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# Incivilities in the College Classroom: The Effects of Teaching Style and Teacher Gender

Misty Renee Bailey

*University of Tennessee, Knoxville*

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Misty Renee Bailey entitled "Incivilities in the College Classroom: The Effects of Teaching Style and Teacher Gender." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Mary Jo Reiff, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Mary E. Papke, Michael Keene

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Anne Mayhew  
Vice Chancellor and Dean of  
Graduate Studies

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Incivilities in the College Classroom:  
The Effects of Teaching Style and Teacher Gender

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Misty Renee Bailey  
August 2004

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the strongest and most courageous woman I have ever met: my grandmother Maxine Mayes Shelton who always told me, “You can do anything you set your mind to.”

In loving memory

March 5, 2004

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I wish to thank all those who helped me complete my Master of Arts degree in English. Thank you, Dr. Mary Jo Reiff, Dr. Mary E. Papke, and Dr. Michael Keene for your guidance throughout the research and writing process and for serving on my committee.

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Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Derek, my mom, Debbie Boles, and my friends for believing in me and understanding when I needed to write instead of spend time with them, but especially Derek for his incredible support and encouragement.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teacher gender, teaching style, and classroom incivilities in composition and business writing courses at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Incivility frequencies were collected from approximately 581 students and twenty-four teachers using surveys.

While it cannot be stated that teacher gender combined with teaching style causes more incivilities, this study revealed a correlation between the frequency of incivilities and teacher gender controlled for teaching style. Students of female teachers who use student-centered pedagogical methods report more incivility occurrences than students of male teachers who use student-centered pedagogical methods.

Findings also revealed that no correlation exists between incivilities and teacher gender alone or teaching style alone, and incivility frequency is no different in composition courses than in business writing courses.

Recommendations for coping with incivilities are provided as well as recommendations for future research.

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## CHAPTER 1 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers of elementary and secondary students study classroom management techniques, including dealing with classroom disruptions, in nearly every education course. They know that they will need to be well-equipped with methods to prevent and halt disruptions. While college instructors know that we are less likely to encounter a paper wad fight in our classrooms, we, too, experience classroom management issues, often to the surprise of our non-academic friends and family. Why *should* we be concerned about behavior problems? Our students are technically adults. Presumably, adults know how to behave in an academic setting. Should not this reason alone prevent any problems?

Unfortunately, our students' adult status seems to make little difference when it comes to what Bob Boice calls "classroom incivilities" in his 1996 article of the same name. Incivilities, as Boice describes them, constitute any rude or disruptive behavior that negatively alters the learning environment – students talking while others talk, complaining with groans, etc. (Boice 463). Such students refuse to participate or show interest, come to class unprepared, or arrive late. Sometimes disruptions even escalate into sexual harassment. Classroom incivilities (CI) seem to be increasing on college campuses all over the United States, and faculties are being forced to respond.

In 1996, Boice's study was ground-breaking in its honest look at CI and why universities avoid discussing the problem. Over the course of three years, Boice conducted teacher and student interviews and visited the classrooms of sixteen colleagues at a large, public, research campus with approximately 11,000 undergraduates (461). His

study included courses in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities (461). Boice made 405 contacts with students during interviews in which he included questions about the value of the class session, the teacher's immediacy, clarity of the material, and whether CI were distracting students (461-2). He applied a rating system to the students' answers, made notes about the class sessions, and interviewed the sixteen instructors weekly (462). Boice learned that CI are embarrassing but taboo subjects. They are publicized more "among teachers with less status and privacy" (454). Higher ranking faculty, on the other hand, are reluctant to acknowledge that CI occur in their classrooms, worrying about their public image and blaming "underqualified students" when they do discuss CI (Boice 456). Not until Boice's article had the academic community seen a relatively large-scale study about CI. Since Boice's study, more and more articles and letters to the editor addressing classroom incivilities are appearing in higher education journals. Discussion of the topic has also spread to university administration, department colloquia, and online forums. Teachers and colleges are now actively looking for ways to prevent CI and trying to understand why they happen.

An example of a more recent discussion is Alison Schneider's 1998 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* entitled "Insubordination and Intimidation Signal the End of Decorum in Many Classrooms," which spawned several letters to the editor, seven of which were printed a month later. While all respondents agree that uncivil behavior is a problem, they all gave different answers as to why incivilities happen in the first place. Marta E. Stone, an Associate Professor of Spanish at Weber State University, believes that "one of the main causes is an exaggerated desire for democracy in which no one is

ever anyone else's superior for any reason or under any circumstances" (1). This exaggerated democracy leads to less teacher authority, according to Stone, and less teacher authority means more incivilities.

Professor of Education Sam Minner from East Tennessee State University blames the problem on a lack of proper teacher preparation for academics, saying that higher education teachers often "lack the skills to engage their students in the learning process" (2). Still other instructors say consumerism breeds disrespect among students. "Students live in a Wal-Mart society, where it's convenience that counts," says Kathy K. Franklin, Assistant Professor of higher education at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (qtd. in Schneider 2). Franklin argues that since students are paying to be in our classes, they approach classes as a service provided to a paying customer. She says that she often hears, "After all, I pay your salary, and since I pay your salary, I should be able to tell you when I want to come to class and when my paper should be due" (qtd. in Schneider 2).

English Instructor Kate Horsley Parker of the Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute agrees with Franklin that students view themselves as consumers. But Parker goes further, saying students no longer have respect for "hard work, creativity, intellect, and compassion" (3). Instead, Parker believes students value nothing "unless it makes money" (3). Gerald Amada agrees but explains in *Coping With the Disruptive College Student* that students may not value a liberal arts education because of a national recession (3). Amada says that many students go to college today not because of a craving for learning but because it is "practical" to do so in "today's shrinking job market," as true in 2004 as it was in 1994 when *Coping* was published (3). Many other

college faculty have their own suspicions as to why so many incivilities occur, and as many different speculations exist as there are departments within a college. In fact, many articles about CI, while written by experienced professionals with years of insight, rely solely on personal experience and evaluation. And although many critics, as we see above, blame the student, either directly or indirectly, several critics also acknowledge that students are not always to blame.

Boice is one of the critics who recognizes that what teachers do has a significant effect on student behavior as well. According to Boice, the “most experienced researchers on CI assume that students and teachers are partners in generating and exacerbating it” (458). Students in Boice’s study said they were bothered by teachers they felt were “distant, cold, and uncaring” (464) and those who distance “themselves from students via fast-paced, noninvolving lectures” (464). Likewise, Kearney, et al., in a 1988 study of classroom communication, found that college students are more likely to comply and employ less resistance to teachers who show more immediacy (95). An instructor who uses immediacy techniques is “friendly, vocally expressive, uses eye contact, [and] frequently smiles” versus the non-immediate instructor who is “tense, reserved, avoids eye contact, [and] seldom smiles” (Kearney and Plax 90). Kearney and Plax also note that teachers who believe that their students bear full responsibility for classroom resistance should recognize that they, too, are potential sources of dissatisfaction (99).

Kearney and Plax studied 574 college students by giving them hypothetical scenarios in which teachers asked them to comply with a request (86-7). They also asked

the students what they “would say or do” to resist that request (88). Both Boice’s and Kearney and Plax’s studies include several academic disciplines, not limiting themselves to one particular subject. While this broad focus helps college instructors in all disciplines understand CI, English studies, and every other discipline for that matter, could benefit from a more narrowly focused study, one that is specific to its students, teachers, and pedagogies.

In order to see how pedagogical approaches play a role in CI, it is necessary to trace the evolution of pedagogies, which affects the roles of teachers and students today. Most composition programs in 2004 developed their approaches to teaching writing from pedagogical movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the process movement being one of those. Lad Tobin writes that process pedagogy developed in response to the “canned, dull, lifeless student essay that seemed the logical outcome of a rules-driven, teacher-centered curriculum that ignored student interests, needs, and talents” (5). Process pedagogues use class time to respond to “student works-in-progress; to discussion of ‘the process’ [ . . . ] and to writing exercises” (Tobin 15). When class time is devoted to activities like these, the class becomes less teacher-centered and more student-centered. The spotlight, so to speak, is not on the teacher but on the student(s) instead. Some process proponents also emphasize freewriting, discovery writing, personal narrative, and voice, which coincide with expressivist practices (Tobin 9).

Tobin explains that process and expressivism were used nearly interchangeably at their onset (9). Like the process approach, expressive pedagogy originated as a reaction against the rules-driven, then current-traditional rhetoric (Burnham 21-2). Christopher

Burnham explains in “Expressive Pedagogy: Practice/Theory, Theory/Practice” that current-traditional pedagogy dominated the teaching of writing in colleges and universities during the 1940s and 1950s (22). Opposing the current-traditional method, expressive supporters were committed to classroom practice that allowed students to find their own voices in their writing, and antitextbooks began to appear offering critiques of the norm (Burnham 22).

Donald Murray (*A Writer Teaches Writing*, 1968) and Peter Elbow (*Writing Without Teachers*, 1973), two leaders of the movement, published books that focused on the writing process and the student-centered classroom, which gave students more responsibility and control over their learning (Burnham 22-3). Murray also emphasized the social process of writing, placing his students within a writing community that stressed “interaction of teacher and students, writers and readers” (Burnham 24). A type of social expressivism has emerged as well that asks students to be concerned with “social context and ideology” and their identity within it (Burnham 29). Social expressivism aims to empower individuals via written voice, whereby teachers can promote “personal awareness” that can help students “act against oppressive material and psychological conditions” (Burnham 29). This branch of expressivism helped inform feminist pedagogy in that it is concerned with individual awareness and social equity (Burnham 29).

A shift in pedagogical approach occurred during the feminist movement of the 1970s, especially within composition departments (Jarratt 113). By the 1980s, Susan C. Jarratt explains, “[F]eminists began to make contributions to composition pedagogy with

broad impact” (Jarratt 114). By then, mostly women taught composition courses, and composition had become what Susan Miller calls “feminized.” Miller says teaching composition became the woman’s work counterpart to the theory-filled literature profession, much like the hierarchical positioning of nurses to doctors (40-42). Further, students began to associate the composition teacher with the fantasy mother who demonstrates the virtues of “self-sacrifice, dedication, [and] caring” while simultaneously displaying “authority, precision, and [. . .] taste” (Miller 46). Jarratt believes students’ expectations of motherly teachers coincides with process writing courses, where the teacher serves as a facilitator, supporter, and encourager (118-19).

Jarratt writes further that feminist pedagogy is closely related to the process movement based on the following traits: “the decentering or sharing of authority, the recognition of students as sources of knowledge, a focus on processes (of writing and teaching) over products” (115). However, “what makes feminist pedagogy distinctive,” Jarratt says, “is its investment in a view of contemporary society as sexist and patriarchal” (115). A pedagogy without this distinction cannot rightfully be called feminist, according to Jarratt’s definition. For this thesis, I will concentrate more on the first half of Jarratt’s definition of feminist pedagogy, the student-centered half. A student-centered approach, by its very nature, belongs within Jarratt’s definition because it renounces a sexist and patriarchal society by refusing the traditional lecture model and approach to writing as a product, both of which have been classified as masculine approaches. A student-centered pedagogy (SCP) rejects the traditional, teacher-centered, lecture style. Teachers give up some of their authority to the students by engaging them in collaborative work, having

frequent issue-based discussions, and promoting process writing. In a student-centered classroom, teachers claim to learn along with the students by listening to their comments and insights during discussion. Writing workshops and peer reviews take place whereby students help each other. Students have the chance to learn from each other in collaborative situations in which the teacher is barely present as an authority.

Composition instructors are now encouraged to embrace a student-centered pedagogy that stresses decentering instructor authority, as described above. However, this pedagogy produces a double bind for female teachers. This type of democratic classroom corresponds with what Marta E. Stone believes contributes to incivilities -- a lack of hierarchy, whereby the authority of the teacher dissolves into equality with the students. Many critics have explored student-centered pedagogy and its possible detrimental effects on female instructors' authority and control of the class. Miriam L. Wallace recalls, in "Beyond Love and Battle: Practicing Feminist Pedagogy," a classroom incident when a female instructor yelled at a male student over a critical statement he made about her in class. Further, Wallace blames the outburst on the instructor's renounced authority, saying that "[i]n trying to enact shared knowledge and legitimacy, she actually abandoned her position as teacher and left a power-vacuum at the center of the class" (191). Wallace believes that expertise from a "feminine sexed/gendered body [. . .] is already more tenuous since culture at large does not endow these bodies with full authority" (188). Dale Bauer and Katherine Rhoades agree, saying that students often scrutinize a female instructor by examining her body, clothes, or hair, "trying to find something somatic [. . .] with which to contain her intellectual difference" (99). In other



words, how can women decenter an authority they do not have?

