

## Incivility Between Students and Faculty in an Israeli College: A Description of the Phenomenon

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Incivility in the classroom is offensive, intimidating, or hostile behavior that interferes with students' ability to learn and instructors' ability to teach. The present study examined incivility in faculty-student relations and presents the findings of a survey conducted in an academic college in Israel. The study was designed to examine three specific objectives: (1) to expose and analyze the nature of behaviors that students and faculty view as incivility; (2) to identify contributory factors to uncivil interactions in the classroom as reported by students and faculty; and (3) to identify practical strategies suggested by students and faculty in order to avoid or diffuse such undesirable behaviors. We collected the data using the Incivility in Nursing Education (INE) questionnaire (Clark, 2008a, b). 46 faculty members and 268 students from various departments completed the questionnaire. We present the survey's qualitative findings in accordance with the three main objectives examined. The findings indicate considerable similarity between faculty and students in identifying uncivil behaviors and both agree that the main cause (although not the only one) lies in the penetration of norms from the external culture. Means of preventing and minimizing incivility in academia are discussed.

*"These interactions between students and faculty are daily obnoxious incidents for both sides. Combine this with the stress and pressure to succeed – and you can see where it [incivility] stems from"* (Student).

As faculty members for many years, we often found ourselves engaged in conversations with colleagues about the uncivil behaviors of students nowadays. As chairs of two departments for the past three years, we quite often had to attend to students' complaints regarding teachers' uncivil treatment of them. We believe that everyone in our position has found him- or herself in similar situations.

The present study examines faculty-student relations in an academic institution in Israel in the context of sweeping societal changes and a multicultural society.

The ramifications of a neo-liberal economy and ideology penetrate all organizations, including academic institutions (Clearly, Walter, Andrews & Jackson, 2013; Hollis, 2013). Like their counterparts in the business sphere, these organizations espouse a competitive orientation and contentious marketing strategies in their relations with other academic institutions in order to entice as many students to them as they can. At the same time, within academic institutions students are treated as clients purchasing educational services (Sedivy-Benton, Strohschen, Cavazos & Boden-McGill, 2015). Concurrently with attempts to respond to the call of providing high quality service, the faculty also attempt to maintain professional standards. Presumably, the organizational culture of a free market and consumerism evolving in academic institutions may mark faculty-student relations, with each party more motivated to pursue its

own interests than in the past (Clearly et al., 2013; Goldberg, 2005; Hollis, 2013).

### Incivility in Student-Faculty Relations

Incivility is a general term for social behavior lacking courtesy, consideration or good manners on a scale ranging from rudeness or lack of respect for elders to vandalism and hooliganism through public drunkenness and threatening behavior. The word "incivility" is derived from the Latin *incivilis*, meaning "not of a citizen." The distinction between plain rudeness and perceived incivility as a threat will depend on a notion of "civility" as inherent to society; incivility as anything more ominous than bad manners is therefore dependent on appeal to notions such as its contradiction to the complex concepts of civic virtue or civil society. Incivility has become a contemporary political issue in a number of countries (Merriam-Webster, 2004).

The last ten years have seen a growing body of research addressing student-teacher relations (Braxton & Bayer, 2004; Clark & Springer, 2007; Clearly et al., 2013; Hollis, 2013). We believe that exploration of faculty and students' experiences of incivility may encourage self-reflection on both sides and foster positive changes in a higher education setting. It can also promote better opportunities for both sides to recognize unacceptable behaviors and improve communication patterns.

Broadly defined, classroom incivility constitutes any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom. Uncivil student behavior not only disrupts and negatively affects the overall learning environment for students, but also contributes to instructors' stress and

discontent. Instructors' incivility might impair students' ability to learn; it may hurt the latter's feelings and create an atmosphere of discomfort and avoidance, and for some students it might cause emotional distress and fear. Generally speaking, incivility in the classroom is offensive, intimidating, or constitutes hostile behavior that interferes with students' ability to learn and with instructors' ability to teach (Tiberius & Flank, 1999).

Accounts of students' incivility toward faculty frequently emerge in staff meetings and professional journals, and an increasing body of literature focuses on this problem (e.g., Clark & Springer, 2007; Clearly et al., 2013; Schneider, 1998; Sedivy-Benton et al., 2015). However, addressing students' uncivil behavior is generally more common than addressing that of faculty. Nevertheless, it is no less important to devote attention to incivility perpetrated by faculty members because of its impact on the academic environment. Instances of such incivility might be showing up late for class, being unprepared, exhibiting boredom, turning a blind eye to students' rude and uncivil behavior, and so forth (Amada, 1994; Clark & Springer, 2007; Hanson, 2001).

### Students' Incivility

Students' academic incivility has been described as any speech or action that disrupts the harmony of the teaching-learning setting (Feldman, 2001). Examples range from trivial behaviors, such as rude comments or noises, to threats or actual physical harm. What little has been written to date about students' perceptions of classroom incivility has been mostly anecdotal (Boice, 1996), discipline specific (Clark & Spring, 2007), or written by specific institutions for their internal distribution and use (Young, 2003). However, in his five-year study of classroom incivility, Boice (1996) found that it occurred in more than two-thirds of the classes he included in his study. Bjorklund and Rehling (2010) conducted what is perhaps the largest study of its kind (3,616 students at a Midwestern public university) on students' incivility. The study's results suggest that students experience a fair amount of moderately uncivil behavior in their classes on a regular basis. Similar findings are also described by Boysen (2012), and in Australia by Clearly and colleagues (2013).

