Classroom Incivility, Gender, Race, and Indigeneity in Higher Education: Faculty Perspectives on Social Factors and Identity Markers

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Based on 20 semi-structured interviews with faculty members from a mid-sized university in Western Canada, this paper offers an examination of research participants' experiences and perceptions of classroom incivility, particularly those that are shaped by social factors such as identity markers (race, ethnicity, gender) as well as cultural beliefs regarding what is considered politically sensitive subject-matter (in this case, indigeneity). Data analysis reveals that when research participants detect instances of incivility expressed as resentment around race, gender, and indigeneity, they struggle to find a balance between taking up the teaching moment and maintaining safe space. This paper offers a reflection on the extent to which research participants choose to assume intellectual candor when making sense of incivility. Pedagogical responses are highlighted in an effort to recognize the importance of a critical consciousness about social positioning, race relations, power, and privilege.

Reposant sur 20 entrevues semi-structurées avec des membres du corps professoral d'une université de taille moyenne dans l'Ouest canadien, cet article propose un examen des expériences et des perceptions des participants à la recherche en matière d'incivilité en classe, particulièrement celles qui sont façonnées par des facteurs sociaux tels que les marqueurs d'identité (race, ethnicité, sexe) ainsi que les croyances culturelles concernant ce qui est considéré comme un sujet politiquement sensible (dans ce cas, l'indigénéité). L'analyse des données révèle que lorsque les participants à la recherche détectent des cas d'incivilité exprimés sous forme de ressentiment autour de la race, du genre et de l'indigénéité, ils luttent pour trouver un équilibre entre la prise en charge du moment d'enseignement et le maintien d'un espace sûr. Cet article propose une réflexion sur la mesure dans laquelle les participants à la recherche choisissent d'assumer la franchise intellectuelle lorsqu'ils donnent un sens à l'incivilité. Les réponses pédagogiques sont mises en évidence dans le but de reconnaître l'importance d'une conscience critique du positionnement social, des relations raciales, du pouvoir et des privilèges.

Although not a recent debate, the tension between free speech and safe classroom spaces has gained further attention recently, especially with the latest American presidential elections (Ben-Porath, 2017; Nolan-Ferrell, 2017; Palfrey, 2017). Despite being protected by law (whether by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms),

speech is not limitless because every freedom belongs to a realm of conflicting forces (Turk, 2014). That is, one is allowed to express their ideas as long as it does not harm others (Kors & Silverglate, 1999; MacKay, 1986; Nolan-Ferrell, 2017). Notwithstanding being a microcosm of society (Kors & Silverglate, 1999; Palfrey, 2017), the university campus is unique given that its purpose is the pursuit, dissemination, and advancement of knowledge (Ben-Porath, 2017; Golding, 2000; Wilson, 1995). Thus, not only is free speech "a driver of equity and justice" (Palfrey, 2017, p. 13), but diversity is fundamental to the university context as it provides different perspectives that ultimately can contribute to the pursuit of truth (Cameron, 2014).

Therefore, debates around incivility in Higher Education have often been polarized around the tension between free speech, as the condition for a democratic learning environment, and some form of censorship, or limitations to free speech, in the name of safe space. If on the one hand, free speech and diversity can and should coexist (Palfrey, 2017), on the other hand, in order for a university to reach its goals, restrictions on speech become necessary so as to promote a comfortable and safe learning environment (Golding, 2000). Although most universities adopt speech codes without making them explicit (Kors & Silverglate, 1999), it is still very unclear to professors how to draw the line between free speech and speech that needs to be silenced (Nolan-Ferrell, 2017).

If speech that hampers a student's learning must be disciplined (Palfrey, 2017), on the extreme end of the spectrum, notions of political correctness have been frequently criticized for being a mechanism to silence radical ideas and developing new knowledge, as well as creating a false sense of security (Ben-Porath, 2017; Wilson, 1995). Callan (2011) reminded us that having a place to speak freely is not an issue with the development of the internet and social media. The classroom, however, is a place where students can question, explore, and learn from one another (Callan, 2011). In other words, Callan argued that intellectual candor is a virtue of the classroom which is lost once speech is silenced. Thus, for Callan, even if the speech is deemed stupid or offensive to stigmatized minority groups, it should not be silenced. Hence, although some scholars argue that open-mindedness is necessary in the pursuit of truth, there are also others who claim that free speech can be used to mask hateful views, which should be silenced (Ben-Porath, 2017; Cameron, 2014). The issue seems to find a common ground, though, with the fact that students must have the freedom to explore and express controversial views (Ben-Porath, 2017; Golding, 2000) but that there is always a limit to tolerance (Palfrey, 2017).

The problem is escalated with a set of policies (which varies greatly amongst universities) that become inhibitors of free speech rather than regulations that address hate speech, which not only becomes a threat to the university's goal but also raises the question of whose speech gets to be validated (Cameron, 2014). Therefore, although for some scholars civility is the benchmark for dignity and fairness (Callan, 2011), for others it is not enough because it leaves to the interpretation of the instructor who focuses more on intent and tone rather than the content, which can be truly harmful (Ben-Porath, 2017; Cameron, 2014; Golding, 2000; Stanchi, 2005).

