

## 1

## Civility, Incivility, Bullying, and Mobbing in Academe

*Warfare is common and no less deadly because it is  
polite.*

*J. Victor Baldridge*

Have people been uncivil lately? Are they acting like playground bullies? The interpretation of what is civil and what is uncivil is in the perception of the receiver, not the sender (Barash, 2004). That is what makes the behavior so insidious, because the meaning behind the interaction could be anything from complete sincerity to sarcasm to flagrant manipulation. It could also be harassment, incivility, passive aggression, or bullying as translated by the receiver. The intent of the sender is insignificant.

Lynne Truss (2005) remarked recently about a prevailing feeling of selfishness, disrespect, self-absorption, and rudeness in America. She believed that if it is *my* place, then we follow *my* rules. She also posited that the increase in rudeness has precipitated an increase in books like Steve Carter's *Civility* (1998), Mark Caldwell's *A Short History of Rudeness* (1999), and Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000). Long before those were published, however, Robert Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man* (1976) offered ways of explaining and fixing the problem of incivility. That it was a societal problem before he wrote about it and likely was a problem among faculty is indeed a reflection of society at large.

## 4 FACULTY INCIVILITY

Sennett (1976) defined *civility* as “the activity which protects people from each other and yet allows them to enjoy each other’s company” (p. 264). However, he also said that to be civil in polite society requires assuming a facade. This facade separates one from the typical power and conflict normally encountered and avoided in work situations. Goffman (1959) said “colleagues . . . share a community of fate,” as they speak the same language and get to know each other’s strengths and weaknesses (p. 160). The civil colleague maintains poise and self-control around colleagues or uses “impression management” to save the situation (p. 160). In other words, we use facades to maintain civility even as adverse feelings may be brewing beneath the surface.

Ferriss (2002) characterized civility with words like *decorum*, *manners*, *deportment*, and *politeness*. Furthermore, civility is also influenced by personal affect or reaction to the actions of another. The lack of these positive reactions and interactions indicates the presence of incivility. The presence of policy and legislation on sexual harassment is positive and has indeed decreased such acts, but not necessarily eliminated them. Uncivil acts still occur between academics, and perhaps more often than we care to admit.

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Why do people bully? People’s insecurity in themselves, lack of self-confidence, jealousy, inability to deal with life problems they may not wish to share, inability to deal with problems others know about but which they cannot deal with. — Cheryl

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Ferriss (2002) argued further that civility or incivility is mitigated or filtered through culture, that is, customs, folkways, mores, and other sociocultural traditions and expectations. Each culture has these, and so does each workplace, where they differ from place to place and even department to department. Learning the subtle nuances of an academic culture is daunting because some of the

information is purposefully hidden from view despite indications to the contrary. To keep cultural acts hidden is a subtle form of incivility; secrecy permits control, and control contributes to a culture of incivility.

Historically, civil behavior was maintained by social control mechanisms. Citizens came to realize that civility toward one another superseded disagreement. In order to maintain the culture, organization, society, and social order, decency and mannerly behavior prevailed despite frequent splintering and minor differences (Peck, 2002). Although conceptual and theoretical debates are necessary and healthy for personal and professional development, we suggest that a facade of social order and control often masks an underlying current of the general rudeness that prevails throughout society in general and the academy in particular.

### Civility in Context

Civility/incivility has been interpreted as a semantic differential. This continuum configuration calculates the position of civil versus uncivil by factoring in the cultural setting, which dictates how well the civil response is accepted or tolerated with regard to one's occupational role or position in the hierarchy. We can determine just how civil or uncivil an action is by monitoring our tolerance level for each particular act as it relates to us. In terms of affect, Ferriss (2002) found those who are more civil practice greater self-control, self-restraint, and self-discipline.

In his study, Ferriss (2002) found age or lifetime to be a factor in civility, as incivility has increased slightly from the previous generation. Civility increases as one ages but does not necessarily increase as a result of education level or environment. Consider this: our parents were likely civil to the Fuller Brush man, the Hoover vacuum cleaner salesman, and the Avon lady. Some of us still remain civil to telemarketers when they call and interrupt our dinner. We are civil largely based on sociocultural custom. However,

## 6 FACULTY INCIVILITY

telemarketing, by the very nature of its anonymity and our personal devaluation of this occupation, seems to encourage people to be less civil to these workers than our parents were to them or were to door-to-door salespeople decades ago. Over time it is possible that by standards of previous generations, we are uncivil, but by Generation Xers and future generations, our current behaviors will probably be judged less harshly than we judge ourselves.

Members of various social groups judge behavior as proper or improper, civil or uncivil. One's current position or power base in an organization or group determines the vantage point from where one comes to judge what is civil or uncivil behavior. A determination that nothing is wrong, however, probably indicates that nothing will be done to correct any incivility (Montgomery, Kane, & Vance, 2004), allowing the uncivil act to gain acceptance. The act may be subtle or even hidden from view, but it is there nevertheless. As Ferriss (2002) pointed out, what is civil and proper in one place or time may not be as civil and proper in another place or time. Goffman (1963) called this "situational determinism." We cannot stress enough that regardless of time, place, or intent, the definition of the situation as civil or uncivil is left up to the victim of the action, not the perpetrator or actor (Thomas, 1923).