The influence of students' incivility is severe. Luparell (2004; 2007) described these incivility behaviors toward faculty as resulting in persistent psychological damage, loss of sleep, and feelings of impaired self-worth. Other faculty members described them as the cause of self-doubt regarding their teaching abilities and as the cause of early retirement decisions. Reporting on his research findings, Appleby (1990) suggested that irritating and immature student behaviors "...pose a threat to the teaching/learning process because they are time-consuming and often prevent a teacher

from dealing with important materials and issues" (p. 42). What should not be overlooked are more intense encounters (e.g., verbal abuse, physical threats, intimidating remarks) which leave faculty members stunned and shaken (Hollis, 2013; Schneider, 1998).

### Faculty Incivility

Faculty incivility is also a grave matter. For example, Thomas (2003) found that students are often distressed by the manner in which they are treated by some faculty members. She identified five major themes described by students as harmful: (1) perceived faculty unfairness or discrimination; (2) unreasonable expectations; (3) unexpected changes in classroom schedules; (4) being embarrassed and humiliated by faculty; and (5) being made to feel inept and ineffective. In a study conducted by Clark (2008b), students reported physical and psychological consequences as a result of perceived faculty incivility.

We contend that faculty and students' incivility is an important issue that affects both parties and therefore warrants attention. This paper presents the findings of a survey conducted in an academic college in Israel. The study was designed to examine three specific objectives: (1) to elucidate and analyze the nature of the behaviors which students and faculty view as incivility, (2) to identify contributory factors to uncivil interactions in the classroom as claimed by students and faculty; and (3) to discern practical strategies suggested by students and faculty in order to avoid or diffuse such undesirable behaviors.

## Method

### Participants

The survey was conducted among faculty members and students in all of the college departments. A total of 45 faculty members and 268 students from different departments completed the questionnaire. The students' (N=268) average age is 27; 85% are female and 15% male; 89% are Jewish, 7% are Palestinian, and 4% are Druze and Christian. Also, 85% were born in Israel, and 14% are immigrants. All of them are undergraduate students. The average age of the faculty members (N=46) is 48; 70% are female, and 30% are male; 96% are Jewish, and 4% are Palestinian; 73% were born in Israel, and 27% are immigrants. The average teaching experience is 7.09 years. The classes they teach are diverse: both introductory courses, workshops and elective courses.

### The Research Tool

We employed the INE (Incivility in Nursing Education) questionnaire, which was developed and

revised by Clark and Springer (2007) who granted us permission to use it. Translation of the INE employed the “back translation” technique whereby the original translation is translated back into the source language by a blind, independent translator. The two versions are then compared and revised if necessary (Sperber, Devellis, & Boehlecke, 1994). The demographic details were adapted to the context of an Israeli college. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Institutional Research Ethics Review Board.

The questionnaire contains quantitative and qualitative items assessing incivility from the perspective of both students and faculty. The quantitative part of the questionnaire includes faculty and students’ demographic data, their perceptions of incivility, and perceived frequency of uncivil behaviors. The qualitative part includes four open-ended questions designed to examine three issues: (1) perceptions of disrespectful displays, and what the respondents perceived as disrespect; (2) the causes of disrespectful and uncivil interaction between faculty and students; and (3) potential patterns of effective coping with incivility and how it can be mitigated.

### Procedure

The researchers invited (via email) faculty from all the college departments to participate in the study and return the completed questionnaire anonymously to their mailbox. To further ensure anonymity, the questionnaire did not include departmental affiliation information. The researchers also asked faculty to distribute questionnaires to their students. Data collection took place in the spring semester of 2009. Participation in the survey was voluntary. The completed questionnaires from each class were placed in a large envelope and placed in the researchers’ mailbox. A total of 46 faculty members and 268 students completed the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

The data this paper relies on are mainly the qualitative data that were constructed into themes and categories through simple content analysis. Representative quotes are presented to illustrate the theme.

The quantitative data are condensed and presented in Tables 1 and 2 to describe the scope of the participants’ perceived frequency and severity of uncivil behaviors.

### Findings

The survey’s quantitative findings are presented in Tables 1 and 2, followed by the qualitative findings that are presented in accordance with the three main research objectives.

Combining the two measures—strength of disturbance of the uncivil behavior and its frequency—facilitates ranking uncivil behaviors from the most problematic (1) to the least. In order to obtain this combined measure, the result of “degree of the disturbance” was multiplied by “frequency of the disturbance” (tables which do not appear in the article). For convenience, the result was divided by 1000.

Table 1 shows that the most problematic uncivil behavior of students perceived by faculty is students holding conversations during a lesson. Additional noteworthy problematic uncivil behaviors are coming late to class, not being prepared for class, and the using cellphones during class.

Table 2 shows that the most problematic uncivil behavior of faculty perceived by the students is ignoring students’ problematic behavior during a lesson. Additional noteworthy problematic uncivil behaviors are teaching using inefficient methods, and the degree of lecturers’ unavailability to students’ inquiries.

### Manifestations of Disrespectful Behavior

The first issue the present study sought to examine addressed the ways whereby disrespectful behaviors were manifested in the faculty and students. In addition, this category of questions examined what each group perceives as disrespectful behavior, and how both groups perceive it.

Figure 1 presents separately what faculty and students perceive as disrespectful behaviors. As can be seen in figure 1 – there are many similarities in the ways students and faculty perceive manifestations of incivility by students. Students noted precisely the same behaviors stated by faculty members, and they even added the issue of complaints about assignments and lack of concern for cleanliness.

