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Customer and Employee Incivility and Its Causal Effects in the Hospitality Industry

Edwin N. Torres
University of Central Florida, edwin.torres@ucf.edu

Mathilda van Niekerk
University of Central Florida, mathilda.vanniekerk@ucf.edu

Marissa Orlowski
University of Central Florida, marissa.orlowski@ucf.edu

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Customer and employee incivility and its causal effects in the hospitality industry

Abstract

The present research sought to understand customer and employee incivility in the hospitality industry. Additionally, the study identified the customers' actions that are perceived as uncivil by employees. An empirical survey using was distributed to 297 hotel employees. Research hypotheses were tested using simple and multiple regression. Results indicated that the effects of customer incivility were an increase in: customer aggression, employee negative emotions, employee-to-customer incivility, employee-to-employee incivility, and employee sensitivity to uncivil acts. The effects of employee-to-employee incivility were increased customer aggression and employee negative emotions, but decreased employee sensitivity to uncivil acts. Uncivil behaviors by customers included insulting comments, anger, foul language, customer frustration, verbal attacks, condescending behavior, and offensive body language. The identification of uncivil behaviors and their effects can assist in training staff in identifying and managing such actions and to devise strategies to mitigate them. Finally, the present research examines and expands the literature on customer education and service recovery by creating a distinction between customer service recovery situations and security-related incidents.

Key Words – customer incivility, employee incivility, aggression, service industry, hotel management, customer education

INTRODUCTION

People aspire to be treated with consideration, dignity, and respect. Civil behavior in this context is necessary for harmonious living in society. Treating others in a courteous and polite manner may be viewed as a virtue, but one cannot neglect the multiple instances of service employees being treated in a manner that is less than desirable. In the field of organizational behavior and industrial/organizational psychology, researchers have paid attention to the topic of incivility for over a decade. Andersson and Pearson (1999) were among the first to address the issue of workplace incivility and to explore its possible effects. Accordingly, incivility is "low-intensity deviant behavior with an ambiguous intent to harm the target in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically: rude and discourteous, displaying lack of regard for others" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). Although incivility is classified as a deviant behavior, it is not to be confused with aggressive or violent behavior. The main distinction is that uncivil behavior has an ambiguous intent to harm, whereas other aggressive or violent behavior typically carries a clearer intent to harm the target (Andersson & Pearson 1999).

Incivility is characterized by "rude, impolite and discourteous action…uncivil is not openly intentional or malicious" (Sliter, et al., 2012, p. 122). Some examples of incivility in the workplace include "answering the phone with a 'yeah,' neglecting to say thank you or please, dropping trash on the floor and leaving it for the maintenance crew to clean up" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999 p. 453). Other acts of incivility may involve receiving a nasty note, being excluded from a meeting, and cutting people off while speaking (Pearson, Anderson, & Porath, 2000). Uncivil behaviors may not be considered threatening, since the negative effects may not seem obvious. Nevertheless, Andersson and Pearson (1999) argue that multiple acts of incivility can lead to a spiral, which may in turn lead to more intense forms of deviance, such as violence or aggression. In fact, researchers

suggest that incivility can lead to loss of productivity, reduction of voluntary efforts, retaliation towards the instigator, and turnover (Pearson, et al. 2000).

Despite the interest in workplace incivility, less attention has been given to customer incivility, its effects, and strategies to mitigate it, although a constant increase in customer incivility has been reported (Fullerton & Punj, 1993; 1997; 2004). Services industries are characterized by interaction between customer and employees. While many customer and guest interactions are highly civil in nature, some are not. More specifically, within the hotel context, guests and employees engage in multiple interactions during the length of stay. For example, in a resort hotel, customer and guest interactions can involve the front office, concierge, room service, pool staff, restaurant servers, and bell staff. Given the length of stay and the likelihood that a guest may interact with the same employee in multiple occasions, the hotel industry presents a unique scenario where attention to uncivil act becomes even more critical. However, the question remains as to the specific actions that employees consider uncivil within service interactions. Furthermore, the effects of customer incivility on the overall climate of the business, as well as the reactions of employees towards customers, warrant more attention.

