

**Cynthia M. Clark, PhD, ANEF,  
Nancy S. Otterness, MS, Wu Ya Jun, MNE,  
Barbara W. Allerton, MSN, Cao Mei Juan, PhD,  
Mikal Black, MSN, & Fu Wei, PhD**

**Abstract:** *Disruptive student behavior is an emerging concern in institutions of higher education in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Faculty from a nursing college in the PRC expressed a desire to study the type and frequency of student incivility. Nursing faculty from the United States of America and the PRC collaborated on a study to measure faculty and student perceptions of student incivility in a Chinese nursing college. Student incivility in nursing education is a relatively new field of investigation; however, this preliminary study in the PRC shows it to be a substantial problem that needs to be addressed.*

**Key Words:** *Student Incivility, People's Republic of China, Descriptive Study*

# DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF STUDENT INCIVILITY IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The study of incivility in nursing education is relatively recent; however, the body of knowledge is growing as more empirical studies are conducted. The collaborative international relationship, foundational to this study, began in 2003 when a nursing professor from a nursing school in the northwest United States of America (USA) was asked to provide curriculum consultation to a nursing college in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Several years of collaboration on curriculum development and on implementing new teaching-learning strategies strengthened faculty relationships between the two universities. In 2006, the relationship culminated in a signed *Agreement of Cooperation* between the two nursing schools. The purpose of the agreement was to establish specific educational relationships, to promote academic linkages, and to engage in collaborative re-

search. As the faculty from both universities continued to work together, the topic of disruptive student behavior entered the dialogue. Various university faculties in the PRC had begun observing disruptive student behavior (Lin, 2007). Alert to the problem and wishing to take a proactive approach, the Chinese faculty expressed a desire to study student incivility and to devise strategies to prevent and effectively manage these behaviors. Consequently, nursing faculty from both universities collaborated to conduct a study to measure faculty and student perceptions of student incivility in a nursing college in the PRC. The study was conducted in 2007 and is the focus of this report.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Academic incivility is a concern for nursing education. Incivility in nursing education is defined as rude or disruptive behaviors which often result in psychological or physiological distress for the people involved, and if left unaddressed, may progress into threatening situations (Clark, Farnsworth, & Landrum, 2009). Studies conducted in the USA reveal that the level of student incivility in nursing education has increased and that some faculty experienced physical and psychological symptoms as a result of uncivil student encounters (Lashley & deMeneses, 2001; Luparell, 2004, 2007). Clark and Springer (2007a, 2007b) measured incivility in nursing education from both student and faculty perspectives and found that both groups reported feeling stressed and anxious as a result of incivility. In subsequent studies, Clark (2008a, 2008b) found that incivility in nursing education often results in psychological and physiological distress in both groups and negatively impacts the academic environment. Faculty and students reported being highly

**Cynthia M. Clark, PhD, ANEF**, is a Professor at Boise State University – Boise, Idaho and is corresponding author. Dr. Clark may be reached at: 1910 University Drive, Boise, Idaho 83725; or at: 208-426-3589; or [cclark@boisestate.edu](mailto:cclark@boisestate.edu). **Nancy S. Otterness, MS**, is Professor Emeritus at Boise State University – Boise, Idaho. **Wu Ya Jun, MNE**, is a Vice Professor at the Nursing College of Hangzhou Normal University – Hangzhou, PRC. **Barbara W. Allerton, MSN**, is an Associate Professor at Boise State University – Boise, Idaho. **Cao Mei Juan, PhD**, is Vice Dean & Professor at the Nursing College of Hangzhou Normal University – Hangzhou, PRC. **Mikal Black, MSN**, is an Assistant Professor at Boise State University – Boise, Idaho. **Fu Wei, PhD**, is Dean & Professor in the Nursing College of Hangzhou Normal University – Hangzhou, PRC.

stressed, overworked, and over-extended by multiple and competing demands. In addition, an inability to cope effectively with stress often resulted in anger and uncivil behavior. In this article, incivility and uncivil behavior are used interchangeably.