Sennett (1976) acknowledged two types of incivility: the incivility of charismatic leaders who act different once they are in power and the incivility of an insular, inclusive, fraternal, communal group faced with intrusion from new members unlike themselves. He added,

Outsiders, unknowns, unlikes, become creatures to be shunned; the personality traits the community shares become ever more exclusive; the very act of sharing becomes even more centered upon decisions about who can belong and who cannot . . . Fraternity has become empathy for a select group of people allied with rejection of those not within the local circle. This rejection

creates demands for autonomy that the outside world itself changes . . . . Fragmentation and internal division is the very logic of this fraternity, as the units of people who really belong get smaller and smaller. It is a version of fraternity which leads to fratricide [pp. 265–266].

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Academe seems to be a breeding ground for uncivil behavior toward outsiders. This is the case only if those already in the “fraternity” get to vote on whether you meet with their approval. It has been my experience that it was and still is the men at the institution who refuse to accept my unorthodox, albeit no less legitimate, qualifications. I did not graduate with the “proper” degree, and my previous experience was not within the acceptable range to be included as a member of the “fraternity.” Because of this, the “boys” refuse to acknowledge my education background and continually dismiss my contributions and abilities. They are, you understand, superior and in control, and I am different. Furthermore, they did not get to “vote” on me. In a unique situation, I was offered my current position without a vote of the department. — Kathy

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Phillips and Smith (2003) define *incivility* as being “rude or inconsiderate,” showing disrespectfulness, and not maintaining “deference and demeanor” in public (p. 85). They also distinguished between multiple types of incivility, such as the physical incivility of vandalism and the social incivility of fighting. These were further distinguished from a third type, *invisible incivility*, which violates norms of social behavior but is less easily detected or acknowledged.

Incivility is bound to happen. After all, we are strangers meeting other strangers. We might regard some actions as uncivil because they contrast sharply with our traditional cultural norms of behavior, even though the same behavior is regarded as acceptable in another cultural setting.

## Defining Incivility in the Workplace

Salin (2003) noted that specific work environments and specific characteristics of workers attracted to a work environment have the potential to spawn and support aggressiveness. A hostile work environment is the result of power imbalances that lead to workplace aggression, camouflaged aggression, workplace incivility, or workplace bullying. Salin offered additional behaviors to illustrate the phenomenon—silent treatment, micromanaging, demotion, and being given less responsibility—and distinguished between physical violence and interpersonal issues. When these behaviors persist over a long period of time, a bully or mob culture is allowed to develop and flourish (Westhues, 2005).

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Because their incivility was not checked early, the “brotherhood” has continued to bully, dictating who gets first choice of courses, class times, and class locations years later. — Kathy

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Montgomery, Kane, and Vance (2004) asked, Who has to be incensed and/or how many people have to be incensed for a behavior to be considered uncivil? For persons like faculty who share the same social climate and live by the same social norms, one would presume that they as insiders would evaluate behaviors similarly. However, personal and social thresholds for incivility differ. It depends on who violated whom, when, where, how, how often, and why. More specifically, if the actors are from the same group, the violation is viewed differently than if they are not. If the violator is an administrator, for instance, and the victim is not, the violation may not be perceived as uncivil by the administrator. By the same token, administrative inaction wittingly or unwittingly sanctions future perpetuation of incivility not only between subordinates and superiors but perhaps among peers as well.

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I was an outsider to education, not having come the traditional route. I was not initiated in the higher ed culture. I had to relearn what to do. Being in a school of education is like being in high school. They [faculty] form cliques just as they did in high school. They never left that environment. They did not have their beliefs and assumptions tested in another environment. People who are successful in schools are system dependent — it lets them know what, where, and how. They cannot deal with uncertainty . . . Things were predictable each day; even disruptions were predictable. — Caroline

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Over time, we may be desensitized to certain acts of incivility that would incense a newcomer. Some behaviors may exist but be invisible to those not looking for or expecting them. Thompson and Louque (2005) discussed accounts of demoralizing incidents, racial slurs, cultural insensitivity, and constant criticism from administrators in their published research study. In the “culture of arrogance,” leaders often overlook or dismiss opportunities to resolve problems because socialization into that culture dictates otherwise. Problems were often ignored, covered up, or claimed to be nonexistent in the first place.

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The organization is only as stable as the people at the top. So these people try to get you to believe *you*, not the organization, are the problem. But the organization *is* the problem. It becomes normalized, and you begin to believe you are abnormal. That is how people in this organization were acting, and I was not picking up on the cues as quickly as I should have. — Caroline

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Montgomery, Kane, and Vance (2004) found females were more likely than males to identify particular behaviors as inappropriate.

They found that male and female faculty have differing thresholds for inappropriate or uncivil behaviors. In most cases, those who identify with the victim by race or by gender were more likely to side with the victim. The same sympathy principle applied to the perpetrator.

### **Civility and Incivility in Academe**

Campbell (2000) charged that faculty have “flawed moral compasses, from ethical codes gone awry” (p. 154). Unless we realize that, it will destroy academe, he predicted. In fact, faculty have “tenaciously held and zealously protected” the status quo (p. 161). We explore that contention further.