With the increase in the race and gender diversity amongst university students, the debate around free speech becomes further problematized. Does free speech mean that everyone has equal opportunity to speak? Several scholars have argued that free speech is in fact a myth, because it is a mere reinforcement of a dominant ideology to the detriment of marginalized voices (Barnard, 2005; Ben-Porath, 2017; Stanchi, 2005). Thus, claims of free speech have been criticized as "coercive pluralism", a double standard which allows diverse voices only to the extent that it does not affect the dominant ones (Barnard, 2005; Kors & Silverglate 1999). The consequence of such coerced conformity is not only the silencing of marginalized voices but also

the nurturing and celebration of a White, western, and straight worldview (Barnard, 2005; Ben-Porath, 2017; Nolan-Ferrell, 2017; Kors & Silverglate 1999; Palfrey, 2017; Stanchi, 2005; Wilson, 1995). For that reason, minority groups end up not only having to remain silent but also as the target of othering and intimidating speech, which makes students feel unsafe and discouraged in the classroom and thus jeopardize their education (Nolan-Ferrell, 2017; Stanchi, 2005; Wilson, 1995).

Safe spaces are places where students do not have to hide their identities. The contrary not only harms their well-being but also prevents their peers from having their perspectives challenged (Ben-Porath, 2017). Moreover, conversations around race and gender touch on issues of personal and emotional significance to students, which makes derogatory speech particularly harmful (Callan, 2011; Golding, 2000; Stanchi, 2005). For the purposes of this paper, "gender" (e.g. male, female) and "sex" (e.g. woman, man) will be used interchangeably despite having different meanings (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2020) given that the terms are used interchangeably both in the literature and by participants themselves. If students must be and feel equal on campus (Golding, 2000), claims of free speech and the mere presence of diversity in the classroom does not suffice (Arons, 1986). Not only does it not guarantee a safe environment but it also prevents the co-production of knowledge that universities claim to desire (Ben-Porath, 2017; Saloojee, 2014).

Notwithstanding, incivility is not limited to speech. Academic incivility can be understood as "rude, discourteous speech or behavior that violates the norms of mutual respect in the teaching-learning environment and disrupts the milieu" (Small et al., 2019, p. 133), which affects the well-being of the ones involved. Moreover, Small et al. (2019) argued that incivility "violates such fundamental values as respect, compassion, do no harm, safe learning environment, accountability, and responsibility that are inherent to nursing foundational theories" (p. 134). The complexity of this phenomenon is also observed by Cameron (2014), who claimed that because being offended is a choice, it becomes extremely challenging to distinguish between mere offenses and harmful speech. Cameron emphasized that expressive activity that simply violates courtesy and is offensive should not be regulated, although he claimed that rudeness is counter-productive and should not be excused. Additionally, Cameron argued that the subjective character of incivility and its porous definitions may lead to instances of camouflaged aggression, which can be more or less serious.

Recent and ongoing racial aggressions and murder against Black people in North America have prompted a stronger presence of activism and social movements motivated by Black Lives Matter. In particular, following the murder of George Floyd, groups and individuals have rallied against racial violence and the policing of Black lives. In recent years, some researchers have explored such movements in the context of higher education. For instance, Cole (2017) explored the extent to which the principles of Black Lives Matter around racial equality and inclusion can be used for the purpose of a culturally sustaining pedagogy. In Canada, a recent publication by Diverlus et al. (2020) focused on Canadian Black activism, with special attention to alliances between Indigenous people and Black people. Furman et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of an alliance between LGBTQ people and Black Lives Matter in the battle against White supremacy. In the area of indigeneity and indigenization, recent reports point to the need for more work to ensure safe space for staff and students (CBC News, 2020; Dacey, 2019; Romanov, 2020; Warick, 2020). These reports point to the importance of renewing efforts to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), many of which relate to educational inequities.

Under these circumstances, despite significant emphasis on respectful, safe, and caring educational spaces, incivility in its various forms, including anti-Black, anti-Indigenous and gender violence remains a pressing social issue in Higher Education (Boysen, 2012; Connelly, 2009; Knepp, 2012). It is generally characterized as disrespect or disruption stemming from stress, frustration, egocentricity, entitlement, or student consumerism (Holdcroft, 2014; Knepp, 2016; Morrissette, 2001) and can take many forms, ranging from interpersonal factors, such as disruptions, discourteous verbal or non-verbal language, intimidation, or emotional outbursts to systemic or social factors related to gender or race identities, such as expressions of racial resentment (Codjoe, 2001; Feldman, 2001; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Schick, 2014).

How, then, can the teacher maintain safety and respect while educating? Although it might be inevitable that misunderstandings will eventually take place among students, it is never easy for the teacher to draw the line, for example, between hate and lesser forms of contemptuous speech (Callan, 2011; Golding, 2000; Palfrey, 2017). A notion of non-interference, for instance, far from encouraging the voicing of diverse perspectives, inhibits those individuals who are already marginalized and vulnerable (Ben-Porath, 2017; Small et al., 2019; Stanchi, 2005). On the other hand, censorship may jeopardize the exchange of ideas that is fundamental for the creation and dissemination of knowledge (Ben-Porath, 2017; Callan, 2011). Engaging with the student who makes a derogatory comment is also regarded as a strategy to be resorted to as a way to point out and educate students about their ingrained beliefs (Callan, 2011). However, some scholars believe that doing so is giving the power to the perpetrator to redirect the class as they wish while further burdening minority students who are asked to speak in defense of "their group" and to involve their emotions in a place where they already do not feel safe (Ben-Porath, 2017; Palfrey, 2017; Stanchi, 2005).