Despite the similarities, the issue of students displaying boredom (which was mentioned by faculty) was not perceived by the students as displaying disrespect toward the faculty, but in contrast, lecturers’ boredom, their lack of preparation for class, the way content is conveyed, and late arrivals and early departures were perceived as displaying disrespect by faculty towards students.

**Faculty being condescending.** Many students noted racist, provocative remarks, and expressing personal opinions as offensive and disrespectful:

- “When an opinion is expressed that affects the students, it would be better to refrain from doing so because it creates tension” (207);
- “Verbal attacks and strong views that not everybody agrees with, and it creates violence” (130);

Table 1  
*Faculty Perceptions of the Problematic Nature of Each Uncivil Behavior Measured*

Students' uncivil behavior	Combined measure	Problematic nature of the behavior
14 hold conversations	101	1
18 come late	86	2
21 are not prepared for the lesson	80	3
17 use their cell phone	74	4
13 are not focused on the lesson	73	5
19 leave early	67	6
9 seem bored	64	7
23 cheat on tests	62	8
10 groan	56	9
24 demand benefits and changes	55	10
20 do not attend lessons	54	11
12 sleep	48	12
11 making sarcastic remarks	43	11
22 create tension, take over	42	13
16 use a computer in the lesson	40	14
15 refuse to answer	30	15

Table 2  
*Students' Perceptions of the Problematic Nature of Each Uncivil Behaviour Measured*

Faculty uncivil behavior	Combined measure	Problematic nature of the behavior
72 ignore the behavior	73	1
60 use inefficient methods	72	2
73 are not available	65	3
62 employ tough behavior	62	4
66 refuse to answer questions	62	5
59 refuse to allow examinations	60	6
65 are distant, inaccessible	59	7
54 come late	55	8
56 cancel activities	55	9
59 do not allow discussion	52	10
67 give subjective grades	52	11
69 display superiority	49	12
61 deviate from the syllabus	48	13
68 make humiliating remarks	48	14
63 give collective punishment	43	15
55 leave early	42	16
70 threaten with a fail grade	42	17
57 are not prepared for the activity	39	18
64 declare lack of interest	38	19
71 make rude gestures	36	20

- “Students and lecturers according provocative remarks about different [ethnic] communities and religions” (82).

Another issue that gained considerable attention as displaying disrespect pertains to the faculty's arrogant and condescending behaviors toward students:

- “In remarks to one another, lack of support and encouragement, unequal attitude toward people” (230);
- “Treating questions with derision, laughing at others' questions, talking about subjects that aren't connected to the lecture (faculty and students)” (110).

**Lecturers not prepared for class.** Students perceive this not just as bad practice but as an act of disrespect:

- “It is not only unprofessional but it is offensive when lecturers come to ‘give’ a course rather than teach” (284);
- “It’s offensive when lecturers come unprepared for class, and that’s what the lesson looks like, both on the part of the students and the lecturers, like when a lecturer is coming late, doesn’t take the class seriously, and so forth” (285).

**Ignoring students’ needs; insensitivity.** The faculty’s disregard for the students and their problems is also perceived as disrespectful behavior. There is an expectation on the part of the students that faculty members should be more attentive to their problems, more flexible with the college’s rules and regulations, take all their calls, and display a certain measure of friendliness:

- “Disregard, rigidly applying the rules of the college and not seeing the individual” (183);

- “Disregarding calls and requests, a cold and disdainful facial expression” (94);
- “A contributor to disrespect is that the lecturer is not always the students’ friend” (69).

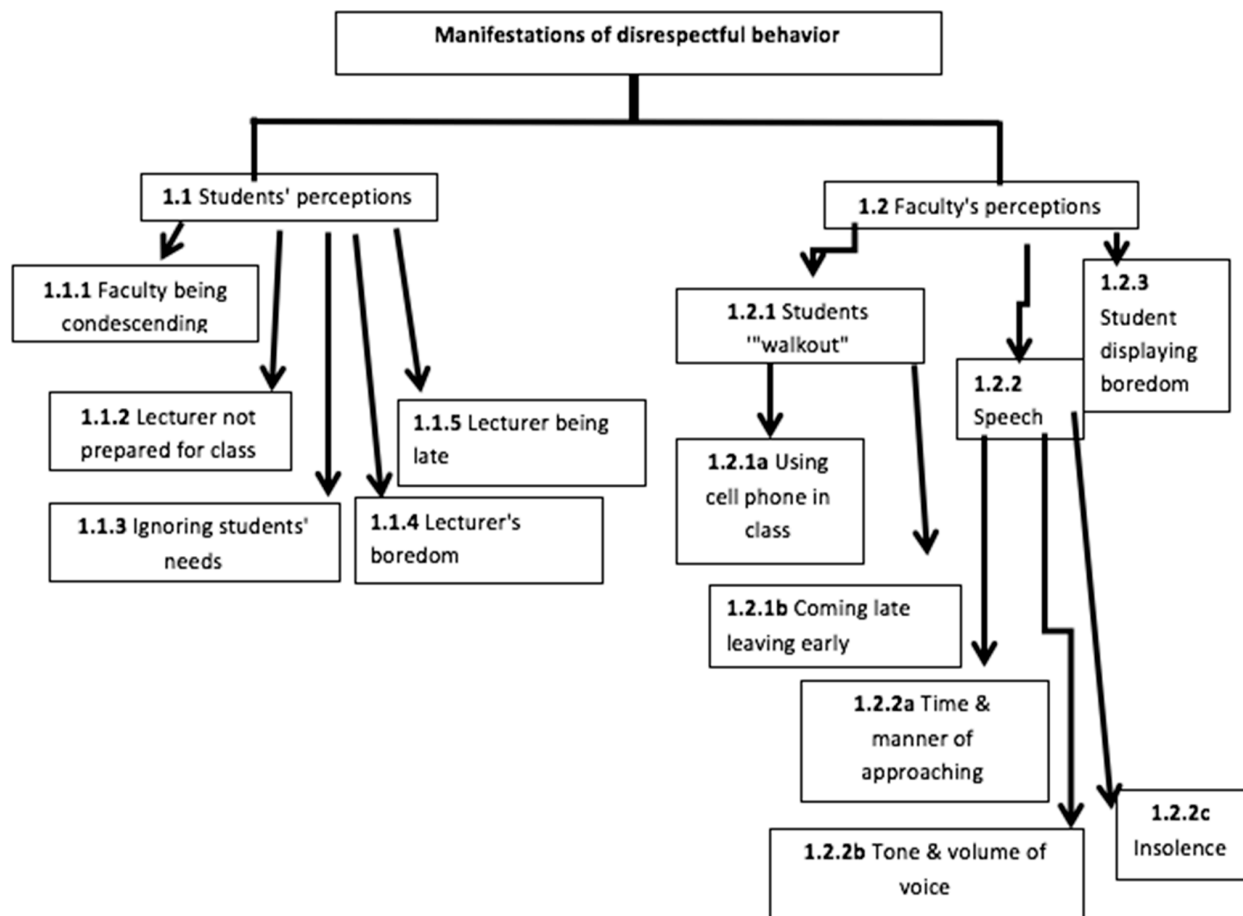
**Lecturer boredom.** This is also regarded as offensive:

