).

Participants reported how often each of the uncivil behaviours occurred in their classroom, on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*almost always*). Whereas many of the responses were similar between students and teachers, there were again some noteworthy differences: 46.2% of students selected "never" for how often "spreading rumors or excluding others" occurred, compared to 15% of teachers. For the item "packing up books before a lesson is over," 61.5% of students, compared to 27.5% of teachers, reported that this occurred "often" or "always," and 35% of teachers reported that "texting during class" occurred "often" or "always," compared to 50% of students.

A second Mann Whitney U test revealed that students reported that "packing up books before a lesson is over" occurred more often than did teachers, whereas teachers reported the items "posting mean comments online about classmates" and "a student spreading rumours about or trying to exclude a classmate he/she dislikes" as occurring more frequently (see Appendix: Table 3).

Question Level Themes

Example quotes for all question level themes are reported in Appendix: Table 4. For the first question, the responses were relatively mixed from the students. Some students stated that it was an issue, others discussed how it was only an issue in some of their classes or sometimes. There were students who said it happened sometimes but was not really an issue, while many mentioned that teachers were quick to stop it in their classes and therefore it wasn't an issue

for them. Many students did; however, mention other students being rude and that it caused difficulty in their learning. However, 20 of 52 students said that they did not feel classroom incivility was an issue for them, with an additional five students who said it was only sometimes an issue. In comparison the majority of teacher participants responded that uncivil behaviour was an issue in their teaching (only four of 40 stated that it wasn't an issue). Among those who reported that it wasn't an issue, they still mentioned that it happened, but not very often or wasn't serious.

For behaviours that were not considered to be uncivil (Question 2), teachers mentioned that they did not consider eating or sleeping in class to be uncivil, whereas students listed that raising their hand to speak or talking to their friend as long as it was quiet was not considered uncivil. Overall, both teachers and students listed similar behaviours for what they considered to be uncivil in the classroom. However, there were some differences in what the most reported uncivil behaviours were. Of the teachers, 80% mentioned making fun of others in class (e.g., for answering incorrectly) and name calling/exclusion, compared to only 15% of the students that listed this type of behaviour. Students most often mentioned talking during a lesson or talking back to the teacher as the behaviours they considered to be uncivil. Both teachers and students reported cellphone use/texting was uncivil behaviour in the classroom, though less than 50% of both samples mentioned this behaviour. Student responses were consistent as they noted talking during class and disrespecting the teacher (e.g., not listening) as the most common occurrences of incivility in the classroom (mentioned by 37 of 52 students). Teacher responses included a range of actions, with consistent responses being: swearing and rude comments towards peers (20 of 40 teachers), talking during a lesson (eight of 40 teachers), and cell phone use during class (12 of 40 teachers). Some students also mentioned cell phone use as a most common occurrence, though only 12 of 52 students.

Students were asked what uncivil behaviours they engaged in most often. The most popular response was that they talk to their friends during a lesson when the teacher is talking or during work time, with the second most common response being that they text during class, or don't engage/pay attention to the teacher. Teachers were asked if they felt that classroom incivility affected their teaching, consistently stating that it was an issue, with only two teachers who reported that they felt as though it did not affect their teaching. Teachers mentioned that student incivility interrupted their lesson and took away from instruction time, as they are forced to deal with a few students (those engaging in the uncivil behaviour) while others lose out on teacher time, overall reducing learning.

Teachers were asked what they have done to limit uncivil behaviour in the classroom. Teachers mentioned actions such as proximity to the student, having behaviour systems in place, or having class discussions. The most common response was the importance of addressing the

behaviour right away and a focus on having discussions with the students involved in the behaviour. Teachers also mentioned that often their response to the uncivil behaviour was dependent on the severity or frequency of the behaviour and would adapt their reaction accordingly. Students were also asked to state what their teachers do to limit uncivil behaviour in the classroom. The biggest theme for this question was the idea of punishment in response to classroom incivility. For example, students mentioned measures such as taking away student cell phones or separating student desks. Students discussed different levels of punishment depending on the uncivil behaviour similarly to teachers.