In any case, while there is a lot of room between silencing and non-interference (Stanchi, 2005), the effects of derogatory speech cannot be erased, so how can the educator restore a safe place for minority students at the same time as promoting an environment where knowledge is pursued? If free speech in the classroom is necessary in the pursuit of knowledge, it must also be available to vulnerable students to feel safe to express their voices and identities (Ben-Porath, 2017). If it is possible and desirable to embrace diversity and free expression at the same time (Palfrey, 2017) but censorship is not enough to protect members of vulnerable groups (Ben-Porath, 2017), what should the instructor's responsibility in instances of incivility in the classroom be?

It is worth noting that recent research on university policies on equity, diversity, and inclusion shows evidence of progress in terms of the prioritization of strategic activities and institutional changes that target fair opportunities for Indigenous students, curriculum changes, and equitable recruitment for minority groups (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). However, most of the research on classroom incivility focuses on "common" discourteous, disrespectful, or disruptive student behaviour (Boysen, 2012), leaving a significant research gap in research on classroom incivility related to identity markers of minority students and politically sensitive subject-matter. Research studies that do focus on gender or race-based incivility, however, contend that cultural perceptions of identity markers are linked to classroom incivility. These studies have mainly focused on White male student micro-aggressions toward professors. In this context, incivility is articulated as an attempt to maintain or reclaim White space and power, which is

> indicative of White students' struggles to reclaim a raced and gendered sense of entitlement over the
> knowledge process in increasingly diverse and pluralistic institutions of higher education at the same

time that WOC [Women of Colour] are seeking authoritative legitimacy in their roles as faculty members. (Ford, 2011, p. 465)

More specifically, Ford (2011) argued that "passive-aggressive engagement (e.g., eye rolling, inattentive gazes, silence) enables White male students to indirectly challenge the presence of WOC faculty in the classroom through a series of 'micro-transgressions'" (p. 465). Ford further explained that "White students often confront differences in ways that subtly maintain racist and sexist structures of power and privilege" (pp. 465-466). In addition, Pittman's (2010) study demonstrated that racialized female faculty "perceive their classroom environments as oppressive on the basis of race and gender" (p. 192). In a similar vein, Alexander-Snow (2004) explored the extent to which identity markers impact classroom incivility. Relying on the notion of cultural perceptions based on stereotypes and social power, Alexander-Snow established that faculty members with minority identity markers are more likely to experience incivility from students than White male professors:

> From the moment female faculty and faculty of color enter cultural space that is not of their own, they know they will be met with skepticism and that their credibility and authority will be called to question repeatedly throughout the term. They expect to meet some degree of classroom incivility simply because of who they are and what they represent. (Alexander-Snow, 2004, p. 28)

Similarly, Johnson-Bailey (2015) observed that gendered and race positionalities increase instances of classroom incivilities:

> Although I might stand on the figurative center stage possessing the earned status of professor, my cultural status as a Black woman influences how I am perceived by my student. Overall, the uncomfortable encounters with my students can be grouped into two categories: direct and hostile confrontations and passive aggressive resistance that are uncivil and rise to the level of bullying. (p. 44)

In the context of settler colonialism and relations with Indigenous peoples, the notion of indigeneity becomes highly relevant in educational discourse on incivility. Indeed, the concepts of resistance and resentment have been explored in conjunction with indigeneity around notions of White space and settler society (Abawi & Brady, 2017; Pedersen et al., 2004; Schick, 2014; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis & Schick, 2003), demonstrating how resentment is susceptible to breeding a kind of relational response that is hurtful to racial minorities and especially Indigenous peoples.

Space occupancy, namely settler space and/or White space, is socially constructed; yet, it leads to concrete instances of entitlement. This space occupancy informs the emotional attachment of distinct communities (White) and their way of understanding themselves within the space they belong, that which is often inscribed by colonized anecdotes. This attribution to space attachment or belonging leads White people to resent those whom they see as "Other" (e.g., Indigenous peoples), from the anticipating threat to the White dominant society where the diverse mixtures of demographics of others are instilling to the mainstream society (Schick, 2014).

In a sense, there is an invisible, yet tangible, barricade that identifies White settlers as "us" and non-settlers, namely Indigenous peoples, as "them". Presumably, in educational contexts, this barricade generates resentment as it becomes a matter of maintaining White space amidst efforts to integrate Indigenous perspectives and curricula in knowledge production.

Although those studies focus on incivility between students and teachers, it has also been

established, though it remains insufficiently examined, that identity markers and cultural perceptions also influence incivility between students, particularly in racially and culturally diverse classrooms. Specifically, studies show that students with minority identity markers experience oppression in the form of micro-aggressions in the classroom and on campus (McCabe, 2009; Solorzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009), which not only threatens norms of mutual respect but negatively affects learning. However, very little research has focused on how faculty members make sense of and respond to incivility between students or topics specifically related to social factors, such as minority identity markers.