- "I say – wake up! Don't fall asleep on us in the middle of class" (43)
- “There is no chance of us being enthusiastic if the lecturer is so damn bored with himself...” (12)

**Lecturer being late.** Some students mentioned this as a sign of disrespect:

- "When a lecturer is almost always late it gives the feeling that he disrespects us and our time" (67)
- “He says he is sorry he's late but you can feel he couldn't care less" (37).

Figure 1  
Manifestations of Disrespectful Behavior



### Faculty's perceptions on manifestations of incivility.

**Students' walkabout.** One focus of disrespect was defined as "walkabout" and general conduct during classes, and it includes coming in late or leaving early, going out to speak on the cellphone etc. As described by faculty:

- "The classroom is like a train station, [people] going out and coming in whenever they feel like it, eating and drinking during class, arriving when they feel like it, and all under the backing of the college's regulations" (32)

And as described by students:

- "Students don't come to classes on time, they're insolent, talk with friends while the lecturer is speaking, which is also offensive to the whole class and the lecturer himself (62);
- "Students who pack up their belongings before the lecturer has concluded his lecture" (285).

Faculty also commented on use of cellphones:

- "Students using cell phones, texting during lectures" (1);
- "Preoccupied with other matters during class, using cell phones" (43).

**Disrespectful speech.** Students' disrespect toward faculty is mainly manifested in manner of speech, a way of speaking that is perceived as inappropriate and disrespectful, and includes insolence, provocation, tone and volume of voice, and time and manner of approaching faculty members. Faculty note the following:

- "The way lecturers are addressed, when and how they are addressed is disrespectful" (15);
- "Manner of speech, tone of voice and volume. The content – insolence, provocation, and so forth" (19).

And students add:

- "Vulgar speech, disrespectful behavior, using cell phones, ignoring lecturers (73);
- "Being insolent, giggling, and talking in the middle of class, laughing at the lecturer, swearing, talking on the phone, interrupting the lecturer" (191).

**Students displaying boredom.** A third kind of uncivil behavior is described as "students displaying boredom," as described by faculty:

- "Disruptions during class, insufficiently serious attitude toward the studied material, no willingness to make an effort" (38);
- "Displays of boredom, sleeping during class, conversations during class" (28).

### Causes of Disrespect

The data reveal considerable similarity between faculty and students' perceptions with regard to the causes of disrespect. Figure 2 illustrates the reasons for disrespect as explained by the study's participants. As Figure 2 shows – both faculty and students share the same explanations regarding disrespectful behaviors.

**Faculty's attitude of overlooking it and/or not punishing it.** One explanation for incivility that was raised with high intensity by faculty members and students attributes the phenomenon to the faculty's soft-handedness, namely, not confronting the problem. To a certain degree there appears to be a demand by students and faculty alike for greater firmness in confronting displays of disrespect toward faculty and students. Students said:

- "At the college, the main problem is that too few lecturers are prepared to deal with it, and mostly disregard it" (231);
- "There are a lot of threats that aren't followed through, for example a lecturer who says he'll remove [the student] from the classroom, and perhaps it would be preferable if he did" (106);
- "They've become used to treating the faculty like that, and haven't received a response that'll prevent them from treating them like that" (244).