### Theoretical Underpinnings of Incivility in PRC

The PRC has an interesting and unique culture. Melby, Dodgson, and Tarrant (2008) noted that eastern cultures, including mainland China, have traditionally emphasized collectivism, a philosophy that recognizes the group rather than the individual as the fundamental unit of political, social, and economic concern. The PRC's cultural philosophy and Communist ideology influences its people, including students in higher education (Sun, Xu, Xu, & Zhang, 2001).

In 1979, the PRC's government implemented the "one child per family policy" to control the country's expanding population and to alleviate its social and environmental problems (Hesketh, Lu, & Xing, 2005). While the policy has been effective in stemming population growth, there is concern that it may have deleterious effects on children being reared under this policy (Hesketh et al., 2005). Falbo and others (1989) postulated that the policy would result in millions of maladapted and over-indulged single children and that moral ethics and traditional Chinese values would be eroded (Jiao, Ji, & Jing, 1986).

Reports regarding the impact of the "one child per family" policy are conflicting. Several researchers report that the policy has led to a nation of "Little Emperors" described as self-centered and openly challenging Chinese traditions, ethics, and morality (Romanowski, 2006; Edwards et al. 2005, Crowell & Hsieh, 1995). Ma (2002) noted that a lack of discipline and a rebellious attitude were a result of the policy. Conversely, in a longitudinal study by Tseng, Tao, Hsu, Qui, Li and Goebert (2000), the researchers found that the effect of being a "single-child" had a minimal impact on the family system.

### Incivility in Nursing Education: PRC

The PRC is undergoing rapid social, political, and economic change, yet the educational system remains heavily focused on cognitive development and structured teaching methods (Rao & Rao, 2003). Wang (2006) postulated that university students reflect the country's changing political and societal forces, and that these university students are beginning to challenge the traditional Chinese educational system. Tian (2004) suggested that individual behavior is a reflection of the general society, and that society will begin to change as university students' behaviors begin to change. Li (2000) noted that university students are likely to challenge traditions and influence moral standards and societal norms. In some cases, student behaviors are changing in the PRC. Some students demonstrate self-centered behavior including a lack of concern and caring for others (Gao, Lu, & Wang, 2001).

Chinese nursing faculty and administrators were concerned about these behaviors and collaborated on a study to investigate the problem of student incivility in nursing education from both faculty and student perspectives. The research questions were:

1. To what extent do nursing students and faculty perceive student incivility to be a problem?

2. What student behaviors are considered to be uncivil by nursing faculty and students?
3. What is the perceived frequency of uncivil student behaviors?
4. How often have threatening behaviors happened to nursing students and faculty?

Understanding the nature of student incivility in the nursing college was needed to improve relationships between faculty and students and to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies.

### SAMPLE

Institutional approval to conduct the study was obtained from both universities involved: a university in the northwest USA and a nursing college in southeastern PRC where the study was conducted. A self-administered *Incivility in Nursing Education (INE)* survey was distributed to all nursing students and to all members of the nursing faculty. The population of nursing faculty and nursing students totaled 510 (faculty = 28; students = 482). Twenty-one (75%) of 28 faculty and 392 (81.3%) of 482 students completed the INE survey. The overall sample consisted of 398 (96.4%) females and 15 males (3.6%). One hundred percent of the faculty respondents were females. Nearly all respondents were of the Han ethnic group (98.5 %), which constitutes more than 90 percent of PRC's population. Their primary spoken language was Mandarin Chinese. Faculty ranged in age from 24 to 53 years (median = 37, mean = 37.7, SD 8.59). Faculty years of teaching ranged from 1 year to 25 years (median = 9, mean = 11.5, SD 7.83). Thirty percent of the faculty were prepared at the bachelor's degree level in either nursing or medicine, 35% were prepared at the master's degree level in nursing or medicine, and the remaining 35% had degrees in other disciplines. The "other" category only listed other and did not ask for specifics. Students ranged in age from 17 to 23 years (median = 20, mean = 19.8, SD 1.10). Approximately one-third of the students were enrolled in the first year of their nursing program (n = 129, 32.9%), another third were enrolled in the second year (n = 135, 34.4%), and the remaining third were enrolled in years three and four (n = 128, 32.7%).

