

# FACULTY TO FACULTY INCIVILITY: EXPERIENCES OF NOVICE NURSE FACULTY IN ACADEMIA

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Academic incivility creates a challenging work environment for nursing faculty. Understanding the concept of faculty-to-faculty incivility may enlighten faculty regarding appropriate interpersonal relationships, assist in alleviating uncivil behavior, and improve the likelihood that faculty will remain in nursing education, potentially easing the current nursing faculty shortage.

The primary purpose of this study was to describe novice nurse faculty members' lived experiences of faculty-to-faculty incivility. A second purpose was to describe and understand how incivility influences faculty decision to remain in nursing academia. A hermeneutical phenomenological approach was selected to uncover the lived experience. A purposive sample of eight novice nursing faculty, those with less than 5 years of experience, was obtained via e-mail recruitment from mid-Atlantic college Web sites.

Five themes and 7 subthemes emerged. Among the findings were sensing rejection, employing behaviors to cope with uncivil colleagues, sensing others wanted novice faculty to fail, sensing a possessiveness of territory from senior faculty, and struggling with the decision to remain in the faculty position. This study is significant in that understanding of faculty-to-faculty incivility adds insight and an increased sensitivity related to uncivil interactions and may contribute to the design of evidence-based interventions supporting increased collegiality that fosters an environment conducive for the recruitment and retention of faculty. (Index words: Incivility; Novice; Faculty; Nursing; Academia; Retention; Phenomenology) *J Prof Nurs* 30:213–227, 2014. © 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**T**HE AMERICAN NURSES Association Code of Ethics and Interpretive Statements requires nurses to “maintain compassionate and caring relationships with colleagues” and “precludes...disregard for the effect of one's actions on others” (para. 1.5; [American Nurses Association, 2011](#)). The discipline of nursing has long been personified as a nurturing and caring profession. Contradictory to this image is the adage that “nursing eats its young,” an insinuation that nursing, as a profession, is not nurturing and caring to its own colleagues. Incivility is a deliberate discourtesy toward another that wounds one's self-esteem and creates doubt about one's abilities ([Peters, 2009](#)). Uncivil interactions are those that are disrespectful, belittling, condescending, threatening/intimidating, and undermining ([Andersson](#)

& [Pearson, 1999](#); [Caza & Cortina, 2007](#); [Hershcovis, 2010](#)). Nursing academe has not been excluded from the practice of incivility. Potentially, novice nurse faculty are the most vulnerable to this phenomenon because of their inexperience and lack of tenure.

Although rich descriptions exist in the literature describing student incivilities directed at faculty and faculty incivilities directed at students ([Clark, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c](#); [Clark & Springer, 2007b](#); [Luparell, 2007](#)), data on faculty to faculty incivility are lacking. Understanding the concept of faculty-to-faculty incivility may enlighten nursing faculty regarding appropriate interpersonal relationships, assist in alleviating uncivil behavior, and improve the likelihood that faculty will remain in nursing education, potentially easing the current nursing faculty shortage.

Comprehending the faculty members' experience with uncivil interactions and how satisfied they are with their position was another facet of this study. Uncivil interactions may contribute to job dissatisfaction, which in

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turn, may lead to faculty departure from academia. Recent research related to nursing faculty job satisfaction is sparse. The National League for Nursing (NLN, 2008, 2010) determined that work environment contributes to faculty satisfaction, while Gormley (2001) identified interactions or relationships with coworkers as having an impact. Organizational climate, in particular, esprit, intimacy, and disengagement have been recognized as predictors of overall job satisfaction among nursing faculty. A sense of community and collegiality; commitments to one's career, students, the profession, and colleagues; and effective leadership have also been identified as influencing nurse educators' intent to remain in academia (Garbee & Killacky, 2008).