Julia Ferganchick-Neufang cites various women in “Women’s Work and Critical Pedagogy” who fear that classroom conflicts might escalate if they transfer most of their authority to their students (30). She questions the practicality of student-centered theory, saying that theory does not transfer to a real-world classroom. A “dissonance” exists, Ferganchick-Neufang says, “between women’s experiences and pedagogical theory” (31). In fact, many of the women in her study have moved away from student-centered classrooms in support of a more teacher-centered pedagogy (30). Constance M. Ruzich, in turn, examines the role of the indulgent mother/teacher in “Are You My Mother? Students’ Expectations of Teachers and Teaching as Related to Faculty Gender.” She says students expect female instructors to be “warm, friendly, and supportive, but as college professors, they are supposed to be objective, authoritarian, and critical”; therefore, women risk being treated as indulgent mothers when they give up their authority (7). Ironically, the resulting role of the indulgent mother promotes gender stereotypes in a pedagogy that has its roots in feminism, a movement born to reject these same stereotypes (Ruzich 18).

Lynnell Major Edwards agrees that many female English instructors struggle with their role in the classroom in her article “What Should We Call You? Women, Composition Studies, and the Question of Eminent Authority.” Edwards says, “The consequence for the feminist pedagogue [. . .] is to lose the monolithic authority of one who ‘professes’” (47). “To profess,” after all, has a preachy, assertive connotation and seems to reject student-centered pedagogy in its very definition. Here again, the professor

role competes with the mother role, just as it does in Jane E. Hindman, Kari McBride, and Glen Barrett's article "(In)Visible Step Sisters: Stories of Women Teaching Composition." Hindman and her colleagues describe a recurring nightmare of a writing conference in which they are torn between being agreeable and supportive or being honest and critical, between being the stereotypical female and the stereotypical professor (3). Hindman, McBride, and Barrett agree that in many students' and administrators' minds, the traits of a good teacher are analogous to those of a good mother (13).

Narrowing the subject under discussion, Jennifer Meta Robinson addresses problems graduate-student instructors have with disruptions in the classroom in "A Question of Authority: Dealing with Disruptive Students." She cites as potential problems the closeness in age of teachers and students as well as the physical disadvantage women often face with students who are much larger than them (120, 122). Robinson also argues that more female instructors encounter disruptions than males (123).

While many instructors fear that giving up their authority will open the door to student resistance, general discipline studies like those of Boice and Kearney, et al, show that traditional, teacher-centered approaches distance teachers from students so much that students may come to see them as cold, uncaring, or incompetent. When instructors detach themselves in this way, conduct problems occur more often. These two findings leave the female teacher with two questions: Does she follow a businesslike, authoritarian model wherein she teaches *to* the students? Or, does she follow a maternal, libertarian model wherein she teaches *with* the students? Either way lies trouble, it

seems. Teaching in the technical communication classroom further complicates this question since the technical communication field has been traditionally taught by males to males.

Mary M. Lay in “Gender Studies: Implications for the Professional Communication Classroom” explains that technical writing in particular has a reputation for being a masculine subject since most of its students major or minor in business or science, areas generally known for high male populations (33). Despite its masculine reputation, Paul M. Dombrowski explains in *Human Aspects of Technical Communication* that more and more females are choosing to major in technical writing, and more women now also teach technical writing (137). Although most technical writing instructors, male or female, embrace process writing that involves revision and student/teacher interaction, technical writing cannot adopt the more expressivist portions of writing theory. Scientific or business documents do not require a writer to find his or her unique “voice” or to use personal narrative as a way to explore the self, and while instructors can decenter their authority in the technical writing classroom by allowing students to work collaboratively on their writing and revision, frequent issue-based discussion is not part of the curriculum. By definition, technical writing instructors cannot apply SCP as fully as can a composition instructor.

Technical writing teachers often worry about whether the content and assignments in their classes allow students to carry their learning experiences over to the workplace, but very little criticism or research exists about what pedagogy model to use when teaching that content. Further, I could not find any research on how teacher gender

affects student resistance. Although general studies about CI certainly apply to technical communication, course-specific research is virtually non-existent for technical communication instructors. Since the technical subfield of writing instruction is often masculinized, technical writing offers a unique arena in which to examine the effects of gender and pedagogical approach on CI, an arena that is gendered differently from that of composition classes.

I am particularly interested in whether an instructor's gender and approach to teaching affects how often incivilities occur and to what degree. In order to get a contrast between feminized and masculinized fields, I will focus on composition and technical communication, limited to instructors and students of Composition I (course number 101), Composition II (102), and Business and Technical Writing (295) courses at the University of Tennessee. The purpose of my thesis is to determine how teacher gender in student-centered versus lecture-based classrooms affects student resistance.

The research performed for this thesis will give teachers the information they need about CI as related to teaching style so that they can make an informed decision about which pedagogy to follow more closely, which pedagogy will work best for them. The results of the study should also serve as a predicting factor of whether instructors who use a student-centered pedagogy will experience more CI than those whose classrooms are teacher-centered. That is, the results will also examine whether women, in general, will encounter more CI than men when using a student-centered pedagogy. At the end of this thesis, instructors will find suggestions for coping with CI.

## CHAPTER 2 – BACKGROUND AND METHODS

It is important to recognize that not all college students engage in classroom incivilities; in fact, most students do not. However, as Kearney and Plax admit, one or two resistant students can ruin the entire class (85). Nancy F. Burroughs discovered that in a classroom of thirty-five students, we can generally presume that six or seven of them will resist a request by the teacher during the semester (42). While adult students are certainly mature enough to abstain from paper wad fights, discourtesies such as students talking while others talk or cell phones ringing often make their way into some classrooms. A quick explanation might be that college students are only a few months or years removed from high school – just learning how to behave as adults. But, this answer excludes non-traditional students who might be thirty years removed from high school. This answer also puts the blame solely on the student, which Boice and Kearney and Plax have warned against.

As recognized in Chapter 1, several studies exist that try to explain how often and why incivilities occur; however, none of these studies is composition and technical communication specific. None of these studies examines the difference between student-centered and teacher-centered pedagogy as a possible indicator of incivilities either. Nevertheless, critics such as Ruzich and Bauer and Rhoades set the stage for this research by questioning the practicality of female instructors using student-centered pedagogy. In a 1994 study, Bauer and Rhoades examined students' journal entries and teacher evaluations in introductory women's studies and writing courses (95). Bauer and Rhoades are interested in whether students have certain assumptions about authority and

feminism and how they respond to feminist teachers (95-6). Specifically, the two critics examined student resistance and harassment in relation to teacher authority and feminist pedagogy (96). Feminist style, say Bauer and Rhoades, encompasses teacher “gesture, appearance, and dress” as well as “its attempt to link the personal with the political, the physical body with the intellect” during issue-based discussion, often about male advantage and social inequality (98, 95).

In a 1990 study, Bauer found that students often reject feminism because they find the “political-personal voice” inappropriate for the classroom and want to see their classroom as neutral or objective (99). Adhering to their desire for neutrality, students find it awkward when their feminist teachers violate that neutrality by trying to develop a relationship with their students (Bauer and Rhoades 98). Instead, Bauer and Rhoades found, students expect a distant and detached instructor who delivers mainstream facts during a lecture, not one who offers politicized discussions (98, 101). Student resistance to feminist style led Bauer and Rhoades to question how feminists can decenter the authority in their classrooms and still maintain enough control to have productive sessions (101). They say early models of feminist pedagogy whereby teachers decentered all authority undermined female teachers, especially since many students found it difficult to grant authority to women (101).

Although Bauer and Rhoades examine student resistance to feminist teaching and call for a new feminist style, they never explain what that new feminism should be. They conclude that the predominant cause of student resistance to feminist style is the students’ attitudes, which places the bulk of the responsibility for change on the students.

However, they do not offer teachers an alternative style or suggest a compromise between completely decentering authority and “professing” with complete authority and student detachment.

Constance M. Ruzich conducted a related study in 1995, wherein she gathered information about the differences in the ways in which freshmen students perceive their male versus female college instructors (4). Ruzich also explored students’ expectations of college teachers as authority figures (4). Her study included 221 traditional college freshmen (between seventeen and nineteen years old and who had not earned previous college credit) enrolled in remedial or general freshman composition at a private, liberal arts college (9). Instead of using student journal entries, Ruzich used surveys to collect information about students’ attitudes toward their instructor at the beginning of the semester in order to capture more accurately their stereotyping (11-12). The anonymous survey required students “to predict the character of their future interactions with the teacher; to evaluate the attitudes and demeanor of their teacher; and to provide information regarding their expectations of ‘good teaching’” (12). Ruzich also asked the students whether they preferred a female or male to teach that class (12).

The results of Ruzich’s study indicated that male teachers were judged as less approachable, less “kind and understanding,” but higher in occupational rank than their female counterparts (14-15). Further, students perceived dress and appearance as more important to a professional appearance for female teachers than for males (16). Although students revealed a double standard about teacher dress and appearance, only about twenty percent had a preference for either a male or female instructor (Ruzich 17). Of

that twenty percent, 13.5 percent preferred a female instructor (Ruzich 17). Ruzich concludes that few changes had occurred in gender-based expectations of college instructors between 1980 and 1994, and she calls for future research to study larger student populations in different educational settings (18-20). Moreover, since her study considered students' expectations only at the beginning of composition courses, Ruzich says more research is needed about expectations at the end of the semester (20). Future studies, she says, should also examine male composition teachers who use feminist pedagogies (21).

To give English faculty a unique reference point, the research conducted for this study uses both composition and technical communication classes to focus on incivility occurrences within English as a subject of study. Although composition and technical communication studies are often offered within the same department, I chose them partly because of their dissimilarities. As Mary M. Lay notes, technical communication courses are usually made up of students with mostly male-dominated majors such as business and science (33). Nearly sixty percent (n = 153) of the technical writing students in this survey are male. This number is unrepresentative of the total student population, which is comprised of only 47.5 percent males (*UT Fact Book* "Student Data" 1). While composition studies have historically been considered feminized, technical communication has been considered masculinized.

Student-centered pedagogy (SCP) has often been associated with feminist pedagogy since the student-centered method rejects the commonly classified patriarchal, traditional lecture model. As discussed in chapter one, SCP moves away from lecture and



product writing by decentering the power structure through frequent discussions, collaborative work, and process writing. The composition classroom, in its feminized state, is an ideal setting in which to study the effects of SCP on classroom incivilities. Most composition teachers at the University of Tennessee use SCP; therefore, the difference in incivility occurrence between male and female instructors can be examined easily. The composition instructors who do not employ SCP offer a unique vantage point as well: instructors who use a teacher-centered pedagogy (TCP) can serve as contrasts to determine whether incivilities occur more often in student-centered classrooms. As recognized in chapter one, however, technical communication instructors cannot use SCP as fully as composition instructors because of the scientific and business content of the course. Studying their CI occurrences will also take into consideration how different teaching styles can affect CI.

While the differences between composition and technical communication courses prove interesting, the similarities between the two also lend themselves to this study – students enrolled in English 101, 102, and 295 are usually between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two. In fact, 97.89 percent of the students in this study were within that age range. Although knowledge level could vary greatly within this age span, Child and Family Development Specialist Arthur McArthur explains that students at these ages are in the same developmental stage, the Young Adult Stage. During this stage of development, students are leaving home for the first time, exploring career options, and shaking off parental control (4). They begin to substitute friends for family and are still establishing themselves as adults (4). The age of the students thus creates a somewhat

homogeneous sample in that they are at a similar developmental level.

Another similarity between the three courses is that they are mandatory either under university or major requirements. Ninety-nine percent of students surveyed for this study said they were taking the course because it was required. Of those students saying the course was required, 66.11 percent said they did not mind taking the course, but 22.53 percent said they did not want to take the course. Boice discovered that students enrolled in classes to meet graduation requirements were more likely to be uncivil, especially when the instructor tried to teach critical thinking skills that students could carry across their college careers (470). Students may think they will not need critical thinking skills in the immediate future, which makes learning those skills less important to them. On the other hand, when teachers in Boice's study taught to the test, which is more immediate, students were less likely to be disruptive (470).

Course requirement status can be a factor in explaining CI occurrences, and this distinction would carry great weight if we were comparing CI in English 101 to CI in an elective, senior-level Shakespeare class. Most students in the Shakespeare course have presumably chosen to be there. However, because all the courses in this study are required, if CI occurs in some English classes more than others, the reason must be due to some factor other than requirement status.

At the same time, English 101, 102, and 295 are unique in that they are usually full of non-English majors. In fact, only about two percent of the students in this study declared a major in English. We could not expect the same research results from a senior-level Shakespeare course because those students must want to be there on some level, or

they would not have chosen English as a major. Since the courses in this study are not developed for a specific major, their content must be broad enough to be valuable to everyone, and the University of Tennessee promotes critical thinking to meet that end, as its 101 course description identifies: “Strategies for written argumentation, critical reading, and discussion; emphasis on audience analysis, the invention and arrangement of ideas, and revision for style and mechanics” (*UT Catalog* 173). The 102 description reads similarly: “Critical strategies for reading and writing about literature [. . .]” (173). English 101 and 102 instructors promote critical thinking and reading skills that will prove valuable in other courses and in future jobs.