Additionally, employees can provide a unique perspective as to what customer actions might be considered uncivil. This information can enhance management's understanding of the phenomena and provide customers with a general sense of service etiquette, which might aid them in receiving the best service within their hotel experience. Given this gap in the field, the purpose of the study is to better understand customer and employee incivility in the hospitality industry by determining the effects of customer incivility and to identify customers' actions that are perceived as uncivil by hotel employees and strategies to manage them. More specifically, the present research aims to determine the relationships between customer and employee incivility and its

likely effects such as negative emotions, employee-to-customer incivility (employee backlash), and customer aggression. More specifically, the researchers propose the following research objectives:

- To assess the impact of customer incivility in employee to employee incivility

- To ascertain the types of behaviors considered uncivil by hospitality workers

- To analyze the impact of customer incivility in relation to more serious deviant behaviors such as customer aggression and harassment

- To provide guidance to hospitality managers on how to minimize customer incivility and differentiate service recovery situations from security related incidents

LITERATURE REVIEW

Incivility in the workplace

One of the great challenges to a harmonious workplace is that of incivility. In summarizing the literature on incivility, Schilpzand, De Pater, and Erez (2014) posited that uncivil behaviors may stem from supervisors, coworkers, and customers. Incivility can result from instigator ignorance or oversight, target misinterpretation, or hypersensitivity (Andersson & Pearson 1999). A plausible explanation for increasing incivility is the constant push for efficiency, leaving fewer workers to do more. Yet another reason is that many individuals are not formally trained in moral behavior (Pearson, Anderson, & Porath, 2000). Regardless of the reasons, such behavior is very real and present in today's organizations. Consequently, researchers and practitioners can benefit from a better understanding of the phenomenon and develop strategies to effectively manage such uncivil behaviors.

Research by Cortina et al. (2001) sought to investigate the incidence of incivility in the workplace. According to them, "incivility is pervasive in the American workplace, with over two thirds of employees reporting disrespect, condescension, or social exclusion" (p. 75). Their research indicated that women endured more frequent acts of incivility than men. Additionally, it is particular interesting that employees' satisfaction with all aspects of their employment (i.e., jobs, supervisors, coworkers, pay, benefits, and promotional opportunities) decreased as incivility increased (Cortina, et al. 2001). Literature identifies three types of incivility: experienced, witnessed, or instigated (Schilpzand, et al. 2014). Experienced incivility refers to the consequences of uncivil actions. Witnessed incivility refers to those actions that reflect awareness of incivility taking place within the workplace. Studies on the instigators of incivility concentrate on the characteristics and attitudes of the perpetrators of uncivil actions. In this regard, a dominating conflict management style, a high level of power, and trait anger have been found to be related to perpetrator incivility (Schilpzand, et al. 2014). The present study focuses on experienced incivility.

Customer incivility and aggression

Incivility was first studied within the context of employee-to-employee interactions. However, in recent years, scholars have taken an interest in the study of customer incivility. Grandey, Dicketer, and Singh (2004) were among the first to study actions of incivility from customers by conducting interviews and surveys of call center employees. On average, employees reported that verbal aggression occurred ten times a day or in about 15%–20% of all the calls they received. It has been acknowledged that acts of incivility occur more frequently than aggression (Silter et al. 2012). However, multiple sources of incivility can accumulate and become harmful. The literature on customer incivility is largely based on studies of call center employees.

In addition to examining the literature on incivility, the authors examined several works on customer aggression. Yagil (2008) argued that in today's service environment, customers feel entitled to misbehave, and service providers are expected to put up with such behaviors. Additionally, the author's research proposes that customer aggression might result from dissatisfaction, unrealistic expectations, and instrumental goals. Aslan and Kozak (2012) proposed that workers perceive different nationalities of hotel guests as having different propensities to engage in deviant behaviors. Furthermore, Yagil (2008) suggested that there are three types of factors that play a role in customer aggression: enabling factors, legitimizing factors, and customer aggression. In reaction to these behaviors, employees can engage in one of three strategies: problem solving, escape avoidance, or support seeking (Yagil 2008). Given the present understanding of customer aggression and customer and workplace incivility, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 1a: Customer incivility towards employees is positively related to customer aggression.

Hypothesis 1b: Employee incivility towards employees is positively related to customer aggression.

The effects of incivility

Some scholars have studied the effects of customers' emotions and moods on employees' affective states (Dallimore, Sparks, & Butcher, 2007). Using an experimental methodology, the authors explored whether employees mimic the emotional affect of their customers using facial gestures. Results showed that there was a greater incidence of negative affective states after employees were exposed to videos of customers who displayed anger while complaining. This phenomenon is called emotional contagion. It has also been proposed that customer mistreatment

towards employees can lead to employee sabotage (Skarlicki, van Jaarsveld, & Walker, 2008). Furthermore, the authors discovered that such a phenomenon tends to take place in greater frequency among those employees who have lower scores on a moral identity scale.

