ABSTRACT

THE SELFIE GENERATION: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF

CLASSROOM INCIVILITY IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

By

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From the early days of academia, classroom incivility has been acknowledged as counterproductive to the social contract of an educational environment; however, due to the subjectivity of what constitutes uncivil behavior, classroom incivility continues to be open to interpretation. The recent surge in classroom incivility has been attributed to changes in generational culture, parenting styles, K–12 educational practices, technological customs, and consumeristic/narcissistic attitudes of students. A marginal amount of classroom incivility literature has focused on higher education settings; even more scant is the literature that has explored uncivil behaviors in social work education environments.

This quantitative study examined students' perceptions of classroom incivility in social work education, using the theoretical framework of social exchange theory. The sample included 203 social work students; nearly 78% were enrolled in the Master of Social Work program and approximately 22% were enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Work program in a public university in southern California. A majority of the sample expressed some level of concern regarding the *severity* of the uncivil

behaviors listed in the survey; however, the participants appeared to be polarized in their responses concerning the *frequency* of uncivil behaviors. Based on these findings, implications for field internship and professional practice were identified and recommendations were made to assist undergraduate and graduate programs to recognize what is potentially the new norm in social work education settings and to promote a dialog regarding how students are educated and socialized into the social work profession. This research did not clarify the issue of what constitutes classroom incivility; rather, it generated questions for future research regarding probable causes, consequences, and effects of uncivil behaviors in social work education.

THE SELFIE GENERATION: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM INCIVILITY IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Once considered to be annoying classroom behaviors, classroom incivility is a growing issue that impedes the learning process in academic settings around the world (Nilson & Jackson, 2004). From generation to generation, what constitutes classroom incivility has been open to interpretation (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Cohon, 1998). The reason for this ambiguity is that the notion of classroom incivility is very subjective; what one person may find to be an uncivil behavior, another person may not (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009).

According to Hoffman (2012), the term *classroom incivility* is defined as "rude or disruptive behaviors which often result in psychological or physiological distress for people involved" (p. 1). Bjorklund and Rehling (2009) stated that classroom incivility included "behaviors that distract the instructor or other students, disrupt classroom learning, discourage the instructor from teaching, discourage other students from participating, [and] derail the instructor's goals for the period" (p. 16). Beyond the definitions, the literature has acknowledged specific examples of uncivil behaviors by students in the classroom setting, such as groans or sighs, sleeping, talking/texting on cell phones, holding side conversations, or non-classroom-related computer use (Black, Wygonik, & Frey, 2011; C. M. Clark & Springer, 2007). Other student-generated uncivil behaviors have been identified as classroom incivility, such as arriving late to class or leaving class early, acting bored, dominating class discussions,

or confronting teachers with sarcastic comments (Boice, 1996; Nilson & Jackson, 2004; Thomas, 2003).

Several key studies conducted within the past couple of decades have identified an increase in both frequency and severity of classroom incivility in higher education settings (Baker, Comer, & Martinak, 2008; Boice, 1996; C. M. Clark, 2008; C. M. Clark & Springer, 2007). The literature indicates various potential causes for this increase in uncivil behaviors. First, Twenge (2009) reported differences in generational views among Baby Boomers, Gen Y, and Millennials. Second, researchers have reported changes in the way current students perceive personal rights and responsibilities as an academic citizen (National Association of Secretaries of State, 1998). Third, Zaslow (2007) attempted to link the changes in how millennial students were parented and the attitude trend of academia self-importance and entitlement. Fourth, along with changes in student mentalities, current students look more like consumers who view the purpose of education as a means to an end, rather than for pursuit of knowledge (Lipmann, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009). Fifth, the literature reported the effects of ever-evolving technology on classroom misconduct (Oblinger, 2003), as well as changes in lower education pedagogy in relation to inappropriate grade inflation (Trout, 1998).

How does this information relate to social work education? In 1915, Abraham Flexner asked whether social work was a profession or simply people with an unselfish devotion to help others. Since that time, the field of social work has attempted to affirm professional standards that clearly identify a specific set of competencies and ethical standards. Ausbrooks, Hill-Jones, and Tijerina (2011)

demonstrated that perceptions of social work students with regard to uncivil behaviors of classmates were similar to that reported in the limited literature. Moreover, research relating the issue of uncivil classroom behavior to social work education is nearly nonexistent. The reason for this silence may be attributed to the following:

> Acknowledging problems of classroom incivility in social work education poses the risk of considering how well social work educators are socializing students to the profession as well as raising questions about the appropriateness of students relative to professional identify and fit. (Ausbrooks et al., 2011, p. 256)

Due to the applied nature of social work education, the learning and development of knowledge and skills are honed in the classroom setting and practiced in required field internships. Throughout the social work education process, students are asked not only to demonstrate understanding of the standards, ethics, and other key concepts within classroom settings, but also to apply social work skills in supervised field internship settings. Ausbrooks et al. (2011) appeared to make an argument for further research relating to uncivil classroom behaviors due to the applied nature of the social work profession.

The professional standards established by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE; 2008) relate not only to the classroom and field internship setting but also to key professional skills needed to perform professional social work in the industry post-graduation. Along with the professional social work standards established by the CSWE, uncivil classroom behaviors identified in the literature do not align with the professional code of ethics upheld by the social work industry. Again, the most immediate implication is that social work is an applied profession and

the practice of professional skills and presentation of self, begins in the classroom setting.

Social Work Education

Since 1929, the social work profession has trained students to uphold a respectful and caring relationship with clients, colleagues, and classmates (Garthwait, 2011). The most common social work degrees offered are the Bachelor in Social Work (BSW) and the Master of Social Work (MSW). Both degrees are educational programs accredited by the CSWE; this governing body establishes the professional standards and policies for social work education known as the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS). The standards are identified within 10 competency areas: professionalism, ethics, critical thinking, cultural awareness, social justice, research informed practice and practice informed research, human behavior and social environment, policy practice, current trends, and direct practice (CSWE, 2008, pp. 3–6). Ultimately, the purpose of the social work professional competencies is to

> promote human and community well-being guided by a person and environment construct, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, social work's purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons. (CSWE, 2008, p. 1)

The main objective of the BSW degree is to prepare students to work in basic counseling and case management positions with "individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations" (Mizrahi & Davis, 2008, p. 185). The MSW degree is designed to build on the foundation skills of the BSW curriculum and add advanced skills of clinical psychotherapy and administrative leadership. Graduates with an

MSW degree enter the work force prepared to work in a wide variety of roles, from therapist to organization administrator.

Both the BSW and MSW degrees emphasize application of professional skills guided by a structured code of ethics. The most widely accepted code of ethics in the United States is authored by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW); the NASW Code of Ethics (The Code) is made up of clearly defined values, principles, and standards. The NASW encourages social work professionals and students to act in the service of others, to advocate for social justice, to respect the dignity and worth of each person, to value the importance of human relationships, and to act in the service of others with integrity and competence (NASW, 2008b). This professional training and conduct begins in the classroom and structured fieldwork internships.

Problem Statement

Although the literature has focused primarily on incivility as it relates to elementary or secondary education (C. M. Clark, 2008), the problem of classroom incivility has had a significant impact on the higher education learning community since the early days of Harvard College (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Cohon, 1998). Nonetheless, according to Brubacher and Rudy (1997), Cohon (1998), and C. M. Clark (2008), a large percentage of empirical research on classroom incivility is geared toward elementary and high school education; less has been published regarding higher education. Consequently, scant empirical data exist with regard to reviewing students' perceptions of frequency and severity of classroom incivility in social work education programs; this lack of examination has created a significant gap in research (Ausbrooks et al., 2011).

Evidence suggests that classroom incivility plays a crucial role in diminishing the teaching-learning environment and may lead to heightened stress and anxiety for students (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009). These uncivil behaviors do not align with the social contract of the classroom environment and may affect the quality of instruction and learning (Feldmann, 2001; Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). Similarly to the social contract described above, classroom incivility does not align with the field of social work competency standards or industry accepted code of ethics. However, addressing these effects, it is important to identify and establish a baseline of what students perceive as uncivil behaviors in social work classrooms.

The consequence of students not perceiving classroom incivility as inappropriate in an academic setting is that social work programs may graduate students with a skewed sense of social work standards and ethics. Due to the counterproductive nature of uncivil behaviors, this skewed lens may ultimately affect their work with vulnerable and underrepresented clients. The results of this research will assist social work educators in understanding the perceptions of severity and frequency of classroom incivility from a student's perspective. Social work educators may use these results to address the issue.

Purpose and Guiding Question

The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions of severity and frequency of classmate uncivil behavior in social work education. This study compared and contrasted student and program demographics to overall perceptions of severity in social work education. Although social work field education is an important component in the development process of professional standards and skills,

this study focused on students' perceptions of severity and frequency of incivility as they relate to the academic classroom setting.