Most composition courses at other colleges and universities also support this same goal since it would be impossible to address every student’s needs based on major in a class that might have fifteen or more different focuses. For example, an instructor cannot gear his or her composition course toward writing lab reports because half the class might be humanities majors. However, Boice says that the same skills we teach to try to benefit all of our students also makes them more inclined to be uncivil, even when teachers use high degrees of immediacy (470). While Boice does not explain why students are inclined to be more disruptive in general education courses like English or business writing, we can speculate that students sometimes see these courses as less useful and more wasteful of their time and energy.

Further, teachers cannot teach to the test in English courses since writing is the main component. For example, the English 295 (Business and Technical Writing) course description reads as follows: “Principles of written communication in science and

business” (*UT Catalog* 173). While mastering several different document formats is a requirement for the course, mastering writing skills with which to compose the documents is the primary focus. Therefore, it is impossible to lessen incivilities by teaching a specific, plug-and-play formula for good writing or by teaching to a test, both of which methods are unsuitable in writing courses. Writing, unlike math, for example, is not as clear-cut and requires critical thinking, reading, and writing skills that cannot be taught by giving students lock-step methods.

While critics like Ruzich and Bauer and Rhoades left the question open as to how SCP (called feminist pedagogy by these three critics) affects the occurrence of incivilities, the only realistic way of knowing how pedagogy affects incivilities is to examine instructor pedagogy and incivility occurrence. The research for this thesis involved giving surveys to both instructors of English 101, 102, and 295 at the University of Tennessee and the students in those classes. I did not ask instructors and students at other colleges and universities to participate because of the time constraints on the research. Applying to conduct human research at each college and managing and compiling masses of paper survey responses from students (including postage) would have proven too large a task for the limited time I had to complete the work. Therefore, I chose to limit my study to the University of Tennessee. While its student and instructor population is not as diverse as that at some universities, it is large and diverse enough to provide reliable information about classroom incivilities.

The University of Tennessee is a large, public, research institution that had approximately 19,956 full and part-time undergraduates enrolled during the fall 2002

semester, one year before this study was conducted (*UT Fact Book* “Student Data” 1). A race breakdown follows: 83.8 percent white, 7.02 percent black, 4.16 percent international, 2.52 percent Asian, 1.12 percent Hispanic, and less than one percent American Indian or not reported (1). The university also employed approximately 1,393 full-time faculty, forty-one percent of whom are full professors (*UT Fact Book* “Faculty Data” 1). White faculty make up 87.1 percent of the full-time faculty; 7.1 percent are Asian; 3.7 percent are black, 1.9 percent are Hispanic, and less than one percent are American Indian (*UT Fact Book* “Faculty Data” 1).

Seventy-seven of these faculty (forty-one professors and thirty-six lecturers) are in the English Department, which also employs about twenty-two part-time faculty and fifty-two graduate student instructors per semester, making it one of the largest departments on campus. The University of Tennessee offers approximately 140 different sections of English 101 and 102 and about fifteen sections of English 295 per semester, so the number of classes and instructors available to participate was more than enough to provide a sufficient sample.

Research was conducted using twenty-four instructors teaching forty-seven classes over the fall 2003 and spring 2004 semesters. Of those forty-seven classes, eleven of them were English 295; thirty were English 101, and six were English 102. All instructors of these three courses were asked to participate in the study by interest letters distributed in campus mailboxes (Appendix A.1). Once instructors expressed interest in the study, they received an information letter explaining the focus of the study and their role in it (Appendix A.2). Thirty-one instructors responded to the first letter, and twenty-

nine agreed to participate. Twenty-four of these instructors and approximately 707 of their students completed surveys<sup>1</sup>.

The average age range of the teachers who participated in this survey is twenty-eight to thirty-one. Twelve of them were ranked as lecturers: five with Ph.D.'s and seven with M.A.'s. Five teachers were Ph.D.-track graduate teaching associates, and seven were M.A.-track graduate teaching associates. Eighteen instructors are female, while six are male. The semester in which this study took place was the first semester of teaching for seven of the teachers; three of them had been teaching for one to two full years; four had taught for three to four years, four for five to eight years, and six for nine to twelve years. I chose to use surveys to collect the data mainly because of the noninvasiveness they provide. Being a part of the normal class, a fly on the wall, so to speak, would be the best method of collecting accurate data; however, both students and teacher would be aware of the presence of an outsider. While the instructor would try to conduct class as usual, students might believe their instructor was being evaluated and might alter their usual behavior either to make their teacher look better or worse in the eyes of the evaluator. Further, attending only two or three sessions of each class in the study would not be sufficient because incivilities often vary from session to session. I might have observed unusually civil days or unusually uncivil days, which would not provide an accurate representation of that class.

For similar reasons, I decided not to use case studies to collect data. David Byrne,

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<sup>1</sup> This number is the mean of students who completed the two surveys. The exact sample size cannot be determined. Because two surveys were distributed, some students might have completed the second survey who did not complete the first, and vice versa.

professor of sociology and social policy at the University of Durham, explains that we cannot assume probabilistic trends exist by studying only a single case (84). Although case studies would provide a more in-depth look at a few specific classes, the classes chosen might not represent the typical 101, 102, or 295 class. Surveys, on the other hand, can cover many more classes, students, and teachers and provide a more diversified sample. Nevertheless, they too have their limitations. Some respondents give unreliable answers by misreading or not understanding questions or by simply circling the same response to every question due to uninterestedness or to save time. Other respondents skip questions or fail to notice the back side of a survey. Responses that are left blank are not calculated, and the margin of standard error reported for results helps account for bogus responses.

Having both teachers and their students complete surveys also helps provide more reliable results since teacher and student responses for the same classes can be compared. Teachers and their students were given two different surveys, one during the first few weeks of the semester and the other at least two weeks later (See Appendix B). As Ruzich explains, early student surveys capture students' initial responses to an instructor and are "more reflective of the students' own stereotypical expectations of the teachers than of actual teacher behavior" (11). For this reason, in the first survey, I asked students questions about how they perceive their instructor. Later surveys, in turn, offer a different student perception since the students had become more familiar with their teacher and his or her teaching methods. Therefore, questions on the second student survey were more in-depth and required students to comment on their instructor's teaching style. Teacher

surveys were given at approximately the same time as student surveys, but I gave two teacher surveys mainly because the response time would have been too long for one survey. Teachers and students are more likely to give accurate answers when they can complete two surveys in fifteen minutes each instead of completing one survey for thirty minutes. If a long survey were given, the responses would be less accurate near the end of the survey since the respondents would be tired or impatient and less careful with their answers.

Getting feedback from instructors and students offers unique perspectives from every position in the classroom, a different camera angle in every response, with the teacher as the front shot. Some incivilities are noticed by students that are not always noticed by instructors, such as inappropriate, under-the-breath comments not loud enough for the instructor to hear but audible to classmates closer to the student who made the comment. Likewise, some students might not notice a classmate sleeping in the back of the room or know that one of their classmates has plagiarized a paper. Instructors might also exaggerate a particularly bothersome incivility in their mind, making it seem worse than students perceive it. Thus, receiving instructor and student input provides balanced responses.

Boice has already determined that students and teachers differ in what they consider incivilities and which incivilities bother them most (463-4). Therefore, the first survey asked instructors but not students what they considered incivilities and which ones bothered them most. I asked these questions to narrow the questions in the second survey. So that I could isolate the most major incivilities, if fewer than thirty percent of



teachers did not categorize a specific behavior as an incivility, I did not include it in the second instructor survey. Most of the incivilities I studied were taken from Boice's study, but his more general categories were broken down into more specific incivilities, and I added several incivilities that Boice did not study.

From Boice's category of students "who seemed reluctant to participate [. . .] or reluctant to display interest" (464), I devised six subcategories: students who fall asleep during class, have excessive absences, read unrelated material, do homework for other classes, daydream, or fail to participate in in-class collaborative work. Under the category of "[s]tudents confronting teachers with sarcastic comments and disapproving groans" (Boice 463), I included students groaning or huffing at assignments and complaining about exam difficulty. Students who dominate discussion or make inappropriate comments (sexual, racist, sexist, etc.) toward students or teachers fall under Boice's "classroom terrorist" category (463). In addition to these subcategories, I also included cell phones ringing, students wearing caps, cheating/plagiarizing, standing too closely, or hugging the teacher. The following types of incivilities were taken directly from Boice: chatting with classmates during non-group work, interrupting others in discussion, unpreparedness, tardiness, leaving early, and excessive requests for extensions on assignments.

Once the categories were established, two different methods were used to distribute the surveys – instructors used online surveys, and students used paper surveys. The online surveys were distributed through Zoomerang Internet survey software. Zoomerang allows the surveyor to write his or her own questions and answers, with a

choice of what type of answers to allow -- multiple choice, short answer, ranking, and rating. Surveys were sent via e-mail to each participating instructor and had to be completed within ten days of launch. The results could then be printed by individual response and by total responses. Some instructors encountered technical errors with the survey, but these were easily resolved once I knew about them.

Asking students to respond to online surveys was an option I hardly considered, however. Solving technical difficulties for twenty-four instructors proved simple enough, but solving them for over 700 students would have been a nearly impossible task. Further, students are more likely to complete a survey if it is immediately in front of them in class. If their instructor asks them to complete an optional survey outside of class, on their own time, they will be less likely to do so because they might simply forget or choose not to complete it. Stephen W. Thorpe, Associate Provost at Drexel University, studied web-based versus paper student evaluations of teaching and found that most students are more likely to complete paper surveys (3). Thorpe found that only thirty-seven percent of students offered a web-based survey in a large statistics class at Drexel completed the evaluation (3). On the other hand, seventy percent of students in another other statistics course completed the paper surveys offered to them (3).

I gave the copied surveys to each instructor in a campus mail envelope that included a return campus address. Each instructor received one envelope per class along with an instructor and student direction sheet (Appendix A.3 and A.4). I asked instructors not to look at their students' responses so that students would feel at ease about giving honest answers. A student then took the surveys to a campus mail drop so

that they could be confident teachers would not look at their responses. Several teachers asked for their classes' results after they turned in grades.

I asked students for demographic information in both surveys to establish the make-up of the sample, and for the first survey, given early in the semester, I was interested in how the students perceived their instructor. Since several critics suspect that incivilities are linked to instructor age, gender, and professionalism,<sup>2</sup> I asked students to estimate their instructor's age, to tell whether they expected a male or female instructor, and to rank their instructor's level of professionalism compared to their other instructors that semester.

Boice also reveals that factors other than those directly related to the instructor might influence incivilities. For instance, Boice found that incivility occurrences were higher in classes with high levels of background noise coming from noisy halls, busy streets, construction, or even papers and food wrappers rattling within the room (475). Overcrowdedness also contributed to higher levels of CI; however, room conditions such as extreme temperatures or dim lighting seemed to have no effect (Boice 476). To adjust for room conditions that might be causing incivilities, I asked each student to describe his or her usual classroom setting.

Another possible indicator of CI, according to Boice, is course requirement status, but I already knew that the courses I would be examining are required. Therefore, I wanted to know whether students wanted to take the course, did not mind taking it, or did

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to the discussion of Wallace, Ruzich, Ferganchick-Neufang, Edwards, Robinson, and Hindman, McBride, and Barrett in chapter one.

not want to take the course. Three other questions also related to course requirement status – students’ major, perceived usefulness of the course, and usual grade in such a course. All these questions aimed to go beyond the broad category of requirement status because they further classified students in mandatory courses. The first survey was to provide this additional information to account for all factors that might be affecting incivilities.

The first survey for teachers worked to establish their views toward classroom incivilities. I provided an extensive list of possible CI and asked instructors to choose which ones they considered to be incivilities inside and outside the classroom and to reveal any other behavior they considered uncivil. Then, following Boice’s lead, I asked teachers to rate certain incivilities on a scale of one to five, one being an incivility that bothers the teacher most and five bothering the teacher the least. I only offered five incivilities in this category, using four of Boice’s findings of behaviors that bother teachers most: tardiness, unpreparedness, students talking while others talk, and not paying attention (463-64). I added cell phone rings since cell phones were not as common when Boice’s study was performed. I omitted two of Boice’s most-bothersome-to-teachers categories because of discussions in which I had taken part with other University of Tennessee teachers. That is, two of the categories on Boice’s list were rarely topics of our discussion: “students who imposed by demanding make-up exams or extended deadlines for projects” and “[s]tudents confronting teachers with sarcastic comments or disapproving groans” (464; 463). As I predicted, about fifty-three percent of the instructors surveyed for this study said they did not consider “excessive requests for

extensions on assignments” or “groaning or huffing at assignments” incivilities.

The first survey also asked teachers about their teaching techniques and abilities. In order to establish what type of pedagogy each teacher used, I asked questions relating to specific student-centered techniques. Instead of simply asking the teachers whether they were usually teacher-centered or student-centered, I asked them how often they lectured, had discussion, used group work, and held peer review/editing. I developed a formula to determine each teacher’s style by averaging the teachers’ responses to the four criteria<sup>3</sup>. After determining the mean score (2.5) of all teachers involved in the study, those above the mean were given the style of student-centered. Teachers below the mean are teacher-centered. Knowing the above aspects of their teaching was crucial in determining whether teachers who use student-centered methods encounter more CI.