Silter et al. (2010) explored the links between emotional labor, incivility, and employee outcomes. The authors argued that the low power relationship between employees and customer can foster incivility behaviors. Their study, which used tellers in a retail bank setting, discovered that emotional labor fully mediates the relationship between customer incivility and emotional exhaustion (Silter et al. 2010). In a similar fashion, Silter, et al. (2011; 2010) posited that both coworker and customer interpersonal conflict predicts burnout, with customers having a stronger influence (Ben-Zur & Yagil, 2005; Chan & Wan, 2012). Interpersonal conflict was also recognized as an important antecedent of negative employee outcomes, such as negative emotions (Fox et al., 2001; Frone, 2000) and reduced life satisfaction (Appelberg et al., 1996). Dormann and Zapf (2004) suggested that customer-related social stressors predicted employee burnout.

Karatepe, Yorganci, and Haktanir (2008) used a sample of front line hotel employees to study the phenomenon of verbal aggression. The authors discovered that customer verbal aggression was positively related to emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion. In a similar manner to Grandey et al. (2004), Karatepe et al. (2008) proposed that there are personality factors that affect employees' appraisals of and reactions to aggressive behaviors:

> "Employees spend their limited resources for managing verbally aggressive customers in the service encounter. However, they have fewer resources left for handling emotional dissonance. Under these circumstances, such employees are supposed to express unfelt emotions in the service encounter due to customer verbal aggression and cannot manage problems associated with emotional dissonance" (p. 725).

Customer incivility can have other negative effects for employees and organizations. Kim et al. (2014) discovered that uncivil acts from customers resulted in lower job satisfaction. This relationship was mediated by increases in job stress, as reported by front line service employees; consequently, their model had uncivil acts leading to job stress and job stress leading to lower satisfaction. In spite of the negative effect of customer misbehavior, "managers want the employees to be rational, hide their emotions and reactions, calm down, and pacify the customer" (Aslan & Kozak, 2012, p. 694) . In light of this, a question remains as to how to best balance the need to create a positive work environment for hotel employees as well as to have a positive experience for guests. Stated differently, a key decision to make is when to stop being nice? Given the studies on customer interactions and their effects on employee's affective states and with the aim to expand upon the current body of work, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 2a: Customer incivility towards employees is positively related to employees experiencing negative emotions.

Hypothesis 2b: Employee incivility towards employees is positively related to employees experiencing negative emotions.

A culture of incivility

Wilson and Holmvall (2013) argued that some of the existing customer incivility measures were originally developed to test workplace incivility. Consequently, they developed the "incivility from customers scale". Some of the uncivil behaviors discovered by Wilson and Holmvall (2013) include making gestures, grumbling about slow service, blaming the employee for a problem he or she did not cause, using inappropriate ways to address employees, and complaining about the value of the goods and services. Porath, Macinnis, and Harris (2010) conducted two experiments to ascertain customers' perceptions of incivility among employees.

Their studies revealed that incivility among employees of a service organization causes customers to form a negative impression about the firm, including those who work in the firm as well as the firm itself.

Silter et al. (2012) proposed that customers can be uncivil, but what makes the situation worse is when employees are simultaneously uncivil. In such a scenario, instead of coworkers being a source of support, they can further contribute to an employee's energy drainage. Their study supported previous literature, which suggested that customer incivility predicts employee withdrawal behaviors. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that a strong negative relationship exists between coworker incivility and sales performance when customer incivility is high (Silter et al., 2012). Given the literature on employee incivility and with the intent to add to the knowledge of customer incivility, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Customer incivility towards employees is positively related to employee incivility towards employees.

Employee incivility towards customers

Customers can engage in a variety of deviant behaviors. There are many causes and consequences to customer incivility. When writing about the related topic of customer deviance, Aslan and Kozak (2012) identified various explanations for why customers misbehave. Alcohol consumption was one of the main factors that employees cited for customers misbehaving. Furthermore, a lack of service personnel, not meeting customer expectations, and the problems of daily life contributed to deviance. The main types of deviant behaviors identified by customers included humiliating, insulting, or blaming employees.

Mullen and Kelloway (2013) studied the relationship between customer mistreatment of employees and retaliation. Customer mistreatment was found to be a significant predictor of

employees' retaliatory practices against customers. The relationship was mediated by psychological strain, with those employees experiencing greater psychological strain being most likely to retaliate. Whereas most research studies have explored employee attitudes towards incivility in aggregation, Walker et al. (2013) explored specific customer incivility encounters or events. In their study of events experienced by call center employees, customer incivility was measured by customers that "a) spoke aggressively toward the employee, b) used a tone when speaking with the employee, c) asked aggressive questions, and d) made curt statements towards the employee." (p. 155) In contrast, incivility towards customers was measured by employees that: "a) treated the customer [disrespectfully], b) got blunt with the customer, and c) escalated his or her tone of voice" (Walker et al., 2013, p. 155). The results of their study revealed that specific instances of customer incivility led to uncivil employee reactions towards the instigating customer. Furthermore, employees with high levels of negative affectivity (NA) are more likely to respond in an uncivil way regardless of whether they see the uncivil customer actions as usual or unusual.