As educational spaces have become increasingly diverse in terms of race, gender, and culture, racial and political tensions have triggered the issues of incivility within higher education classrooms calling into question teachers' ethical and professional responsibilities. In addressing classroom incivility, professors have to navigate a delicate pedagogical tension between, on the one hand respecting free speech in conjunction with a teaching moment, and on the other hand maintaining safe space by protecting those at the receiving end of the uncivil behavior. Research on teachers' response to classroom incivility related to social factors has been mainly normative, focusing on what teachers ought to do rather than exploring what teachers actually do and what motivates their pedagogical responses. Yet, responding to classroom incivility very much depends on how teachers make sense of the sociocultural dynamics presented in the classroom.

Moreover, research shows that students victimized by classroom incivility experience psychological stress, damaged self-esteem and resilience, and erosion of academic performance (Hotchkins & Dancy, 2015). Therefore, in addition to addressing a gap in the literature, this study calls attention to achievement gaps related to social inequality as social groups most targeted by incivility would, inevitably, be at higher risk.

Relying on data obtained from twenty semi-structured interviews with faculty members from a mid-sized university in Western Canada, this paper offers an examination of professors' experiences and perceptions of classroom incivility, particularly that which is shaped by social factors, such as identity markers (race, ethnicity, gender), as well as cultural beliefs regarding what is considered politically sensitive subject-matter, meaning what is taught. The specific research questions of this study are:

1. How do faculty members make sense of classroom incivility in their classrooms? That is, to what extent are perceptions of incivility articulated around social factors and identity markers?

2. How do faculty members address moments of incivility in their classrooms? More specifically, to what extent are faculty members' responses to incivility informed by a belief in intellectual candor, ignorance, and/or gender resentment?

3. Finally, how do professors who experience or witness classroom incivility shaped by social factors negotiate the tension between their perceived pedagogical responsibility to take up teaching moments and the ethical responsibility to provide and maintain safe space?

Theoretical Orientations

The theoretical lens that guides this research is two-fold: (1) Social identity theory and cultural perceptions on incivility; (2) Callan's (2011) notions of intellectual candor and interpretive charity. Tajfel's social identity theory (Insko et al., 1992) proposed that social group membership depends on the social characteristics of individual members, which means that people recognize

themselves as members of specific groups based on shared identity markers and values. For the purpose of the paper, we focus on those identity markers that relate to gender, indigeneity, and racial minority. It is important to note, however, that such categories of identity are neither static nor pre-conceived, but fluid, dynamic and contextual, and relational responses of an individual (Allard & Santoro, 2006; Britzman, 1998; Watzlawik, 2012). In terms of social status, students who consider themselves "on top" hierarchically are more likely to be uncivil to others, including faculty and classmates, in order to maintain their privileged social positioning.

According to Alexander-Snow (2004), social stereotypes increase student incivility and primarily affect those positioned minority identity markers: "a white male teacher's aggressive prodding may be perceived by students as intellectually challenging, whereas the same behavior by an ethnic minority [or female] teacher may be perceived as hostile or argumentative" (p. 28). Having stereotypical belief systems about gender, sex, or people of color, therefore, whatever the intensity is, breeds expectation for conformity, and when conformity does not happen, resentment follows (Alexander-Snow, 2004). Cultural identities are reflected in social structures in ways that establish privilege for some and marginalization for others, potentially increasing socially structured inequalities (Alexander-Snow, 2004). Social identity theory is relevant in this study because cultural identities and social perceptions impact the extent to which individuals perceive others with positive or negative dispositions, prompting civility or incivility.

This project also relies on Callan's (2011) notions of intellectual candor and interpretive charity. Callan saw intellectual candor as "a cardinal civic virtue that any educational civility regime should seek to foster" (p. 18) and interpretive charity as working from the assumption that

> our students have shown up in good faith to learn from us, and, when they say things that seem foolish or even offensive, our first response should be to act as if they are cordially inviting us to teach them better. (p. 18)

Callan argued that derogatory generalizations and stigmatization about a particular social group should not be silenced when intellectual candor is at play, despite the potential negative impact on those affected by such stigmatization in the classroom:

> it is wrong to silence students for making derogatory generalizations about particular social groups when the generalization is academically on topic, even if the social group is widely stigmatized, some members of the derogated group are in the classroom, and we recognize that their stigmatization is a grave social evil. (p. 17)

In this case, Callan continued, teachers should engage with the student in the context of a teaching moment. In this paper, we seek to examine the extent to which educators may be able to rely on intellectual candour in order to justify engaging, rather than silencing, uncivil speech. Specifically, we seek to determine the extent to which faculty members assume intellectual candor when making sense of classroom incivility, and the extent to which this assumption may inform their pedagogical response differently from those who see incivility as expressions of social resentment, particularly in relation to the offender versus the offended.

Methodology

A qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews was used for this research. The interview

guide was elaborated to elicit responses on the following issues: defining incivility; identifying and making sense of different types of incivility; range of pedagogical responses and strategies; and perceptions of the extent to which intellectual candor is at play. Data analysis was organized around the following framework: (1) faculty's perceptions of social, cultural, and identity factors, particularly race and gender, in instances of classroom incivility; (2) the extent to which Callan's (2011) perspective on intellectual candor and interpretive charity has been operationalized by faculty members who have witnessed classroom incivility shaped by social and identity factors; and, (3) faculty's pedagogical responses, with particular attention to the tension between teaching the perpetrator and maintaining safe space for those potentially victimized. Data were collected from 20 participants at a mid-sized university in Western Canada considered to be culturally and racially diverse and with a commitment to indigeneity.