Questions 12 and 13 addressed their perceived strengths and weaknesses by asking teachers their strongest and weakest teaching areas, and question 10 asked them to describe techniques they “find most useful in preventing and/or stopping incivilities.” Other questions in the survey established demographic information.

Second teacher and student surveys included the same demographic questions and were most concerned with how often incivilities occurred in their English courses during the semester in which the survey took place. The instructor survey asked each respondent to “rate how often each incivility has occurred in [their] 101/102/295 classes this semester.” As indicated above, the four lowest ranked behaviors were left off the list. If

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<sup>3</sup> Because a score of zero for lecture frequency means that teachers never lecture, the lecture responses were flipped so that a score of four indicates never. By inverting those responses, an average style score was attained easier.

an instructor did not consider a specific behavior an incivility, he or she indicated that in an optional comments box. I asked instructors whether each behavior occurred often (weekly), sometimes (monthly), seldom (once or twice per semester), or never. Another question allowed instructors to respond with any other incivilities they had encountered that semester or to expand upon specific or recurring problems.

The last two questions of the second survey followed up on the first survey by revealing more about teaching style and teacher immediacy. Kearney and Plax include as immediacy techniques “forward body leans, purposeful gestures, eye contact, and other behaviors that signal closeness” (95). James C. McCroskey and Virginia P. Richmond say in “Increasing Teacher Influence Through Immediacy” that students are more likely to respect, like, and admire a teacher who uses these friendly techniques and that students are less likely to resist “reasonable instructions or requests” from more immediate teachers (102).

The second student survey had questions similar to the instructor survey so that the teacher and student answers could be compared. Preliminary results indicated that teachers and students perceived incivility occurrences differently and disagreed on what they considered classroom disruptions. The first survey asked students how disruptive their English class was compared to their other classes that semester. Although many of their instructors noted a high occurrence of incivilities, most of their students said their classes had been disruption free. On the second survey, I asked students to indicate how often each activity occurred in the class and purposely omitted “disruption” as any part of the question. From there, I asked students questions about their instructor’s teaching style

so that their responses could be compared with that of their instructor. For the last question, I asked students to define “lecture” because of its many possible connotations to students.

As the surveys came in, I entered each response into a QuattroPro spreadsheet. Once the spreadsheet was complete, a statistical consultant transferred the data to SPSS, a statistical software package, and ran several tests to examine any correlations in the data. The results of the tests performed on instructor and student surveys are discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3 – DISCUSSION

While it cannot be stated that teacher gender combined with teaching style causes more incivilities, this study revealed a correlation between the frequency of incivilities and teacher gender combined with teaching style. Students of female teachers who use student-centered pedagogical methods (SCP) report more incivility occurrences than students of male teachers who use SCP. However, findings revealed that no correlation exists between classroom incivilities and teacher gender alone or teaching style alone, and incivility frequency is no different in composition courses than in business writing courses. Because composition and business writing courses are so similar, their results are presented here together.

Findings also support previous studies that found that students and teachers notice incivility occurrences differently. Getting two different takes on the incivilities that occur in each classroom via student and teacher survey responses seemed like a simple task at first. However, after the first student surveys came in, the results looked discouraging. When asked if disruptions occur in their classes, about eighty-nine percent of students reported that they never occur. While having perfect classes with no disruptions would be a luxury, these results were not expected. Further, after receiving responses from the second teacher survey, teachers were indicating that incivilities occur much more than their students first reported. Because of these contrasting results, on the second survey I asked students how many times specific activities occurred in their class, being careful to avoid using the word “disruption” and placing the most obvious incivilities (inappropriate comments and cheating/plagiarizing) at the end.



## What Constitutes an Incivility?

Although only about eleven percent of all students from the first survey say disruptions occur in their classroom, students with female instructors report slightly more disruptive classrooms than those with male instructors. When asked if their class had ever been disruptive, only 9.19 percent of students in male-taught classes report disruptions (10.80 percent was statistically expected), but 11.05 percent of students in female-taught classes report them (10.84 percent was expected). However, when asked about specific behaviors on the second survey, many more students report experiencing the specific incivilities.

One explanation for this contrast has already been explored by Boice – students and teachers often differ in their definitions of incivilities (464). On the second student survey, I asked students to indicate how often they had noticed each “activity” in each question, not each “disruption.” Although students might have noticed several activities occurring often, they might not have considered those activities as disruptions. Boice reports that both students and teachers dislike students who chat so loudly that the class discussion cannot be heard and students who confront instructors “with sarcastic comments or disapproving groans” (463). However, students and teachers disagreed about other incivilities that bother them (Boice 464). Further, teachers in Boice’s study noticed twice as many incivilities as their students noticed; specifically, teachers were more likely to notice when “students were not participating or being civil in class” (464).

Howard Seeman, author of *Preventing Classroom Discipline Problems: A Guide for Educators*, would agree that students and teachers sometimes differ in their definition

of disruptions. Seeman categorizes incivilities into those that disrupt a class and those that disrupt a teacher personally (43). He argues that a student seated in the back of the room doing his or her math homework during English class is not disrupting the class but disrupting the teacher as a person (45). Therefore, the teacher finds the student's behavior disruptive but the other students do not.

Teachers, too, differ in what they consider incivilities. Table 1 lists the percentage of teachers surveyed who classify each behavior as an incivility. The only behavior that all instructors agree upon is cheating/plagiarism. The three categories teachers marked least are students wearing caps, standing too closely, and daydreaming. Teachers mark "caps" because some students who wear caps push the bill over their eyes, making it convenient for the student to fall asleep or be inattentive without the teacher knowing. However, many more students wear caps who do pay attention. Teachers also say it is nearly impossible to tell when a student is daydreaming, making it difficult to know whether the student is being uncivil. Students standing too closely seems to be considered an incivility only when it is combined with another behavior such as inappropriate comments. One teacher from this study says that standing too closely depends on the context: "If it's a student who is trying to 'schmooze' me, or a clear-cut case of a power play/sexual harassment, it definitely is uncivil. If it's just a case of student cluelessness [. . .] I don't have a problem with it."

**Table 1: Teachers' Incivility Classification**

<b>Student Behavior in Class</b>	<b>Percent of teachers who classify behavior as an incivility</b>
Cheating/Plagiarism	100
Inappropriate Comments (sexist, racist, etc.)	95.65
Chatting with classmates during non-group work	91.30
Reading non-class-related material	86.96
Doing homework for other classes	82.61
Cell phone ringing	82.61
Not participating in group work	73.91
Tardiness	69.56
Sleeping	69.56
Interrupting others during discussion	69.56
Excessive absences	65.22
Leaving early	52.17
Hugging/Putting arm around teacher	52.17
Dominating discussion	52.17
Excessive requests for extensions on assignments	47.83
Complaining about assignments	47.83
Daydreaming	26.08
Complaining about exam difficulty	13.04
Standing too closely	8.69
Wearing caps	8.69

n = 24

Although most teachers agree that behaviors such as written or verbal inappropriate comments (sexist, racist, sexual, etc.) toward the teacher or another student constitute incivilities, teachers are sharply divided on other behaviors. Approximately half of the teachers surveyed for this study agree that the following behaviors are incivilities: students complaining about assignments, dominating discussion, leaving early, asking for excessive extensions on assignments, and hugging or putting their arm around the instructor. Of course, nearly half of the teachers also say the above behaviors are not incivilities. The same instructor who says students standing too closely depends on the context also says that if a student hugs her “as a congratulations,” she does not consider it an incivility. However, another teacher comments that she prefers “more professional distance than that.”

When asked to describe any other behaviors they considered incivilities, ten teachers responded. Two instructors mentioned general and complete student apathy toward the course. Some apathy-related incivilities listed are students “yawning openly during lecture and/or discussion,” passing notes, and listening to music through headphones. Other teachers mentioned students “complaining about the early time of day the class meets,” using foul language, ignoring written or verbal instructions, lying about absences, and “packing up books, etc., when it is close to time to go, but the teacher is not through with class.” Also making the list is students “calling a teacher by a name other than what he/she has requested.” In this specific case, a student addressed a teacher as “Mr. B” instead of Mr. Baker<sup>4</sup>. During my first semester as a teacher, a student once

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4 All names have been changed to protect the privacy of study participants.

addressed me as “Misty-licious.” Yet another teacher reports being called a “lazy, moronic bitch” during class.

Several teachers described specific incidents like the ones above when answering the question “Have you experienced any other incivilities, or would you expand upon a particular or recurring problem?” One teacher recalls having “a student who played with *Star Wars* figures in class.” Much more serious is the teacher whose student became violent: “I once had a student who was so unhappy with his grade on a paper (a C by the way) that he slammed a chair onto the floor, and it was flung in my direction.”

Just as serious are inappropriate written comments addressed to a teacher, and as Katherine Benson writes in response to a 1984 article written on university sexual harassment, the anonymity of most written comments reverses the power relationship between student and teacher (517). Benson argues that the current definition of sexual harassment is not enough to protect college faculty from harassment by students (518).

As it is, the University of Tennessee defines sexual harassment for its employees as

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature[. . .] when [. . .] such conduct is made [. . .] a term or condition of an individual’s employment,[. . .] is used as a basis for employment [. . .] decisions affecting the individual, or [. . .] has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual’s work performance [. . .] or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. (*Personnel Policies* 2-3)

Benson challenges this definition, saying that “contrapower harassment” (even in written

form) can occur when the victim has formal power over the assailant, as with teachers and students (517). Contrapower harassment, she says, is not often addressed in college personnel policies (517). Indeed, the University of Tennessee's policy does not clearly acknowledge the possibility of students harassing instructors either.

Nevertheless, harassment of teachers by students still happens. Elizabeth Grauerholz conducted a 1989 study at a large, public, research institution of how often teachers were sexually harassed by their students. By mailing questionnaires to every female instructor at her university, Grauerholz discovered that 47.6 percent of respondents ( $n = 208$ ) claimed to have encountered some type of sexual harassment (793). While sexist comments were the most prevalent (experienced by thirty-two percent of instructors), eight percent received written sexual comments (793). Some of the student respondents for this study also provided written sexual comments on their surveys. When asked to describe their classroom setting and whether all students have a good view of the teacher, one student writes, "All of the students have a good view of the teacher (which is a good thing because she's very attractive)." Another student who has the same teacher writes, "Yeah, she's looking good today \*wink\*."

These anonymous, written comments usually appear on teaching evaluations or on slips of paper left behind on desks when the class leaves, and they can damage the teacher's sense of authority and confidence, not to mention having detrimental effects on relationships with students (Benson 517). Grauerholz found that most of the offenses are directed toward female instructors by male students (795). Both of the examples above are written by male students, but female students can be instigators as well. A male

colleague of mine once received a final paper from a female student with a note attached to the front that said how much she enjoyed his class not only because of the content but also because he is “easy on the eyes.” Although I pointed out to him that the note was inappropriate, he did not consider it sexual harassment but instead found it flattering and cute.

As we can see, most teachers agree that they label activities as incivilities only after evaluating the situation and the student. How each teacher reacts in various circumstances makes for a multitude of different opinions about every category of incivilities. Just as teachers and students differ in what they consider incivilities, they differ in their reports of how often incivilities occur.

### **How Often Do Incivilities Occur?**

Overall, teachers in this study report more incivilities than students, confirming Boice’s 1996 results. Nancy F. Burroughs suggests that fewer students report incivilities because they are reluctant to reference an actual teacher (44). Burroughs asked students to recall whether their teacher in the class that met “directly before this class” ever asked them to do something they did not want to do (19); fifty-five percent of students said their teacher did not make such a request (26). Students in this thesis study were asked about the teacher in whose class they were completing the survey, which could have caused results similar to those Burroughs found.

Another explanation for fewer students reporting incivilities is the setup of the classrooms. Most classrooms have tables and chairs or desks in rows facing the instructor unless the teacher moves them. This type of setup allows the teacher to see all

of the students but does not allow all the students to see each other. Therefore, if the only student sitting in the last row is reading the newspaper, only the teacher will see that student. Even if all the students can see each other (as with a circle seating arrangement), most of them will be taking notes or focusing on the instructor or student who is speaking. Still, the four or five students near someone who is napping during class will inevitably notice. If that student snores, the entire class becomes aware of him or her.

In this study, teachers reported more occurrences than students of every incivility except students interrupting others during discussion, dominating discussion, and arriving late or leaving early. Students reported these activities more than their teachers perhaps because these activities are the most disturbing and/or noticeable to them. When students try to participate in class discussion but are cut off by another student or when they cannot participate because of one or two students who dominate discussion, they can become frustrated. Students are also drawn to the entrance or exit of another student regardless of how little the teacher seems to notice. Their concentration is momentarily taken away from the task at hand by latecomers or those who leave early.