#### **Incivility in the Department**

Hume (2003) pointed out that department faculty have become so civil that they often fail to recognize that some tenured colleagues no longer contribute their fair share to teaching, research, or service obligations. Perhaps other ill feelings toward colleagues are subverted, that is, channeled through other avenues. In the meantime, department colleagues pretend all is well through their civility and adopted facade, for to call the deadwood issue into question might be thought of as mean-spirited by colleagues. It would, however, be well intentioned, given that noncontributing faculty use up limited resources and perhaps do students a disservice.

Hume (2003) further characterized faculty as possessing political self-interests. To push those self-interests would mean that other individual faculty interests would be invaded. This would not support the thin veil of civility. Such well-meaning idealistic suggestions would be summarily dismissed, and the colleague making the disparaging suggestion would perhaps be ostracized as “different,” “difficult,” or “not collegial” by senior colleagues.



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During a departmental meeting to award level 2 graduate faculty status to a candidate, another faculty member and I voted no, while the majority voted yes. We argued that the candidate did not meet the requirements, but the spokesperson for the majority reminded us that the candidate had a family and had just assumed a mortgage; therefore, if we did not support him, he would have to leave the university, and he had a family to support. I argued that he was not doing his job, and I think there were more people in the department who agreed with us dissenters but were afraid to buck the spokesperson. As a female viewed as trying to “destroy” the career of a male colleague, and a home owner at that, I was labeled bitchy and vindictive and as holding a grudge against this man. — Abby

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### **Incivility and the Classroom**

Braxton and Bayer (1999) noted that incivility in the classroom has risen, but they do not attribute total blame to student brashness or general increases in campus or societal violence. They contended that the classroom behavior of faculty toward students may be problematic and precipitous. For example, they regarded chronic tardiness and absenteeism, off-color humor, demeaning comments, public humiliation, and gross profanity in the classroom as incivility. Their premise was that if students were uncivil to faculty, perhaps it was linked to unprofessional faculty behavior because there is little regulation for classroom teaching.

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I was teaching in a doctoral cohort my first year. One woman in the cohort screamed at me about how bad my syllabus was and how much work the course would be and that I should talk to my

## 12 FACULTY INCIVILITY

colleagues and they could tell me how to put a course together. . . . I was the interloper who entered after the cohort had been together for five semesters. Only one woman in the whole class supported me. They wrote e-mails to my chair and my mentor and my colleagues. The students are the customers, and maybe they are right. I was never able to control the class. I give students extensive feedback on papers, and I am the queen of turnaround time. The students in this class asked why I bothered . . . . Did I really believe they were going to read *my* comments? My scores in the class evaluation were low, and they said I should be fired. . . . My colleagues supported the student, whom they said was very bright and a good student. — Caroline

Faculty in the Braxton and Bayer (1999) study experienced difficulty agreeing on classroom behavior, that is, what one faculty member saw as unacceptable another dismissed as absent-minded or eccentric. Faculty responses to behaviors differed by gender, status, and tenure, which made it difficult to reach consensus on unacceptable classroom behaviors. Seasoned faculty with rank, status, and prominence tended to impose higher standards for faculty and felt comfortable enforcing them, perhaps through the peer review process. They concluded that if teaching is regarded as less important than research, incidents of classroom incivility would be expected and infractions stood a chance of being overlooked or dismissed. In other words, the culture and the structure of higher education would continue to tolerate and absorb such inappropriate behavior.

In both undergraduate and graduate school, I saw a number of incidents in which students were hostile to the professor. I just never understood it. How could they [the professors] tolerate it? I won't and don't tolerate hostile and uncivil behavior [from students]. However, if nothing is done about student incivility, then that lack of accountability emboldens others to go ahead with their bad behavior. — George

I recall one graduate class, this guy all semester made snide comments, and finally I had had it. I asked him to stay after class. I sat him down and asked, "Please let me know what you are thinking because I don't understand all the snide remarks, and I think it could be better if you talked to me about it." He said, "We *all* hate you, I haven't learned a thing, blah, blah, blah." So I just said, "Thank you for your feedback, as I was curious as to what you were thinking." Instead of coming to me for help, he came at me with anger. — Allison

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### Incivility as Manipulation

Braithwaite (2001) defined aggressive behavior as largely "an outward expression of an internal emotion or an action created by circumstances" (p. 22). He reported that a few people find aggression (even passive aggression) helpful as a means to manipulate others to achieve desired ends. Primary causes of aggression include an innate human quality stemming from frustration, a learned behavioral response to positive or reinforcing stimuli, and an environmental response or societal stereotype that dictates unequal social status. In fact, workplace aggression includes behaviors such as exploitation, coercive power in management, machismo, power plays, and defamation of character (Hannabus, 1998).