The levels of education are defined as BSW programs and MSW programs. The context of this study was focused on a public state university social work program in southern California. After an extensive review of the literature, the following research questions were posed:

1. Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?

2. Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?

3. Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?

Theoretical Framework: Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) was established by George Homans, John Thibaut, Harold Kelley, and Peter Blau. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) focused on social exchange in terms of psychological concepts and Blau (1964) concentrated on social exchange as it is related to power within groups. According to Emerson (1976), the earliest writings on social context as an exchange were documented in an essay written by George Homans. In this essay, Homans (1958) identified social exchange as a behavior that was influenced by an exchange of rewards and costs; SET proposes that people are presented with a choice between costs and rewards. Homans noted that these behaviors turn out to be mutually beneficial, motivated by the necessity to continue to receive rewards through the social exchange. The essence of SET focuses

on social behavior, specifically the result of reward or cost as a byproduct of an exchange between two or more people (Homans, 1958).

Following these studies, Meeker (1971) identified four fundamental principles of SET: "the individual value, the perception of the various behaviors available to the individual, perceived consequences of the behaviors, and social norms dictating a prescription for behavior" (p. 486). According to Meeker, behaviors of an individual are voluntary, whereas values of an individual are not voluntary. This important concept led Meeker to suggest that "people choose things or behavior they value more than they choose things they do not value" (p.489). Ultimately, SET proposes that people behave in the manner that maximizes their potential for positive results (rewards) and avoids negative consequences (costs; Meeker, 1971). Meeker expanded the work of Homans to suggest that the core of social exchange is less about the individual and more about social norms. The term *norms* is defined as "generally accepted behaviors or beliefs," while *social norms* "are those behaviors or beliefs that are socially accepted and enforced" (Meeker, 1971, p. 486).

Adding to SET were Lawler and Thye (1999), who researched the role of emotions in relation to social exchange. Lawler and Thye identified six basic emotions: pleasure, sadness, joy, fear, frustration and anger; they noted that there is very little control of these emotions. Later, Lawler (2001) continued research on social exchange and suggested five basic assumptions:

> Exchange produces emotions ranging from positive to negative; these emotions are internal stimuli; individuals seek to avoid negative stimuli and incur positive stimuli; the global emotions trigger cognitive efforts to understand their cause resulting in specific emotions; and individuals explain and interpret their global feelings in relationship to the group or network by connecting feelings to experience. (p. 322)

Lawler (2001) contended that emotions are globally felt by everyone and are involuntary reactions to external experiences; while the brain takes energy to focus on the emotion, cognitive capacity and processing are diminished. According to C. M. Clark (2008), concerning uncivil behavior, everyone involved in the exchange feels an emotional connection. Therefore, if emotions are a fundamental part of uncivil behaviors and emotions have been shown to diminish cognitive capacity, this may have important repercussions to a student's ability to learn in the classroom (C. M. Clark, 2008).

According to Boyer (1990), higher education has become increasingly important in shaping a student's social and civic responsibility. Echoing this viewpoint, Kirk (2005) noted that higher education offers students an opportunity to build knowledge, skills, and respect for others through social interactions. Looking at academic interactions through this lens, SET informs the concept of classroom incivility regarding why a student abides or resists in an academic setting and how positive and negative emotional responses either assist or hinder the learning process. A student's capacity to abide or resist the appropriate social norms in the classroom may be predicated on the student's perception of reward or cost benefit. According to the literature, this perception may be based on various factors, such as variations in generational differences, perception of personal rights and responsibilities as a student citizen, attitudes toward self-importance and entitlement, various reasons to pursue higher education, the culture surrounding use of technology, or changes in K–12 education instruction as related to inappropriate grade inflation.

Significance of the Study

This section reviews the significance of researching classroom incivility in social work education. The broader significance of researching classroom incivility becomes increasingly more important in creating a classroom environment conducive to learning and free of distractive behaviors. Students who are unsuccessful in learning the required competencies in the classroom setting and fail to demonstrate self- and environmental awareness of inappropriate perspective and conduct run the risk of not possessing the necessary professional standards and ethical skills to perform in their field internship. Moreover, students who fail to develop appropriate social work standards and ethics during their educational process also run the risk of continuing this skewed perspective and behaviors in their work outside the walls of academia.

> Acknowledging problems of classroom incivility in social work education poses the risk of considering how well social work educators are socializing students to the profession as well as raising questions about the appropriateness of students relative to professional identity and fit. (Ausbrooks et al., 2011, p. 256)

The outcome of this research may provide social work educators a foundation regarding the prevalence of classroom incivility in social work education from a student's lens. The research may assist undergraduate and graduate-level programs to identify, review, and adjust classroom management techniques that lead to more conducive learning environments for social work students. Results of this research may lead to more inclusive methods of assessing appropriate social work readiness and fit between academic and fieldwork education. Ultimately, this study may inspire

larger sample-size research on the topic of classroom and field internship incivility in social work education.

Operational Definitions

This section defines significant terms utilized in this dissertation.

Academic Incivility

"Behaviors that distract the instructor or other students, disrupt classroom learning, discourage the instructor from teaching, discourage other students from participating, [and] derail the instructor's goals for the period" (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009, p. 16).

Civility

"Training in the humanities; civilized conduct; courtesy, politeness; a polite act or expression" ("Civility," 2015).

Classroom Incivility

Student conduct that does not adhere to CSWE (2008) professional standards, as well as social work professional code of ethics in the social work classroom setting.

Code of Ethics (The Code)

The values, principles, and standards that provide a foundation for the practice of social work.

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)

A nonprofit association that provides progressive leadership through accreditation standards for all social work programs in the United States.

Educational Policies and Accreditation Standards (EPAS)

Recently updated in 2008, the EPAS is developed by CSWE to guide BSW and MSW programs through accreditation educational policies and competency standards.

Incivility

"The quality or state of being uncivil; a rude or discourteous act" ("Incivility," 2015).

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

The world's largest professional membership organization for social workers that provides leadership through professional ethics (The Code) and development, as well as macro-level advocacy for social justice.

Social Work

A practice-based profession that supports social change through collective responsibility and the empowerment of people; a strength-based focus advocating for basic human rights and social justice through respect for diversity and equality.

Uncivil

"Not civilized; lacking in courtesy; not conducive to civic harmony and welfare" ("Uncivil," 2015).

Assumptions and Delimitations

The first limitation of the study was that the sample was a convenience sample of a social work program in southern California; thus, the study's findings cannot be generalized to all social work programs. Second, the quantitative data focused on the seriousness and frequency of perceived uncivil behavior by classmates. By using a cross sectional design, the results may lead to low internal validity because the study

did not take into account mitigating circumstances surrounding the perceived event. Both culture and gender were intentionally excluded because of time constraint. However, it was assumed that student responses were based on personal experience, responses were forthright, and questions were correctly understood as intended. The lack of an experimental design excludes causal inferences from the results of this study. Also, another limitation was that the authors of the scale used in this study, Black et al. (2011), did not provide any psychometric properties.

This research contains issues with external validity. The selected study site may not represent other social work programs in the region due to the small size of the sample and the nonprobability method of sampling. The data collected from these respondents may differ from data that could be collected from the overall social work student population. Furthermore, the university campus and social work department policies and culture may have contributed to the perceptions held by social work students regarding classroom incivility.

A qualitative study may be useful in the future to gather information regarding historical or current circumstances that may influence perceptions of uncivil behavior. Literature on faculty perceptions, classroom management, or teaching pedagogy was not reviewed or investigated in this study; further quantitative or qualitative research study may be useful in the future to gather information regarding the influence of these variables on classroom incivility.

Chapter Summary

This study focused on students perceptions of classmates' behaviors in higher education social work programs. This chapter provided the background, problem

statement, purpose, guiding questions, significance, delimitations, definition of terms, and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the construct of incivility by defining incivility in general terms, then focusing on how incivility relates to the classroom setting and the various levels of classroom incivility. The next section reviews the history of incivility to see how classroom incivility has evolved since the early days of Harvard College. This history is reviewed by era: colonial to pre-Civil War, post-Civil War to pre-World War II, and post-World War II to contemporary time. The section also examines the history of social work as a profession, its culture, and its educational curriculum development. The next section reviews the literature regarding various potential reasons behind present-day classroom incivility in higher education. Some of the possible explanations identified in the literature are generational differences, rights versus responsibilities, parenting styles, narcissism and entitlement, changes in pedagogy, technology, consumerism, and grade inflation. The chapter concludes with a review of the sparse literature on classroom incivility in relation to social work education.

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

To address the gap in the literature, this literature review explores the severity and frequency of classroom incivility in social work education from a student's perspective. The context of this study was one social work program located in a southern California public university. For the purpose of this research, *classroom*

incivility was defined as a student's conduct not adhering to the CSWE (2008) professional standards and the social work professional code of ethics in the social work classroom setting.

The literature review is presented in the following relevant sections: construct of incivility, history of academic incivility, history of social work, culture and curriculum of social work, present-day academic incivility in higher education, and present-day academic incivility in social work education.