### INSTRUMENT

The *Incivility in Nursing Education (INE)* survey is a descriptive tool used to measure faculty and student perceptions of incivility in nursing education and includes both quantitative and qualitative measures (Clark, Farnsworth, & Landrum, 2009). Permission to use the INE survey was granted from Clark who developed the instrument. The INE Survey measures nursing faculty and student perceptions of uncivil and threatening behaviors and the perceived frequency of these behaviors. The INE also elicits suggestions for addressing incivility. The INE is divided into three sections. Section I of the survey collects demographic data, which establishes the context of uncivil behavior. Section II lists student and faculty behaviors occurring in the academic environment. The behaviors in Section II are divided into two categories. The first category lists behaviors that may be considered uncivil. For each behavior, the respondent is asked to indicate whether he

or she regards the behavior as disruptive or uncivil and how often he or she has experienced the behavior in the past 12 months. The second category lists behaviors that are known to be threatening. Respondents are asked to indicate if they or someone they know have experienced the threatening behavior within the past 12 months. Section II also includes two items to measure: a) the extent to which students and faculty perceive incivility to be a problem; and b) the extent to which respondents' perceive nursing faculty or nursing students as more likely to engage in uncivil behavior. Section III includes four open-ended questions asking respondents to describe ways students and faculty may contribute to incivility in nursing education, how the incivility should be addressed, and whether the respondent has any additional comments.

For this study, the INE Survey was translated into Mandarin Chinese. Nursing faculty and students from a Chinese nursing college completed the survey and both groups' perspectives were garnered. This article describes the demographic data and the types and frequency of uncivil and threatening student behaviors displayed in a Chinese nursing college. The qualitative description derived from the INE survey is beyond the scope of this article. For a detailed description of the INE Survey, see Clark, Farnsworth, and Landrum, 2009.

### Item Description

The INE lists 16 student behaviors which may be considered uncivil, 11 perceived threatening behaviors, and two additional single item measures. A four-point Likert scale (*always, sometimes, rarely, and never*) is used to indicate the degree to which faculty and students perceive student behaviors as uncivil. Frequency of these perceived uncivil student behaviors occurring within the past 12 months is measured using a four point Likert scale (*often, sometimes, rarely, and never*). The INE measures 11 perceived threatening student behaviors occurring within the past 12 months and responses are reported as *yes, no, or unsure*. One single item measure addresses the extent to which students and faculty perceive incivility in nursing education to be a problem. Possible responses are *serious problem, moderate problem, not a problem, uncertain*. The final quantitative single item measure addresses the extent to which respondents think or believe nursing faculty or nursing students are likely to engage in uncivil behavior. Possible responses include *faculty are much more likely, faculty are a little more likely, faculty and students are about equal, students are a little more likely, students are much more likely to engage in uncivil behavior*.

### Content Validity

During initial development of the INE, a panel of nursing and non-nursing professors, students, and a statistician found the items to be reflective of academic incivility. A qualitative phenomenological study provided additional content validity and was used to further refine the INE (Clark, 2008d). Factor analysis using a varimax rotation, eigenvalues  $> 1.0$ , and factor loadings  $> .50$ , yielded three factors explaining 56.0% of the variance. The three factors emerged with factor loading ranging from 0.680 to 0.880. Factor 1 refers to distracting or disrespectful classroom behaviors, such as sarcasm, sleeping in class, making disapproving groans,

or refusing to answer direct questions. Factor 2 refers to disrespect or disregard for others, such as arriving late for class or using a computer for non-class related issues. Factor 3 refers to a general disinterest in class, such as being unprepared or leaving early (Clark, Farnsworth, & Landrum, 2009). To examine reliability, Cronbach's alpha inter-item coefficients were calculated to evaluate the extent to which each item related to the rest of the items on the survey. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.808 to 0.889, indicating good inter-item reliability.