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I was responsible for giving a faculty colleague a piece of information. I also had an associate dean ask for another piece of information, so I attended to the dean's request before that of my colleague. The colleague came into my office and went on a tirade about how I dragged everybody down. She said I did not do my responsibilities. Every button I had was pushed by her tirade, and she was probably justified because I didn't get her work done in the manner in which she wanted it done. I felt I needed to do the associate dean's request

## 14 FACULTY INCIVILITY

first. This incident affected me so deeply that I did not feel comfortable working with her ever again. I respected her work, but the fact that she treated me this way was too much for me to handle. — Lucille

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Workplace aggressors compete, gossip, divulge confidences, offer criticism publicly, patronize, find fault, and overload colleagues with work. Hannabus (1998) tried to make the distinction between bully and bossy and reached the conclusion that if either gets results for the organization through the use of these aggressive behaviors, it will be regarded as effective and remain in vogue. Some bullies project charming personas in public situations to cover their covert vindictiveness.

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A colleague has passed me in the halls or on the stairways many times and never speaks to me; he puts his head down or does an about-face and heads in the other direction. However, when I see him pass other colleagues, especially the men, he speaks to them. On one occasion when he was walking with a campus administrator, he spoke to me. I hate being patronized by this guy, then being ignored, and, what is worse, I don't think he thinks he is doing anything wrong. — Abby

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### Incivility as Retaliation and Indifference

Lawyer Ann Franke (2005) insisted that workplace retaliation would “surpass discrimination as the most severe employment problem in higher education” (p. B14). She considered retaliatory harassment as incivility. Common reactions include seeking support from others by stressing just one side of the whole story, ignoring or dismissing the complaint, and marginalizing the

complainer. Retaliation can take several forms that are camouflaged in the workplace, such that it is difficult for the accuser or accused to justify or refute.

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The ex-superintendent found out I didn't support him when he was hired. He was angry because of the questions I asked him in the interview that he was unable to answer. When I returned after my leave, I had no graduate courses to teach, although I had had them before I left. I was blacklisted from teaching grad courses. I have undergrads. I am no longer listed in the grad catalogue. I am a full professor and tenured and at the institution over a decade. — Ben

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Namie and Namie (2003) alluded to the fact that in some work environments, bystanders know what is going on, but they usually do nothing to help victims for fear of retaliation. A culture of incivility begins to support the bully through reinforcement and eventually becomes engrained in the existing academic culture. Targeted victims usually internalize the problem, isolate themselves, and choose not to share privately or air publicly instances of bullying, mobbing, incivility, or harassment. Whether the silence is totally out of fear or out of embarrassment, frustration, or importance is difficult to determine. Silence is also associated with feelings of powerlessness and lack of knowledge on navigating the university grievance process, if there is one.

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My institution tends to reward and promote those colleagues who demonstrate incivility . . . I see coalitions developing across campus, within departments, and among those who have designs for power/control. I think that making others uncomfortable and feeling

## 16 FACULTY INCIVILITY

unwelcome is a method of silencing voices. Who wants to put up with that crap in a toxic workplace? It is far easier to just go to one's office, shut the door, and get the work done. It's lonely and frustrating, but it is the path of least resistance. — George

I just decided to do my own thing. After trying to navigate through the institutional grievance process and learning it was really designed for staff rather than faculty, I chose to just quietly do my job, avoiding collegiality and active participation in department and division activities, be they academic, social, or otherwise. I just became other focused, *other* meaning "other than the internal culture." I focused on my class and my research, and that's it. — Kathy

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### Incivility as Bullying

These behaviors are indicative of bullying (Appleton, Briggs, Rhatigan, & Anderson, 1978):

- Indulging in self-promotion
- Showing intolerance or disrespect to others
- Giving lame alibis or rationalizations for actions
- Procrastinating to avoid fixing relationships or chasms
- Demonstrating temper and hostility during individual or group confrontations
- Demonstrating poor knowledge of human and interpersonal relations
- Indulging in professional misconduct such as breaking confidentiality, harboring rumors, and playing favorites

- Avoiding taking a stand when one is needed to correct a wrong
- Employing ineffective strategies to correct problems and inadvertently causing more problems

Bullying challenges the limits of civility. To be civil means to be able to balance and contain personal desires, especially when these desires are in conflict with one another. In times of conflict, stress, or extreme pressure, however, the bully aligns personal interests to his or her own agenda in the belief that he or she is acting for the greater good of others or the organization. The individual acting as a bully lacks self-control and directs his or her irrational emotions toward others, who receive and interpret the behavior as an uncivil act (Peck, 2002).

We think of bullying as child's play (Henry, 2004; Namie & Namie, 2003; Olafsson & Johannsdottir, 2004) and not something that adults do. But child bullies do not always outgrow their bullying behavior.

Abdennur (2000) and Coyne, Craig, and Smith-Lee Chong (2004) see bullying as inherently societal and organizational, such that adult bullies are encouraged by the institution to continue this behavior. Specifically, the same tension that manifests itself as uncivil behavior on the playground exists in the greater society. In fact, these researchers believe it is gaining increased presence in the workplace. In addition, the same dynamic that permitted the bully to reign on the playground is probably present in the organization and the culture to sustain it there, but in a more grown-up manifestation, perhaps under the guise of civil facades. Klein (2005) stated that as on the schoolyard, bullies are impotent without supporters or a support system.