Van Jaarsveld, Walker, and Skarlicki (2010) explored the relationship between customer and employee incivility. They discovered that customer incivility generated employee incivility, and employee incivility generated customer incivility. This is consistent with the spiral of incivility framework provided by Andersson and Pearson (1999). The authors suggested that incivility can have negative effects on employee's health and job perceptions. The study, which utilized focus groups and surveys in a call center setting, proposed that companies should do a better job at generating training programs that instruct employees on how to diffuse emotionality, and firms should increase the number and frequency of breaks (Van Jaasrsveld et al. 2010). In light of this, the authors propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: Customer incivility towards employees is positively related to employee incivility towards customers.

Hypothesis 4b: Employee incivility towards employees is positively related to employee incivility towards customers.

Employee sensitivity to uncivil acts

It has been suggested that the advent of modern technology has made it easier for workers to be uncivil towards one another, as they can have more faceless interaction (Pearson, et al. 2000). Furthermore, Wilson and Holmvall (2013) discovered moderate to high correlations of customer incivility to customer justice, customer psychological aggression, and employee job satisfaction. Given individual differences concerning propensity and sensibility to incivility, it would be pertinent to explore whether they have an effect on customer incivility. The authors of the present research suggest that some individuals are more likely to perceive uncivil acts and thus have a heightened sensitivity towards customer incivility.

Following this line of thinking, Grandey et al. (2004) inquired whether employee traits could affect their perceptions and the reporting of incidences of incivility and aggression. The results demonstrated that people with high levels of NA reported more instances of verbal aggression and felt more stressed (Grandey et al., 2004). Other researchers have investigated the characteristics of the targets and instigators of incivility. In particular, Kern and Grandey (2009) examined the impact of race on incivility and discovered that an employee's race did not have a significant difference in terms of the perception of incivility from customers. Nevertheless, employees with higher levels of racial identity did in fact report greater incivility as well as a higher link between incivility and job exhaustion and stress appraisal (Kern & Grandey 2009). The study, which used retail employees, also demonstrated that whites are more likely to appraise

customer incivility as unfair and blameworthy (Kern & Grandey 2009). In light of this, the authors proposed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5a: *Customer incivility towards employees is positively related to employee sensitivity to uncivil acts.*

Hypothesis 5b: *Employee incivility towards employees is positively related to employee sensitivity to uncivil acts.*

Coping strategies for uncivil behaviors

Reynolds and Harris (2006) conducted interviews with multiple front line employees and identified the coping tactics—which took place pre-incident, during the incident, and post incident—that were utilized to minimize employee deviance. Accordingly, the pre-incident tactics included mental preparation for work, consuming drugs, altering one's clothing, and observing patrons. As can be seen by the nature of these tactics, some are healthier than others. Tactics employed during the incident included ignoring difficult customers, bribing customers, using emotional labor, exploiting sexual attractiveness, eliciting support from patrons, altering personal speech patterns, and manipulating the 'servicescape.' Post-incident tactics included social isolation, talks with colleagues, physical release of emotion, and revenge (Reynolds & Harris 2006).

Goussinsky (2012) examined the coping strategies of employees following customer aggression (as opposed to incivility). Workers with high levels of NA were more likely to use behavioral disengagement, whereas individuals low in NA were less likely to vent negative emotions. Given the studies by Grandey et al. (2004) and Goussinsky (2012), employees and workers can use different coping strategies depending on whether an act is uncivil or aggressive. Furthermore, individual dispositions affect which strategies are chosen by employees. Reactions

also vary by employees: those who feel more threatened resort to venting and surface acting, whereas workers that feel less threatened utilize deep acting, positive refocusing, and perspective taking (Grandey et al. 2004).

Taking into account the literature on customer incivility and the proposed hypotheses, the authors put forth a theoretical model (Figure 1) of incivility in the hotel industry. In the results section, the authors will demonstrate how this model stood to empirical testing. As demonstrated in Figure 1, customer incivility towards employees has arrows pointing to customer aggression (H1a), negative emotions (H2a), incivility towards customers (H4a), and sensitivity towards uncivil acts (H5a). All of these lines demonstrate the likely effects of customer incivility towards the employees. In the upper part of the model, another box titled "employee incivility towards employees" demonstrates the potential of this construct to result in negative effects such as customer aggression (H1b), negative emotions (H2b), incivility towards customers (H4b) and sensitivity towards uncivil acts (H5b). Finally, a line is drawn from customer incivility towards employees to employee incivility towards employees, which demonstrates the relationship proposed in Hypothesis 3.