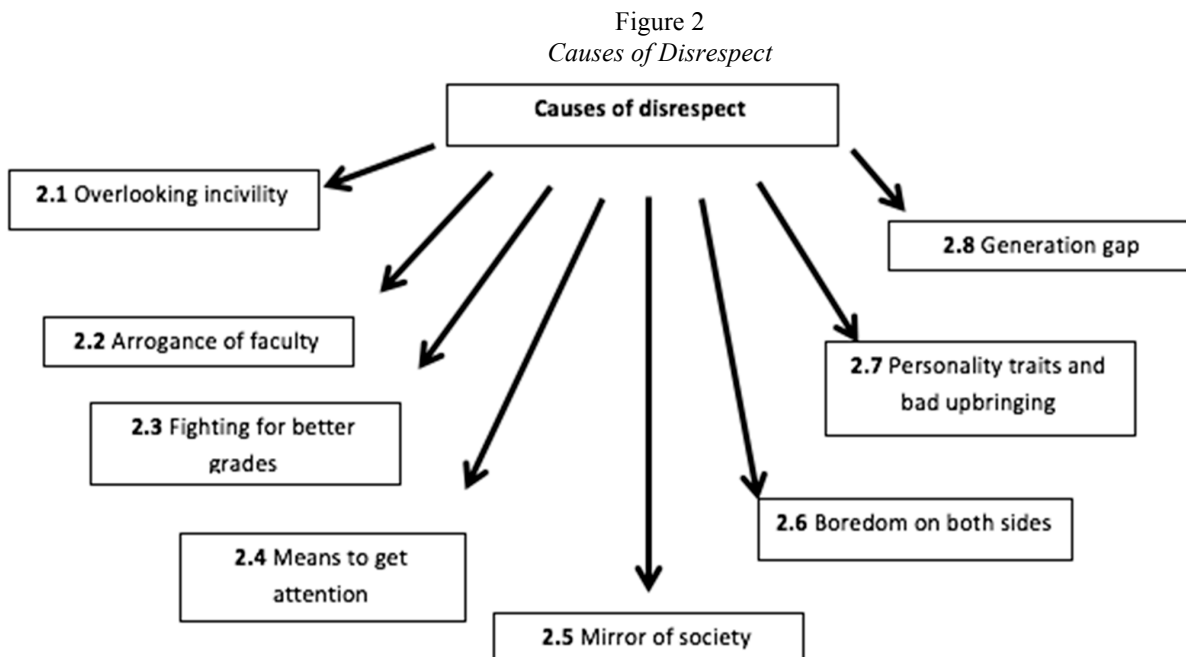
Faculty members added: "The main reason, in my view, that the phenomenon exists is the faculty's attitude of not treating the issue of respect seriously, overlooking it, not punishing it" (43).

The issue of vague boundaries between what is and is not permissible was also raised with regard to failing to confront the problem. Students stated:

- "Leniency creates vagueness – students and faculty face a problem because authority relations are unclear; it isn't clear who is above whom" (256);
- "Perhaps there isn't sufficient boundary clarity and about the framework we're in" (195).

Faculty members claimed:

- "Greater flexibility that gives a sense that 'you can,' and sometimes unjustifiable leniency and



blurring of the clear boundaries and the permissible/not permissible” (25);

- “That academic behavioral norms are not set and anomalous phenomena are not confronted from the first semester of the first year” (1).

**Arrogance on the part of the lecturers.** A subject that was mainly raised by students, but was also mentioned by faculty members as a cause for disrespect, is the arrogance of the faculty. Many students stated that they feel that faculty members are condescending and abuse their power or discriminate unjustly between students:

- “It seems that in academe there is a feeling of superiority of the academic faculty, so there’s a kind of superiority and exploitation of the hierarchy” (69);
- “There’s a phenomenon of arrogance on the part of the lecturers” (297);
- “Because some lecturers look at you disparagingly and yell for no reason” (124); “Faculty – a situation in which they exploit their position of power against the students” (101).

This is referred to weakly by the faculty:

- “Faculty – mainly as a reaction to disrespect on the part of the students, but also as exploitation

of their power and authority in the absence of tools for contending with conflict” (39);

- “Lecturers – from a condescending position” (17).

**“Students for grades.”** A common issue raised both by faculty members and especially by students attributes displays of disrespect to the pressure experienced by students due to their desire to gain achievements that are expressed in grades:

- “There’s an atmosphere of studying only for grades, so it’s permissible and even necessary to argue about the grade, especially for assignments” (32);
- “Because it’s frequently perceived as a ‘factory’ for grades and people only care about the grade itself and not about the studied subjects” (110).

The students attribute disrespectful behavior toward the faculty to pressure as well: “Lecturers are under pressure to be successful in their work, students are under pressure to succeed and achieve good grades” (51).

**“He wants to be the king of the class.”** This means to get attention. Some faculty members and students interpret displays of disrespect, both toward faculty members and toward other students, as the student’s attempt to “seize” status and standing in the

group; disrespect as a way of standing out among other group members:

- “Some people think that they have greater value and that they’ll be looked at differently if they behave in a way that might defeat and humiliate others. The disrespect actually stems from a desire to appear strong” (247);
- “Because of his upbringing and the environment he lives in, or that he’s a racist, and by showing disrespect he shows it, or he wants to be the king of the class and shows who’s in control” (153).

Faculty members stated, “Some kind of need to stand out (8); Latent power struggles” (16) .

**“The college is a ‘mirror’ of society as a whole.”** As demonstrated in the above quotation, both faculty members and students consider the college a reflection of general society outside academe. The decline of the general educational system, the admiration for money and materiality over broad intellectual knowledge and the “rating culture” – all are considered to infiltrate academia. The seclusion of academe from other organizations has been breached, and thus behaviors prevailing outside have penetrated its “walls.” Students described it as follows :

- “The violent social environment in Israel is manifested in reality as well. Students and faculty do not draw a distinction and don’t behave differently at the college” (73);
- “Everyday behavior is penetrating academe” (99).
- “People don’t want to learn, they want success and money. Preferably quickly” (57).