The overall infrequency of classroom incivilities (CI) is encouraging. Neither students nor teachers report any CI happening weekly. Most CI are ranked below two, meaning that they happen less than once per month in most classes. However, teachers say their students chat with classmates during non-group work more than once monthly but not weekly (a 2.136 score).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, students say their classmates are tardy or leave

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<sup>5</sup> Teachers and students rated incivility occurrence by marking "Never," "Seldom (one or two times per semester)," "Sometimes (monthly)," or "Often (weekly)." Their responses were coded as zero, one, two, and three, respectively.



early more than once monthly (a 2.089 score). These are the two highest and only categories that teachers and students say happen more than once monthly.

When divided by course, the CI frequency score tends to stay within three-tenths of a point regardless of whether the course is business writing or composition. For example, the mean score for student interruptions in composition courses is 1.155. Similarly, the mean score for interruptions in business writing courses is 1.159. The only incivility that occurs significantly more in business writing courses is students working on homework for other classes (an increase of 18.66 percent). Overall, the frequency of CI does not significantly differ between business writing and composition courses. A gender effect in business writing courses could not be determined because all instructors teaching that course during the time in which the study took place were female (their styles did differ and are part of the final results).

Room conditions seem to have no effect either. Students in every class were divided on the comfort of the room's temperature, with most of them reporting the room as either too hot, too cold, or a mixture of the two extremes. Very few students said their classrooms were crowded, but most of them mentioned construction, traffic, and hallway noise as distracting. The timing of this survey contributed to the high reports of noise because construction or renovations are occurring near almost every campus instructional building. Many of the buildings face busy roads as well, and a relatively new campus bus system in addition to already clogged streets amplifies traffic noise.

## **Does Gender or Pedagogical Method Affect Incivility Occurrence?**

Both teachers and their students reported the frequency of specific incivility occurrences and answered questions related to teaching style. We have already seen that their incivility results differ, but, surprisingly, students also disagree about teaching style, not only with teachers but also within the sampled student population. The mean for each teaching style determinant is between a score of 2 and 3, except for discussion (mean 3.53). However, these means are deceiving. These mean scores do not indicate that students consistently agree that their teachers use group work monthly, for example. Instead, within almost every class, nearly one third of the students reported their teacher being at one extreme or the other. For example, in one class, eleven students (fifty-five percent) gave their teacher a score of zero or one for lecture frequency; yet in this same class, five students (twenty-five percent) gave the teacher a score of three or four for lecture. Eighty percent of the students in this class gave nearly opposite answers, making their reliability questionable, to say the least.

The most probable reason for such contrasting student results lies in the questions themselves. After asking students how often their teachers lecture, I asked students how they define “lecture.” Although many teachers would give the same response, few students agreed on the word’s meaning. The following responses are from one class but are typical of every class: “Teaching without student input or discussion”; “Professor explains concepts or chapters, providing examples, allows for discussion”; “Blah, blah, blah, page by page for book or PowerPoint.” Some students define lecture as a reprimand. Clearly, students report answers based on their definition of each term, and

their definitions are hardly similar in many cases. Although I did not ask students to define the other teaching style determinants, we can safely assume that those definitions differ as well. Because of the unreliability of student responses, I used teacher responses to determine teaching style.

Of the twenty-two teachers responding to the first survey, ten use teacher-centered pedagogy (seven females and three males), and twelve use student-centered pedagogy (ten females and two males). When examining the effect of teaching style alone on student disruptions, both the teachers' and the students' responses to disruption frequency show no relationship. The same can be said for examining the effect of gender alone. Neither teaching style nor gender, when considered alone, reveals a connection with the frequency of student disruptions. When teaching style is combined with gender, however, a connection to disruptions reported by students is obvious.

The Pillai's Trace<sup>6</sup> significance test reveals a significance score of zero for students' reports of disruptions. For teaching style, gender, and disruptions to be considered significantly related, the Pillai's Trace must be under 0.05. Overall, a relationship exists between gender, teaching style, and disruptions. However, the following specific incivilities reveal no relationship: students complaining about assignments, chatting with classmates during non-group work, and cheating/plagiarizing. These incivilities occur just as often for males as for females, regardless of whether they use student-centered or teacher-centered pedagogies. On the other hand, interruptions, lateness, cell phone rings, absences, inappropriate comments, students dominating

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<sup>6</sup> Pillai's Trace is a statistical test that examines relationships between dependent variables.

discussion, reading non-class-related material, completing non-class-related homework, or not participating in collaborative work are all incivilities that vary according to the teacher's gender as related to teaching style.

Figure 1 shows the means of how often students dominate discussion and is representative of the pattern of each significant incivility. When teaching style is teacher centered, disruptions occur no more in females' classes than in males. However, when teaching style is student centered, most incivilities increase in females' classes. Table 2 shows the mean of each significant incivility accounting for teacher gender and pedagogical method. Each incivility reveals at least a 12.2 percent increase from the male, student-centered mean to the female, student-centered mean.

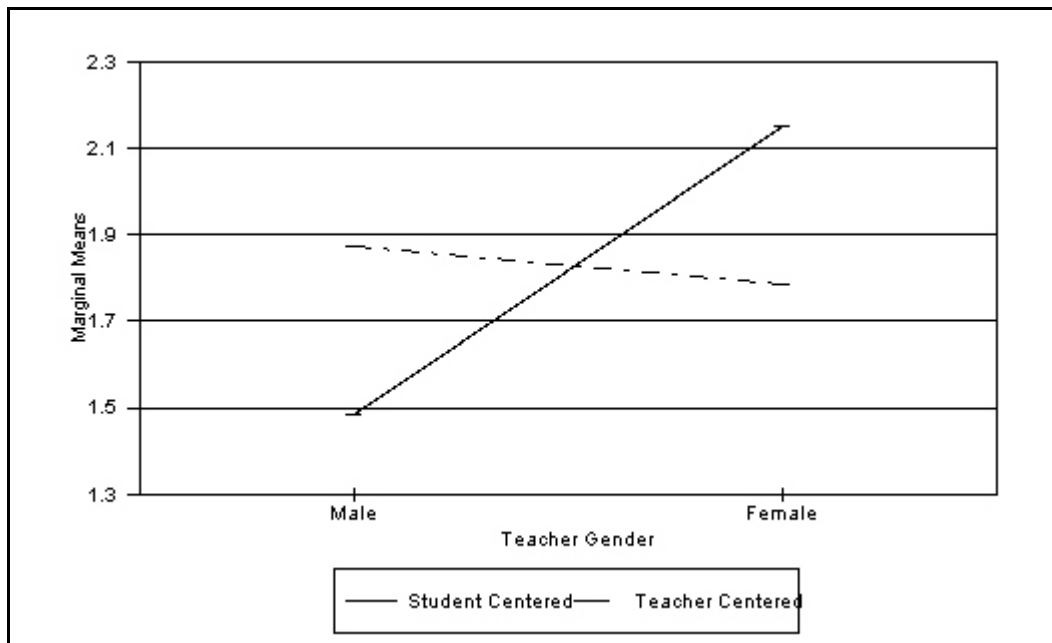


Figure 1. Frequency of Students Dominating Discussion

**Table 2: Effect of Teacher Gender and Teaching Style on Student Disruptions**

<b>Student Behavior in Class</b>	<b>Teacher Gender</b>	<b>Teaching Style</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>
Interrupting others during discussion	Male	S	.946	.156
		T	1.383	.138
	Female	S	1.356	.066
		T	1.323	.064
Tardiness	Male	S	1.351	.133
		T	2.106	.118
	Female	S	2.107	.057
		T	2.171	.055
Sleeping	Male	S	.514	.154
		T	1.191	.137
	Female	S	1.137	.066
		T	1.161	.064
Reading non-class-related material	Male	S	.189	.160
		T	1.064	.142
	Female	S	1.185	.068
		T	1.442	.066
Doing homework for other classes	Male	S	.108	.145
		T	.936	.129
	Female	S	.673	.062
		T	1.005	.060

**Table 2: Continued**

<b>Student Behavior in Class</b>	<b>Teacher Gender</b>	<b>Teaching Style</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Error</b>
Cell phone ringing	Male	S	.541	.149
		T	1.596	.132
	Female	S	1.171	.063
		T	1.249	.062
Excessive absences	Male	S	.378	.146
		T	1.681	.130
	Female	S	1.522	.062
		T	1.346	.060
Dominating discussion	Male	S	1.486	.149
		T	1.872	.132
	Female	S	2.151	.063
		T	1.783	.061
Not participating in group work	Male	S	.486	.145
		T	.787	.128
	Female	S	1.293	.061
		T	.995	.060
Inappropriate comments (sexist, racist, etc.)	Male	S	.000	.101
		T	.234	.090
	Female	S	.366	.043
		T	.253	.042

n (students) = 581

n (teachers) = 22

Despite the connection between teacher gender, style, and CI, many incivilities occur more often in teacher-centered classes. Regardless of gender, students say classmates are tardy, sleep, read non-class-related material, and have cell phones ring more often in teacher-centered classes. Female, teacher-centered instructors also encounter more students doing homework for other classes than their female, student-centered counterparts. One explanation for this increase is that all of the above mentioned CI, with the exception of tardiness, are passive behaviors and therefore somewhat “easier” to do in a teacher-centered class wherein students do not have to participate in discussion or group work as often as in a student-centered class.

More active CI such as students not participating in group work, making inappropriate comments, dominating discussion, and interrupting others during discussion occurs more in female, student-centered classes than in female, teacher-centered classes, perhaps because students have more opportunities to engage in these behaviors. If teachers never ask for student input or allow students to engage in discussion, students will not be able to interrupt others, for example. Nevertheless, male instructors in this study encounter more of these specific incivilities if they use a teacher-centered pedagogical method.

Kearney and Plax might say the reason for more incivilities in male taught, teacher-centered classes could be a lack of teacher immediacy strategies such as eye contact, smiling, and approachability. Their studies indicated that college students were more likely to comply with immediate teachers (Kearney and Plax 95). Further, McCroskey and Richmond found that non-verbal immediacy might have more of an

effect on student learning than any verbal control strategies teachers try (106). In this study, male teachers rated as slightly less approachable by their students than did females. Males rated 4.21, with 5 being most approachable, while females rated 4.45. Male teachers in this study also reported using immediacy techniques less often than females. I asked instructors to rate how much they use eye contact, smile, use student names, lean when talking to individuals or small groups of students, nod in recognition, or recognize verbally students' comments. Male teachers reported using eye contact and verbal recognition 8.3 percent less often than females. Males also saw a 12.66 percent decrease in response to smiling, a 14.66 decrease in using student names, a 15.66 percent decrease in leaning, and a 21 percent decrease in nodding in recognition.

It must be noted that the entire discussion of incivility frequency above involves students' reports of CI frequency, not teacher reports. I use student reports here because the Pillai's Trace significance score for teachers' reports of disruptions is 0.780 (again, to be statistically significant, this score must be below 0.05). The most likely reason behind the considerable difference between student and teacher accounts of CI frequency is sample size. The lowest standard error for teachers' responses, 0.194, is higher than any standard error for students' responses since only twenty-three teachers completed survey two. If one teacher reports abnormally high incivilities, the effect on the group will be greater than if one student reports abnormally high incivilities. Because 581 students returned survey two, and their answers are relatively similar, the standard error is smaller making the results more statistically reliable.



## CHAPTER 4 -- SOLUTIONS

The University of Tennessee (and most other colleges and universities) prints a conduct policy each year in the student handbook. Besides academic integrity, this policy addresses classroom disruptions. Teachers can refer disruptive students to this section of the handbook to back up any rules they apply to their classes. Tennessee's policy reads that dismissal from the university or "any lesser penalty may result from [. . . o]bstruction or disruption of teaching" (*Hilltopics* 11). The phrase "any lesser penalty" gives departments and instructors the freedom to choose their own class rules and accompanying penalties. How to choose to resolve classroom incivilities is the focus of this chapter.

If we experience classroom incivilities, Howard Seeman says we should first decide how we define discipline problems and what behavior is worthy of immediately stopping during class. Although Seeman's book is primarily geared toward kindergarten through twelfth-grade discipline problems, some of its discussions and solutions are applicable to college courses. Seeman formulated his recommendations over a twenty-year career in which he taught high school for six years at three different schools and substituted at ten different junior and high schools (xiii). He has also prepared student teachers for over eighteen years (xiii).

Seeman divides incivilities into categories, two of which are pertinent to college courses: discipline problems and personal disruptions. Discipline problems differ from personal disruptions in that discipline problems "often require immediate assertive action on the part of the teacher" (43). Personal disruptions, on the other hand, are "disruptive

to you as a person; not a teacher” (43). If teachers handle a personal disruption as a discipline problem, Seeman believes those teachers have committed a “miscall” and then become the source of a discipline problem themselves (43). He cites the example of a student sitting in the back of the room doing homework for another class. What we must consider, says Seeman, is whether the student is “disrupting the learning of the rest of the class”; if not, the teacher should not call attention to the student’s behavior in front of the class (45). Otherwise, the teacher interrupts, and risks losing, the attention of other students while trying to gain the attention of just one. Seeman does not, however, discuss whether a student doing non-class-related homework in the front row of a class constitutes a discipline problem. Other incivilities that Seeman would say instructors should not call out during class are students quietly sleeping or reading non-class-related material. Again, students engaging in this behavior usually are not disturbing their classmates or disrupting the learning process of anyone except themselves.