<center>**>>>Insert Figure 1 here<<<**</center>

<center>**RESEARCH METHODS**</center>

Design

To study the proposed hypotheses, the researchers utilized a quantitative research methodology. Drawing on past studies, a six-part questionnaire was designed to collect employee perceptions of customer incivility, employee sensitivity towards incivility, customer aggression, employee incivility, employee emotions in the face of uncivil behaviors, and demographic characteristics. The questionnaire consisted of both closed- and open-ended questions to ensure

that all possible information was captured. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, it was pilot-tested with academic colleagues and doctoral students to obtain feedback and to establish face validity (Trochim, 2009). Feedback was received and evaluated, and minor adjustments were made to the format of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was distributed to hotel employees, both in print and electronically. One hundred (100) paper questionnaires were distributed to employees in a large hotel (over 1,000 rooms) in the state of Florida in the United States. An additional 290 electronic questionnaires were managed through Qualtrics and hosted on Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk). The researchers hosted the survey on Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk) and invited mTurk users (known as "workers") to participate in the study. mTurk started in 2005 and is an online crowdsourcing website that coordinates the supply and demand of tasks that people are required to complete (Paolacci et al., 2010). According Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling (2011), mTurk participants are slightly more demographically diverse than a standard Internet-based sample and can be influenced by compensation rate and task length. However, realistic compensation rates do not affect data quality and data obtained via mTurk is as reliable as data obtained through traditional methods. Following the guidelines suggested by Goodman, Cryder, and Cheema (2013), pre-qualifying conditional questions were included to ensure participants fit the needs of the study. Participants who did not have a minimum of one year of work experience in the hotel industry were not allowed to complete the survey. Participants who met the criteria were allowed access to the survey and received $0.50 in compensation upon completion of the survey.

Measures

All items were measured using a 5-point response scale in which, unless otherwise noted, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement. In part one of the

questionnaire, customer incivility was measured using the 10-item Customer Incivility Scale (CIS) created by Burnfield et al. (2004). The scale contains items regarding customers' displaced frustration and condescension. In part two, employee sensitivity to customer incivility was measured by providing a list of 12 potentially uncivil behaviors. Respondents were asked to what extent they considered the behaviors to be truly uncivil. In part three, customer aggression and harassment was measured with six items based on Yagil's (2008) comprehensive summary of aggression and harassment and Karatepe et al.'s (2008) study of verbal aggression. For part four, which addressed employee incivility to customers and to other employees, the wording of the CIS (Burnfield et al., 2004) was reversed to reflect employees as the uncivil actor and customers or other employees as the target of uncivil acts. Five items measured employee-to-customer incivility and three items measured employee-to-employee incivility. Employee emotions and feelings were measured with seven items. Finally, respondents were asked to rate their level of tolerance for uncivil customers (1 item) and uncivil employees (1 item). For these two tolerance items, 1 indicated very intolerant and 5 indicated very tolerant. An open-ended question also allowed respondents to describe an experience with an uncivil customer. Cronbach's alphas for all multi-item measures are provided in Table 1.

>>>Insert Table 1 here<<<

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 59 print surveys and 242 electronic surveys were returned, representing a 77% response rate. Four surveys were eliminated to due to extensive missing data relative to the dependent variables of the study, leaving a final sample of 297 hotel employees. In terms of demographics, all respondents had work experience within the hotel industry, with the average respondent having a total of 7.5 years of experience. Men totaled 51.5% of respondents, whereas

females were 48.5% of survey takers. A majority of the respondents were in the age groups 20–29 (42.2%), 30–39 (25.6%), and 40–49 (17.6%). In terms of race, respondents were 67.2% Caucasian, 10.4% African American, 7.0% Asian, and 12.0% Hispanic. Concerning education, 35.2% obtained a high school diploma, 19.5% had an associate degree, 38.3% graduated with a bachelor's degree, and 3.4% attained a master's degree.