Construct of Incivility

This section begins with a review of various conceptual definitions of incivility. Second, definitions specifically pertaining to academic incivility are explored. Third, various levels of severity of uncivil behaviors, from less serious to more serious, are explored.

Defining Incivility

A variety of definitions can be found in the literature regarding what constitutes uncivil behavior. Berger (2000) defined *uncivil behavior* as "any speech or action that is disrespectful or rude" (p. 446). The strength of this definition seems to be its all-encompassing nature; the limitation lies in what constitutes disrespect or rudeness.

Another definition, relating more to the workplace environment, defines incivility as a "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norm as for mutual respect" (Anderson & Pearson, 1999, p. 455). The strength of this definition is that it begins to identify incivility in a more measureable and observable way and makes the distinction between more and

less severe behavior; the limitation is that it does not define a norm. If workplace norms could be tied to some form of organizational policy, or code of conduct, there might be stronger consensus as to whether a behavior is appropriate or inappropriate.

Defining Academic Incivility

Frey-Knepp (2012) identified *academic incivility* as a behavior that "violates the unspoken or implied understanding of respect for the learning process and the academy" (p. 32). The strength of this definition is that it begins to identify academic incivility; a limitation is that the definition is open to interpretation of what constitutes professional or scholastic common courtesy. Morrissette (2001) defined academic incivility as "the intentional behavior of students to disrupt and interfere with the teaching and learning process of others" (p. 2). The strength of this definition is that it focuses on an academic setting; a limitation is that it rests on intent. Along with assigning meaning to a particular behavior in order to identify whether it is an act of incivility, faculty or students must assess a person's motives. Even if a behavior interferes with the teaching or learning process, it may be difficult to evaluate a person's intent.

Feldmann (2001) defined academic incivility as "any action that interferes with a harmonious and cooperative learning atmosphere in the classroom" (p. 137). The strength of this definition is similar to that by Morrissette in that it is focused on an academic setting and begins to focus on the effects on the academic environment; the limitation seems to be in the term "any action," which allows too much room for individual interpretation.

While these definitions alluded to the effect of academic incivility, C. M. Clark (2008) recognized a more cause-and-effect relationship in terms of consequences of uncivil behavior by defining academic incivility as a "disregard and insolence for others, causing an atmosphere of disrespect, conflict, and stress" (p. 38). The strength of this definition is that it begins to bring together a cause-and-effect relationship; the limitation is that the listed causal behaviors and effects are not specific to academia. What do disregard and insolence for others look like in a classroom setting? What do disrespect, conflict, and stress mean in academia?

A more refined definition of academic incivility was developed by Bjorklund and Rehling (2009): "not in accordance with the unity of the classroom community, including behaviors that distract the instructor or other students, disrupt classroom learning, discourage the instructor from teaching, discourage other students from participating, [and] derail the instructor's goals for the period" (p. 16). The strength of this definition is that it begins to define parameters of uncivil behaviors, as well as the effects of incivility in the classroom setting; the items listed can both be potentially observed and measured. Focusing on the effects in a classroom setting gives researchers a common foundation to conduct studies. However, causal behaviors are not clearly defined.

All of these definitions have one limitation in common. Since academic incivilities are "perceptions based on individual interpretation," it is difficult to generate one single all-encompassing definition because various behaviors can be seen as uncivil (Hoffman, 2012, p. 33). Bjorklund and Rehling (2009) stated that each generation perceives academic incivility differently; while one generation may take

issue with certain behaviors, others would not even notice those behaviors. This difference may also be seen among faculty members, where each behavior is assigned an individual meaning as to whether or not an act is appropriate (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009).

Defining Levels of Academic Incivility

While more severe behaviors such as culturally or ethnically derogatory insults or persistent unwanted sexual advances may be acknowledged as uncivil, defining the line between acceptable and unacceptable is much more elusive for less serious behaviors. As illustrated in the literature, perceptions of disruptive and uncivil behavior have been present on college campuses since the early days of higher education (Hernandez & Fister, 2001; Meyers, 2003; Seidman, 2005; Young, Vance, & Ensher, 2003). As academic incivility relates to modern college settings, the literature separates uncivil behavior of students into two levels: less serious and more serious. The act of labeling these behaviors in reference to severity can be a subjective task (Alberts, Hazen, & Theobald, 2010). Frey-Knepp (2012) noted that "a behavior that one instructor considers rude and disruptive (e.g., a student eating his or her lunch during class) may not bother—or even enter the awareness of another instructor" (p. 33).

Less serious uncivil behaviors. Less serious uncivil behaviors can be identified by students or faculty as a nuisance or annoyance (Frey-Knepp, 2012). Feldmann (2001) acknowledged a first construct of less serious indirect forms of classroom incivility as inappropriate student attire, loud and disruptive side conversations during class sessions, or sarcastic statements or a lack of interest or

disapproval expressed as groans or sighs. C. M. Clark and Springer (2007) supported and expanded this list of less severe academic incivility behaviors as "using cell phones or pagers during class, holding distracting conversations, sleeping in class, using computers for purposes not related to the class and making disapproving groans" (p. 10). Connelly (2009) reported uncivil behaviors to be connected to technology, such as sending threatening or inappropriate emails or inappropriate use of cell phones, tablets or laptops during class time for nonacademic activities. Connelly indicated other uncivil behaviors, such as "sleeping in class, disapproving groans or sighs, acting bored or disinterested, not attending class, challenging the instructor's knowledge or credibility, dominating class discussion, and not taking notes" (p. 48). Nordstrom, Bartels, and Bucy (2009) reinforced Connelly's findings by identifying similar behaviors such as talking or texting on a cell phone, sleeping, arriving late, surfing the web, and carrying on conversations with others during lectures. Frey-Knepp (2012) added to the list of less serious classroom behaviors

> loud emotional outbursts during class, failing to participate or express interest in the course, coming to class unprepared, making demands and unreasonable requests toward the instructor (e.g., extended deadlines, make-up exams, extra credit opportunities), and disrupting class by arriving late or leaving early. (p. 34)

Feldmann (2001) noted a second construct of less serious direct forms of uncivil behaviors, such as deviating class discussion from the course topic and being closed-minded to the input of others, both faculty and students.

<u>More serious uncivil behaviors</u>. According to the literature, there are various classifications of what constitutes more serious uncivil behavior (Alberts et al., 2010; Boice, 1996; C. M. Clark, 2008; Feldmann, 2001; Frey-Knepp, 2012). The highest

level of academic incivility has been documented as rising to the level of violence. Feldmann (2001) categorized verbal threat or physical harm as the most serious of uncivil behaviors. Boice (1996) reported that, while the percentage of incidents of physical violence against higher education faculty or administrators is low, violence and threats of violence have occurred. Echoing these findings, C. M. Clark (2008) stated that more serious behaviors are rare in higher education; the few that have been publicized by national media are considered to be in the realm of acts of violence. However, according to Alberts et al. (2010), the number of more serious behaviors on higher education campuses has been on the rise since the 1990s.

Feldmann (2001) published a study that identified a subset of more serious uncivil behaviors that did not reach the level of physical violence but still carried a high degree of hostility. A subconstruct of academic incivility was identified as intimidating behaviors such as bullying the professor for a better grade or to eliminate an assignment. Frey-Knepp (2012) also identified behaviors that would be perceived as "hostile" or "threatening" toward other student, faculty, or staff (p. 33). These serious nonviolent uncivil behaviors included

> stalking (in person or electronically), intimidation, unjustified complaints to a professor's superior (e.g., department chair, dean), unwarranted negative feedback on an instructor's teaching evaluation, cheating or other academic integrity violations, and personal comments or verbal attacks against faculty or classmates. (Frey-Knepp, 2012, p. 34)

History of Academic Incivility

This section of the literature review identifies and explores perceptions of academic incivility in higher education from a historical perspective by delineating the timeline into three key eras in U.S. history: Colonial to pre-Civil War, post-Civil War

to World War II, and post-World War II to Contemporary. The relevance in reviewing the history of any concept is to understand how events have been perceived and helped to shape the present-day issues with regard to uncivil behaviors in academic settings.

> Whether one believes that historical events are largely accidental, fortuitous, existential occurrences to which meaning is attributed retrospectively, or that history can be understood as an interrelated set of causal forces, there are certain dramatic moments that have unusual consequences for the pattern of human events far into the future. (Austin, 1983, p. 357)

From generation to generation, what constitutes uncivil behavior has been open to interpretation (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009). Even though the colloquial terms that describe unruly behavior may have changed, it appears that incivility has a longstanding presence in higher education in the United States. Although many presume that uncivil behavior is a problem relegated to elementary or secondary education, the issue of incivility has had a significant impact on the higher education learning environment since the days of Harvard College (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Cohon, 1998).