Prolonged workplace incivility and bullying can sustain a bully culture. In addition, in academe, the governance structure and

the hierarchical organization may serve as an incubator for the establishment or maintenance of a bully culture.

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If no one listened to that deceitful committee chair or if someone investigated deeply enough to uncover what really happened in those committee deliberations, there would have been no one supporting the unscrupulous behavior and, consequently, no reason to continue the behavior. The consequent incivility by those who “trusted” the bully and themselves became bullies would never have festered. — Kathy

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Perhaps tensions rise over the regard for status as a sought-after commodity. Tension may simply grow out of upheaval and change (Ferris, 2004; Hoel, Faragher, & Cooper, 2004; Hoel & Salin, 2003; Olafsson & Johannsdottir, 2004). Changes at work can add to that pressure, especially if workers feel they, their values, and their position are being threatened (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999). With the introduction of corporate culture into academe, decreased support for public higher education from the states, and budget tightening on all campuses, tensions can mount (Washburn, 2005; Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005). We couple this with the fact that faculty and their sandbox politics compete for status, rank, merit pay, travel money, and space in journals.

Deliberate or unconscious, verbal or nonverbal, isolated or repetitive, uncivil acts of bullying like these are unwanted by their victims (Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003; Ferris, 2004; Lewis, 2004; Abdennur, 2000; Hadikin & O'Driscoll, 2000; Henry, 2004; Heim & Murphy, 2001; Hoel, Faragher, & Cooper, 2004; Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; McCarthy & Mayhew, 2004; Olafsson & Johannsdottir, 2004; Peyton, 2003; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002; Smith, Singer, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003):



## Civility, Incivility, Bullying, and Mobbing 19

- Manipulating and intimidating the seemingly powerless
- Divulging confidential information
- Insulating and protecting negative behaviors while ignoring positive contributions
- Assigning overloads coupled with unrealistic expectations
- Using public humiliation, insults, innuendo, rumor, slander, libel, sarcasm, backstabbing, talking down to, and lies
- Excluding, alienating, marginalizing, ostracizing, silencing, patronizing, and scapegoating others
- Unfairly treating, hounding, micromanaging, undermining, and unfairly criticizing
- Distributing resources unequally by supervisors
- Withholding resources and information from colleagues and subordinates or failing to render a decision
- Belittling or dismissing others' valid opinions and ideas
- Deceiving, using passive-aggressive behaviors, and flaunting power and authority
- Eroding another's self-confidence and self-esteem
- Not correcting false information
- Involving others as allies who become complicit in these behaviors
- Shunning, denying someone's existence, questioning one's judgment or decisions, and continually and consistently interrupting

We recognize that incivility and bullying may not be solely an act of an individual. Given the committee governance structure in higher education, the strength of the academic culture, and the notion that bullies need support from others to be successful, a bully often acts in consort with others, that is, a mob.

### Incivility as Mobbing Behavior

Serial bullies, or habitual bullies, can always find justification for their behavior. When it becomes such an indistinguishable part of the organization, Hannabus (1998) calls it “corporate bullying.” Westhues (2005) refers to the phenomenon as “mobbing”: a prolonged, repeated series of acts on coworkers or supervisors. Mobbing encompasses various forms of bully behavior. It appears to be polite, civil aggression or criticism, but its forced invisibility renders it more toxic. Mobbing includes the starting of unfounded rumors and slander and demotion or loss of assignment without just cause; the victims are thereby ostracized, shunned, or marginalized by a group of bullies. Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott (1999) noted that the ultimate goals of mobbing are to “dominate, subjugate, and eliminate” (p. 23). Mobbing is a special category of workplace harassment that these researchers believe may affect as much as 15 percent of the working population. Hoel and Salin (2003) estimate that bullying (or mobbing) may affect as much as 20 percent of the workforce.

In the workplace, mobbing takes on a five-step process (the last step would be difficult to impose in academe): (1) conflict with victim, (2) aggressive acts toward victim, (3) involvement of management, (4) victim labeled as difficult, and (5) firing of victim (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999). Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott have credited mobbing behaviors with attacking employee “dignity, integrity, and credibility” (p. 41). The victim endures humiliation, feeling set up, at fault, and subsequently misinterpreted. Mobbing can persist only because bullies have allies and networks; these allies constitute the “mob.” Plots are engineered

to eliminate or disarm troublesome employees who perhaps stand in the way of others' agendas. Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott posited that although the unique culture and structure of the academic organization may support mobbing inadvertently, it is no less deadly an extent for some faculty victims (see also Westhues, 2005). In academe, because tenured faculty are difficult to dismiss, an uncivil mob may resort to isolation, slander, invisibility, shunning, and elimination from governance activities as a way to encourage the victim to leave on his or her own. Readings (1996) acknowledged that "few communities are more petty and vicious than university faculties" (p. 180).

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My chair became angry over a trivial issue and made a federal case that lasted for years. — Ben

I have experience not doing what I've been told, because it goes against best practice. The dean gets over it, but has also looked to more malleable, less expert colleagues in different arenas to do the job he wants done. I always figured they hired me for my expertise, not using it as someone else understands it to be. — Sue

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### Identifying the Uncivil, the Bully

Namie and Namie (2003) typify work environments where bullying emerges and remains because administrators do not see the problems or simply deny problems exist; institutions focus on image rather than inner substance; secretive behaviors surround hiring and firing; administrators bypass faculty channels to push their agendas; and poor communication or miscommunication means that symbolic messages are sent and received differently by different people or groups of people.