Analyses

The first objective of this study was to examine the effects of customer and employee incivility. To accomplish this, a series of multiple regression analyses was used to examine the impact of customer incivility and employee incivility towards employees on four dependent variables: customer aggression, employee negative emotions, employee incivility towards customers, and employee sensitivity towards uncivil acts. Simple linear regression was used to examine the impact of customer incivility on employee incivility towards employees. In addition to screening the data to ensure that the multivariate assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, linearity, and independence were met, the data was also inspected to ensure that multicollinearity was not present (Hair et al., 2010). According to Hair et al. (2010), correlations above 0.90 among independent variables indicate substantial collinearity, as do tolerance values below .10 and VIF values above 10. Correlations among the independent variables in this study ranged from .089 to .764. The tolerance value was .785 and the VIF value was 1.275. These values suggest the absence of multicollinearity. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics and correlations among the study constructs.

<center>**>>>Insert Table 2 here<<<**</center>

Construct validity was established by examining the extent to which convergent and discriminant validity existed within and among the constructs of the study. To this end, the inter-

item correlations of the 43 individual items used to measure the six constructs of interest were examined. The pattern of correlations revealed significant, high correlations among the items within each construct, which is an indicator of convergent validity. The pattern of correlations also revealed consistent nonsignificant, low correlations between items that represented two different constructs, which is an indication of discriminant validity. Further, the convergent correlations were higher than the discriminant correlations, which also provides evidence for construct validity (Trochim, 2009).

The second objective of this study was to assess employee tolerance for uncivil acts. To accomplish this, descriptive analysis was conducted on the 12 items used to measure employee sensitivity to uncivil acts as well as on the two items that addressed employee tolerance to uncivil customers and employees. The open-ended responses were analyzed for common themes.

RESULTS

Four separate multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the extent to which customer incivility towards employees and employee incivility towards employees (E2E) influenced customer aggression, employee negative emotions, employee incivility towards customers, and employee sensitivity towards uncivil acts. Simple linear regression was conducted to assess the extent to which customer incivility towards employees influenced employee incivility towards employees (E2E). Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, heteroscedasticity, linearity, independence, or multicollinearity. A review of the residual statistics indicated that the Mahalanobis Distance and Cook's Distance values were within acceptable ranges. The results of the regression analyses are presented in Tables 3-7.

With regard to customer aggression as the outcome of the first analysis, the total variance explained by the model was 45.7%, F (2, 294) = 123.695, p < .001. Both customer incivility (beta = .399, p < .001) and E2E incivility (beta = .391, p < .001) had statistically significant positive effects on customer aggression, offering support for the assertion in Hypotheses 1a and 1b.

>>>**Insert Table 3 here**<<<

Employee negative emotions was the dependent variable in the second analysis. The total variance in negative emotions explained by the model was 11.9%, F (2. 293) = 19.827, p < .001. Customer incivility (beta = .280, p < .001) had a statistically significant positive effect on employee negative emotions, thus supporting Hypothesis 2a. However, Hypothesis 2b was not supported, as E2E incivility was not significant (beta = .110, p = .076).

>>>**Insert Table 4 here**<<<

Simple linear regression was used for the third analysis. Results indicated that 21.5% of the variance in E2E incivility could be attributed to customer incivility [F (1, 296) = 81.028, p < .001] and that customer incivility had a statistically significant positive effect on E2E incivility (beta = .464, p < .001). Therefore, Hypotheses 3 was supported.

>>>**Insert Table 5 here**<<<

The fourth analysis focused on employee incivility towards customers (E2C) incivility as the outcome of interest. The total variance explained by the model was 62.3%, F (2, 294) = 243.285, p < .001. Both customer incivility (beta = .226, p < .001) and E2E incivility (beta = .659, p < .001) were statistically significant and had positive effects on E2C incivility, which provides support for Hypotheses 4a and 4b.

>>>**Insert Table 6 here**<<<

Employee sensitivity to uncivil acts was the dependent variable in the final multiple regression analysis. Customer incivility and E2E incivility explained 25.2% of the variance in sensitivity [$F_{(2, 295)} = 49.471$, $p < .001$]. Hypothesis 5a was supported, as customer incivility (beta = .558, $p < .001$) had a statistically significant positive effect on employee sensitivity to uncivil acts. Hypothesis 5b was partially supported, as E2E incivility (beta = -.170, $p = .003$) did have a statistically significant effect on sensitivity. The direction of the relationship was negative, however, which was opposite of what was hypothesized. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the results as they relate to the theoretical model of this study.