The last question that was asked of both teachers and students was about promoting a civil learning environment. Teachers emphasized the importance of starting early (i.e., right from the beginning of the year), being consistent and fostering strong, positive relationships with the student. Both teachers and students mentioned class rules and contracts at the beginning of the year that they created and agreed on together. Interestingly, student responses to this question tended to again focus on punishments for engaging in uncivil behaviour, whereas teachers generally focused on ways to promote positive relationships and a positive learning environment.

Emergent Themes

After the question level coding (e.g., Popping, 2015), we explored emerging themes in the open-ended responses. The following themes came from the teacher responses, as this sample tended to give more unprompted elaboration. First, teachers discussed the importance of fostering a positive learning environment and setting the standards early to have control of their classroom to limit uncivil behaviour, highlighted by these quotes:

> "*At the start of the year we get to know each other and I explicitly go over the need for respect and kindness as an absolute! I model these aspects and praise students doing so too. I deal on the spot with incivility and make it a learning moment.*" (Grade 8 teacher)

> "*I run a cooperative learning environment often in my class. students adapt to the expectations quickly. At the beginning of the year a lot more is required to prevent incivility but students adjust.*" (Grade 9 teacher)

The next theme that emerged was the idea of having background information of why the student was engaging in such behaviour. That is, many teachers discussed that disruptive behaviour may not be considered uncivil if they know the context behind why a student might be engaging in such behaviour as demonstrated in the following quotes:

> "*Eating in class—many students cannot get a meal at home [and] sleeping as there will be a reason behind it that needs to be investigated. Leaving class, going for a short walk—for some students, this is a coping mechanism.*" (Grade 7 teacher)

"*In other school I was at, it was a low-income school, it did not matter what I did in the classroom though as these students were all bad for classroom incivility. I believe depending on the school it's something that is much harder for teachers to overcome.*" (Grade 9/10 teacher)

Along similar lines, the next theme was the idea of intentionality. Teachers often gave explanations in their responses of student's engaging in uncivil behaviour but not necessarily meaning to do so, highlighted below:

"*Students are addicted to their phones—for many I don't think they realize it to be rude or distracting.*" (Grade 9/10 teacher)

"*The most common occurrence would be side conversations that occur. Students are not trying to be rude they just are social and want to chat with their peers.*" (Grade 8 teacher)

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the viewpoints and experiences of both students and teachers regarding classroom incivility. Specifically, we wanted to address a gap in the current literature, by not only including adolescents' teachers, but comparing their viewpoints to those of adolescent students. Overall, our results indicate that both teachers and students agree that classroom incivility occurs in their classrooms and can be an issue within the learning environment, but there are some differences in how they are perceiving uncivil behaviour in the classroom. Further, our results suggest that there may be distinct differences in how adolescent students are perceiving classroom incivility, compared to students in postsecondary education.

First, teachers and students agreed that students who tended to receive lower grades in school, as well as boys, engaged in classroom incivility more often than students who received higher grades and girls. Our findings are consistent with the broader adolescent literature which shows that boys tend to engage in greater classroom incivility than girls (Spadafora & Volk, 2021). However, gender-related differences among adolescents are not consistent with what has been found in postsecondary samples. For example, among postsecondary samples, differences between boys and girls have not been reported (Huang et al., 2020). In adolescence, this sex difference may be due to boys generally being more disruptive in the classroom than girls (Bertrand & Pan, 2013) and an increased pressure on adolescent girls to excel at all aspects in school compared to boys (Pomerantz & Raby, 2011).

Both teachers and students acknowledged that uncivil behaviour occurred in their classrooms, however teachers more consistently stated it was an issue in their classroom. However, when asked to rate in general how serious an issue incivility was to their learning, students and