Colonial to Pre-Civil War Era

As a new nation was being developed, so was the institution of higher education in early America. Patterned after the English system of higher education, Harvard College was established September 8, 1636 (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Lucas 2006). According to Brubacher and Rudy (1997), Oxford and Cambridge were used as the template in designing an English-American college. In "student discipline, curriculum, administrative regulations, and degree requirements, Harvard followed English college precedents as closely and faithfully as it could; and Harvard, in turn,

became the great prototype for all the later colleges of English America" (p. 3). So why did students rebel against the college?

According to Lucas (2006), the policies, practices, values, and expectations of English culture were embraced in these academic institutions. Whether the student came from a common or privileged background, the early colonial colleges held the entire student body to the same high standards of civility (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Along with standards of etiquette, early American colleges mirrored the intense rigors of student class work found in English colleges. Combining high expectations of schoolwork with excessive restraint outlined in the college's civil code of conduct led to an explosive era of "pranks, rioting, dissipation, vandalism, and even personal assaults" (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997, p. 49).

With strict religious undertones, many of the rules that were enforced during this time were seen by students as excessive (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Lucas, 2006). Evidence of such strict rules was the Harvard College Laws (HCL) of 1642 (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Some colleges in this era adopted the HCL, which controlled everything from promptness and attendance to how a student conducted prayers, wore clothes, spent free time, and even what was to be eaten; there were specific rules outlining elimination of any and all vices (drinking, fighting, gambling, swearing, etc.; Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Lucas, 2006). Early indicators of resentment by students toward such strict rules surfaced by means of "absenteeism, of obscene graffiti scribbled by students in the flyleaves of their hymnals, of spitting in the chapel aisle, and general inattentiveness" (Lucas, 2006, p. 127).

Further evidence of rising tensions could be seen in the riots and violent open rebellion of students on college campuses across the country. These exchanges resulted in injury to faculty and students and, on occasions, death (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Also, this environment contributed to a fragmented relationship between students and faculty, whereby the faculty regulations were seen as "paternal despotism" and intrepid students were seen as undisciplined and disrespectful (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997, p. 50). Why were faculty seen as paternalistic tyrants?

According to Brubacher and Rudy (1997) and Lucas (2006), college policies could be blamed for requiring faculty to act as campus constables. The faculty was charged by the institution to monitor, correct, and discipline student behavior, as well as investigate, apprehend, and punish disruptive student offenders.

In this time period, uncivil behavior appeared to be widespread, creating situations that often called for the entire faculty to systematically pursue groups of offenders (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). According to Brubacher and Rudy (1997), the colleges of the colonial era "resembled that of a low-grade boys' boarding school straight out of the pages of Dickens" (p. 50). Likewise, Lucas (2006) noted the rising resentment from faculty who were required to impose norms and pointed to one example of a professor being hurt when falling while trying to chase a student who was running with a stolen turkey; while on the ground, the professor was heard to cry out "Mein Gott! All dis for two t'ousand dollars!" (p. 124).

According to Brubacher and Rudy (1997), another way that the "illustration of all phases of subcivilized existence" became evident was through creation of unsanctioned secret organizations; these informal groups used extravagant initiations,

hazed new members, and became a formal outlet to express feelings of frustration and anger toward the established system of higher education (p. 50). While some groups focused on debating religious questions regarding what sins were potentially forgivable, other groups gathered to vent distain for the system (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Lucas, 2006).

Looking at these subgroups through the lens of social exchange theory, Lawler and Thye (1999) described them as "self-interested actors who transact with other self-interested actors to accomplish individual goals that they cannot achieve alone" (p. 217). The creation of these informal groups offered positive stimuli for students to vent feelings of anger and frustration that otherwise could not be done on their own. Also, Lawler's (2001) assumption that emotions play an integral role in social exchange would demonstrate that these informal groups acted as a coping mechanism for students affected by what they perceived to be academic incivility.

Student participation in peer-approved activities that were not approved by the university often led to positive acceptance by peers. Conversely, the student who participated in a non-peer-approved activity, such as a positive student-faculty association, may have been seen as an outcast—or in the colloquial terms of the day as "blue," "blue skin," or "fisher"—by his peers (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997, p. 50). Lucas (2006) described faculty and administration as the "enemy," and students who interacted with school officials "were ostracized by their fellow classmates or were viewed with suspicion" (p. 124).

What else caused such uncivil behavior? Aside from the college policies, Brubacher and Rudy (1997) attributed the behavior to democracy. From a macro

point of view, during this time, the United States was bursting with democratic ideals and students who grew up in this pre-Civil War era were modeling this behavior at a macro level. These academic uncivil behaviors could be a byproduct of being raised in an environment that condoned defiance of authority within a free democratic society (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Along these lines of rioting and rebellion, students of this era grew up in a world filled with violence. The frontier nature of this era stimulated a need for survival and active rebelliousness as a lifestyle (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Cohon, 1998).

In applying SET to these two causes, a student may have observed and learned that the ability to express and defend oneself was part of the fundamental tenets of democracy that led to a higher probability of survival in the harsh environment and, ultimately, acceptance by peers and society outside the walls of academia.

As previously stated, there are many ways that uncivil behavior surfaces in higher education settings. While terms may have changed, the lesson learned from this era can be applied to the modern day. As Frey-Knepp (2012) pointed out, this issue of academic incivility is a reciprocal process, generated by administration, faculty, and students, that contributes and often dominates an academic environment through disrespectful and undesirable behavior.

Post-Civil War to World War II Era

After the Civil War, the nation began a process of healing that led to a new positive culture; no more was this change in culture reflected than on college campuses across the United States. At the end of the 1800s, higher education institutions went through an era of "scrutinizing themselves and reexamining their

basic purposes and goals" (Lucas, 2006, p. 145). This transformation from modest colleges to diverse and comprehensive universities was fueled by a combination of "social, political, cultural, and economic factors" (Lucas, 2006, p. 148). Academic reform was generated by higher education administrators who saw the need to modernize curriculum to be more reflective of these factors and to prepare students for a wider range of technical occupations that could not be merged into the "old-time" studies (Lucas, 2006, p. 146).

Along with curriculum changes came reforms for both students and faculty that led to a more positive campus climate. First, adjustments were made by creating less oppressive college policies that treated students as adults and professors as educators (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Lucas, 2006). During this era, students were allowed more flexibility by campus administration to create their own collegiate culture dictated by student-driven values, customs and behaviors; incoming students became connected to this innovative campus culture (Cohon, 1998). Along with university policy changes affecting students, colleges began to develop formal campus security divisions that were responsible to maintain order in the institution. This change relieved professors of their former role of campus constables and allowed them to concentrate on academic responsibilities (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997).

Second, during this period, campuses placed an emphasis on intercollegiate athletics. The rationale was that, if students were offered a formal outlet for their aggressive and rebellious tendencies, college campuses would see a decrease in uncivil and disruptive behaviors (Cohon, 1998). This attention to athletic competition

mirrored the competitive spirit of a growing nation that sought to refocus efforts from civil war to growth and prosperity (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997).

> As the collegiate way became codified, student rebellions against the staff became less common. Occasional rebellions against the colleges' surrogate-parent status were seen, but even these confrontations were less acrimonious, relatively free of the violence and mayhem characteristics of student riots during the mid-nineteenth century. (Cohon, 1998, p. 122)

Third, institutions made changes that affected the social aspects of college life through mainstream inclusion of co-ed education and development of formal university organizations such as fraternities (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Cohon, 1998; Lucas, 2006). According to Brubacher and Rudy (1997), these changes may have contributed to a more positive overall student attitude by providing constructive outlets for youthful zeal. Pursuing higher education became more attractive for young people who saw advantages to the positive college lifestyle and technical and professional opportunities "in a nation without an effective apprenticeship system" (Cohon, 1998, p.114). During this postwar rebuilding, the number of students attending college was estimated at 62,000 in 1870; within 20 years, that number grew to 157,000, by the turn of the century the student population exceeded 355,000, and in 1945 enrollment rose to 1,677,000 students (Cohon, 1998; Lucas, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 1992).

It appears that the college culture in America was changing and, according to SET, the term *social norms* was defined as "those behaviors or beliefs that are socially accepted and enforced" (Meeker, 1971, p. 486). While the social norms of the previous generations were marked by rebellion, the social norms of this era reflected conformity rooted in mutual respect. Therefore, if "people choose things or behaviors

they value" and attending college was seen as an opportunity rather than an extension of a boys' boarding school, then the lack of uncivil behavior became the new social norm and SET would suggest that adhering to the social norm yielded more reward than participating in disruptive behaviors (Meeker, 1971, p. 489).

