

*The Differences Between Male and Female University Students' Perceptions of  
Classroom Incivility in Taiwan*

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0334

The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

Abstract

Classroom incivility is a major concern in higher education today. The current studies about incivility classroom behaviors focus on reducing incivility in the university classroom, or remedial civility training. Yet little studies have been done of student perceptions of incivility in the classroom, and most of relatively studies doesn't reveal that how statistically significant difference can be showed by students in the different gender. The major purpose of this study is to describe the difference between university male and female students' perceptions of classroom incivility in Taiwan. In order to answer the research question, this study try to understand what is the most incivility behavior that interrupted students in class? And how is the frequency of incivility behaviors under students' perception? Moreover, following by the above questions, the researcher surveys the frequency and perception of student's incivility behaviors under students' gender. As a result, the most disturbance to least disturbance of classroom incivility behaviors by all in top fourth of mean rating of students' perceptions are at the same score by male and female. The result indicate that the mean rating of felt the disturbed behaviors is female over male, and the mean rating of the frequency behaviors is male over female. This analysis indicated that although male sense more incivility behaviors in the class, male could endure more incivility behaviors than female, and felt less disturbed.

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## **Purposes**

The classroom incivility has been an annoyed behavior to students, because they can't study effectively under a disturbed environment. Over the past decade, lot of research studies have been written about the incivility behaviors (Boice, 1996; Jacoby, 1999; Lunday, 2007; Thomas, 2003). The incivility behaviors is not a new phenomenon in class, and has been complaints by both faculty and students (Braxton & Bayer, 1999; Luparell, 2003; Schneider, 1998; Gonzales & Lopez, 2001; Amanda, 1994; Hall, 2004; Clark & Springer, 2007). Hirschy and Braxton (2004) surveyed that classroom incivilities may affect the academic and intellectual development of students negatively and reduce their commitment to their college or university, both of which can impede a student's progress toward his or her educational goals.

Like most of universities in the western countries, classroom incivility has become an issue and a problem among university in Taiwan. Students have repelled about incivility behaviors and yearn for a civil classroom instead. Therefore, a lot of Taiwan universities have established some policies to prevent classroom incivility. While administrative problems have gradually been resolved, the issue of university students' perceptions of classroom incivility received little attention in Taiwan. Although classroom incivility is not a new idea, its contents and factors are still unclear. The identification itself involved individual perception. The previous studies from the Western countries have found that ( Nordstrom, Bartels, & Bucy, 2009) classroom incivility is more/less frequent depending on students' gender. For example, a female student can require a quiet classroom environment for studying, but a male student may consider this is not the interfered factor, and a male student may not be interrupted by student loud or prolonged side conversation, but a female student may, vice versa.

Researchers (Nordstrom, et al., 2009) have emphasized that, in order to promote classroom learning atmosphere, it is very important and crucial to understand students' perceptions of classroom incivility, particularly the relationship between students' gender and their perceptions of classroom incivility. Therefore, the major purpose of this study is to identify university students' perceptions of classroom incivility by examining a random sample of university students in Taiwan. In addition, this study investigates the relationship between students' gender and their perceptions of classroom incivility.

## **Perspectives**

Classroom learning environment is both the physical and psychological environment where teaching and learning occur (Boice, 1996; Bruffee, 1999). However, there are a lot of unexpected factors involved from begin to end of the learning process. The incivility behaviors is one of them and becoming more frequently in the classroom (Boice, 1996; Feldman, 2001; Hernandez & Fister, 2001; Meyers, 2003; Seidman, 2005). Basically, there are two sides of research on incivility behaviors, one is how to decline the incivility behaviors. On the other side of research, educators have explored the identification of incivility behaviors. The aim of this study is latter, which focus on the student's view about incivility behaviors, and there are few researches have been done about student perceptions of incivility behavior in class, so

this study try to answer two question: What is the most incivility behavior which interrupted students in class? And how is the frequency of incivility behaviors under students' perception?

## **Method**

Participants. A sample of 2075 undergraduates from a public university in the east coast of Taiwan was invited to fill out the survey questionnaire for this study in December 2010. The analysis was based on useable responses from 1304 (62.84%) of the invited sample. The sample consisted of 543 (41.6%) male, 755 (57.8%) female, and 6 who did not identify their gender. They included 337 (25.8%) freshmen, 357 (27.4%) sophomores, 402 (30.8%) juniors, 205 (15.7%) seniors, and 3 not identified. With regard to the course attribute, 283 (21.7%) of them are in the field of Humanities, 227 (17.7) in Education, 187 (14.3%) in Fine Arts, 217 (16.6%) in Business Management, 152 (11.7%) in Sciences and Engineering, and 238 (18.3%) in General Education.