Individuals have psychological needs that are met through bullying others. These individuals may be controlling, power hungry, neurotic, insecure, pompous, egotistical, socially dysfunctional, narcissistic, jealous, or self-aggrandizing. Despite their bully characteristics, they find that seeking allies is easier than working alone (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999). Strategically, the best place to search for allies is among leaders. The second-best option is to seek a leadership role or position.

Through careful manipulation, bullies may inadvertently be mistaken for leaders (French & Raven, 1960). Normal, average-behaving colleagues who have an opportunity to exert pressure on another colleague for some reward may be enticed to exhibit uncivil behavior toward that colleague. Therefore, given the power of the dangling carrot, a bully could be created. Leadership roles or positions place the bully in a unique position, referred to as the catbird seat, where rewards may be forthcoming.

According to Campbell (2000), authority figures often “see through naughty schemes but look the other way” (p. 31). It may be easier to do that than deal with real problems. This avoidance may also stem from the fact that administrators and faculty have other things they see as more pressing. Although such behavior is understandable, ignoring it is not acceptable. Perhaps leaders have no idea what to do about such problems when they encounter them because no repertoire of proven solutions exists. Campbell would refer to this conspiracy of silence as the essence of the dry rot in academe; it avoids the hard truths that surround reality.

Chronic bully personalities pose challenges to leaders trying to deal with them (Namie & Namie, 2003). Bullies may seek allies among leaders. Strong administrations may appear to be uncivil, dictatorial bullies to their faculties. Weak or laissez-faire leadership, though not uncivil, can inadvertently instigate incivility through inaction. These leaders may also be unable to stop bully behaviors and mobs once they begin (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999).

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There was this married couple in the department who had a strong power base. That is probably why we had several department chairs while I was there. When we finally hired a nice fellow from outside the university to chair the department, this couple piled on the charm with him right after he moved into his office. He shared that fact with me and a colleague, who both told him that it was not charm and hospitality; rather, they expected loyalty from him in return and would be back for it in due time. He was skeptical of what we said, but probably a year or so later, he acknowledged that we were right. I gave him a lot of credit for saying that to us. They perceived him as an easy target and sought to take advantage of his good nature. He caught on eventually. — Abby

The department hired an ex-superintendent who has no people skills and has been released from his last three jobs. While I was on leave, this person was promoted to graduate program director and also hired his buddy. The sidekick was much more suave, though. They displaced a well-respected graduate program with one that has little to do with best practices. He hired adjuncts to teach classes, but if they cross him, they get no courses. He micromanages, downplays, and tries to throw every faculty meeting off course. He lies, and the chair knuckles under to them. — Ben

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## Victims of Incivility, Bullying, and Mobbing

Using a committee structure to inadvertently entwine others in the mob process without their realizing it signifies the presence of mob behavior. Mobbing through committee decisions camouflages and insulates the real bully or singular instigator (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999). Klein (2005) regarded mobbing or bullying as following multiple episode patterns. In other words, isolated events

may not be detected by the victim, but several events related to one another are a clearer pattern.

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I remember very clearly a situation of bullying resulting from a colleague divulging confidences. The result of a committee chair divulging confidential committee deliberations was devastating. And as though violating confidences wasn't bad enough, I have excellent reason to believe he was untruthful about what he "divulged" regarding both the nature of the discussions and his role in the proceedings. What leads me to believe this? Well, when the results of the deliberations proved to be unsatisfactory, the makeup of the committee changed, and the continued incivility shown the deposed committee members was outrageous. — Kathy

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Complicating matters are colleagues who in social situations appear collegial, congenial, and supportive to the victim but in private become just the opposite. The victims are excluded, disenfranchised, silenced, overlooked, or ignored.

Faculty perpetrators who perceive themselves as less mobile in their career often subvert their displeasure through perhaps improper means (Gouldner, 1957, 1958). Faculty victims who are less mobile and more reliant on the institution for salary and benefits seldom speak up about their plight. Despite being overworked and underappreciated, faculty victims typically fail to use the channels prescribed by policy (Austin & Gamson, 1983; Twale & Lane, 2006), highlighting their powerlessness and fear.

Targets likely to be mobbed or bullied are people who are different or threaten the status quo. Colleagues who unwittingly buck the system or challenge long-established patterns or values may be likely targets for bullies and mobs. At first, victims of bullying and mobbing probably trust their colleagues and may not be aware they are being targeted. Those new to higher education are

perhaps too naive to realize that seemingly well-meaning colleagues would be uncivil toward them or that the academic culture and organizational structure may have built-in mechanisms to permit bullying or mobbing (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999).