Post-World War II to Contemporary Era

While past educational periods had seen increases in student enrollment, none could compare to the 500% growth experienced between 1945 and 1975; the student population exploded from just under two million to eleven million (Cohon, 1998; Lucas, 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). As the United States emerged from World War II, new incentives became available to make college attendance affordable. In 1944, the Serviceman's Readjustment Bill (also known as the GI Bill) helped returning solders with educational expenses. Along with the GI Bill, many federal and state loans and grants were made available, as well as access to local community colleges that offered affordable low tuition. Higher education institutions were established in many towns, which reflected a sense of hope and prosperity (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). According to Cohon (1998), "Anyone who did not want to attend college was considered misguided and in need of special encouragement" (p. 197).

This national atmosphere of open educational access and post-war optimism translated into a generational culture known as the "silent generation" (Cohon 1998, p. 202). This generation of college students was made up chiefly of veterans and those who saw educational administration in a favorable light. According to Cohon (1998), another contributing factor for this compliance may have been restrictive immigration

laws that reduced the size of foreign-born populations or the threat of McCarthyism. The "apathetic collegians" of this era were not interested in social or political activism (Lucas, 2006, p. 275); in fact, the silent generation was criticized for being ultraconformist, lacking the capacity for independent thought (Cohon, 1998). Social exchange theorists would see this conformist behavior as the student response to the social norm of a growing anticommunistic and social liberal national culture to avoid costs (being seen as a subversive) and increase rewards (being seen as a good American; Meeker, 1971; R. T. Morris, 1956).

While one generation conformed to social norms, the following generation of college students became more socially and politically active. Bergen (1977) noted that "the university campus is where the new and different are being discovered and the old rethought and reevaluated . . . so if a university is doing its job, it is bound to be a hotbed of heresy" (p. 170). According to Cohon (1998), in the 1960s a new era of activism began in Southern states, where the spark of social change began at a Woolworth lunch counter and led to the pacifist sit-in movement utilized by Black students to fight against injustice.

This youth counterculture movement resonated across hundreds of higher education institutions in the United States, as well as college campuses in Europe, Latin America, and the Far East (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). Brubacher and Rudy (1997) noted that no one clear cause could be identified for this global student rebellion; while students in the United States were beginning to protest against the war in Vietnam, other countries with no involvement in Vietnam experienced similar activism.

Cohon (1998) noted many reasons for such uncivil and rebellious behavior in the United States such as “civil rights, the Vietnam War draft, access to college, curricular and instructional forms, women’s equality, environmental issues, the role of state government in higher education, and what they perceived as the evils of a corporate world” (p. 203). The majority of students in the United States saw higher education as a means to further opportunity; 1% to 2% of students were identified as creating disruption (Cohon, 1998).

Some of the less serious student behavior began with “circulating petitions, soliciting funds, and joining picket lines” to changes in hair style, dress, language, and music. Students escalated uncivil behaviors into confrontational marches, rallies, and vigils (Lucas, 2006, p. 277). Brubacher and Rudy (1997) reported that college administrators and campus police were faced with more serious behaviors such as rock throwing, bomb threats, trash fires, and terrorist-like acts. These disruptions often affected the faculty’s ability to hold class or carry on academic discussions without interruption. With each protest, the level of intensity and frequency of violence between students and police increased. On the milder side, the consequence of these uncivil student behaviors led to student suspensions or postponement of classes, whereas more severe disorderly behaviors resulted in the arrest, physical injury, or death of students (Lucas, 2006).

After the high-intensity student activism of the Vietnam era, the following decade appeared rather quiet with regard to academic incivility (Cohon, 1998; Lucas, 2006). According to Brubacher and Rudy (1997), middle-class values had resurfaced in academia, and the focus was more on attending class than disrupting it. Also, while

fraternity and sororities groups fell out of favor during the 1960s and 1970s, these groups made a strong comeback during the late 1970s to the 1990s. A new culture was developing among college students who saw higher education as a lifestyle, as well as an opportunity for success (Cohon, 1998; Lucas, 2006; Tucciarone, 2004, 2007).

Regarding any of these generations of college students, from the colonial period to the new millennium, SET would link a student's behavior to the values of the youth culture during that time (Meeker, 1971). The students of each era sought reward through peer-approved social norms. In the Vietnam era, individualism was valued and rewarded, as opposed to the value of hard work or competition held by the previous generation. As Meeker (1971) stated, "People choose things or behavior they value more than they choose things they do not value" (p. 489).

History of Social Work

According to Fisher and Karger (1997), "Part of the [current] political struggle, in social work is . . . how to remember its past" (p. 27). Since this study focused on social work education, it would be helpful to review the history and evolution of the field, culture, and pedagogy of social work. The relevance in reviewing the history of the social work profession and educational programs is in understanding how past events have helped to shape present-day issues with regard to academic incivility.

The profession of social work in the United States can be traced back to before the American Revolution. In an agricultural-based society, responsibility of helping others fell on the families of the early settlers. Those who lived on the frontiers often implemented "mutual aid," a concept influenced by the Native Americans, to assist

those in need (Morales, Sheafor, & Scott, 2010, p. 57). During the late 18th century, American society provided orphan homes and poor houses supported by town and local communities (Morales et al., 2010; Trattner, 2007).

During the 19th century, social issues developed that challenged a young nation: a high level of immigration, the start of the anti-slavery movement, and the U.S. Civil War. The responsibility of attending to many of the hardships related to social welfare was still relegated to local towns and communities that offered relief for the poor, the orphaned, and the mentally ill (Jansson, 2001; Kirst-Ashman, 2012; Trattner, 2007). The roots of social work began with untrained upper-class men and women (majority women), often from church-based organizations, who were known as "friendly visitors," volunteering their time to assist poor people by modeling moral behavior (Trattner, 2007, p. 98).

As issues with the economy, immigration, child welfare, and racism grew, the need to change how social welfare was addressed by an informal system of volunteerism that relied on a "deductive and discretionary approach" to more of a "scientific charity" or "scientific philanthropy" that focused on the "objective and factual" (Trattner, 2007, p. 102). In 1898, the first social work class was offered at Columbia University (Austin, 1983; NASW, 2013). In the same year, the first professional development course was offered by the New York Charity Association to train "charity workers" (Kirst-Ashman, 2012, p. 159).

In 1915, at the National Conference of Charities and Correction, the field of social work experienced a reality check and a turning point. Abraham Flexner, the leading expert on professional education, questioned whether social work was a

profession, stating that any field that lacked specialized knowledge and technical skills was not a profession (Austin, 1983; Flexner, 2001). Although the movement was in process, the shift from volunteerism to paid staff using a standardized format of professional case work was just beginning.

With regard to the field of social work, "The term profession is used in its more traditional sense of identifying a set of carefully prepared and highly qualified persons who assist people in dealing with complex matters in their lives" (Morales et al., 2010, p. 53). By the early 20th century, along with the establishment of 17 schools of social work, nine national associations were formed: (a) in 1915 the National Social Workers Exchange, (b) in 1918 the American Association of Medical Social Workers, (c) in 1919 the Association of Training Schools of Professional Schools of Social Work, (d) in 1930 the American Association of Social Workers (AASSW), (e) in 1926 the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, (f) in 1941 the American Association of Group Workers, (g) in 1941 the National Association of Schools of Social Administration (NASSA), (h) in 1945 the Association for the Study of Community Organization, and (i) in 1949 the Social Work Research Group (Kirst-Ashman, 2012; NASW, 2013). The AASSW developed curriculum requirements and accreditation standards for MSW programs, and the NASSA did the same for BSW programs (Kirst-Ashman, 2012, p. 200).

A national movement was taking place whereby the issue and burden of social welfare were being transferred from local towns and communities to state and federal governments (Trattner, 2007). The landmark federal legislation that exemplified this transfer of responsibility was the Social Security Act (SSA) of 1935, which

established new social welfare policies and benefits and consolidated existing government public assistance programs (Kirst-Ashman, 2012, p. 185). This shift in government oversight of social welfare policy created an opportunity for social workers to fill the void of professional delivery of "social insurance," "public assistance," and "health services" (Tice & Perkins, 2001, p. 156; see also Kirst-Ashman, 2012). Ultimately, competing views and interests from the various social work associations fragmented the growing profession of social work (Morales et al., 2010). The social work field was again faced with the question posed by Abraham Flexner in 1915: "Is social work a profession?" (Austin, 1983, p. 361; see also Flexner, 1915; P. M. Morris, 2008).

By mid-century, positive changes were brought about that moved the profession of social work into a cohesive uniformity. In 1952 the CSWE was formed, merging the AASSW and NASSA to establish a central organization for oversight of social work education (Morales et al., 2010). In 1962, CSWE developed accreditation standards for BSW programs (Kirst-Ashman, 2012). This measure advanced the profession of social work by consolidating educational standards and accreditations and creating continuity between undergraduate and graduate pedagogy.

CSWE governed various levels of social work degree programs, the two most common of which are the BSW and the MSW. The focus of the BSW degree is to develop young professionals, rooted in a strength-based, social justice, and person-in-environment perspective to work as entry-level counselors and case managers with various levels of clients: "individuals, families, groups, communities and organizations" (Mizrahi & Davis, 2008, p. 185). The MSW degree builds on the

foundation skills of the BSW education; however, the clear difference between the two degrees is that an MSW graduate is allowed to perform clinical psychotherapy; the program also places an emphasis on leadership roles in the social service industry.