Data were coded using categories and sub-categories relevant to the research questions and theoretical orientations. For example, Callan's (2011) work on the notion of intellectual candour in relation to incivility was used as a reference for the creation of a category. Themes were then identified through a process of breaking transcriptions into small units within existing categories and sub-categories. More specifically, key words and expressions were searched throughout transcripts to establish all instances of that word, and extract relevant themes (for example, "diffuse and redirect" or "confront and educate").

Ethics and Recruitment

This research was conducted according to the protocol submitted and approved by the university's Research Ethics Board of the principal investigator (and first author) of this paper. Letters of invitation were sent to Faculties of Art, Education, and Business and Economics. Criteria of inclusion included full-time faculty members in tenure-track positions currently teaching in one of the following disciplines: Education, Social Work, Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, Philosophy, Political Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and Native Studies. Criteria for exclusion were: part-time faculty members, contract instructors, sessional instructors. A minimum sample of 12-16 research participants was desired, but the final research sample included 20 participants. Initially, the ethics protocol allowed the researcher to name the university, Faculty and Department affiliations in subsequent research reports and publications. However, as a number of research participants were affiliated to Departments and Faculties that were small in size, the principal investigator decided to remove the association of small Departments (mainly in the Faculty of Arts) to specific quotes. Additionally, upon further reflection on the generosity expressed in the stories, specifically around indigeneity and gender positioning, the researcher also decided not to disclose the name of the university in which the study took place.

Research Participants

Twenty faculty members, eight women and twelve men, at various ranks and stages in their career accepted to participate in this study. Three research participants identified as racialized and/or Indigenous individuals. The following faculties were represented: Education (5), Arts (13), and Business and Economics (2). In the Faculty of Arts, the departments represented were as follows: Religion, History, Criminology, English, Political Science/Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, Indigenous/Native Studies, Languages and Literatures. Pseudonyms were assigned to each

research participant to ensure anonymity.

Findings

The findings are organized around the following categories: (1) Incivility as low-intensity rudeness; (2) Incivility related to identity markers, mainly gender and indigeneity; (3) Incivility related to cultural perceptions on what is taught, in this case mainly indigeneity; (4) Pedagogical responses to classroom incivility.

All participants defined incivility in Higher Education as a form of disrespect. However, nuances in perceptions of disrespect ranged from mild disruptions often referred to as "common" rudeness, to targeted assault related to identity markers (specifically around gender and race) and expressions of resentment related to subject-matter and/or topics of discussions (specifically around indigeneity). Out of the twenty respondents, two reported never having witnessed any instances of incivility, eight felt these instances were rare, six reported several instances, and four witnessed many instances of incivility.

Incivility as Low-Intensity Rudeness

In the area of low-intensity incivility, words most often used by research participants were "disruption", "insensitivity", "aggressiveness", "targeted comments", and "arrogance", as the following remarks express: "any form of rudeness" (Ursula); "Rude, disruptive and aggressive in expressing a view point" (Kent); "The result of arrogance and ignorance on the part of an individual who is exposing themselves as an insensitive person" (Imen). Examples cited were inappropriate use of phones in class, eye rolling, chatting off-topic, etc. Almost all participants (eighteen) had experienced or witnessed instances of incivility as low-intensity rudeness in their classrooms. They attribute this type of incivility to unawareness, poor social skills due to immaturity, stress leading to verbal release, and egocentrism.

Incivility Related to Minority Identity Markers: Gender Identity and Indigeneity

Over half of the participants defined incivility as being inherently linked to identity makers, particularly around gender identity. In this case, respondents defined incivility as a violation or dismissal of otherness in general, which are expressed as micro-aggressions against, or blatant targeted attacks on an individual with minority identity markers (particularly female and Indigenous). Andy, for example, defined incivility as "dehumanization of diversity". For Helena, "incivility is expecting or demanding that other people behave in the same way you do, it's ignoring, dismissing or attacking other people's value systems". Out of the eight female respondents, seven reported feeling their gender identity was a risk factor and stressor: "Young angry men have made sexist comments; some of them were deeply aggressive ... Some challenge me in a sexist way on a continuous basis; they wouldn't do the same with my male colleagues" (Cara); "As a woman, there were moments of incivility that I have observed or even been subjected to myself" (Nadia). Although most female respondents report having been subjected to incivility because of their gender identity, they acknowledge that gender-based incivility also occurs between students: "I've had more instances of men lacking civility in their responses to female students because they still think they are in a superior position" (Helena); "It's very much when female students have feminist interpretations and male students roll their eyes" (Larissa).

"Gender and privilege are the main root cause of incivility" (Andy); "Females are the most affected by incivility" (Imen). Conversely, four male participants recognized their gender was a privilege: "I'm pretty sure that my privileged position as a white male protects me from all kinds of incivility, and also makes me probably ignorant of acts on incivility in my classroom", explained Louis; "I think that probably because I'm a white male, I haven't had many problems. My guess is if I had been a woman or if I had an accent or were Black or brown, it might have been different", added Kent; "Some of the female colleagues that I work with are dealing with things that are horrifying to me …, that's my privilege as a male … it's invisible to me", concluded Andy.