teachers reported similarly (Table 1). The qualitative responses allowed for a more in-depth discussion and suggest that while teachers tend to find it difficult to teach in a classroom where uncivil behaviour is occurring, students may be more able to adapt to disruptions in their learning. Specifically, our results seem to suggest that while students may sometimes find uncivil behaviour annoying and rate it at least as a "slightly serious" behaviour, they do not necessarily consider classroom incivility to be a large hindrance to their learning. This could be in part due to the differences of roles within the classroom. For example, teachers have certain expectations within the classroom to ensure the maximized success and well-being of all students in the class (Lane et al., 2003). Teachers may also feel pressure to teach a certain amount of curriculum content and excel at their careers. Adolescent students in our study reported that while classroom incivility occurs in their classroom, they do not necessarily consider it a big deal, which contrasts research focused on university students (Bjorkland & Rehling, 2009). It is possible that adolescents may find it fun or appealing to engage in uncivil behaviour, particularly when accompanied by their friends. However, previous literature on university classroom incivility seems to suggest that this is not the case in university classes. Whereas postsecondary students may have a broader tolerance for actions that can be engaged in during class, at the same time, students at this level tend to be taking their learning more seriously and therefore do not want it to be disrupted (Ausbrooks, 2011; Bjorkland & Rehling, 2009; Ibrahim & Qalawa, 2016).

An interesting trend in the reported perceptions of uncivil behaviour, is that the teachers consistently reported intentionally uncivil behaviour (Spadafora & Volk, 2021) as more serious than the students. For unintentional behaviour, students reported it has more serious (or the same) as the teachers. This was supported by the qualitative data. Students were more likely to list behaviours that may be perceived as disrespectful to the teacher (e.g., talking during class), while the teachers were more likely to mention that the majority of uncivil behaviour engaged in was towards other students (e.g., making fun of others and name calling). Overall, it seems as though when it comes to adolescent students being uncivil towards each other, teachers view this behaviour as more serious than the adolescents themselves. This suggests that teachers place a greater emphasis on harmonious peer relationships, a view protecting students in their class as high priority. Adolescents having quality relationships with both other students in their class and with their teacher is positively associated with increased academic achievement and engagement (Furrer et al., 2014). Adolescent students are more concerned with uncivil behaviours that either could be seen as disrespectful to the teacher or interrupt the classroom instruction, providing evidence of the agreed upon student–teacher relationship that exists in elementary and high school (Yariv, 2009). In other words, students tend to report uncivil behaviour that may be perceived as disrespectful by the teacher (e.g., eating during class) as more serious than teachers themselves might be. Research in the postsecondary setting found

that faculty tended to report classroom incivility as less serious than students (Ausbrooks et al., 2011). Whereas this was the case for much of the classroom uncivil behaviours in our study, overall our results suggest that perceptions of adolescents and their teachers may be more dependent on the individual situation.

Specifically, whereas students considered actions such as eating or sleeping during class to be uncivil, many teachers stated that they would not deem these actions as uncivil. For example, if students did not get a proper meal at home and then were eating at school or sleeping at school because they did not get a good night's rest, then the teacher did not consider this behaviour to be uncivil. This idea of having background information brings about an interesting question: is a behaviour still uncivil within a learning environment even if the perpetrator did not mean to engage in the behaviour, or has a valid excuse to engage in such behaviour (e.g., home life issues, ADHD, lower socioeconomic status)? Regardless of intent of the perpetrator, it is possible that behaviours may be uncivil within the classroom even if they are not disruptive.

With regards to frequencies of uncivil behaviour, both teachers and students rated "talking when you shouldn't during class" as the most frequently occurring uncivil behaviour, and this was also the most reported behaviour in the qualitative responses of the students. This finding matches a similar study that found that University students also rated this uncivil behaviour as occurring most regularly in class (Bjorkland & Rehling, 2009). Again, teachers reported intentionally uncivil behaviour occurring more often than students did (Table 3). Students, on the other hand, reported that "packing up books before a lesson is over" occurred significantly more often than did teachers, suggesting that teachers may not always be noticing when this behaviour is occurring. Previous research has found that University students reported more uncivil behaviour in the classroom than faculty did (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Ibrahim & Qalawa, 2016), whereas this was not necessarily the case in our study. Given the negative implications of adolescent incivility (Marini, 2009; Volk et al., 2016), it becomes increasingly important to turn our focus to what teachers are doing within the classroom to reduce such behaviour.