Another major milestone in social work history occurred in 1955 when the NASW was formed, merging the five existing specialized professional social work associations and groups (Morales et al., 2010). This national organization not only consolidated competing views but, in 1960, created The Code, which offered social workers a foundation for professional practice (Kirst-Ashman, 2012, p. 27). Although other codes of ethics existed, this was the first effort to address the social work profession as a whole.

The following section discusses the NASW Code and its impact on social work culture and education. According to Erickson (2003), "Since our subjective world or perspectives . . . what we see, know, and want . . . [are] culturally constructed, and since culture varies, persons really do not inhabit the same subjective worlds" (p. 38).

Culture and Curriculum of Social Work

According to Miley and DuBois (2008), "Social work has been identified as the primary profession that carries out the social welfare mandate" (p. 25). However, the general public is inclined to recognize any person who works in the area of human services as a social worker, regardless of education. In reality, professional social workers adhere to specific values and receive specific education and training (Miley & DuBois, 2008). In the United States, the social work profession has been grounded in the values identified by the NASW Code (Davis, 2008; Hare, 2004).

Established in 1960, The Code has gone through numerous changes. In 1999, The Code took on the familiar version that exists today, which encompasses and articulates the mission, values, ethical principles and standards of the social work profession (Miley & DuBois, 2008). Minor revisions were made in 2008 by NASW delegates (NASW, 2008b). The Code now states that the mission of social workers is to "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (NASW, 2008b, p. 2).

The foundation of social work practice is guided by six core values, in no particular order: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (Davis, 2008). While the values are meant to be abstract, the ethical principles are concrete actions that help to define the values. Some of the more common ethical principles are "acceptance, individualization, purposeful expression of feelings, nonjudgmental attitudes, objectivity, controlled emotional involvement, self-determination, access to resources, confidentiality, and accountability" (Miley & DuBois, 2008, p. 117).

The Code outlines key standards of professional activities, delineated into six categories that describe social work responsibilities to clients, colleagues, practice settings, other professionals, social work profession, and broader society (NASW, 2008a). The Code "does not provide a set of rules that prescribe how social workers should act in all situations," but helps to guide the decision making process and conduct of professional social workers (Davis, 2008, p. 328). Whether in a classroom

setting or in the community, social workers are asked to adhere to The Code in all situations.

According to the most recent 2008 accreditation standards published online by the CSWE (2013a),

> The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person and environment construct, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, social work's purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons. (p. 1)

The overall purpose, established by CSWE, mirrors the mission of the NASW. Rather than creating a guide for social workers, the role of CSWE was to develop a competency-based curriculum that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound (SMART). The 10 competencies outlined by CSWE are as follows: professionalism, ethics, thinking and judgment, diversity, social justice, research-informed practice, human behavior and social environment, policy practice, context shape practice, and practice skills (CWSE, 2013a). Within each of these competencies are clear objectives that define the goal. These competencies allow for comparability of the 258 current graduate social work programs in the United States, as well as flexibility to allow for a degree of differentiation based on the various applications and populations served (CSWE, 2013). Because social work can be found in so many areas of social welfare, each social work program collaborates with community agencies, where students complete 2 years of applied internships (minimum 900 hours accumulated) to identify appropriate activities to meet the outlined objectives (CWSE, 2013a). Students are asked to uphold both NASW's and CSWE's missions, values,

principles, standards, and competencies both in the classroom and in internship settings.

Present-Day Classroom Incivility in Higher Education

According to Barzun and Graff (1985), "The facts never speak for themselves. They must be selected, . . . linked together, and given a voice" (p. viii). In review of the literature, each generation has a unique source that fuels uncivil behaviors. Over the past two decades, research has identified increasing concerns regarding the frequency and intensity of academic incivility in higher education (Boice, 1996; C. M. Clark, 2008; C. M. Clark & Springer, 2007; Connelly, 2009; Feldmann, 2001; Morrissette, 2001; Oblinger, 2003; Schneider, 1998). Also, within the past 20 years, studies have reported an increase in uncivil behaviors by students as perceived by higher education faculty (Baker et al., 2008; C. M. Clark & Springer, 2007; Kirk, 2005; Lashley and de Meneses, 2001). This sections explores the various reasons and effects of academic incivility as reported in the current literature with regard to generational differences, changes in K–12 pedagogy, technology, entitlement, consumerism, and grade inflation.

Generational Differences

Research has demonstrated that each generation acquires a collective identity, marked by attitudes and values shaped by similar experiences and memories within that aged-based group (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Joshi, Dencker, Franz, & Martocchio, 2010; Mannheim, 1952). Those born between 1977 and 1994 are referred to in the literature as Generation Y (Gen Y), Generation Me (GenMe) or millenniums (Oblinger, 2003; Twenge, 2006). With a population reaching just over 71 million,

Gen Y is not only the largest generation in American history; it is also the most diverse: One in three are members of a minority group (Schroer, 2013; Soule, 2001). The diversity is seen not only in the variety of race and ethnicity but also in Gen Y's generational culture of social norms and values (Schneider, 1998; Walker et al., 2006). According to Self (2009), Gen Y has been described as lazy, self-important, and impatient, while others have labeled the generation as optimistic and self-assured. The conflict begins as the strong work centrality and work ethic of the Baby Boomer generation clashes with the weaker work ethic and less work centrality of Gen Y, who attempt to find a balance between work and play (Twenge, 2010). Also, Twenge (2006) contended that Gen Y'ers are not self-absorbed, but rather consider themselves self-important, based on being self-adorned with an increasingly diminished belief in personal responsibility, mollycoddled by parents, and immersed in an ocean of multimedia and technology. The following subsections explore the literature as it relates to the reasons behind this egocentric culture.

Right versus responsibility. An example of Gen Y's negative stereotypes can be seen in the following study. When exploring values and social norms, a study conducted by the National Association of Secretaries of State (1998) concluded that those in Gen Y view the role of citizen as a right rather than a responsibility. The study sample consisted largely of Gen Y students, as well as those in Generation X (those born between 1966 and 1994), who were asked, "What does it mean to be a citizen in a democratic society?" (National Association of Secretaries of State, 1998, p. 17). According to the study, about half of the sample who self-identified as Gen Y rated being an American first but could not describe what that meant. Other responses

stated that being a citizen is a right, in relation to the right to vote, freedom of speech, the right to bear arms, and religious freedom (National Association of Secretaries of State, 1998). Similar results were seen in a follow-up survey completed 10 years later (National Association of Secretaries of State, 2008). Unlike older generations, which perceived being a citizen in terms of responsibility, this study illustrated that an entrenched core value of Gen Y is the belief that citizenship is a right. A strength of the first study, conducted in 1998, is that the 2008 study yielded similar results with regard to identifying Gen Y's preference for civic rights over responsibilities. The limitation of the study is that the focus of the research was on civic duty as it related to participation in the democratic process, not specifically on higher education. Comparable studies could not be found to support or refute the results of the study. Even though both studies surveyed youth ages 15 to 24 in all 50 states, the results cannot be generalized outside the United States.

Parenting. According to Self (2009), Gen Y's values and social norms can be traced back to parenting. Self (2009) suggested that the high level of parent involvement that continued well into a graduate's adult years resulted in higher self-esteem for Gen Y. Similarly, Twenge (2006) suggested that the age of adolescence was extended far beyond normal years. According to Zaslow (2007), this may be attributed to the fact that parents of Gen Y were so focused on building the child's self-esteem through positive reinforcement that uncivil behavior was often attributed to normal developmental childhood behavior and thus dismissed. SET would suggest that, if no negative consequences came as a result of uncivil behavior, there was no cost to continuing the behavior; in fact, it may even have been rewarded through the

student's perception of parental indifference. Also, if mediocre effort is met with high parental praise, there is no incentive for a student to push for higher achievement if the reward is attained with average-level effort.

Narcissism and entitlement. The term *narcissism* is defined a "grandiose sense of self-importance . . . lack of empathy . . . overestimates their abilities and inflate their accomplishments . . . special, or unique and expect others to recognize them as such . . . a sense of entitlement" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 670). Although college students may not meet the criteria for a clinical diagnosis of narcissism, Gen Y was immersed in positive messages that each person was special, just for being himself or herself. Whereas previous generations were raised on the idea that having high expectations for oneself and hard work made a person special, Gen Y understood that they were special just by their mere presence (Zaslow, 2007). Twenge (2006) contended that "feeling good about yourself is more important than good performance" (p. 56), resulting in an over-inflated sense of self that may have contributed to an unintended consequence of increased narcissistic tendency. Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, and Bushman (2008) conducted a study that found that Gen Y college students were more narcissistic than the previous generation, reflected in a 0.33 increase in standard deviation calculated from a study conducted in 1985 to a follow-up study completed in 2006. While this study was comprehensive, the results cannot be generalized outside the United States or to Gen Y individuals outside the college setting. Nordstrom et al. (2009) argued that this increased tendency of self-centeredness, lack of empathy, and entitlement are factors that have contributed to student-generated academic incivility in the higher education settings.