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I recall this schoolwide faculty meeting chaired by the dean, and being a new faculty member, I was appalled: untenured male professors berated full-tenured female professors, and this was just a couple of years ago. My department meetings were horrible. People screamed at one another for hours. Setting dates/times to meet candidates in a search process would incite battles. . . . I cried in my office after faculty meetings. — Caroline

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To be isolated means to be labeled a pariah, an academic untouchable. People are instructed and encouraged to avoid the target's company lest they be labeled similarly. When these more covert procedures fail to encourage the victim to leave the institution, overt attacks may occur. From these overt and covert actions comes invalidation: the victim is discredited, thus raising suspicions regarding many of the victim's previous actions.

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[I feel] marginalized by the dean; made to feel through verbal comments "when are you leaving." Being told "what you will do" on return to the faculty from sabbatical leave — especially given a "job description" without any consultation. In another incident, I was accused [by the female dean] of making a crude ethnic remark toward an Asian individual (I did not) and was sent an official letter indicating that any further disparagement of ethnic groups on my part would result in severe discipline. — Doug

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Colleagues seem to criticize many things the victim does or says. As a result, Klein (2005) attributed this sequence of behaviors as eventually leading to differential treatment of the victim, which ultimately affects merit, tenure, and promotion decisions. He noted that different standards are applied to the disenfranchised that range from poor evaluations and smaller salary increments to tenure denial.

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I am learning more about my colleague. She comes on strong sometimes . . . strong minded and opinionated, and she may be perceived by others as the bully and they are just responding to *her* behavior. She is not in control here as an untenured faculty. People are not in agreement with her, so they see her doing things that are inappropriate. She is interpreting her experience that she has with them from her previous environment. — Allison

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Feeling victimized can be a cause for further victimization, that is, victims may display more vulnerability. Milgram (1963) noted from his studies that to ensure greater social distance, other rational acts accompanied initial victimization. Aggressors play a blame game such that the victim is the perpetrator, deserving of the continued aggression. It is easier to act in heinous ways against the victim once the victim has been isolated and dehumanized. In time, bullies and mobs experience desensitization to their acts and their victims, such that once the original sting is gone, bullies experience forgetfulness. Out-of-sight is out-of-mind.

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My female chair tells the faculty one thing and this one male faculty member another. When this man did what she allowed the female faculty to do, he was called on the carpet. He is not tenured and chose not to fight it even though he had a case. We (the rest of



the faculty) don't understand why she treats us one way and him another. This guy doesn't pose a threat to her. I urged him to bring it to grievance. He would not follow through because he wants tenure and would rather be bitched at. On another occasion she took him to the provost, and he didn't fight that either. He came to me to ask how he should fill out a specific form in hopes that he doesn't get into trouble with her again. He has been crapped on since he started, but he keeps marching along. She doesn't treat the females that way. — Allison

Victims have usually done something unknowingly to arouse the bully or the mob. These acts range from simply being hired to challenging philosophically something someone said. No matter how scholarly or civil the challenge, going against the normal flow or rhythm of the department, school, or university culture can have deleterious effects for the challenger. Despite the fact that the intellectual challenge is valid, the bully takes personal affront to the act. If the academic culture or organizational structure is conducive, the bully or the mob finds justification for their behavior and likely repeats it. Victims become revictimized by the bully or the mob and also by subsequent bouts of their own self-doubt (Davenport, Schwartz, & Elliott, 1999).

We want to make clear that “bullying is not about what the perpetrator meant; it is about what the recipient felt” (Peyton, 2003, p. 84). Therefore, likely victims of bullying are those perceived to be shy, vulnerable, powerless, defenseless, marginal people and those having low self-esteem (Hoel, Faragher, & Cooper, 2004; Jennifer, Cowie, & Ananiadou, 2003). Researchers view the phenomenon as more of a power than a gender issue (Hoel, Einarsen, & Cooper, 2003; Rayner, Hoel, & Cooper, 2002). However, Smith, Singer, Hoel, and Cooper (2003) found that women are more likely than men to be bully victims in the workplace (Hoel, Faragher, & Cooper, 2004; Olafsson & Johannsdottir, 2004). Given the

disparity in gender of more senior male faculty and more junior and part-time female faculty, odds are that more cases of incivility are reported by women than men. When the gender distributions are more balanced, the proportion of victims and bullies of either gender is also likely to be more balanced.

Because of the covert nature of some of the uncivil actions of bullying and mobbing and the fear of reprisal by victims, victims often suppress the resulting emotions and do not fully reveal to others what has happened (Lewis, 2004; White, 2004). Suppression is as likely to be by both men and women but perhaps for different reasons. Men are more likely to be embarrassed and women more fearful. Sustained over time, these emotions manifest themselves in physiological and psychological difficulties for the individual victims and their organizations. Incivility and bullying also affect empowerment, competency, and motivation; they are disempowering (Hoel, Faragher, & Cooper, 2004; Lewis, 2004; White, 2004).