>>>Insert Table 7 here<<<

>>>Insert Figure 2 here<<<

To understand the actions and behaviors that employees consider to be the most uncivil, descriptive analysis of the 12 items used to measure employee sensitivity was conducted. Table 8 provides a ranking based on mean scores. Notably, employees consider it highly uncivil when customers take out anger on employees (M = 4.23), when customers make insulting comments to employees (M = 4.21), and when customers take out their frustrations on employees (M = 4.12). Analysis of the open-ended question revealed that some of the most commonly mentioned uncivil acts were failure to leave gratuity, leaving insufficient gratuity, throwing items at staff, and ignoring or interrupting employees when they speak. Results of the descriptive analysis of the tolerance items indicated that the average tolerance for uncivil customers was 3.49 (SD = 1.147) whereas the average tolerance for uncivil employees was 2.76 (SD = 1.231). This suggests that hotel employees are more tolerant of uncivil customers than they are of uncivil employees.

>>>Insert Table 8 here<<<

Concerning employee's coping strategies following an uncivil customer encounter, several additional responses were obtained. Some reported items that could be considered employee withdrawal behaviors, including "walking out" and "stop showing up [to work]." Others relied on cigarettes or alcohol. Breathing, meditating, praying, and listening to music were all cited as additional remedies. Respondents were encouraged to describe their most difficult customer in terms of gender, age, purpose of trip, and marital status. Employees seemed to describe some of the most difficult customers as middle age (40s and 50s) and predominantly middle class. Several respondents described their most difficult customers as "heavier" or "fat." Males and females seemed to be cited almost as much. The second research objective proposed in the introduction was to explore the specific consumer behaviors hotel employees consider uncivil and the strategies they employ to cope with uncivil experiences. Given the data gathered on customer behaviors that employees considered uncivil, the second research objective was accomplished.

DISCUSSION

Customer incivility is a phenomenon that takes place in various service environments. Due to the high levels of interaction in the hotel industry, it should come as no surprise that employees experience incivility from customers and employees. The present study confirmed that there is a positive relationship between customer incivility towards employees and customer aggression. This is consistent with the studies of Grandey et al. (2004) and Goussinsky (2011). Customer incivility towards employees and those employees experiencing negative emotions were also supported by the current research study, confirming the findings from the studies by Dallimore et al. (2007) and Skarlicki et al. (2008). Customer incivility led employees to feel more stressed, disappointed, and emotionally exhausted, among other negative emotions.

The relationship between customer incivility and employee-to-employee incivility, was supported by the present research. The relationship between customer incivility and employee's experiencing negative emotions was also supported. This is consistent with the spiral of incivility described by Andersson and Pearson (1999), the link between emotional labor, incivility, and employee outcomes of Silter et al. (2010), and the Mullen and Kelloway (2013) study on the relationship between customer mistreatment and employees and retaliation. Due to the links found between customer incivility, employee-to-customer incivility, and employee-to-employee incivility, the authors suggest that a culture of incivility might be prevalent in some organizations. Consequently, acts of incivility from different parts not only increase the probability for further incivility but are likely tolerated and considered part of organizational life.

The relationship between customer incivility towards employees and a person's sensitivity toward uncivil acts was supported. This finding supports the Wilson and Holmvall (2013) study on the correlations between customer incivility and psychological aggression. The present research revealed that hotel workers are more tolerant of customer incivility towards employees than employee incivility towards employees. Furthermore, some employees coped with uncivil acts by engaging in unhealthy activities, such as smoking. Incivility and its possible negative effects have been the focus of study among scholars. Bitner, et al. (1997) posited that customers can play vital roles in affecting their service experience, and such roles can either enhance or detract from their satisfaction. The authors conducted research in a weight-loss program and a medical office. The authors concluded that "apparent in both studies are the benefits of customer education, effective and realistic expectation setting, and other efforts by providers to facilitate customers in their roles" (p. 203).

Eisingerich and Bell (2008) highlighted the importance of customer education. According to their research, educating customers can increase their perceptions of trust. Furthermore, the authors suggested that education reduces information asymmetries between customers and employees and can serve to differentiate one business from the next. In spite of the positive effects of customer education, a more knowledgeable customer can have more information to compare competitors, and thus a business may open the door for greater competition (Bell & Eisingerich, 2007). While the aforementioned research can be helpful in understanding the impact of customer education efforts, the study focused on financial services, thus it would be relevant to see their applicability to the hospitality industry.

Past research has also proposed that firms may benefit from looking at their employees as customers and their customers as employees (Bowers & Martin 2007). Accordingly, there are various effects that are applicable for both relationships, such as the concept of quality, value, satisfaction, loyalty, feedback, compatibility, and involvement. Bowers and Martin (2007) highlighted the importance of customer orientation: "Neglect of misinformation on the customer's part may lead to dissatisfaction with the service and a perception of poor value" (p. 93). When customers are not ready to properly interact and engage with a firm, their behaviors may not grant them or facilitate the service they so desire. In light of this, Bowers and Martin (2007) proposed that organizations should define the customer's job within the service process, train the customer on how to perform such job, and retain valuable customers by rewarding them for a job well done.