In response to what teachers do to limit classroom incivility and to promote a positive learning environment, students were more likely to mention punishment for uncivil behaviour, whereas this was not mentioned much by teachers. Instead, teachers focused on creating a positive learning environment by fostering strong relationships with their students and setting clear expectations from the beginning of the school year (Oliver et al., 2011). This raises a question of what students are perceiving as punishment. For example, many teachers mentioned that they would discuss the uncivil behaviour with the perpetrator either during or after class. It is possible that in their responses, students were reporting any type of intervention such as this, as "punishment." Specifically, teachers highlighted the necessity to stop and address uncivil behaviour when it happens rather than letting it build up. Both teachers and students

mentioned classroom rules stated and agreed upon at the beginning of the school year and how this helped to limit uncivil behaviour. Previous research within the postsecondary setting has suggested that students feels as though it is the responsibility of the teacher to manage classroom incivility, particularly when it disrupts the learning environment (Boysen, 2012). Our results suggest that adolescent students feel as though their teachers effectively intervene in such behaviour. This contrasts previous qualitative research examining perceptions of students compared to faculty, which found that even though faculty believed that they were addressing incivility, students did not agree (Ausbrooks et al., 2011).

Limitations and Future Directions

Our study is a first step in using qualitative methods to explore adolescent classroom incivility, and highlights that more comprehensive qualitative research is needed in the future. Whereas a limitation of the present study is that there is a lack of variability in qualitative responses with open-ended questions, this exploratory study can help inform future research. Future studies should continue to expand the use of qualitative methods through the use interviews and focus groups as these methods might allow for more elaboration of responses, particularly for the student sample. Whereas the size of our sample was a strength for the qualitative component of the present study, it may be a limitation for the quantitative components. Future research should more comprehensively investigate the comparisons between student and teacher reports of occurrences/beliefs towards uncivil behaviour in the classroom using larger sample sizes with greater statistical power.

Future research could also explore potential differences between responses of teachers and students based on classroom structure, school climate or socioeconomic status of the school neighbourhood. It is possible that these environmental factors could be impacting perceptions of classroom incivility. We acknowledge that the perception of classroom incivility might not be "one size fits all" for students and teachers, however there are general behaviours within a classroom setting that may be deemed as uncivil regardless of intentionality or background of the student, and further research is needed to disentangle these complex ideas.

Implications and Conclusion

Our results not only suggest that there are important differences in perceptions between teachers and adolescent students with regards to classroom incivility, but that it is an issue in both teaching and learning. Theoretically, this study has provided a foundation for future studies to continue to understand the viewpoints and lived experiences of classroom incivility of both students and teachers. Given the role of the teacher in intermediate and high school, our results support that teachers should limit uncivil behaviour whenever possible. The overall finding that there are indeed differences in perceptions between students and teachers can help

inform intervention. Through teachers understanding how students are perceiving classroom incivility, they may gain insight into why they are engaging in such behaviour in the first place. While it might seem like a matter related to just the classroom, civility may in fact be a vital element in the health function of family, public, work, and political environments. This makes its presentation in educational settings an important foundation for not just the classroom, but modern citizenship. Taken together, the findings of this study are an important addition to the existing literature on adolescent incivility, while being directly applicable to the classroom setting.

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Appendix: Tables

Table 2

Results of Mann Whitney U Test Comparing Teachers and Students on How Serious They Rate Uncivil Behaviour in the Classroom

		Mean rank	Mann–Whitney U	*Z*	*p*
Packing up books before a lesson is over	Teachers	41.81	852.50	−1.55	.122
	Students	50.11			
A student making fun of a classmate who answered a question incorrectly	Teachers	50.28	889.00	−1.25	.210
	Students	43.60			
Sending text messages/notes during class	Teachers	48.90	944.00	−.78	.438
	Students	44.65			
Posting mean comments online about classmates.	Teachers	51.53*	839.00	−2.05	.040
	Students	42.63			
Reading, going online, or playing games during a lesson.	Teachers	48.41	963.50	−.63	.529
	Students	45.03			
Calling a classmate names because they did not agree with your opinion.	Teachers	54.08*	737.00	−2.58	.010
	Students	40.67			
Eating during class	Teachers	37.18	667.00	−3.11	.002
	Students	53.67*			
A student spreading rumours about or trying to exclude a classmate he/she dislikes.	Teachers	51.15	854.00	−1.73	.083
	Students	42.92			
Sleeping during class.	Teachers	40.56	802.50	−1.92	.055
	Students	51.07			
Fighting with another student (physical or verbal)	Teachers	52.16*	813.50	−2.25	.024
	Students	42.14			
Students talking when they shouldn't during class	Teachers	40.46	798.50	−1.99	.046
	Students	51.14*			