Sax, Astin, Korn, and Mahoney (2000) found that 60% of incoming freshman in the year 2000 reported above-average self-confidence; these were record levels, compared to previous studies. The sample was 269,413 students from 434 undergraduate universities and colleges. The strength of the study was the size of the sample and the high degree of generalizability within the United States; however, a limitation was that only college freshmen were sampled; the study did not sample Gen Y outside higher education settings, which limits the generalizability of the results.

Although only one side of the coin, these numbers are encouraging, speaking to the high level of confidence of Gen Y. On the other side, Self (2009) noted that this high level of self-esteem can lead to fragile egos and a negative stereotype of being arrogant. Also, this increased preoccupation with self, along with other narcissistic tendencies, sometimes means that college students do not see any issue with "demanding a makeup exam or expecting to receive the professor's notes when they missed class" (Nordstrom et al., 2009, p. 75). SET would suggest that, if unexceptional academic work is met with better grades simply because the student feels entitled and demands it, then college students are rewarded for uncivil behavior; again, there is no incentive for a student to push for higher achievement if the reward is attained with average-level effort.

Changes in K–12 Pedagogy

Trout (1998) contended that, aside from the effects of overparenting, academic incivility in higher education starts with the "dumbing down of elementary and secondary education" (p. 40). According to Trout, students are ill prepared to perform college-level work and, in turn, adapt behaviors that demonstrate disdain, frustration,

and anger toward adults and mainstream middle-class values. Lawler's (2001) assumption that emotions play an integral role in social exchange would demonstrate that the emotions felt by these students are a byproduct of this academic experience. While students may be unprepared to perform at the college level, the emotional reaction may intensify a student's inability to concentrate. As C. M. Clark (2008) stated, emotions have been proven to diminish cognitive capacity, resulting in a further decrease in a student's concentration levels.

When Gen Y meets college faculty, not only do values and expectations clash, but emotions explode in reaction to perceived academic incivility. According to Damon (1995), the effect caused by the lack of challenging academic standards in elementary classrooms has created a generation that is void of mental stimulation and detachment. Damon's statement is supported by a study conducted by Sax et al. (2000), which reported that incoming freshmen experienced an increasing level of disconnect from education. Owen (1995) suggested that this disengagement could be attributed to teachers in secondary education who exchange lower standards for the bare minimum of academic civility. Owen stated that, once students reach higher education, they are not only skilled at sidestepping academic responsibilities; they enter expecting the previously established quid pro quo regarding decreased academic standards in return for minimal classroom civility to continue. According to Trout (1998), "A sizeable segment of students now entering college does not love to learn, is not used to working hard to learn, and does not have anything resembling an intellectual life" (p. 41). Ultimately, these observations contribute to a negative perception of Gen Y as lazy (Self, 2009). SET would suggest that elementary and

secondary students learned to bargain with civil and uncivil behaviors in return for a reward of lower academic standards.

Technology

The literature points to technology as an unexpected cause for academic incivility. Gen Y students have grown up in front of technology screens, such as computers, tablets, cell phones, television, video games, digital cameras, and movies, all of which are considered by this generation not as technology but as a part of life (Oblinger, 2003; Self, 2009). Oblinger (2003) noted that Gen Y members use the Internet more than any other generation for "school, work and leisure" (p. 38). To put the magnitude of this information-age viewpoint into perspective, Lenhart, Simon, and Graziano (2003) reported the following numbers regarding Gen Y preferences for technology: "94% use the internet for school research . . . 78% believe the internet helps them with schoolwork . . . 70% use instant messaging . . . 81% use e-mail to keep in touch with friends and family . . . 56% prefer the Internet to the telephone" (p. 2).

According to Weiler (2005), excessive exposure to technology has had a lasting effect on Gen Y's thought process. For example, students desire visual learning or search the Internet for instantaneous gratification rather than taking the time to read a book or go to a library. This immediate need to have information on demand has contributed to the overall Gen Y culture of entitlement. Similar to the availability of 24-hour customer service, Gen Y students expect faculty to be on call (Soule, 2001). Both Soule (2001) and Oblinger (2003) identified Gen Y as being more technologically sophisticated and desiring faculty in higher education to

integrate technology during class time. Oblinger (2003) suggested that the culture of Gen Y is rooted in multitasking and staying connected at all times (e.g., use of cell phone, texting, surfing the web, or e-mailing), and these activities are condoned as social norms in student culture. C. M. Clark and Springer (2007) reported that faculty perceived the use of electronic devices during class time for things unrelated to course work as academic incivility.

On another level, excessive exposure to technology has created a Gen Y culture that "glorifies in-your-face rudeness and coarseness" (Trout, 1998, p. 40). Technology has allowed Gen Y access to an infinite amount of uncensored information; students who are exposed to public scandals and the worst of human behaviors see the adult generation as untrustworthy and fallible. Gen Y has transferred this cynical attitude toward authority to the academic setting, often questioning the standards by which grades are assigned and the validity and usefulness of the information being taught by faculty in higher education. Connelly (2009) identified uncivil behaviors connected to technology, such as sending threatening or inappropriate e-mails to faculty. Trout (1998) contended that these uncivil behaviors can see seen as a form of protest against an academic system that Gen Y perceives as antiquated, boring, and arbitrary.

Consumerism and Unmerited Grade Inflation

Extending from the topic of elevated self-esteem and educational expectations, the research suggests that a strong sense of consumerism is partially to blame for uncivil behaviors in academia (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002; Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Edmundson, 1997; Lippman, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009; Smith, 2000). While a

large body of literature exists regarding consumerism, much is in the form of personal observations and anecdotes (Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Edmunson, 1997). Delucchi and Smith (1997) studied 195 undergraduate sociology students in the Northeastern United States and found that they believed in a consumer-driven higher educational system, with 42% of the sample contending that a degree should be given to them if tuition is paid. The strength of the study is that the sample was comprised of students in the largest sociology program in America; the limitation is that the sample was small and the study was conducted in only one school in a specific region of the United States, all of which limits generalizability.

With the increase in enrollment, the line that divides generational cultures becomes more apparent. Statistically, more students are attending college; in 1985, 58% of high school graduates enrolled in higher education, compared to 69% 20 years later (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). A survey conducted by Pryor (2005) indicated that 69% of the students reported that the main goal of pursuing higher educational was to increase earning potential, as opposed to 21% in 1976. The same study reported that attaining knowledge was not a priority for a majority of college students (Pryor, 2005). Likewise, Lippman et al. (2009) stated that current youth culture discarded traditional student roles and focused more on self-interest, viewing education as an economic exchange rather than an opportunity to learn. Lipmann et al. (2009) suggested that Gen Y has grown up in an era in which society has modeled a behavior of commodifying everything and in an increasingly rationalized, homogenized, and disenchanted world. Some critics argue that

consumption has become the source of meaning for individuals—especially youth—in society, as well as means by which they create an identity and self-image.

Crook, Pakulski, and Waters (1992) proposed that "performativity is the most powerful criterion for determining worth, replacing agreed upon, rational, modernist criteria for merit" and defined *performativity* as "the capacity to deliver outputs at the lowest cost; replaces truth as the yardstick of knowledge" (p. 31). Bronner (1998) reported that "the commodification and marketing of higher education are unmistakable today . . . one hears constantly from parents and students: We are the consumer. We pay the tuition" (p. A24). Delucchi and Smith (1997) reported that students related better grades to the potential of earning a higher income. Oblinger (2003) echoed this finding by suggesting that Gen Y students are notorious for actively comparing college programs and discerningly using their "purchasing power" to their advantage (p. 41).

Therefore, education is not perceived as a "transformative intellectual experience" but as the fastest means to an end of obtaining better employment, higher wages, and more prestige (Lippman et al., 2009, p. 198). Consequently, Gen Y sees attending college as a calculated function, as well as an absolute right rather than a privilege (Lippman et al., 2009). Nordstrom et al. (2009) reported similar findings and stated that, rather than taking on the mindset of a learner, college students see themselves as consumers who are allowed to do as they please. Ultimately, this mindset has led to a higher percentage of students who aggressively advocate for higher grades and rationalize the use of cheating to achieve their ends (Bunn, Caudill, & Gropper, 1992).

Looking at consumerism through the lens of SET, students may see education as a commodity. If Owen (1995) was correct, in that secondary education teachers have exchanged lower academic standards for classroom civility, then SET would suggest that the students learned to be rewarded. However, if a positive grade is not received, then the unspoken contract is broken and students may use uncivil behaviors to behave like a dissatisfied customer.