### Psychometric Testing on the Chinese Study Sample

Relationships between the items on the Chinese INE were examined using Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis. Using factor analysis, each item was examined for its relationship to the scale as a whole. After the best factor solution was found for each item set, the internal consistency of each factor was then evaluated using coefficient alpha. The 16-item uncivil behavior set was reduced to eight items ( $\alpha = .923$ ), with factor loadings ranging from 0.630 to 0.857; frequency of uncivil behavior was reduced from 16 items to two factors of seven items ( $\alpha = .795$ ) and four items ( $\alpha = .753$ ), with factor loadings ranging from 0.436 to 0.748; and the 11-item threatening behavior set was reduced to three factors of two items each ( $\alpha s = .755, .608, \text{ and } .523$ ), with factor loadings ranging from 0.613 to 0.829.

Reliability was examined with coefficient alpha for students and faculty separately and combined on each of the uncivil and threatening behaviors and on the frequency of the uncivil behaviors. Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.90 for perceptions of uncivil behaviors (faculty,  $n = 21$ ,  $\alpha = .934$ ; students,  $n = 392$ ,  $\alpha = .915$ ; both,  $n = 413$ ,  $\alpha = .916$ ). Results for frequency of uncivil behaviors exceeded 0.80 (faculty,  $n = 21$ ,  $\alpha = .802$ ; students  $n = 392$ ,  $\alpha = .881$ ; both  $n = 413$ ,  $\alpha = .878$ ). Cronbach's alpha for frequency of threatening student behaviors was not as strong with this sample ranging from 0.724 to 0.468 (faculty,  $n = 21$ ,  $\alpha = .724$ ; students,  $n = 392$ ,  $\alpha = .468$ ; both,  $n = 413$ ,  $\alpha = .494$ ). This could be due to generational differences in perception of when a behavior becomes threatening.

### Translation

While some of the Chinese participants have studied English, most have only a limited understanding or command of the English language. Addressing the issue of language is important to ensure comprehension, to decrease potential for cultural insensitivity, and to preserve the quality of the study. Brislin's (1993) translation procedure was used to translate the INE survey. First, a professional translator performed the initial forward translation of the survey instrument. Next, the translated version of the INE was reviewed, and then back translated by two students whose primary language was Mandarin Chinese. Then, a pilot study was conducted with 10 Chinese students enrolled in an English class at the PRC university using the translated INE survey. Students from the pilot study did not participate in the final study, but they assessed the INE survey in all aspects of translation, including semantic, conceptual, and content differences. No culturally sensitive issues were discovered and only minor translation adaptations were made. The INE survey was revised to include both the English and Mandarin Chinese translations and for-

matted into a response sheet for electronic scanning.

### Procedure of Data Collection

This study was conducted in mid-October 2007. A researcher from the United States traveled to the PRC to administer the INE survey to all nursing faculty and students in the undergraduate nursing program at the nursing college. Members of the Chinese research team explained the consent form, gave instructions for completing the survey, and explained the voluntary nature of the study. The surveys were self-administered and sealed in an envelope before being transported to the USA for analysis. All responses were collected anonymously and reported as aggregate data.

### RESULTS

Data from the INE survey were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. The first research question in this study asked respondents to consider the extent to which incivility may be a problem in the nursing college. Findings revealed that nearly 10% of respondents (9.4% of the students and 9.5% of the faculty) perceived incivility to be a serious problem in the nursing college (see Table 1). Over one-third (38.5%) of the students and 19% of the faculty perceived incivility to be a moderate problem. Thirty percent of the students and 52.4% of the faculty did not perceive incivility to be a problem. The remaining respondents (students = 21.9%, faculty = 19%) were uncertain regarding the extent to which incivility may be a problem in the nursing college.

The second research question addressed student behaviors that faculty and students perceived to be uncivil. Table 2 displays the degree to which faculty and students perceived certain student behaviors as "usually" or "always" uncivil. The top five uncivil student behaviors reported by students included: cheating on exams and quizzes (75.9%); creating tension by dominating class discussions (73.7%); using cell phones and pagers

**Table 1. To What Extent Do You Think Incivility In The Nursing Academic Environment Is A Problem? (Faculty n=21, Student n=392)**

Behavior	Student		Faculty	
	n	%	n	%
No problem at all	118	30.1	11	52.4
Moderate problem	151	38.5	4	19.0
Serious problem	37	9.4	2	9.5
I don't know / can't answer	86	21.9	4	19.0

Note. Numbers may not always equal 21 or 392 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to missing responses.

during class (67.9%); holding distracting conversations (67.8%); and leaving class early and making sarcastic remarks or gestures (66.8% each). The top five uncivil student behaviors reported by faculty included: cheating on exams or quizzes and using cell phones during class (65.0% each); holding distracting conversations (61.9%); demanding make-up exams (60.0%); and arriving late for class; which tied with creating tension by dominating discussions (55.0% each); and not paying attention (52.4%). Both groups perceived three of the top five uncivil student behaviors to be the same: cheating on exams or quizzes; using cell phones during class; and holding distracting conversations.