Table 3

Results of Mann Whitney U Test Comparing Teachers and Students on How Frequent They Report Uncivil Behaviour in the Classroom

		Mean rank	Mann–Whitney U	*Z*	*p*
Packing up books before a lesson is over	Teachers	33.14	505.50	−4.34	<.001
	Students	56.78*			
A student making fun of a classmate who answered a question incorrectly	Teachers	47.78	989.00	−.42	.673
	Students	45.52			
Sending text messages/notes during class	Teachers	47.14	1014.50	−.21	.837
	Students	46.01			
Posting mean comments online about classmates	Teachers	53.95*	742.00	−2.47	.013
	Students	40.77			
Reading, going online, or playing games during a lesson	Teachers	45.84	1013.50	−.22	.829
	Students	47.01			
Calling a classmate names because they did not agree with your opinion	Teachers	50.66	873.50	−1.37	.172
	Students	43.30			
Eating during class	Teachers	49.94	902.50	−1.13	.259
	Students	43.86			
A student spreading rumours about or trying to exclude a classmate he/she dislikes	Teachers	56.13*	655.00	−3.15	.002
	Students	39.10			
Sleeping during class	Teachers	43.65	926.00	−.96	.339
	Students	48.69			
Fighting with another student (physical or verbal)	Teachers	48.39	964.50	−.63	.528
	Students	45.05			
Students talking when they shouldn't during class	Teachers	44.56	962.50	−.64	.522
	Students	47.99			

Table 4

Example Quotes for All Question Level Themes for Both Students and Teachers

Question	Student responses	Teacher responses
Classroom incivility can be defined as *rude low-level behaviours that interrupt a cooperative learning environment*. Is classroom incivility an issue in your classroom(s)? Why or why not?	"Classroom incivility is not an issue in my classes because if there are any problems, the teacher will take care of it outside of the class so it doesn't interrupt everyone's learning." (Grade 12 girl) "Not necessarily because most of us are pretty well behaved." (Grade 12 boy) "It is, because the certain people who are doing this interrupt my learning and interrupt many other people in my class." (Grade 8 girl)	"No. Generally, it is not an issue. If you create a healthy learning environment where student ls feel appreciated, belonging and know the teacher will not tolerate incivility you avoid these situations in your classroom." (Grade 9/10 teacher) "Yes, it is. Over the years, it has gotten worse. Less respect for the teacher." (Grade 7 teacher) "Definitely is. All of those low-level behaviours, no matter how minor they might seem, detract from the learning environment." (Grade 9/10 teacher)
Please give three examples of actions that **you personally** would consider to be uncivil behaviour in the classroom, and some examples of actions that **you personally** do not consider to be uncivil behaviour in the classroom.	"Uncivil behaviour would be fighting, yelling and acting inappropriately in the classroom and civil behaviour would be respectfully engaging in the classroom by asking questions, refraining from disturbing other students and helping those who are struggling with certain subjects in the classroom." (Grade 12 boy) "What I consider uncivil behaviour: Yelling or cussing at the teacher, hurting other classmates or teachers, and talking about topics that will make others feel bad or may be sad. What I do not consider uncivil behaviour: laughing in class, talking out (you should not do but is not looked down on), and interrupting a lesson to go to the bathroom." (Grade 8 boy)	"Uncivil behaviour includes: laughing at someone who gives an answer, making a comment to intentionally make someone feel uncomfortable, encouraging others to exclude an individual. Not uncivil behaviour: eating in class, wearing a hat in class, chewing gum." (Grade 6/7 teacher) "Uncivil: Getting up and leaving without permission, being obstinate and argumentative, and name calling, I do not consider eating or sleeping in class to be uncivil as sometimes student home lives can be very chaotic and school is the only quiet safe place they have." (Grade 9/10 teacher)