Other obviously disturbing incivilities are students chatting with classmates during non-group work, interrupting others during discussion, dominating discussion, refusing to participate in group work, making an inappropriate comment, coming late, leaving early, or letting a cell phone ring. All these activities immediately interrupt the learning process of other students.

Excessive student absences also interrupt learning, especially in English classes that thrive on discussion. The fewer student opinions and comments during discussion, the fewer ideas are being circulated, leaving the students present at a disadvantage. If the only three students who oppose an idea with which the rest of the class agrees are absent

on the day the idea is discussed, the discussion will become stagnant. Cheating may also affect others' learning if one student plagiarizes or cheats off of another student without that student's knowledge. In this case, a teacher would find it difficult to determine which student is to blame, especially if both students present conflicting stories.

How does Seeman suggest handling incivilities (discipline problems) that affect other students? He says "immediate assertive action" by the teacher is necessary (39). The student's behavior should be halted promptly. However, how to stop a CI is perhaps the most debated topic among teachers, and they employ various methods both to prevent and end CI.

### **An Ounce of Prevention**

I asked instructors surveyed for this study to list any measures they use to prevent incivilities. The most common technique is listing unacceptable behaviors on the syllabus – fourteen teachers say they do this. Most of them describe unacceptable behavior on their syllabus as any general disruptions that would detract from the learning environment. Several teachers say they stress professionalism and maturity and describe incivilities as rude and unprofessional. One instructor quotes part of the University of Tennessee's conduct policy, which states that teachers will not tolerate disruptive behavior.

However, other teachers list specific incivilities, ones that they find particularly bothersome. Tardiness, cell phone use, sleeping, chatting, and excessive absences show up on several teachers' syllabi. About inappropriate comments, one instructor says she ties them into her class content and goals when talking about ethos: "making offensive

comments either on a paper or in class hurts ethos and makes your audience stop listening to your argument.” Another teacher says that although he tries to use preventive measures, he feels “that you can’t address every single instance that might occur.” For this reason, he does not list specific incivilities on his syllabus. Instead, he, like other teachers, verbally goes over unacceptable behavior at the beginning of the semester, not necessarily listing every incivility but explaining to the students that civil behavior is expected of them.

Instructors also report addressing plagiarism and academic integrity both on their syllabi and repeatedly in class. To prevent cheating on quizzes or exams, Seeman suggests sitting or standing in the back of the room. He says students become nervous when they cannot see the teacher, and cheaters will usually turn around to look for the teacher (237). Unlike many other incivilities, academic dishonesty is most often accompanied by a penalty statement as well, such as “plagiarism may result in failure for the assignment, the course, or dismissal from the university.” Specific penalties for specific incivilities, however, are almost exclusive to plagiarism. Although most teachers say they forbid disruptive conduct, few of them have clear penalties for it. One teacher admits that while her syllabus is fairly detailed, she does not have a discipline policy. Other teachers use a participation grade that is affected by incivilities, but some of them question the effectiveness of using a participation grade as a CI deterrent: “[I] caution against excessive tardiness, though again, the class participation grade damage is the only penalty there. I also use class participation damage as penalty for sleeping in class, talking privately in class or reading outside material in class (all mentioned on the

syllabus).”

During my first year of teaching, I began using a participation sheet meant to prevent CI. Each student has his or her own class calendar that I give out and take up every class meeting. Each date includes a column for students to give themselves a participation grade for the day – between a zero and a four and eventually adding up to 100 possible points. At the end of each class meeting, students record their grade for the day and turn in the sheet to me. Then, I give a participation grade in a separate column. An extra column for comments allows me or the students to explain our grades when necessary. My grade is final, but most students seem honest and sometimes even deduct points for reasons of which I am unsure. When I notice a student sleeping in class, I deduct a pre-determined number of points and comment on the behavior in writing. When a student is absent, he or she receives a zero for the day.

The participation sheet is always on top of the students’ desks serving as a constant reminder of their expected behavior. By receiving a timely response (usually by the next class period) to their behavior, students do not have to second-guess their participation grade or wait until the end of the semester to know how it is affecting their final grade. These sheets also allow me to thank students for their insights during discussion. One disadvantage of using this method, however, is that the grade is exact and has no “wiggle room.” Many teachers prefer having a flexible participation grade that can raise or lower a final borderline grade. Some students also take advantage of this system by giving themselves the highest possible grade every day (the teacher’s grade can correct this, though).

Other teachers use similar passive CI prevention methods such as giving quizzes at the beginning of class that cannot be made up to deter tardiness. However, some teachers incorporate definite and sometimes detailed penalties. One teacher explains a detailed penalty list for specific incivilities:

My syllabus is very clear. [. . .] Every third tardy is an absence. Four absences are permitted before points begin to be deducted from their final grade. [. . .] I stress REPEATEDLY that all students should participate. To cut down on the one or two dominant students, I tell the class that once they say something, they need to wait a few minutes before they speak again so that others may have a chance to speak. (This has helped a lot!) My syllabus states that students who chat, sleep, read the newspaper, complete homework, or are ‘otherwise disengaged from the class’ (including in-group work and non-group work) receive an absence for the day and receive a zero on that day’s quiz.

Not only do teachers have preventive techniques for reducing incivilities, they also have methods to stop them once they begin to occur.

### **A Pound of Cure**

Being immediately firm and direct at the onset of a CI and telling the students they must leave if they will not be respectful of the entire class is a method of choice for two teachers. Several others say promptly shutting down CI by simply confronting the student during class in front of his or her peers is often enough. Although drawing attention to some students’ behavior is enough to stop them, instructors say they try to ignore students or end behavior quietly if it seems to be a bid for attention. For chatting, standing near

talkers while continuing with the lesson works well for many instructors. Others find using body language and eye contact effective. For exceptionally rude or obnoxious behaviors, one instructor says he simply stops talking and lets the other students control the behavior for him – by being silent or letting the culprit “know that she or he has my attention – and not the kind they want!” Similarly, a teacher reports that although she expresses a general disapproval for politically incorrect comments, the class will often respond to them before she has a chance.

Still other teachers make general comments addressed to the entire class instead of an individual, and if the problem persists, most teachers talk to the student after class or set up an office appointment to try and ascertain the problem and resolve it. If that does not work, one teacher says she makes an appointment with the director of freshman composition and the student, which is an option open to all teachers.

Perhaps the most interesting response I received from teachers about techniques they use to prevent and stop incivilities is something the teacher calls an “Eejit<sup>7</sup> List.” The teacher keeps a list of “embarrassing (but polite) behaviors” that a student must perform if he or she is caught being uncivil. When a student breaks a class rule, he or she must choose a number, which corresponds to an activity from the Eejit List. This teacher maintains that although this is the first time she has used the list, “so far this semester only one person has had to do jumping jacks while reciting the alphabet. It seems to work!”

Although the teacher above seemingly has no hesitations about confronting

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7 “Eejit” is a slang term for idiot, used most often in the United Kingdom.

students and enforcing penalties, others find it difficult to follow through. “Be strict now, and let them find out I’m a nice person later,” says one instructor. She recalls that her strategy worked for a while, but eventually students caught on and took advantage of the holes in her system. Now, she tries daily to control the few uncivil students in her classes. Another teacher has similar problems: “I must say I hate confrontation as a rule, and I find it difficult to have to face these remedies, though I also find it less and less difficult to do so with every new semester.” Here, experience offers itself as an advantage.

However, Boice’s study says that experienced teachers encounter just as many high levels of CI as novices (469). Boice explains that in his study, students “could usually spot novice teachers, and they felt inclined to go easier on them” (469). High levels of CI in lower level classes taught by senior faculty may also be related to course material: non-majors and students being taught critical thinking skills were generally more uncivil (Boice 470).

Since composition and business writing instructors cannot alter their levels of CI by enrolling more English majors or teaching to a test, they must look for other ways to cope with incivilities. Many critics mention the same techniques as University of Tennessee instructors, but instructors in this study have not exhausted the possibilities. Below is a list of what other critics have suggested as ways to cope with incivilities:

- Jennifer Meta Robinson stresses pausing frequently to ask for student questions and to check student comprehension, being sure to listen to students (123). These frequent pauses allow students to ask questions if they are confused, which could



prevent passive incivilities like doing homework for other classes or sleeping.

When students become completely lost in a lecture, they see no point in trying to pay attention to something they do not understand.

- Ferganchick-Neufang offers these suggestions: dressing professionally and asking to be addressed as Mr./Ms., Dr., or Professor (28). These behaviors set clear boundaries between teachers and students so that students do not misconstrue the relationship between student and teacher. This helps the relationship remain professional.
- Boice recommends “decreasing students’ anonymity by knowing and using their names” (456) and “arriving at classes early, for informal chats with students” (479). These suggestions are forms of teacher immediacy and let the students know their instructor is approachable. During these informal chats, some students might also ask questions they would not otherwise ask. Some students will not make the initiative to set up an office meeting, but this pre-class forum gives them the opportunity to get answers.

In the February 2003 edition of the Associated Writing Program’s job bulletin, Professors Diana Hume George and Christopher Origer offer some precautionary measures to help avoid the possibility of sexual harassment. They recommend leaving the office door open during meetings and note that if meeting off campus, a public place is better, but not having off-campus meetings is best (27). George and Origer also advise leaving a paper trail of conversations, e-mails, or phone calls with the student (27). Most important, they say, is establishing clear relationship boundaries with students so that they

are not confused about their level of intimacy with their instructor (27). To prevent students from misunderstanding the student/teacher relationship, some of the instructors in this study say they never give their home phone numbers to students. One teacher insists she “would never ever answer the phone if a student number were indicated on [her] caller ID.” Two instructors also mentioned refusing to answer “chatty” e-mails. The same teacher who says she screens her calls has a policy against excessive e-mails: “I have told my students that every student gets so much of my out-of-class time per semester, so they will want to save some of the excessive e-mailing for later in the semester. I had to tell this to a student who e-mailed me seven times in about three hours.”

Being direct and letting students know when they are crossing lines is important (George and Origer 27), not only to possible sexual harassment cases but also to teachers who feel physically threatened by students. A male instructor in this study reported having two cases of student hostility, and both of them happened during office visits: “In each instance, I let the student talk too long; by allowing them dominance in the conversation, I also gave them tacit permission to become more and more wildly. I’m more likely to end the conversation now. I’ll listen to questions, ideas, unrelated stories, or general weeping for a long time; but I shut down aggression.” If a teacher suspects an office visit might become hostile, he or she can also consider asking a colleague to join in the meeting or to linger outside the doorway.

Responding accordingly, just as the teacher above now does by promptly shutting down aggression, could be an important method of controlling incivilities. Boice

describes how teachers with higher levels of immediacy address CI when they occur. Corresponding with several instructors' responses in this study, Boice noticed that teachers with fewer CI treat disruptions respectfully, paying careful attention to students' actions and reacting accordingly (477). One instructor for this study responded that "respect is the key [. . .] to getting students to 'behave' in and out of class." For example, when students began to nod and/or yawn in one of the classes Boice observed, the teacher responded, "I'm seeing some big yawns and abandoned note-taking. I'm sorry. I'm losing you. Let's all stand and stretch for a minute and then we'll backtrack a bit" (477). In this case, the teacher notices her students' possible incomprehension or boredom and acts upon it by meeting their needs instead of becoming angry.

Similarly, a teacher in this study says, "Whining only happens once. I call it out in front of the class, telling them that I invented that and have the copyright on it. We laugh, and they don't try it again." This teacher uses humor to point out and stop incivilities. Boice says that "socially skilled, positive responses" to incivilities like the one above help calm classrooms (478). Becoming visibly angry and yelling at a student who is working on his or her math homework during class could do just the opposite of calming; students who were otherwise engaged might then become disengaged or at least distracted.

Addressing incivilities positively may also benefit teachers in ways other than preventing a breakdown in the lesson for the day. Boice's study revealed that optimistic responses can "reengage students who had been distancing themselves from the class [. . .] [and] provide breaks in the action, even helpful cues for redirection or changed pacing"

(478). Similarly, Kearney and Plax found that not all opposition is destructive to the learning environment. Instead, resistance “becomes constructive when on-task behaviors are enhanced” (86). Other ways in which student disruptions may enhance on-task behavior are students interrupting the instructor for clarification, helping neighboring classmates with comprehension, or openly challenging someone else’s ideas, even the instructor’s (Kearney and Plax 86).

Despite the various ways in which teachers and researchers suggest handling CI, most teachers in this study agree that each disruption is a judgment call, depending on the incivility and the student. Several consecutive absences because of recovery from a minor surgery will usually be handled differently from absences because of a hangover, for example. And if a normally attentive and involved student falls asleep and snores in one class, that case might be handled differently, too, because the behavior seems out of character.

Aside from all the above suggestions for ways to cope with CI, college teachers are hardly prepared to deal with incivilities. Professor of Education Sam Minner of East Tennessee State University says college instructors lack proper teacher preparation, and he may be right (2). If college teachers want information about classroom disruptions, they often have to seek out that information themselves, and their seeking begins usually only after they have already experienced some kind of discipline issue that they could not easily resolve.