Faculty members similarly stated: “As part of a process Israeli society as a whole is undergoing, there is a decline in education and values, including respect for others” (27) .

Faculty members also mention the client-oriented culture and consumer entitlement: “I’ve paid, so I’m entitled”:

- “The view whereby “I’ve paid money” so “I’m entitled to everything” (30);
- “The students are under the impression that since they are paying they are entitled to complain about a lecturer” (32).

**“Wake up! Don’t fall asleep while you teach!”**

Another issue that was raised quite strongly as a cause of disrespectful behavior by faculty members and students alike was boredom and lack of interest.

Students speak mainly about boredom with the content of the studied material and the way it is conveyed. Faculty members speak mainly about contempt for the profession and the students’ lack of interest in studying. For example, faculty state the following:

- “Mainly boredom and a desire to invest as little effort as possible in studying while getting the best possible grade” (28);
- “Lack of interest in the studied subject. Studying as a burden – you have to get a BA socially, but it isn’t really interesting and they don’t want to make an effort” (30).

Students also attribute a central role to boredom in disrespectful behavior, but the emphasis is on the faculty that causes this boredom: “The faculty use teaching methods today that are not effective and not relevant and are outdated, they’re not interested and only teach because they have to, which the students feel and it creates disrespect toward them. By contrast, a lecturer who makes an effort and teaches out of interest and respect for diversity – you can see a great deal of respect” (149) .

**“It stems from the personality of the particular individual.”** A different opinion regarding the source of disrespectful behavior shared by faculty members and students attributes the phenomenon to the individual’s psychological and personality traits. Some holding these opinion associate displays of disrespect with a trigger, a cause, while others do not associate the behavior with an external factor, as articulated by faculty members and students: “In my view it stems from the students’ character traits and their frustration that they have difficulties in academe” (215) .

Faculty members added :

- “The students behave disrespectfully because they feel threatened by the material, frustrated with difficulties that aren’t necessarily connected to the lesson or the lecturer” (43);
- “From lack of self-confidence” (8);
- “Due to feelings of inferiority” (39) .

This is combined, or stems from, “Bad upbringing at home, living environment, gaps in society.” A considerable proportion of faculty members and students (see Tables 1 and 2) attribute displays of disrespect to improper upbringing. It appears that in their view this is not an overarching social phenomenon, but the outcome of improper education. Students describe it as follows:

- “Maybe I’m naïve, but it stems from upbringing at home” (172);



- “It might come from family outlook, a bad family background” (206).

The statements of faculty members and students alike indicate that the source of disrespect is extraneous to the college and penetrates it, either as a sweeping social phenomenon or as one that is dependent upon the student’s specific environmental background.

**“Generation gap.”** A small number of faculty members stated that in their opinion there is also a generation gap effect, that what faculty members perceive as disrespect is not perceived as such by students. The generation gap is described in terms of talking style, of over-familiarity, and as a result of different behavior-codes (especially regarding mobile-phones use):

- “It seems to me that one of the problems stemming from the generation gap is that what I perceive as insolence or rudeness, isn’t perceived as such by the students. Not because of the different roles, but because of different generations” (41);
- “For the students talking to you and at the same time texting SMS is not offensive, but for me it is! I suppose it’s the generation gap...” (38).

### Ways of Successfully Contending with Incivility

The third question examined the perceptions of faculty members and students regarding potentially effective ways to engage with the problem; what, in their view, should be done to mitigate disrespect between faculty and students, and disrespect among peer-students. Examination of the survey responses shows that both groups hold a variety of similar views that can be presented as a sequence, from common activities of communication, dialogue and discourse, to employing a heavy-handed sanctions and uncompromising approach.

In figure 3 you can see the means of contending with incivility as suggested by students and faculty alike. We have arranged them on a "scale" moving from dialogic means to disciplinary sanctions.

**“Have relatively open communication” – a joint, mutually binding code of conduct.** A few lecturers noted that in order to overcome the phenomenon of disrespect, it is necessary to collaborate with the students on formulating a code of conduct, writing a code of ethics—clear rules—on how a faculty-student encounter is conducted, and ensuring that this code is distributed to all students. From the students there were calls for dialogue and discourse. Faculty note:

- “It is necessary to create together with the students principles and an acceptable

behavioral framework between lecturers and students” (1);

- “Collaboration in constructing a clear code of ethics” (5);
- “Rules, regulations that will be written and available” (29).

Students note: “Listen to one another, have relatively open communication, not violent, but in a positive, quiet way” (134).

A few students also noted that a third, neutral party should be included in the discourse as a mediating or arbitrating factor in the event that disagreements emerge.

- “Talk and discuss disputed issues, create an arbitration mechanism in the event that the two parties cannot reach agreement independently” (291);
- “An independent entity that will listen to the remarks of the students and those of the faculty as well” (101).

**“Imposing sanctions on the perpetrator.”** As opposed to the call for discourse and dialogue and creating agreement, many faculty members and students feel that a clear, rigorous, and unequivocal response by the college is the means to improve the situation. Among the things they note are a rigorous and unequivocal response from the faculty, department heads, and college institutions charged with such matters, to the extent of preventing offending students from completing their studies. Additionally, a recommendation was also made to publicize extreme cases in order to create a deterrent effect (“naming and shaming”).