Describe the most common occurrences of classroom incivility that you see in the classroom.	"The most common occurrences of classroom incivility I see are people chatting during class, gossiping about other students, playing on their phones, interrupting the teacher during a lesson, and taking pictures on their phone." (Grade 10 girl)	"The most common occurrences of incivility are related to how they treat each other and very rarely include how they treat me. Specifically, one person won't be included in an activity at recess by a group of friends." (Grade 6/7 teacher)
	"Talking Out of Term [sic] or talking to my friends" (Grade 10 boy)	"Talking or being disruptive during a lesson or during independent work time. Refusing to complete work or do what was asked of them." (Grade 6 teacher)
	"In my classroom I see lots of people not listening to the teacher when she tells you to do something." (Grade 7 girl)	"Phone issues are most common. Outbursts when teacher is speaking/other classmates are talking are also fairly common." (Grade 9 teacher)
For students: Describe the uncivil behaviour in the classroom that you engage in most often. *For teachers:* Do you feel uncivil behaviour in the classroom affects your teaching? How does it affect teaching/learning in the classroom?	"The uncivil behaviour in the classroom that I engage in most often is being disruptive during class time, not by being in my phone or anything like that but I definitely love talking all the time with everyone around me even when I know I probably shouldn't be." (Grade 10 girl)	"It slows down the rest of the class who could benefit from my assistance or attention because I am dealing with behaviours." (Grade 7/8 teacher)
	"I tend to go on my phone in class sometimes and if I'm not interested in a presentation I don't pay attention as much as I should. Also, I have packed up my things and got ready to leave before class was dismissed a couple times, because my friends were doing it." (Grade 12 girl)	"It certainly can – Depending on the group of students that are in there. Some classes I find at all I am doing is refereeing, and trying to teach them simple manners and how to act in public." (Grade 9/10 teacher)
	"I do not do uncivil behaviour." (Grade 9 boy)	"Students are addicted to their phones– for many I don't think they realize it to be rude or distracting. For me teaching, I find it very distracting to be sharing a story in front with students heads down on phone (even if it's only 1 student, my attention is brought to them)." (Grade 9/10 teacher)
For students: What does your teacher do to limit uncivil behaviour in the classroom?	"The teachers take away phones and seat you next to someone they don't think you'll talk to a lot." (Grade 9 boy)	"When it is occurring in the classroom, I deal with it right away by stopping and having a discussion about why it is wrong. I ensure that they understand how harmful their behaviour is and how it impacts the people around them." (Grade 6/7 teacher)

For teachers: What have you done to address these types of uncivil behaviour when it is occurring in the classroom?	""Teachers do things like, if we go a week straight without any problems, they treat us with a free period or treat day or watch an educational movie. Teachers also set rules in place or just send you to the office." (Grade 9 girl) "When the class is getting too loud for example, our teacher usually just stops the lesson until we pay attention again. If it gets too consistent our teachers sometimes put various students out in the hall or separate them from their peers." (Grade 12 boy)	"If you have clear expectations, consistently follow through even with the small things you can avoid large or more serious issues. Ultimately by being clear, transparent, and consistent you build good rapport with students. Students know what to expect and it leaves the guess work out." (Grade 9/10 teacher) "I typically address uncivil behaviours with policy and procedure. Quickly highlighting acceptable behaviours in and outside the classroom is a good start." (Grade 7 teacher)
For students: What measures does your teacher or school take to promote a civil learning environment in your classroom? *For teachers:* What proactive measures do you take to promote a civil learning environment in your classroom?	"To promote a civil learning environment, the school has strict guidelines for how to behave, along with discipline when necessary. My teachers try to keep a positive attitude towards students in order to keep them engaged in learning and feeling more optimistic." (Grade 10 girl) "They have punishments set up for if someone is doing something they shouldn't be." (Grade 9 boy) "The teachers will hand out course outlines with their classroom behaviour expectations and disciplinary conduct on the first day of class. Sometimes these are posted around the classroom." (Grade 9 girl)	"Being very clear on my expectations, regularly following through, classroom contracts, reminding students that I am there to support them and that they can trust me." (Grade 7/8 teacher) "From day 1 I expect civility. I do not tolerate any behaviour that would negatively impacts our classroom. If you come off as a strong teacher who has a big presence in the room students respond well." (Grade 9/10 teacher) "Appreciate the civil behaviours and motivate students to do so. Set up the clear expectations. Role model by not using my phone and modeling civil behaviours." (Grade 9/10 teacher)