Boice explains that teachers are reluctant to admit they experience disruptions in their classes because their colleagues might consider those disruptions an indicator of

incompetency (454). Admitting to classroom management problems is embarrassing for many teachers, and instead of tackling the problem to find possible solutions, Boice says faculty often blame “deteriorating conditions of teaching on democratic tendencies to admit underqualified students into college” (456). Instead of placing blame or ignoring the problem, Boice suggests using a form of medical doctors’ practices of acknowledging annoying and detrimental patient behaviors (454). Medical professionals, he says, “are coached in ways of reducing the stress and burnout that come with manipulative, controlling, uncooperative patients” (455). Physicians and therapists learn to “understand the causes of resistance [. . .] balance caring with objectivity [. . .] and [. . .] find more peer support” (Boice 455). Of course, in order to find peer support, medical professionals must discuss openly with colleagues their problems.

The University of Tennessee’s English department began to acknowledge CI by conducting an open panel in January 2003 entitled “Incivilities in the Classroom: How to Cope.” The panel was comprised of a professor, an assistant professor, a lecturer, and a graduate student (myself), all of whom are female. The session began with an overview of much of the material presented in the first chapter of this thesis. Then, each person on the panel discussed specific behavior problems and invited audience members to participate. While the session was relatively productive as far as instructors acknowledging a problem exists, the group did not come to any conclusions about what should be done to prevent or stop CI.

While panels like that one are a good start, one departmental colloquium is simply not enough to help instructors contend with CI, especially in the case of new teachers who

are just beginning to test various CI prevention methods. Instead of an annual or bi-annual discussion, how to handle CI should be a frequent topic in departmental teaching workshops, in “how to teach” courses for graduate students, and in teacher mentoring programs. These issues should also be addressed at the university level by perhaps reminding students of expected professional behavior during freshmen orientation and during dormitory move-ins. Campus newspapers and the convenience of mass e-mail also make it feasible for higher administration to issue reminders throughout the year to both instructors and students.

Utah State University has developed a “Student-Instructor Expectations” document that emphasizes student responsibility (Meeks, et al. 205). This contract (see Appendix C) is printed in the freshman English handbook, which every student enrolled in the class is asked to purchase. Teachers go over the form at the beginning of the semester and have the student either sign a copy of the form to ensure they have read it or they give quizzes on it (Meeks, et al. 206). The contract calls for a “student-instructor partnership” and stresses the roles of both students and teachers in keeping a class civil (206-7). The document contains a list of what students should expect from an instructor and what an instructor should expect from the students, and the list for both is quite similar (207-8). Expectations call for equal respect, clear and courteous communication, promptness, and a willingness to “work on solving problems if they arise” (207-8).

Utah State’s behavior contract then gives students a list of behaviors that will help them succeed in English class and other college classes. Some of these behaviors follow:

- ◆ read the assignments carefully and critically.

- ◆ participate in discussions about readings [. . .]
- ◆ participate in peer reviews [. . .]
- ◆ respond respectfully to instructor and classmates [. . .]
- ◆ come to class on time and with a positive attitude. (208)

Students also have at their disposal in this contract a catalog of several steps that an instructor may take if a student disrupts the learning environment so that the student knows exactly what might happen should he or she be disruptive. At the end of the document is an “Addendum/Handbook Awareness” form that provides space for student initials beside every expected behavior as well as for the student’s signature (Meeks, et al. 210-11).

The effectiveness of Utah State’s contract has not been reported as it was only enacted two years ago. However, this type of contract seems useful and should be considered by other colleges and universities. Not only could this contract be used in freshmen English classes, but it could also be filed and used for a back-up in other classes as well. For example, the University of Tennessee’s freshmen sign a form at the beginning of the year whereby they acknowledge knowing what constitutes plagiarism and pledge not to commit it. This sheet is kept on file in the event that other departments need it for a case of plagiarism. In the same way, a behavior contract could prove useful to the entire college instructional community.

## CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

The assumption before this study was that both male and female teachers who use student-centered pedagogical methods (SCP) would experience more incivilities. This hypothesis was challenged when gender was examined independently and no statistical significance was found. However, when gender is combined with teaching style, a significant pattern exists showing an increase in incivilities in classrooms with female, student-centered teachers. Although female instructors using SCP encounter more incivilities than males using SCP, the most significant difference in occurrences is only 38.13 percent (for excessive absences). Further, the frequency of other incivilities shows no such correlation when controlled for gender and teaching style.

While the overall results are discouraging for female teachers using SCP, research by Kearney and Plax, Boice, and others shows that SCP and high levels of teacher immediacy seem to support better learning and lower CI levels than lecture models or low levels of teacher immediacy. However, as this study found, female teachers who use student-centered pedagogical approaches seem to encounter more CI. One possible explanation for these contradictory results is hypothesized by McCroskey and Richmond. They propose that a point might exist “at which the teacher can have ‘too much’ immediacy” (109). Applying a heavily student-centered approach might just be that point for female teachers. Before female instructors alter their teaching style in attempts to reduce classroom incivilities, more research should be done to determine if a threshold exists where the influence teaching style has on learning converges with its influence on CI. At what point do the drawbacks of SCP outweigh the benefits and require a change?



Based on the results of this study, most female teachers who use SCP can expect to experience more classroom incivilities than their male counterparts. Knowing these expectations, they can prepare CI prevention methods and have possible solutions in place to stop them when they occur. Similarly, professors of courses that prepare graduate students to teach can use this study to inform their students. Going beyond the English department, women's studies programs might find these results worth examining as a sample of gender attitudes among college students. This study can also help administration at the University of Tennessee (and possibly other colleges and universities) to recognize CI as a problem. Chapter four of this thesis can prove useful to most college teachers in that it provides many methods to prevent and stop CI.

### **Possibilities for Future Research**

As we have seen, critics like Ruzich and Hindman, McBride, and Barrett say that students generally expect a female instructor to exhibit maternal qualities – to be friendly, helpful, warm, and encouraging. Forty percent of students in this study report expecting their English teacher to be female, while only about three percent of them expect a male instructor. Therefore, the students in this study might also be expecting maternal qualities from their English teachers. An intriguing possibility for future research is examining how single parenthood affects student perceptions of their teachers and if incivility occurrences will change if their parental perception changes. Often, children of single parents see their mothers as both the archetypal maternal figure and the stern disciplinarian. The same can be said for single fathers: they must take on maternal qualities. With the high rate of divorce and increasing number of single people adopting

children, this idea is worth exploring. If students' parental expectations change, could that also affect the frequency of incivilities?

Future research could also involve other types of higher education institutions such as community colleges or small, private, liberal arts colleges. The atmosphere at these colleges is quite different from that of a large, research institution. Smaller colleges usually have a different student makeup and much more close-knit community wherein many students will already know each other and perhaps even their teacher before they meet for the first class session. Results from a large university study might not, then, prove the same for smaller colleges.

Similarly, expanding the study beyond English courses should also be explored. These results could be lower-level English course specific and might not repeat themselves when the study is performed in lower-level biology courses or higher-level English courses, for example. Regardless of the subject genre, having more participating teachers will help the reliability of a study because more teachers equal a larger and more heterogenous sample. In this study, for example, the effects of teacher gender and teaching style on incivilities in business writing courses could not be examined because all business writing teachers at the time of the study were female.

An important but more difficult research endeavor stemming from this study is to determine *why* more incivilities occur in female, student-centered classes. The purpose of this study was to assess only whether CI are more prevalent in those classes. This research was exploratory and descriptive, not explanatory. Many complex reasons probably exist to explain what this research uncovered, but much more research should be

done to determine those reasons. Critics such as Ruzich speculate the reason to be that female teachers have an indulgent mother stigma that makes them more vulnerable to CI, but in order to prove that, students' thoughts and feelings would need to be explored in depth.

This thesis study confirms past research on classroom disruptions and adds to it information about a previously untouched area of study by examining teaching style in relation to disruptions. Its use of English classrooms as study sites is not new, but the inclusion of only composition and business writing courses had not been examined. Future extensions of this study should include more technical writing courses (with both male and female teachers) to further compensate for the lack of research in that area.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A: LETTERS**

**Appendix A.1  
Instructor Interest Letter**

September 22, 2003

**To: English 101, 102, and 295 instructors**

**From: Misty McGinnis Bailey**

**Re: Participation in a thesis study**

I am an M.A. candidate at the University of Tennessee working on a thesis that will explore the effects of student-centered pedagogy versus traditional pedagogy on incivilities in the college composition and technical communication classrooms.

I am looking for several composition and technical communication instructors to be participants in my thesis study. Participants should be anyone currently (fall 2003) teaching a composition or business writing course. The study will consist of several instructor questionnaires over the course of the fall and spring semesters. The time required to participate is minimal, with each questionnaire taking only about 10 to 15 minutes, at most, to complete. Participants would not be asked to respond to more than three questionnaires during the semester, and participation during future semesters is optional. Most of the surveys will be available only online.

The instructors would also need to be willing to distribute approximately two questionnaires to their students throughout the semester. These surveys will be paper since students will often opt not to complete online surveys.

**If you are interested in participating, please write your name and e-mail address on the lines below and return it to my mailbox (under non-teaching) by Wednesday, October 1, to receive more information about the project.** If you have any questions, please contact me via e-mail at XXXXXXX@utk.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

---

Name

---

E-mail

## **Appendix A.2 Instructor Information Letter**

Misty R. McGinnis Bailey

May 11, 2004

Dear Instructor:

I am glad to hear that you are interested in participating in my thesis study. As you have already read, the study involves discipline issues in the composition and technical communication classrooms. Let me take this opportunity to tell you a little more about the project.

This thesis began as an annotated bibliography about female authority in the classroom and how student-centered pedagogy affects that authority. It evolved into a fascination with what Bob Boice calls "classroom incivilities" in his 1996 article of the same name in *Research in Higher Education*. Classroom incivilities, or CI, are usually thought of as elementary or high school problems, but we all know they carry over to the college classroom.

With this thesis study, I will attempt to determine whether an instructor's approach to teaching affects how often incivilities occur and to what degree -- whether student-centered pedagogy seems to invite more discipline problems than a traditional, lecture-style pedagogy. The student-centered classroom often relies on collaborative learning, process writing (peer review, revision, etc.), and discussion, while the traditional classroom relies more on teacher lectures and product writing. I will also look at how instructors approach incivilities, both before and after they occur, and how incivilities affect the classroom atmosphere.

The surveys/questionnaires to which you will be asked to respond will consist of demographic, multiple answer, and short answer questions. All surveys will be conducted online using Zoomerang Internet software. You will not be asked to respond to more than three questionnaires this semester, and you will have the option of whether to continue the study after fall 2003. No names will be used in the thesis, only the demographic information you supply. I will be the only person with access to this information.

I would also like for your students to respond to two questionnaires throughout the semester. I will supply the paper questionnaires for you to distribute. Please let the students know that their participation is optional.

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this thesis study. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me. If I do not hear from you, I will assume you still want to participate in the study, and I will send you material as I get it ready.

Sincerely,

Misty R. Bailey

**Appendix A.3  
Instructor Survey Distribution Letter**

May 11, 2004

**To: Thesis study participating instructors**

**From: Misty McGinnis Bailey**

**Re: Last student survey**

In the attached envelope(s) are enough surveys for your class(es). Please distribute them before the semester ends, when class time allows. The surveys should take no longer than five to seven minutes for most students to complete. You might want to distribute them near the end of class and have a student designated to collect them after you leave, to conserve time. Feel free to look at the form, but please do not look at students' answers to the questions. If you would like, I will give you a list of their responses after your classes are over. Student surveys are simply to find out what the students perceive in class -- what they are thinking -- and I hope their answers will help determine what might cause classroom incivilities.

**Technicalities:** Students may use a pen or pencil. Please let them know that they will not be penalized in any way for not completing the survey and that this survey is not an evaluation of you. Inside the folder, the student administering the survey will find an instruction sheet. This sheet explains that the student should take the envelope to a campus mail drop (drop sites listed) on the day the survey is given.

Again, thank you, and enjoy a couple of treats on your walk to class.

**Appendix A.4**  
**Student Direction Sheet**

Dear Student:

Please seal and deliver this envelope **TODAY** to one of the following campus mail drop boxes:

**Ayres Hall** – Just inside the central doors on the main floor

**Communications Building** – 1<sup>st</sup> floor dock area inside doors leading to stairwell

**Andy Holt Tower** – P1 level garage loading dock

**McClung Tower** – P2 level parking garage near elevators *OR* Room 311

**Perkins Hall** – Next to Perkins 101 door

**Stokely Management Center** (Spam Can) – Basement level inside stairwell

**University Center** – Post Office

Also, please find a small thank you for doing this taped inside the bottom of the envelope.  
Thanks!!