Faculty noted:

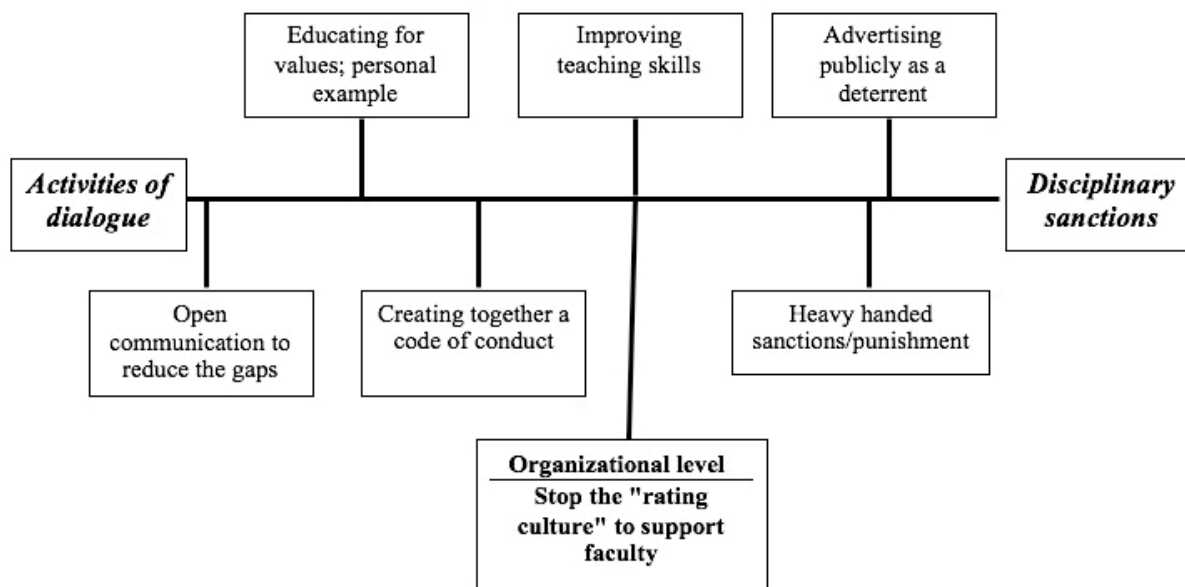
- “A rigorous, unequivocal response by the college [by department heads and the disciplinary committee] is likely to be effective” (33);
- “Publicizing examples of cases that have been addressed, as a deterrent” (29);
- “The college can use a firmer hand in addressing problems of disrespect, for example suspension in cases of recurring insolence” (38).

Students:

- “Severe punishments, to the extent of canceling a degree or delaying it” (236);
- “Use punishment as a deterrent!” (212).

Other students expect the faculty to respond more decisively and firmly and not to allow students to

Figure 3  
*Ways of Contending With Incivility*



behave disrespectfully: “Adopt a stronger hand, for the lecturers to know how to handle it and not let students make remarks over and over again” (106).

“**Education, personal example.**” Some (albeit very few) lecturers believe that change can be achieved by educating for values, and the faculty setting a personal example while creating greater interest in classes.

- “Good personal example. Treating the students with respect” (24);
- “Educating for values” (7).

A few voices were also heard among the students who believe that personal example can be beneficial:

- “The faculty has no right to express disrespect, even if it comes in the form of impatience with students’ questions. They have an obligation and a binding position not to show or express any disrespect or any personal opinion about anyone” (230);
- “Set a personal example!” (57).

#### **Action on the Organizational Level to Improve the Situation**

**Organizational action.** A few faculty members noted that action should be taken on the organizational level. The belief is that organizational culture is

dictated to one degree or another by the institution and its administrators. In order to create change they believe that the individualistic and bureaucratic culture at the college needs to be changed, greater support provided to lecturers, and the end of semester “ratings” feedback stopped since it deters lecturers from acting more strictly. On the organizational level there is also mention of holding workshops on the subject and periodic meetings to air feelings.

- “Support for lecturers” (11);
- “It needs to be understood that the organizational environment in which we live and work doesn’t come into being just like that, but is the product of our construction, we create it and can influence it – but it requires behavior that runs counter to the bureaucratic and individual culture of the institution, and higher education in general” (20);
- “There’s a ‘ratings’ situation as well, so if we’re tough they’ll ‘stick it’ to the faculty in the feedback at the end of the semester” (30);
- “At the start of each first year of study people should attend a workshop on the subject” (32).

“**Make studying more interesting and meaningful.**” Another possible course of action that was raised by students pertains to creating greater interest in the studies:

- "Make studying more interesting and meaningfully and address anyone whose disrespect has an adverse effect on his learning environment as well" (76);
- Wake up! Don't fall asleep while you teach!" (255).

**"Spread more information about respect."** An original idea raised by students pertains to advancing the idea and awareness of the subject at the college:

- "Spread more information about respect with films, advertisements, lectures, and even mandatory courses" (242);
- "Greater emphasis should be placed on raising awareness on the subject of respect in an academic setting, among students and lecturers [faculty] alike" (251);
- "Open a mandatory course that teaches what respect toward people means! Nowadays people are no longer aware of the disrespect that's so deeply rooted in our country" (300).

### Summary of Findings

**Disrespectful behaviors.** We have noticed that our findings indicate a considerable similarity between faculty and students' perception of the term "disrespectful behavior." The similarities pertain to behaviors such as lack of punctuality, manner of speech, use of cell phones, and arrogance. Displaying lack of interest and boredom are also perceived by both groups as indications of disrespect, but in this instance, each group perceives the other as being afflicted with lack of interest and boredom.