Indigeneity as an identity marker is also perceived as a risk factor and stressor in classroom dynamics. When incivility occurs as a result of racial resentment, Indigenous identity can become a target for those motivated by the need to maintain White space: "Indigenous people want to be able to learn without having to defend their identity or explain it," said Helena. Andy recalled a resentful comment related to treaty rights, directed at him and at Indigenous students in the class:

> The accusation there, it was a comment about free education, and the implication is "you got free education and I didn't" and what that does is devalue that instructor's journey in trying to survive as an Indigenous person in the academia … Teaching about your own cultural identity in a room full of people that may resent having to be there weighs on you.

Incivility Related to Cultural Perceptions on What is Taught: Indigeneity and White Space

Over two-thirds (thirteen) of the respondents reported that their field, specifically what they taught, generated tension, conflict, some of which internal and personal (often related to an emotional trigger), some of which external and of a confrontational nature with classmates and/or the instructor. Out of these thirteen individuals, six reported having experienced classroom incivility related to a specific course, the content of a course, or the topic of a specific discussion. The seven other respondents reported noticing tension and conflict but did not qualify these instances as incivility; rather, they interpreted these moments of conflict as essential components of the learning process. The common denominator for instances of incivility related to content was primarily indigeneity and White space. As Ursula reported, "Let's face it, political sciences have always been about the universal citizen as a middle-class White male".

When prompted about specific examples, participants confirmed that indigeneity as a topic had generated instances of classroom incivility. Specifically, courses related to Indigenous education, colonialism in Canada, or the simple existence of an Indigenous course requirement are seen as the main root cause for incivility related to resentment. Several research participants noticed incivility when discussing whiteness and privilege in relation to colonialism: "Topics on whiteness and privilege breed resistance and resentment" explains Carolina. In a similar vein, Helena felt that "topics on indigeneity are used as a tool for resistance to hurt others". In these cases, incivility was evidenced in the following ways: (1) disrespectful body language: "When somebody sits with their arms crossed and their legs spread and slumped in their chair, that is very much a message", explained Carolina; (2) derogatory generalizations and stigmatization about Indigenous people and with Indigenous students present in class: "A student said 'we should be careful when we try to make saints of Indigenous people because there are many families who are doing horrible things to their children'", reported Danny; and (3) attitudes of resistance, refusal, or disengagement towards the instructor or the work expected: "There was an

assignment due and I saw a student scribble down something on the paper, tear it out of his book so that it was sort of ripped right across and hand that in as his assignment; the ultimate disrespect", remembered Helena.

Pedagogical Responses to Classroom Incivility

Pedagogical responses highlight the problematic tension between engaging in a teaching moment and maintaining safe space.

Safe Space and Free Speech: The Teaching Moment Prevails

Although all participants appear to believe in the importance of safe space in classrooms, overall they emphasized more the importance of the teaching moment (i.e. engaging with and educating the perpetrators of incivility) than the importance of maintaining safe space (i.e. prioritizing those potentially victimized by instances of incivility). This does not suggest that respondents disregard safe space, but it shows they do not necessarily link incivility to safe space, nor do they assume harm may have occurred. Specifically, only four of the respondents have silenced (or believe they would silence) someone's speech, and have done so (or would do so) in extreme cases of incivility so as to protect those students who might be harmed: "I'll cut off the more aggressive individuals" stated Imen. Larissa concurred: "I've done it, mostly to male students; it's about that assumption 'I have the right to speak, I'm a guy'... So, it's about silencing to secure space for others". Conversely, the majority of the participants believe in the importance of working with the perpetrator in class for the purpose of learning: "All comments are welcomed in order to be discussed", said Zara; "I tolerate incivility for the purpose of learning", added Danny; "If a comment is hurtful, I help the student rephrase his comment and use it as a teaching moment for everyone", explained Boris.

Several respondents do acknowledge feeling an internal struggle when thinking about the tension between free speech and safe space. Danny admitted: "On the one hand, I wanted that comment to come out to bring that discussion out, and on the other hand, I wanted to protect the students who were hurt". However, when further prompted on that tension, most respondents admit favoring the teaching moment. Such is the case for Jackson: "I don't want to make the classroom a place where people can't express opinions that are uncivil just because others are triggered by a topic; this is about teaching!" Data analysis showed that respondents who believe in "tolerating" incivility for the purpose of teaching, even if at the expense of safe space, correlated that stance with a belief in intellectual candor.

Assuming Intellectual Candor

A little over half of the respondents (eleven) assume intellectual candor when facing instances of classroom incivility. This means that they believe there was no harm intended; rather, when hurtful comments are expressed, such as derogatory generalizations and stigmatizations about a specific social group, respondents believe it is because the individual lacks knowledge, maturity, or social skills. According to Carolina, "they have not had enough life experiences yet". Jackson agreed: "He didn't know or he had not been exposed to the information about Indigenous residential schools". Zara recognized: "Most of the time it is non-intentional, and so I give them the benefit of the doubt".

Respondents who believe in intellectual candor are also those who believe in the necessity to engage with the student for the purpose of teaching rather than confront or silence the student for the purpose of safe space. In Nadia's view, "someone who doesn't have the correct lingo because they are thinking aloud and may have not thought things through ... you provide a safe space for them to think aloud". Anya contended: "They don't think through their premise, their thought, and how other people will perceive it; so, what we have to do is educate them on that".