Other terms exist that resemble incivility, including *horizontal violence*, *lateral violence*, *bullying*, and *harassment*. *Horizontal* and *lateral violence* are terms that have been used interchangeably and have been defined as "an act of aggression that's perpetrated by one colleague toward another" (Longo & Sherman, 2007, p. 35). Dellasega's (2009) definition was covert or overt acts of verbal and nonverbal aggression causing enough psychological distress to prompt nurses to exit the profession. When horizontal violence becomes repetitive, it is referred to as bullying. Workplace bullying was first described by Leymann (1996) as a continuing conflict where the victim is subjected to two or more negative incidents weekly for at least 6 months. Several definitions of bullying exist. Matthiesen and Einarsen (2001) indicated that bullying occurs when one person perceives negative actions directed at him from one or more individuals, lasting greater than 6 months, and when this person is unable to defend himself. Twale and DeLuca (2008) defined bullying as publicly belittling or finding weakness in others; it is intrinsically social and structural meaning that the workplace culture must reinforce the behavior. A perception of power exists between the bully and the person being bullied. Workplace harassment differs from bullying in that harassment is considered to be cultural, racial, or sexual in nature (Pryor & Fitzgerald, 2003). Horizontal violence has been widely discussed in the literature for a number of years and is frequently the term used when discussing incivility in the nursing workplace. Similar to incivility, examples of horizontal violence include acts or behaviors that include criticizing a colleague in front of others, belittling a colleague, segregating a colleague or leaving the colleague out of activities, withholding information from a colleague, and preventing opportunities for promotion (Longo & Sherman, 2007). Horizontal/Lateral violence and bullying share the same behaviors with the exception that bullying takes place for greater than 6 months (Simons, Stark, & DeMarco, 2011). These terms are more often associated with nursing practice rather than nursing academia.

Antecedents necessary for incivility to occur are stress/occupational stress, workload/time management, difficult working conditions, differing cultures/differing perceptions, generational differences, need to express power

over another, need for verbal release, need to obtain something of value, and greater degree of informality at work (Peters, 2009). Peters noted the consequences of uncivil behavior to be depression, anxiety, avoidance, anger, humiliation, physical illness, absenteeism/decreased time spent at work, retaliation, low motivation, reduced job satisfaction, alienation, distrust, and turnover/decreased retention.

The primary purpose of this study was to describe novice nurse faculty members' lived experiences of faculty-to-faculty incivility. A second purpose was to describe and understand how incivility influences faculty decisions to remain in nursing academia. It may be inferred that when nursing faculty encounter uncivil interactions with other nursing faculty, it diminishes their desire to stay in academia, increases their stress level, and decreases their job satisfaction. Heinrich (2007b) spoke about the "zestful workplace" and "joy stealers" and has suggested that uncivil workplaces and lack of collegiality between and among nurse educators lead to faculty resignations from academia.

The NLN, 2010 Faculty Survey revealed "that an inadequate number of nurse educators currently teach in the education pipeline" (NLN, 2010, ¶ 3). According to the NLN, "fully one half of the nurse faculty said they expected to retire within the next 10 years, and just more than one in five (21 percent) expected to retire within the next five years" (NLN, 2010, para. 8). Between 2007 and 2008, the NLN Nursing Data Review showed that "23.4 percent of the nation's nursing programs...reported receiving more qualified applicants than could be accepted...with 119,000 qualified applicants, or 39 percent...turned away from prelicensure programs in 2008" (NLN, 2010, para. 10). These findings suggest that retention of qualified nursing faculty is necessary to reduce the current faculty shortage and may reduce the nursing shortage. Faculty-to-faculty incivility warrants in-depth scrutiny because of its potential for detrimental effects on victims and possible effects on the profession of nursing academia and, thus, nursing education. In addition, uncivil interactions in nursing education may transfer to patient care. Nursing students who look to faculty members as role models and observe uncivil faculty-to-faculty interactions may think that such behavior is acceptable and mimic the behavior in the workplace with their coworkers and their patients.

## Review of Literature

Robust literature exists illuminating the problem of incivility in multiple disciplines such as business, higher education, sociology, psychology, government, and nursing (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Connelly, 2009; Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Griffin, 2004; Moffat, 2001; Porath, Overbeck, & Pearson, 2008). Job satisfaction of nursing faculty is also reviewed because it is related to retention of nursing faculty with the assumption that satisfaction with one's job will enhance faculty retention. The lack of literature related to uncivil interactions between and among nursing faculty

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