The third research question addressed the perceived frequency of the uncivil student behaviors. Table 3 displays the reported frequency of faculty and student experience with uncivil student behaviors occurring often or sometimes within past 12 months. The five uncivil student behaviors most frequently experienced by students were: being unprepared for class (82.4%);

**Table 2. Degree to Which Faculty and Students Perceived Certain Student Behaviors as Usually or Always Uncivil (Faculty n = 21, Student n = 392)**

Student behaviors	Student		Faculty	
	n	frequency %	n	frequency %
Cheating on exams or quizzes	292	75.9	13	65.0
Creating tension by dominating discussions	286	73.7	11	55.0
Using cell phones/pagers during class	263	67.9	13	65.0
Holding distracting conversations	262	67.8	13	61.9
Leaving class early	259	66.8	10	50.0
Making sarcastic remarks or gestures	258	66.8	10	50.0
Demanding make-up exams, extensions, etc	255	66.4	12	60.0
Arriving late for class	252	62.4	12	55.0
Sleeping in class	234	60.3	10	47.6
Cutting class	233	59.9	9	45.0
Using computer unrelated to class	220	56.8	5	25.0
Not paying attention	213	54.9	11	52.4
Refusing to answer direct questions	209	55.1	9	42.9
Making disapproving groans	201	52.2	8	40.0
Acting bored and apathetic	153	39.7	7	35.0
Being unprepared for class	139	35.9	10	50.0

Note. Numbers may not always equal 21 or 392 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to missing responses.

**Table 3. Reported Frequency of Faculty and Student Experience with Uncivil Student Behaviors Occurring Often or Sometimes in past 12 months (Faculty n = 21, Student n = 392)**

Student behaviors	Student		Faculty	
	n	frequency %	n	frequency %
Being unprepared for class	319	82.4	17	85.0
Sleeping in class	278	71.6	16	76.2
Acting bored and apathetic	272	69.6	15	75.0
Using cell phones or pagers during class	271	69.8	11	55.0
Not paying attention	264	67.7	12	57.1
Holding distracting conversations	207	53.0	14	66.7
Making disapproving groans	190	48.6	6	28.6
Arriving late for class	122	31.4	12	60.0
Using computer unrelated to class	101	25.9	3	15.0
Cutting class	100	25.6	4	20.0
Making sarcastic remarks or gestures	98	25.1	4	20.0
Cheating on exams or quizzes	83	21.5	4	19.1
Leaving class early	79	20.3	5	25.0
Refusing to answer direct questions	43	11.3	3	15.0
Creating tension by dominating discussions	42	10.8	3	15.0
Demanding make-up exams, extensions, etc	41	10.6	2	10.0

*Note. Numbers may not always equal 21 or 392 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to missing responses.*

**Table 4. Student and Faculty Perceptions of Threatening Student Behaviors: Did These Behaviors Happen to Them or Someone They Know in Past 12 Months (Faculty n=21, Student n=392)**

Behavior	Student		Faculty	
	n	%	n	%
Challenges to faculty knowledge or credibility	242	61.7	8	38.1
General taunts of disrespect toward other students	123	31.4	1	4.8
General taunts of disrespect toward faculty	86	22.0	3	14.3
Vulgarity directed at other students	69	17.6	2	9.5
Vulgarity directed at faculty	28	7.2	1	4.8
Threats of physical harm against other students	25	6.4	0	0.0
Inappropriate e-mails to other students	17	4.4	0	0.0
Harassing comments directed at other students	15	3.8	1	4.8
Threats of physical harm against faculty	12	3.1	1	4.8
Harassing comments directed at faculty	9	2.3	1	4.8
Inappropriate e-mails to faculty	4	1.0	0	0.0