For a small number of respondents, hurt feelings are considered unavoidable collateral damage. Tony explained: "I don't really consider individuals that might be harmed. I make my judgment on how to respond to incivility according to whether individuals are surpassing a barrier of what might be considered civil". Jackson added: "Because I don't want to make the classroom a place where people can't express opinions just because others are triggers by a topic". Interestingly, two research participants reported seeing evidence of incivility as "masked intellectual candor", meaning that they believed students may express a hurtful comment in a way that is candid in appearance, but that carries resentment in reality.

Diffuse, Confront, Interrupt, Educate

Respondents' pedagogical strategies in response to incivility shaped by identity markers or cultural perceptions can be summarized within the following main categories: (1) Diffuse and redirect (most participants); (2) Confront and educate (more than half); (3) Prevent and model (about half); (4) Interrupt and/or silence (few participants). Respondents who diffuse and redirect also confront and educate, depending on the context. Faculty reported diffusing and redirecting to "calm the class", "avoid conflict", "alleviate the tensions", or "avoid harm". Confronting and educating is a strategy used to challenge the individual, press for evidence, and then correct misinformation and harmful stereotypes. Respondents believed that confronting and educating also addressed potential harm in the class community. Imen explained: "I asked the individual to explain himself ... He revealed himself to the class as someone who is intolerant of alternative perspectives on subject of gender neutrality ... therefore, I think there was no threat to the class even though he was being uncivil". Preventing and modeling is a strategy that stems from a belief in the importance of building relationships with students, particularly those with vulnerabilities, setting up clear rules and guidelines for respect, using small group discussions to avoid conflict, and offering opportunities to debrief in and after class. As mentioned previously, the final strategy of interrupting and/or silencing is rarely used; rather, overall, respondents seemed to privilege diffusing the situation or addressing it after class.

Maintaining and Reclaiming Safe Space

When prompted about the potential harm caused to class members of minority groups because of race or gender-based incivility, respondents articulated skepticism about actual harm, a belief in the offended individual's responsibility to reclaim their own space, and a belief in their own responsibility as instructor to recognize harm and maintain safe space. Several participants reported not noticing harm, with some stating that emotional distress can be related to personal factors and triggers that are likely not caused by uncivil remarks. Other participants believed that the offended has a responsibility to speak up or wished that the offended would call out and confront the offender.

For some participants, safe space trumps free speech: "I am not interested in making safe

spaces for White supremacists … my allegiance would be with my racialized students because they have far less social and institutional power", claimed Nadia. She added: "You can't make a safe space for a White supremacist and a Black student or an Indigenous student at the same time". Andy believed that "free speech should not be held above human rights and dignity". For others, free speech is a component of safe space. Ryan believed that it is a "safe space to think aloud and express ideas even if they are phrased in a way that could hurt someone". Danny thought that safe space is "also a freedom to express a viewpoint, so that they [students] can be educated". For most, the tension between assuming intellectual candor in order to teach and assuming potential harm in order to maintain safe space remains difficult to tease out.

Discussion

The perception of incivility as inherently linked to identity markers, especially gender and indigeneity, shared by more than half of the participants in this research, is consistent with findings from other studies (Lampman, 2012; Lampman et al., 2009). According to Lampman (2012), "in an academic setting, a gender imbalance in status may make women and other faculty who are underrepresented (such as minorities) or have less status (e.g., lower rank, no doctorate, no tenure) more vulnerable to student hostility because they are viewed as having less authority and power within the workplace" (p. 189). In addition, data analysis showed that participants perceive that indigeneity as teaching content potentializes conflict in the classroom. Such perception is in line with Mohamed and Beagan (2019), who discussed the experiences of racialized and Indigenous faculty in Canadian universities and argued that "Indigenous faculty are routinely assigned courses that conflict with Indigenous ways of knowing; if they choose to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their teaching, they face student resistance, harsh criticism, and poor evaluations" (p. 348). In a similar vein, Henry and Tator (2012) observed that "the incorporation of anti-racism models of knowledge and critical perspectives is often met with resistance and hostility from White students and a lack of support from White colleagues and administrators" (p. 82). Therefore, our findings are consistent with current research on resistance and resentment from settlers toward indigeneity. Much work remains to be done for creating a safe space for teachers and students alike while continuing efforts around curriculum equity.

This research shows that most participants operationalize the concept of intellectual candor and interpretive charity (Callan, 2011) when making sense of and responding to classroom incivility shaped by social factors, such as racial or gender identity factors, especially topics linked to indigeneity and whiteness. Even when they detected resentment in students, most participants chose to give the benefit of the doubt, assuming lack of maturity rather than hurtful intent. As such, our findings are consistent with Callan's claim that, unless facing hate speech, teachers should assume that their students are expressing a need to be educated, and that teachers should assume their duty to teach.

Furthermore, our data analysis shows that several participants who believe in engaging with the offender for the purpose of teaching also believe that such engagement maintains safe space because, by correcting the uncivil speech, the teacher creates a space for potentially hurt students to feel their positioning matters. As Callan (2011) claimed, the teacher's engagement with the offending speaker has two further aims:

> to reaffirm the standing of students of color in the classroom as equals among peers to be treated with
> a decent presumption of competence as civility requires; and to blunt the potentially adverse effects

that uncivil speech would otherwise have had on their effective opportunity to participate in the classroom. (p. 15)

In essence, as Callan (2011) contended, these participants believe that "we can have the educational benefits of candor, in other words, while providing strong protection to the interests of students most vulnerable to the hazards of candor in the classroom" (p. 15).