## **APPENDIX B: SURVEYS**



**Appendix B.1  
Instructor Survey 1**

1. Which courses are you teaching this semester? English 101 English 102  
English 295

2. How long have you been teaching? First semester 9-12 years  
1-2 years 13-15 years  
3-4 years 16-19 years  
5-8 years 20 or more years

3. What best defines your rank? Graduate Student Teacher – M.A. Track  
Graduate Student Teacher – Ph.D. Track  
Instructor/Lecturer  
Assistant Professor  
Associate Professor  
Professor  
Other

4. Gender Female Male

5. Age 21-24 32-35 44-47 56-59 68-71  
25-27 36-39 48-51 60-63 72 or older  
28-31 40-43 52-55 64-67

6. Have you ever been nominated or won a teaching award? If so, please list.

7. Which of the following do you consider to be classroom incivilities? Choose all that apply.

Sleeping/Nodding in class	
Chatting with classmates during non-group work	
Reading material non-class related	
Wearing caps	
Complaining about assignments	
Interrupting others during discussion	
Dominating discussion	

Complaining about exam difficulty	
Not participating in group work	
Working on homework for other classes	
Cell phone ringing	
Inappropriate comments toward students or teachers, written or verbal (sexual, racist, sexist, etc.)	
Excessive absences	
Tardiness	
Leaving early	
Daydreaming	
Excessive requests for extensions on assignments	
Cheating/plagiarism	
Standing too closely	
Student hugs and/or puts his or her arm around you	

8. Please describe anything else you consider to be an incivility.

9. Which of the following do you consider to be discipline problems OUTSIDE the classroom? (i.e. in your office, hall, English department office)

Excessive office visits (more than 3 per week)	
Excessive phone calls (more than 4 per week)	
Calling you at home	
Excessive e-mails (more than 5 per week)	
Sends angry and/or threatening e-mail	
Emotional outbursts	
Other, please specify	

10. Please describe the techniques you find most useful in preventing and/or stopping incivilities.

11. Please rank the following behaviors in order, with 1 being the behavior that bothers you most and 5 being the behavior that bothers you least.

Tardiness/leaving early	
Unpreparedness	
Cell phone ringing	
Talking while others talk	
Not paying attention	

12. What do you believe to be your strongest areas when teaching?

13. What areas of your teaching do you believe could use some work?

14. How often do you use the following teaching techniques in your classroom(s)?

	Often	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
Lecture				
Discussion				
Group work				
Peer review/editing				

**Appendix B.2  
Instructor Survey 2**

1. What classes are you teaching this semester?      English 101  
    English 102  
    English 295
2. Gender      Male  
    Female
3. Age              21-24              35-40              54-59              68-71  
    25-28              41-46              60-63              72 or older  
    29-34              47-53              64-67
4. How long have you been teaching?      First semester              9-12 years  
    First year                      13-15 years  
    1-2 years                      16-19 years  
    3-4 years                      20 or more years  
    5-8 years
5. What best defines your rank?      Graduate Student Teacher – M.A. Track  
    Graduate Student Teacher – Ph.D. Track  
    Instructor/Lecturer  
    Assistant Professor  
    Associate Professor  
    Professor  
    Other

6. Please rate how often each incivility has occurred in your 101/102/295 classes this semester. If you do not consider specific behaviors incivilities, please indicate that in the comments box.

	Often (weekly )	Sometimes (monthly)	Seldom (1 or 2 x per semester)	Never
Sleeping/Nodding in class				
Chatting with classmates during non-group work				
Reading material non-class related				

Groaning or huffing at assignments				
Interrupting others in discussion				
Dominating discussion				
Not participating in group work				
Working on homework for other classes				
Cell phone ringing				
Inappropriate comments toward students or teachers, written or verbal (sexual, racist, sexist, etc.)				
Excessive absences				
Tardiness				
Excessive requests for extensions on assignments				
Cheating/plagiarism				
Student hugs and/or puts his or her arm around you				

7. Have you experienced any other incivilities this semester, or would you expand upon a particular or recurring problem?

8. Do you use any preventive measures, i.e. listing rules on the syllabus or addressing them on the first day of class? If so, please describe them.

9. How often do you do the following in class?

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Make eye contact with students				
Use student names				

Smile				
Lean forward while talking to individual students or small groups				
Nod head				
Verbal recognition of what student says/does (uh-huh, etc.)				

**Appendix B.3**  
**Student Survey 1**

Student Survey 1

Please **DO NOT** write your name on this form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! On future forms, you might be asked to repeat some of these general questions. This is only to protect your anonymity and privacy as a participant. Please be honest and thoughtful in your answers; your instructor will NOT see them.

For most questions, you will simply circle the appropriate answer. Others will ask you to respond in short-answer form.

1. Your gender                      Male                      Female

2. Your age                      17-19    20-22    23-25    26-28    29-33    34-40    40 or older

3. What year are you? Freshman              Sophomore              Junior    Senior    Graduate

Non-degree seeking

4. Did you have an expectation of the gender of your instructor? If so, what did you expect?

Male                      Female                      Didn't have an expectation              Already knew

5. How would you rank your instructor's level of professionalism compared to your other instructors this semester, 1 being least professional, 3 being average, 5 being most professional?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

6. How would you rank your instructor's level of approachability compared to your other instructors this semester, 1 being least approachable, 3 being average, 5 being most approachable?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7. How would you rank your instructor's knowledge of the subject compared to your other instructors this semester, 1 being least knowledgeable, 3 being average, 5 being most knowledgeable?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5





## Appendix B.4 Student Survey 2

### Student Survey 2

Please **DO NOT** write your name on this form

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study! You will be asked to repeat some of the general questions from the first survey you answered. This is only to protect your anonymity and privacy as a participant. Please be honest and thoughtful in your answers; your instructor will NOT see them.

- |                       |          |                    |        |        |       |
|-----------------------|----------|--------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1. Your gender        | Male     | Female             |        |        |       |
| 2. Your age           | 17-19    | 20-22              | 23-25  | 26-28  | 29-33 |
|                       | 34-40    | 40 or older        |        |        |       |
| 3. What year are you? | Freshman | Sophomore          | Junior | Senior |       |
|                       | Graduate | Non-degree seeking |        |        |       |

#### 4. How often have you noticed the following activities occurring in this class?

##### Students interrupt others during discussion

Often (weekly)	Sometimes (monthly)	Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)	Never
----------------	---------------------	-------------------------------------	-------

##### Students came in late/left early

Often (weekly)	Sometimes (monthly)	Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)	Never
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##### Students audibly complained about assignments

Often (weekly)	Sometimes (monthly)	Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)	Never
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##### Students fell asleep/nodded

Often (weekly)	Sometimes (monthly)	Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)	Never
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##### Students read unrelated material (newspaper, magazine, etc.)

Often (weekly)	Sometimes (monthly)	Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)	Never
----------------	---------------------	-------------------------------------	-------

##### Students did homework for other classes

Often (weekly)	Sometimes (monthly)	Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)	Never
----------------	---------------------	-------------------------------------	-------

##### Cell phone ringing

Often (weekly)	Sometimes (monthly)	Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)	Never
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##### Excessive absences

Often (weekly)                      Sometimes (monthly)                      Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)                      Never

**Students chat with classmates during non-group work**

Often (weekly)                      Sometimes (monthly)                      Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)                      Never

**One or two students dominate discussion**

Often (weekly)                      Sometimes (monthly)                      Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)                      Never

**Students did not participate in group work**

Often (weekly)                      Sometimes (monthly)                      Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)                      Never

**Student made an inappropriate comment toward another student and/or teacher  
(racist, sexist, etc.)**

Often (weekly)                      Sometimes (monthly)                      Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)                      Never

**Students cheated/plagiarized**

Often (weekly)                      Sometimes (monthly)                      Seldom (1 or 2 times this semester)                      Never

5. How often do you have the opportunity to participate in in-class group work?

Often                      Sometimes                      Seldom                      Never

6 How often do you have the opportunity to engage in class discussion?

Always                      Often                      Sometimes                      Seldom                      Never

7. How often does your instructor “lecture”?

Always                      Often                      Sometimes                      Seldom                      Never

8. How do you define “lecture”?

**APPENDIX C: “STUDENT-INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS”  
CONTRACT**

## Appendix C

### “Student-Instructor Expectations” Contract (Meeks, et al. 206-11)

#### **Student-Instructor Expectations: Toward a Civil and Productive English Classroom Environment**

##### Student-Instructor Partnership

Much of the work instructors and students do will be in class; therefore, the student-instructor partnership is central to a positive learning environment. Both the instructor and the student are responsible for maintaining a classroom atmosphere where courtesy and goodwill prevail. This means that instructors and students are kind, listen to what others have to say, and do not “put others down,” or show disrespect. In some classes, instruction and communication carry over to cyberspace (e.g., e-mail, Internet); the same expectations for behavior extend to that learning environment.

Students and instructors can maintain a positive learning environment by constantly working to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships. If at any time the student or teacher feels that the relationship needs improvement, he or she should approach the problem appropriately, by saying something like, “It seems that there is a problem here. I would like to talk to you and see if you agree.” The university expects that participation in collaborative class management will contribute to students’ development as citizen-scholars.

##### What Students Can Expect from the Instructor

There are many things instructors can do to help set a positive tone for the classroom:

- ◆ Respect and show courtesy for students regardless of their gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation.
- ◆ Offer assistance to students when needed.
- ◆ Listen attentively when students “have the floor.”
- ◆ Listen to suggestions for improving the classroom environment.
- ◆ Arrive on time and prepared.
- ◆ Inform students of changes in the syllabus.
- ◆ Work on solving problems if they arise.

## What Instructors Can Expect from Students

There are many ways in which students help set a positive tone for the classroom:

- ◆ Respect and show courtesy to classmates and the instructor regardless of gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation.
- ◆ Ask for assistance when needed.
- ◆ Listen attentively when another student or the instructor “has the floor.”
- ◆ Listen to suggestions for improving the classroom environment.
- ◆ Arrive on time and prepared.
- ◆ Make note of changes in the syllabus.
- ◆ Work on solving problems if they arise.

## Behaviors That Promote Success and Quality Work

Students who succeed and produce quality work in English 1010, as well as other university classes,

- ◆ read the 1010 Handbook (syllabus) and the instructor’s addendum thoroughly.
- ◆ complete assigned homework on time.
- ◆ read the assignments carefully and critically.
- ◆ participate in discussions about readings.
- ◆ complete written assignments before due dates to compensate for possible technical difficulties.
- ◆ participate in peer reviews.
- ◆ offer collaborative assistance to others.
- ◆ respond respectfully to instructor and classmates.
- ◆ show consideration and respect for students who are different in gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

- ◆ come to class on time and with a positive attitude.
- ◆ attend to and write down the instructor's in-class statements about assignments.

### English Department and University Policies Regarding Nonproductive Behavior

The following behaviors are considered violations of University Standards as prohibited by *The Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University* (1993), article V, Section 3: "Obstructing or disrupting instruction, research, administration, meetings, processions, or other University activities including its public service functions on or off campus, or authorized non-university activities on University premises. This includes aiding, abetting, or encouraging another person to engage in such activity. . . .

"Wrongfully inflicting physical or mental duress, harm, or abuse upon another person, including but not limited to verbal abuse, threats and intimidation, sexual violence, arson, and murder" (10-11).

If an instructor finds that a student's behavior obstructs or disrupts classroom instruction or out-of-class conferences, the instructor may:

- ◆ Give an oral warning.
- ◆ Request a conference with the student.
- ◆ Give a written warning.
- ◆ Request a mediator.
- ◆ Ask the student to complete a behavior contract.
- ◆ Refer the student to the Counseling Center.
- ◆ Ask the student to meet with the University Discipline Officer.
- ◆ Ask the student to meet with the Vice President of Student Services.

These methods will be used as the instructor sees fits, bearing in mind that the goal during a dispute is a quick, fair, and amicable resolution of the difficulty whenever possible.

### Addendum/Handbook Awareness

Your instructor may ask you to initial, sign, and turn in this form:

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and understand the class addendum.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I must arrive in class on time.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that attendance in this class is part of my grade and I will make every attempt to come to class.

\_\_\_\_\_ I realize that this class requires daily reading and writing assignments, and I am committed to doing my homework.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that participating in class is part of my grade. I understand that means working in groups and volunteering responses to questions asked in class, as well as appropriate contributions to discussions.

\_\_\_\_\_ I know that I am responsible for assignments as outlined in the English 1010 Handbook and in-class statements made by my instructor regarding assignments and the due dates.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that when I have specific questions regarding my grades or participation, it is my responsibility to discuss them with my instructor outside of class.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that it is not acceptable to disrupt or obstruct instruction in the classroom with inappropriate behavior such as talking when the instructor or other students are talking.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that a good learning environment is the result of a partnership between the instructor and the student, and I am willing to make an effort to make that partnership a positive one.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I must show courtesy during conferences with my instructor.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **VITA**

Misty Renee McGinnis Bailey was born in Knoxville, TN, on August 20, 1979.

She was raised in Washburn, TN, and graduated from Washburn School in 1997. From there, she went to Walters State Community College and received an A.S. in general studies in 1998. Bailey received her B.A. in English in 2001 and M.A. in English in 2004 from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Bailey is currently teaching English at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, TN.