Measures. The instrument used in this study was the Students' Perceptions of Classroom Incivility Behavior (SPCIB) questionnaire derived from the previous studies (Amanda, 1999; Appleby, 1990; Boice 1996; Feldmann 2001). The SPCIB consisted of 27 student behaviors generally regarded to be uncivil from a review of existing research studies on student incivility in the classroom. Uncivil was defined in the survey as behavior that is "not in accordance with the unity of the classroom community or is contrary to the well-being of the classroom community, including behaviors that distract the instructor or other students, disrupt classroom learning, discourage the instructor from teaching, discourage other students from participating, derail the instructor's goals for the period, etc." Participants were asked, "To what degree do you consider the following behaviors to be uncivil?" They used a 5-point Likert-type scale to evaluate each behavior (1 = not uncivil at all to 5 = extremely uncivil). Participants also were asked to rate how frequently they observed each of the 25 student behaviors in classrooms using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never to 5 = frequently).

Analytic Strategy. In order to examine the relationship between student's gender and their perceptions of classroom incivility, individual mean scores were calculated for each subject on each item of classroom interaction. These means constituted the dependent variables in the study. The independent t test was performed to test the mean difference in students' perception scores of classroom incivility between male and female students.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study shows some interesting and noteworthy findings. First of all, the ranges of the means of students' perceptions of the most disturbance to least disturbance of classroom incivility behaviors are 2.55 to 3.97. The findings indicate that the most disturbance to least disturbance of classroom incivility behaviors by all in top fourth of mean rating of students' perceptions are after warning from teacher keep loud or prolonged side conversations, after warning from teacher keep loud or prolonged side conversations, rude behaviors to classmates, and use defiant words. Those four disturbed classroom incivility behaviors are at the same mean rating by male and

female. However, female students score higher than male students on the perceptions of the disturbance. This maybe because the female are more sensitive and tend to be interrupted by environment factors compared to their counterparts.

To compared the most disturbance to least disturbance of classroom incivility behaviors by student gender in significantly different, there are five items are significantly different, repeatedly come to class late, repeatedly leave to class early, chat, pick up belongs before class dismiss, hand down the notes to classmates. Although all the five behaviors are incivility and showed offended, however the first two behaviors offended to the teacher, the other three behaviors are not only offended to the teacher, but also disturbed the students to learning. The result indicate that the mean rating of felt the disturbed behaviors is female over male, and the mean rating of the frequency behaviors is male over female(See Figure1). This analysis indicated that although male sense more incivility behaviors in the class, male can endure more incivility behaviors than female, and felt less disturbed.

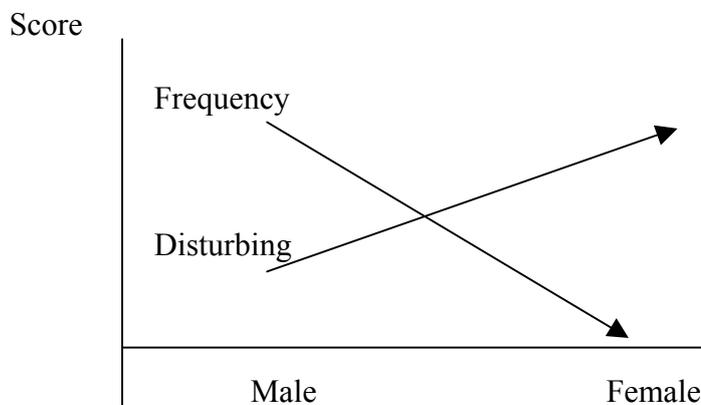


Figure1 the difference between male and female students

### Significance of the Study

The findings have implications not only for university students and teachers sense for the frequency of incivility behaviors in the class, but also for researchers interested in developing explore what difference between male and female react about it. This study suggests that we should aware the different perceptive may happen by gender. Moreover, it is crucial for the teachers to realize that since the different perceptive exist, then the different strategies may take by gender. Last but not least, could this research involve the culture factors in it? The common traits of Taiwanese universities, male students are mostly encouraged to be actively in the class, however, the female are usually not in the same expectation. That means, it is useful to supplement the survey data with observational endeavors in further research.

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