However, our findings also show that most participants who expressed a belief in intellectual candor did not necessarily refer to the potentially offended students; rather, they mainly affirm the need to teach the offending party. This means that, if those potentially victimized by the uncivil speech are not seen as part of the equation, awareness of risk factors for safe space may be lacking.

Even though all respondents recognize the importance of safe space, this study demonstrates that there is a high inclination for them to prioritize the teaching moment, which is reinforced by the low number of professors (four) who reported having already silenced or who would silence students with aggressive speech content in the classroom. The unclear relationship between interrupting uncivil behaviours for the purpose of safe space and tolerating incivility for the purpose of learning shows the tension that exists between these possibilities of intervention in the classroom.

When facing instances of classroom incivility, particularly those which involve race, gender, or indigeneity, the choice to redirect the discussion appeared as the most common, followed by the decision to confront and educate (mentioned by more than half). The strategy to prevent incivility and model civility is mentioned by close to half of the participants, but the option to silence or interrupt is rarely mentioned. From these findings, one could infer that there is an apparent incompatibility between the need to guarantee safe space for students from minority groups and moments of discomfort and harm caused by the need of others to express ignorance or resentment.

One cannot negate the fact that space that is supposed to be safe for students is inherently associated with a teaching moment of being the way of the democratic teaching-learning process. However, the guarantee of the right of expression to all, even for those who express discriminatory views, and the belief in possible intellectual sincerity do not seem to be sufficient reasons for justifying the harm that may arise from privileging the teaching moment over safe space. We, then, concur with the argument that "the responsibility to the vulnerable other must precede the teaching moment for the offender" (Piquemal et al., 2019, p. 189).

Although a significant number of interviewees did not seem to believe in possible harm caused by incivility toward minority groups, previous research studies bring up several negative consequences of microaggressions that occurred in classrooms, especially in higher education (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Harwood et al., 2012; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Solorzano et al., 2000; Wells, 2013). These studies point out that there is already a feeling of non-belonging among minority students within higher education institutions, whether due to their ethnic background, socioeconomic status, or lack of racial mirrors. These conditions, combined with the lack of privilege of a safe space in the classrooms, may compromise the academic trajectory of students affected by incivility in the classroom.

Limitations and Avenues for Reflections

The criteria of inclusion in this study included full-time faculty members in tenure-track positions, which means that part-time faculty members, contract instructors, and sessional

instructors were excluded from the recruitment. At the time of design of this study, criteria of inclusion were chosen based on the premise that full-time faculty members in tenure-track positions would likely possess a more long-term perspective or a perspective contextualized with more involvement in the life of their institution, than those on contract or part-time work. Additionally, the principal investigator believed that the anonymity of part-time faculty members, contract instructors, and sessional instructors might be more easily compromised. However, as the literature suggests (Lampman, 2012), these positions are often held by racial and gender minorities who, in turn, experience more incivility. The inclusion of participants from more marginal or temporary positions would have likely exposed an additional layer of vulnerability in relation to incivility. Our criteria of exclusion thus constitute an important limitation of the study. Teachers' responses, as well as their perceptions of the consequences of acts of incivility in the classroom, demonstrate that universities still need to further develop strategies to guarantee an academic space that can support safe space for minority groups. Although important, the ethno-cultural diversification of the teaching staff is not enough if it is not accompanied by actions that promote the construction of a critical conscience aimed at recognizing and preventing incivility motivated by issues of gender, race, or ethnicity.

Teaching programs in the most varied areas of knowledge need to include content that educates about incivility. However, educating students to civility requires a non-arbitrary instructional approach that correlates students' sentiment with learning objectives and their corollary outcomes. If safe space is deemed an integral part of the curriculum, it must not be seen as antithetical to the purpose of a teaching moment. The teacher, as a catalyst, can situate this space within the instruction for the students based on their needs, anticipating, and explaining potential harm. It would appear therefore possible to move beyond the offender-offended dichotomy if both parties came to understand themselves and each other as reciprocal and non-paradoxical. As such, the teacher, as a responsible host of this process must be diligent, not just in their own way of knowing the students and their diversity, but by making civility a central teaching objective. The curriculum is meant to play a catalyst role by thoroughly integrating diverse contents (e.g., understanding the historical relationship of indigeneity) and perspectives (e.g., normative Canadian history) of socially marginalized as well as the mainstream dominant groups. Critical reflections on social positioning are key so that teacher and student discern their social identity (Indigenous, non-Indigenous, White, settler, immigrant, etc.) and learn to respect each other without any forms of hegemony or denigration based on identity markers.

These changes are necessary and urgent especially in the contemporary scenario where the pandemic caused by Covid-19 has resulted in significant instances of discrimination against minority people of Asian descent (Wen et al., 2020). The post Covid-19 scenario seems to open a vital, reading key, as it poses challenges that will need to be faced inside and outside the educational institutions. The attribution of the origin of the disease to the Asian continent as well as the targeting of countries with high rates of infection may stigmatize and therefore marginalize groups of students, posing a new challenge for facing the classroom incivility and the construction of safe spaces within higher education institutions.

Acknowledgements

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