*Note. Numbers may not always equal 21 or 392 due to missing responses. Percentages may not always equal 100% due to missing responses.*

sleeping in class (71.6%); using cell phones and pagers during class (69.8%); acting bored and apathetic (69.6%); and not paying attention in class (67.7%). The top five student behaviors most frequently experienced by faculty: included being unprepared for class (85.0%); sleeping in class (76.2%); acting bored and apathetic (75.0%); holding distracting conversations (66.7%); and arriving late for class (60.0%). Both groups perceived three of the top five most frequently reported uncivil student behaviors to be the same: being unprepared for class; sleeping in class; and acting bored and apathetic.

The fourth research question asked respondents to consider how often they experienced threatening behaviors in the nursing college within the past 12 months.

Threatening behaviors are defined as serious actions that when left unaddressed could result in harm or injury to self or another (Clark & Springer, 2007a). Examples include taunts of disrespect, vulgarity, harrassing comments, and inappropriate e-mail messages. Table 4 displays student and faculty perceptions of threatening student behaviors: did these behaviors happen to them or someone they know in past 12 months. The top five most frequently experienced threatening student behaviors reported by students included: challenges to faculty knowledge or credibility (61.7%); general taunts of disrespect to other students (31.4%); general taunts of disrespect to faculty (22.0%); vulgarity directed at other students (17.6%); and vulgarity directed at faculty

(7.2%). Eight of 21 faculty members (38.1%) reported challenges to faculty knowledge or credibility as the most frequently observed threatening student behavior, while three faculty (14.3%) reported general taunts of disrespect toward faculty. Both groups perceived two of the top five threatening student behaviors to be the same: challenging faculty knowledge or credibility; and general taunts of disrespect toward faculty. These behaviors were observed to occur within the past twelve months by the person witnessing the behavior, though in some cases, the targeted individual was unaware of the behavior.

## LIMITATIONS

This study is limited by the convenience sample of students and faculty at one nursing college in the PRC. While the participation rate was high, the sample may not be representative of the population of nursing students and faculty in nursing education programs within the province or the PRC. There is a lack of gender and ethnic diversity among the sample, although this is broadly reflective of the population within the PRC, which is 91.6 % Han Chinese (National Bureau of Statistics, 2001). This is the first known study conducted on nursing student incivility in the classroom in the PRC. Therefore, further studies conducted in other schools of nursing in the PRC would provide comparison and a greater potential for valid generalizations about the findings.

## DISCUSSION

This study assessed perceptions of uncivil student behaviors in a sample of faculty and students in a nursing program in the PRC. More students perceived incivility to be a moderate to severe problem than did faculty, and a greater percentage of faculty did not perceive incivility to be a problem. Faculty and students reported similar perceptions regarding the frequency with which each group experienced uncivil behaviors. However, faculty reported students holding distracting conversations and arriving late for class more often than students reported the same behaviors. When trying to conduct a class and engage students' attention, faculty may be more sensitive to these particular behaviors and thus more likely to find these behaviors disruptive than do students.

The reported frequency of threatening student behaviors creates interest in that students reported a greater frequency of challenges to faculty knowledge than did faculty. Students may be experiencing these behaviors in classes other than those taught by the nursing faculty who were surveyed, or the faculty may be interpreting statements made by students as challenging less often than do students. (Or students may be reporting from student-to-student interactions.) Taunts toward students are reported more frequently by students than by faculty. Students may be experiencing these behaviors outside the faculty's view, or as above, the faculty may interpret these statements differently as do students.