Notwithstanding the similarities, differences in perceptions of the two groups were also found, especially in the students' perceptions of the faculty's behavior as arrogant. The college's code of conduct and maintaining status differences between lecturer and student are possibly perceived by the faculty as essential and proper behavior, while students interpret them as arrogance and condescension. Another disparity in faculty and students' perceptions was evident in students' expectations regarding a lecturer's availability, considering its paucity as displaying disrespect by a faculty member.

Integration of the quantitative and qualitative data shows that for lecturers the most problematic phenomena in students' behaviors are talking and using cell phones during lectures. Additionally, the faculty's questionnaires indicate the issues they perceive as problematic in their own behaviors. In this instance too, there is congruence between the qualitative and

quantitative data. Faculty members note the issue of arriving late, employment of ineffective teaching methods, and rigid conduct as causes that impair proper relations between faculty and students.

Furthermore, the issue of faculty ignoring unacceptable student behaviors was also supported by the quantitative data. Faculty members are aware of this phenomenon and its negative implications for their relationship with the students, and they yet do not take action.

**Causes for incivility.** It can be stated that faculty and students are in agreement regarding the causes of disrespectful behaviors, and the main reasons are the penetration of incivility from the external environment, notably Israeli culture, into academe. Another source of incivility stems from the faculty's reluctance to engage with the problem, thereby allowing its continuation. Also noted were causes that foster mutual disrespect. Students indicated that faculty members behave arrogantly and convey the studied material in a boring manner, while faculty members claimed that students have no desire to learn, but are only interested in completing their studies with minimum effort.

**Ways of addressing incivility.** The ways that were proposed by faculty and students are varied and diverse, revealing a great deal of similarity in faculty's and students' perceptions. In both groups there are those who advocate "soft" approaches (cooperation, dialogue, education, workshops, creating a joint code of conduct), but at the same time loud voices are heard from both groups calling for assertive, unequivocal, and uncompromising action against those who behave inappropriately. Additionally, some faculty members direct attention to the organizational culture that to some degree supports and perpetuates the phenomenon or does not enable the faculty to address the matter properly or positively. There is also a call for publicity: for putting the issue on the agenda, talking about it, holding workshops, introducing content on the subject as part of the college curriculum. There are also calls for publicizing actual cases including the outcome of action taken against people who behave unacceptably. Education was also mentioned as a way of addressing the issue, but on a very limited level.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to obtain a heightened understanding of incivility: its manifestations, its causes and what faculty and students think should be done to minimize it. The voices described in this article come from a specific cultural environment: an academic college in Israel. However, the phenomenon it describes is very commonly talked about both in educational institutions around the world (Boice, 1996; Boysen, 2012; Clark, 2008a; Clark, 2013;

Gonzales & Lopez, 2001) in particular, and in workplaces in general. The organizational culture of a free market and consumerism evolving in academic institutions indeed seems to mark faculty-student relations, with each party more motivated to pursue its own interests than in the past (Goldberg, 2005). This is true in most Western countries (Hollis, 2013; Sedivy-Benton et al., 2015), and it is true in Israeli society which has changed from unity to segmentation and from socialist solidarity to neo-liberal ruthless competitive ideology in the past thirty years (Rosen & Amir, 2003). Rather than seeing themselves as one community that pursues knowledge – this perception presents two groups with different, and sometimes even opposite, interests: many students want to "purchase" the degree merely to thrive in the competitive labor market, whereas the faculty want to engage them in the material, teach them critical thinking skills and maintain academic culture as they perceive it.

The participants—faculty and students alike—spoke about the emotional stress created by incivility in a place where openness and respectful relations are expected. They describe the everyday impact of incivility on their ability to perform their tasks to the best of their abilities. In fact, it seems that both parties wish to re-constitute the academic community as one community, if only for practical reasons: to be able to perform their errands better. Consequently, most of them suggested means to minimize incivility which involve some kind of an open dialogue between students, faculty, and administration, such as creating forums for mutual dialogues, allowing for different opinions and cultural diversity both in class interactions and the curriculum, encouraging and setting a personal example—by students and faculty alike—of a respectful discourse, transparency and fairness regarding grades (faculty's responsibility), and of teachers' ranking (students' responsibility). All these means were prescribed to foster better relations and prevent (or rather minimize) incivility (Braxton & Bayer, 2004; Clark, 2008a; Fuller, 2006; Morrisette, 2001). These findings actually suggest fostering a stronger sense of community in academia in order "to fend off" the social and cultural incivility that penetrated academia. They suggested forums of students and faculty where they can discuss and generate solutions for incivility, as well as actual courses about civil behavior and respect. However, when incivility does occur, some of the participants called for a firmer reaction and for punishment in order to clearly set the norms and for faculty to actually addressing the subject rather than ignoring it. All of the participants rejected the present situation in which the phenomenon is not addressed and treated.

The present study is limited since it was conducted in one academic setting only and in a specific country –

Israel. Despite these limitations, this study adds to a growing body of literature regarding the severe impact of incivility in organizations in general (Anderson & Pearson, 1999; Porath & Erez, 2009) and its particular impediments in educational settings (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2010; Boice, 1996; Boysen, 2012; Cassell, 2013; Clark, 2013; Sedivy-Benton et al., 2015). We hope that this study will have a strategic impact for faculty and management of higher education. Based on these findings it is clear that identification and prevention of incivility in academia is within reach, and it can be minimized if both faculty' students and management will adopt rigorous as well as sensitive means to eliminate it.

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