Theoretical Implications

Throughout the course of this article, the researchers proposed a theoretical model for customer incivility in the hotel industry. Based on the findings, the authors were able successfully

test and find support for the hypotheses contained in the theoretical model and expand upon the present scholarly work on incivility. Furthermore, the authors propose that a culture of incivility can be engendered in organizations. When incivility is perceived by either customers or employees, it will likely lead to a spread of incivility at various levels and with various stakeholders (i.e., employees, customers, and managers) within the business. These perceptions are likely to have a negative effect on the quality of life of employees and are likely to result in retaliation towards customers.

Academicians can potentially gain additional knowledge about customer incivility and its effects with a specific emphasis on the hotel industry from this study. This research expands upon the current body of work by arguing that better service can be obtained by providing proper customer orientation in order to avoid potentially uncivil behaviors that endanger the positive relationships between guests and service providers. It also adds to the current theory by identifying behaviors seen as uncivil by hotel employees, for instance, insulting comments, anger of customers, foul language, customer frustration taken out on employees, personal verbal attacks, and offensive body language. Finally, the present research also identifies the negative effects of uncivil customer behaviors and of uncivil employee behaviors.

Practical Implications

A practical implication of this research is that it highlights the need for training both employees and customers. Hotels can educate employees on the major sources of incivility and how to deal with such instances. Furthermore, employees could be trained as to the difference between minor acts of incivility and more serious acts of aggression, which require different responses. Therefore, the present research can help employees and managers understand when to address a guest problem as a customer service situation and when to engage security, emergency,

and law enforcement personnel. Based on the results of the present research, the existing literature, and author's insight, several strategies are provided in fulfillment of the final research objective. Some aspects that employees and managers should consider concerning whether to address a situation a customer service problem or security situation are as follows:

1) What is the nature of the action or statement made? An action may be classified anywhere from mildly uncivil to overtly aggressive.

2) How was the statement delivered? An individual might raise his or her voice, display aggressive body language, or simply display a lack of interest or regard.

3) What is the perceived intention of the situation? Does it appear that the customer has a clear intent to harm someone physically or verbally?

4) Are the attacks ambiguous or personal in nature? Complaining about an aspect of service is acceptable, but launching personal attacks against workers might present signs of behaviors that are of greater concern.

5) Does the incidence involve the consumption of alcohol or controlled substances? The use of these can quickly escalate and affect the seriousness of an incident.

6) Is the cost (in terms of money and time) becoming unbearable? Not all customers are good customers. Some customers by virtue of their acts of deviance create increased costs for business.

7) Does the action jeopardize the physical and mental well-being of the staff? A balance needs to be struck between serving the customer and ensuring a healthy work environment.

8) Does a customer cause problems for other customers? If other customers are negatively affected by a given's guest's behaviors, then it might be worthwhile to treat the incident as more of a security situation.

Customers can also be educated through awareness campaigns or fun activities regarding how to properly interact with the service staff. Previous research has highlighted the importance of customer education (Bowers & Martin 2007; Eisingerich & Bell 2008). Hotels can provide a simple orientation through their promotional materials, confirmation e-mails, videos, and other media. Such orientations can expose customers to a realistic preview of what the check-in process should be like, what information is important, what service providers can offer, and what actions might violate general etiquette towards employees and other customers. While such efforts will not completely eliminate uncivil behaviors, they will likely reduce them and improve the relationship between service providers and recipients.

Limitations and future research

The study only considered the hotel industry in the United States of America, but could be expanded to other services industries around the world. Factors affecting incivility, such as cultural difference and personality traits (Milam et al. 2009), were not tested and represent a limitation of the study. Future research could compare the behaviors that employees consider uncivil against those that customers consider to be uncivil. Wilson and Holmvall (2012) posited that the present incivility scales were originally designed to measure workplace incivility. They created yet another scale to measure uncivil behaviors. However, it is noteworthy to state that different service environments might present different opportunities for uncivil behavior. For example, acts of incivility experienced by a retail sales associate might be different than those experienced by a cocktail server. Therefore, future research could develop a scale specifically designed for incivility

experienced by hotel workers. Future research could also examine whether there are any significant differences in the actions that are considered uncivil from a customer's perspective as opposed to an employee's perspective. Although much is known about the effects of incivility, more research can illuminate the underlying reasons for customer incivility. The present research examines the phenomenon of incivility from an individual behavior perspective. Future studies could examine organizational, cultural, and environmental factors that can trigger or reduce acts of incivility.

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