Differences between students and faculty in the reported frequency of uncivil student behaviors may be related to differences in their lived experiences both in and outside of classes. The average age difference between student and faculty is noteworthy, thus students and faculty may interpret specific behaviors differently due to generational differences. For example, this gen-

eration of students has grown up with cell phones and access to the internet, and may have different levels of tolerance and varying standards of behavior regarding the use of such devices in the classroom. Zhang (2002) noted that university students have grown up in a society undergoing challenges to the older value system without a clear new value system to replace it. Further, Zhang observed that university students are adolescents with immature psychological and moral development. These observations are consistent with a study conducted by Lorenz (2007) which found that some Chinese students lack social and critical thinking skills. Changes in Chinese society increase the potential for conflict between traditional standards of behavior and those of its young people as there is less emphasis on social moral education in today's society (Li, n.d., Liu & Zuo, 2007). These differences in the values and lived experiences of faculty and students may account for differing perceptions of the severity of the problem of incivility between students and faculty. The traditional Chinese classroom is conducted with the expectation that students obey and pay attention to what the teacher is saying. By contrast, in the modern Chinese classroom this expectation may no longer be valid and teachers may need to take on a stronger role in teaching and modeling civil behavior (Watkins, 2000).

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study have implications for nursing education, research and practice within the nursing college. Faculty plays a critical role in creating safe, respectful learning environments. During the first week of classes, faculty are encouraged to greet students in a friendly manner, cover substantial content on the first day, and provide a clear review of the syllabus and course objectives. In addition, faculty needs to engage students in co-creating norms for classroom behavior. Norms are more likely to be followed if students participate in their development. Establishing classroom norms clarifies expected behaviors and starts the class on a positive note. Having open and frank discussions of expectations of student behaviors may help to clarify divergent interpretations of civil or uncivil behavior, set clear standards for behavior, and help to create a respectful and productive learning environment (Clark & Springer, 2007b; Clark 2008a, 2008b, 2008c).

Teaching approaches designed to engage students in active learning may foster a more civil learning environment. Examples include problem-based learning strategies, case-based analysis, and having students perform free-writes on the relevant topics. Active learning activities may decrease classroom disruption by promoting cooperation and increasing student engagement in the course content (Clark, 2009).

Students also play an important role in fostering a civil learning environment. Students can actively participate in co-creating classroom norms, reinforcing expected behaviors, and holding students accountable for behaving responsibly. Students can come prepared for class, arrive on time, and stay until class is dismissed. Students can use cell phones outside of class, pay attention, engage in classroom activities, and ask questions if the subject matter is unclear.

Clearly stated policies regarding student behavior should be developed and widely disseminated to ad-



dress incivility. The faculty need to be consistent in their expectations in the classes, and be accountable to support a common approach to student behavior. Zhang (2002) reinforced the importance of the teachers' responsibility to educate students on acceptable behavior and to serve as role models of civility. Zhao (2003) noted that nursing faculty often lack formal education in teaching, and that faculty need training to deal with incivility.

Since this is the first known study to examine student incivility in nursing education in the PRC, further research is needed to define the scope of the problem. Because this study did not investigate gender differences due to the dearth of male respondents, further studies are needed to investigate potential gender differences in perceptions of uncivil student behavior. Research studies involving university students and faculty in disciplines other than nursing would provide a foundation for comparison of student behaviors in the PRC's higher educational system.

Further studies are needed to measure the causes and implications of uncivil behaviors to develop a more complete understanding of the phenomena and to determine a range of remedies to prevent and effectively manage uncivil student behaviors. Yang and Zhaung (2008) observed uncivil behaviors such as use of cell phones and disrespect toward instructors among Chinese nursing students in the clinical setting. While uncivil behavior by Chinese nursing students has been observed in both the classroom and clinical practicum settings (Yang & Zhuang), no known studies exist linking the impact of student incivility on patient care in the practice setting. Further research is warranted in this area.

## CONCLUSION

Student incivility in nursing is a relatively new area of study in the PRC. The presumption is that this nursing college is representative of nursing institutions throughout the PRC, and that uncivil behavior may be found in other nursing colleges in that country. Parallel to investigating the prevalence of incivility, strategies must be devised to address the problem within the context of Chinese culture. Nursing faculty will need education on addressing incivility so that they can teach appropriate behavior and serve as role models for students. Open and frank discussions within the classroom are a beginning, but protocols must be put in place to manage incivility and disruptive behaviors as they occur. Protocols must be carefully thought out to balance the welfare of the classroom with that of students who have a genuine need for additional discussion and personalized attention, which may be perceived as disruptive.

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