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After I had tenure and was a year or so away from going up for full [professor], I had the unfortunate ordeal of having to confront a doctoral student with her plagiarized term paper, documentation and all, and that I was taking her before the academic honesty committee. She ran to her dissertation “co-chairs.” They each came to me individually. The first one asked me to reconsider, and the other one point-blank said, “If you take her to that committee, it will hurt *you* more than it will hurt her.” I was stunned, but I also deserved full professor, and I knew what he meant: they would block it. So I worked out a deal where she would rewrite the paper. I hated to make that compromise. It was over a decade ago, and I still hate what I felt I had to do, and that was, compromise my integrity. Later they blocked my promotion anyway. That hurt even more. — Abby

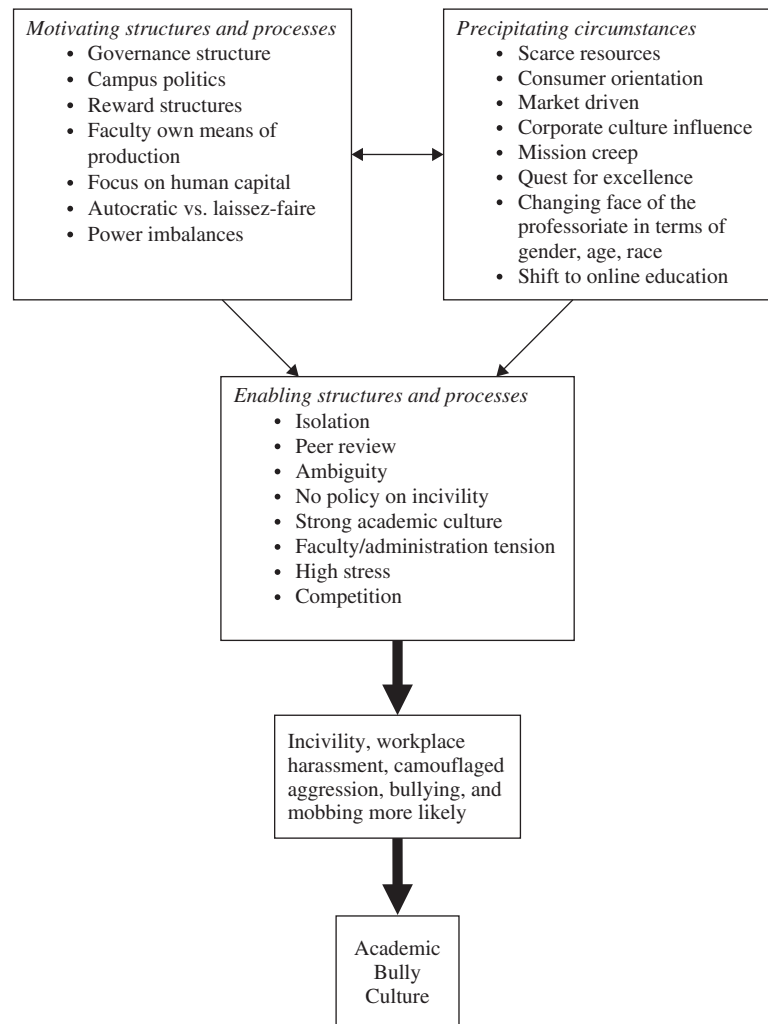
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## Conceptual Framework

Little scholarship exists on American workplace incivility, although studies have been conducted on aggressive behavior and bullying in European workplaces, mostly outside academe. Based on the reading of numerous studies on workplace aggression, we have blended an analysis of organization, governance, and culture. Denise Salin (2003) has developed a framework that is reflective of workplaces in general; it entwines several key areas that make incivility, bullying, and mobbing more likely to manifest themselves in a work environment. We have adapted her framework to be reflective of academe and the pressures facing faculty that make incivility, bullying, and mobbing possible. The structure of Parts One and Two of this book follows her framework, which is presented in Figure 1.1.

Salin (2003) uses “motivating structures and processes” to refer to the means offered in the form of incentives and positive reinforcements that encourage incivility, bullying, and mobbing behavior. In academe, those include the committee governance structure and the fact that faculty own the means of production that interfaces with the power imbalance, often fueling faculty-administrative tension. “Precipitating circumstances” are the “triggering circumstances” (p. 1217) that encourage incivility, bullying, and mobbing. We focus here on two general areas: corporate culture and the changing face of academe. “Enabling structures and processes” encompass what allows incivility, bullying, and mobbing to occur. In academe, we identify the strong academic culture that inadvertently supports isolation and ambiguity and the inherent stresses and tensions built into the faculty role. Salin posited that the presence of all these elements determines whether there is the opportunity for incivility and workplace aggression to exist. We agree that when these elements are present *and* existing bully behaviors are permitted or are rewarded in the culture and the structure, an academic bully culture will be permitted residence.

## 30 FACULTY INCIVILITY



**Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework of Bullying**

We hear some of these stresses and pressures in accounts from faculty colleagues. Because the nature of incivility is defined by the victim, these faculty members described incidents of incivility, bullying, and mobbing. We asked them about the structures and processes that were in place when these incidents occurred and how

these contributed to the problem. In addition, we wanted to know how they felt, and if the bullying or mobbing was dealt with and resolved. We make no attempt to code or discuss prevailing themes expressed by these faculty members. Given the exploratory nature of this study, we are offering their anecdotes where they support the prevailing literature. These persons have experienced incivility, bullying, or mobbing behavior while employed in academe. Our hope is that what was once camouflaged will be brought into the light.