In addition to the topic of consumerism, the literature points out a clear trend concerning unmerited grade inflation. Rosovsky and Hartley (2002) conducted a study that concluded that grades were substantially inflated between the decades of 1960 and 1990. Similarly, according to Johnson (2003), towards the end of the 20th century, some the most respected institutions of higher learning had seen an increase in the number of A grades awarded. Landrum (1999) noted that students who self-identified as submitting average school work and normally would receive a grade no higher than a C still expected to receive a grade of B or better. According to Cordell, Lucal, and Morgan (2004) the sentiment among Gen Y'ers is that the worst a professor can say is "no" when they ask for a higher grade; among the few who resort to uncivil behaviors, many succeed with new faculty or graduate assistants. Pope (2001) highlighted that this expectation may often lead to negative encounters between faculty and students, and Schneider (1998) noted that this conflict has escalated into various levels of academic student incivility, ranging from threatening to give poor faculty evaluations to stalking or screaming at faculty members.

Twenge (2006) found that respondents with an inflated ego are more likely to react to perceived negative feedback with anger, frustration, and hostility. Looking at

this emotional reaction through a SET lens, emotional reactions are involuntary (Lawler, 2001). If the social exchange between faculty and student is not handled with what the student would perceive as respect, the student could perceive the feedback as academic incivility. In turn, the exchange produces a range of global emotions (anger or frustration) that spark an internal dialog within the student whereby the brain takes concentration away from academic focus in the attempt to understand these emotions in reaction to experience, resulting in further diminished cognitive capacity for learning (Twenge, 2006).

Present-Day Academic Incivility in Social Work Education

Recent literature has identified growing concerns regarding the issue of incivility in higher education (Boice, 1996; C. M. Clark, 2008; C. M. Clark & Springer, 2007; Connelly, 2009; Feldmann, 2001; Morrissette, 2001; Oblinger, 2003; Schneider, 1998). However, research in the area of academic incivility as it relates to social work education is scant. An article in the *Journal of Advances in Social Work* specifically addressed this problem. Ausbrooks et al. (2011) conducted a mixed-methods exploratory study of a convenience sample regarding uncivil behaviors in the classroom setting of social work education. The researchers advertised by fliers to both faculty and students. They administered a student civility survey, receiving a 56% response rate from a faculty of 10 females and 5 males and a 13% response rate from 213 students, thus gathering 28 surveys from respondents, 78% of whom were female (Ausbrooks et al., 2011). The qualitative and quantitative results were similar with regard to students recognizing uncivil behaviors in the classroom. The more common behaviors identified by students were “texting,” “talking in class,” and

“disrespect toward the instructor” (p. 267). A few students cited “surfing the internet,” “arriving late/leaving early,” “disrespecting another student,” “not being prepared for class and asking questions,” talking on cell phones,” “expressing bias during class discussions,” and general “electronics” (p. 267).

Ausbrooks et al. (2011) reported the effects of classroom incivility and identified student responses to uncivil behaviors as distracting, annoying, getting angry, losing focus, wasting time, and stifling the learning process. Some of the reasons that students gave to explain why other students engaged in academic incivility were “student entitlement,” “boredom,” “not being held accountable,” and “students having their own agenda”; the authors also included other individual responses as

> generational difference, students not being taught appropriate behavior, students not being provided clear expectations, students not being invested, student narcissism, power issues, students seeking attention, identity issues, students being comfortable with each other, and student conflict spilling over into the classroom. (Ausbrooks et al., 2011, p. 270)

The limitation to this study was its low generalizability; however, as stated by the authors, the research shed light on an issue that had not been fully explored. The researchers explained the lack of literature regarding uncivil behaviors in social work programs: It “poses the risk of considering how well social work educators are socializing students to the profession as well as raising questions about the appropriateness of students relative to professional identity and fit” (Ausbrooks et al., 2011, p. 256).

Social work is rooted in both NASW and CSWE guidelines and competencies that emphasize the values of human relationships, dignity, worth of the person, and

integrity of each professional. Clearly, academic incivility is a breach of NASW and CSWE values. Recognizing current issues in social work education, educators may identify and address ways to assist social work students in development in these professional areas (Ausbrooks et al., 2011).

The findings reported by Ausbrooks et al. (2011) mirror findings in the literature across other areas in higher education. Similar to data found by Twenge (2010), generational differences surfaced in other higher education settings. While not clinically diagnosable, students in higher education settings demonstrated symptoms of narcissism, with an increased preoccupation with self and entitlement (Nordstrom et al., 2009). With regard to students not being held accountable, Owens (1995) attributed this condition to changes in secondary education, where teachers exchange lower standards for the minimum of academic civility. The study by Ausbrooks et al. (2011) echoed the literature with regard to inappropriate use of technology in the classroom. Oblinger (2003) reported that the culture of Gen Y incorporates technology to stay connected at all times, as well as to multitask. Students having their own agenda speaks to the consumerism of today's students. As reported by Pryor (2005), a majority of college students do not view obtaining knowledge as a priority but as a means to a goal of increasing earning potential.

Conclusion

The literature does not provide a single clear definition of academic incivility. While the Bjorklund and Rehling (2009) definition was the most complete, it was still too narrow because it related only to classroom settings and did not encompass a more macro view of academic incivility. Although the historic overview of academic

incivility was thought provoking, the books cited in this literature review were limited to scarce information regarding these eras; most of the information seemed to be based on personal observations and anecdotes. The significance of the historical review was its mirror of present-day higher education and social work academic incivility. Common themes that link the history of academic incivility to the present are that (a) uncivil behaviors are defined by each individual's perception, perspective, and values; (b) incivility is rooted in a global notion of perceived respect or disrespect; (c) generational clashes of values and expectations are universal; and (d) experiencing incivility generates a range of human emotions.

The most notable information identified in this literature review came from the study by Ausbrooks et al. (2011) that identified the similarity of uncivil behaviors in social work education and in other areas of higher education. Based on the scarce literature on this topic, there is a clear need for further research concerning social work education as it relates to academic incivility. According to Bergen (1977), "The university campus is where the new and different are being discovered and the old rethought and reevaluated . . . so if a university is doing its job, it is bound to be a hotbed of heresy" (p. 170). Therefore, each generation in higher education will face the challenge of how to debate, solve problems, and grow in a civil manner.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Although classroom incivility has been documented as far back as the inception of Harvard College in the early 1600s and has continued until the present day, little is known about uncivil behaviors in higher education due to the sparse research on the topic. According to the literature, both frequency and seriousness of uncivil behaviors in higher education classroom settings are on the rise (Baker et al., 2008; Boice, 1996; C. M. Clark, 2008; C. M. Clark & Springer, 2007). As discussed in Chapter 2, classroom incivility in today's academic environments has been linked to generational characteristics such as student rights versus responsibility, student narcissism versus entitlement, and student consumeristic attitudes versus unmerited grade inflation. Furthermore, classroom incivility has been linked to an obsession with technology, (e.g., computers, tablets, cell phones, digital music, cameras, recording devices). Classroom incivility has also been associated with parenting style and changes in K–12 pedagogy. Limited research exists concerning the effects of classroom incivility in higher education and little is known about the link between perceptions of uncivil behaviors and social work education (Ausbrooks et al., 2011).

This chapter explains how students' perceptions of classroom incivility were studied in one social work program located in a southern California public university. The research questions presupposed a quantitative answer so numeric data could be used for the following queries: (a) How do social work students perceive severity and

frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors? (b) Is there a relationship between students' perceptions of frequency and severity of uncivil classmate behaviors and age? and (c) Is there a relationship between students' perceptions of frequency and severity of uncivil classmate behaviors and technology? The research questions were studied utilizing a survey cross-sectional design to look at social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behaviors at a single point in time. An online survey was distributed through e-mail to the social work student population by the director of the social work program. The instrument, called Classroom Civility and Teaching Practices Survey and used to measure students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors, was developed and vetted by Black et al. (2011); only the Classroom Civility scales were used for this study. Furthermore, the Classroom Civility scale was split into two sections: frequency and severity. The frequency section listed 24 uncivil classroom behaviors with a Likert-type response scale ranging from *Infrequent* to *Very Frequent*; the severity section listed the same uncivil classroom behaviors with a Likert-type response scale ranging from *Not Serious* to *Very Serious*).

This chapter describes the site, the sample, methods, procedures, data collection, instrument, data analysis, and protection of subjects.

General Methodological Design and Defense of Method

The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behaviors in social work classroom settings. According to Rubin and Babbie (2012), a cross-sectional design studies a phenomenon at one point in time

and carefully examines the data. A descriptive cross-sectional study does not determine causation but may uncover valuable relationships (Rubin & Babbie, 2012).

As one of the most widely used techniques for data collection, a survey was used for this study; this tool has the potential to offer accurate, valid, and reliable data (Neuman, 2011). Survey research can be used to explain or explore, but the best reason for using a survey is to describe a larger population that is difficult to observe directly (Rubin & Babbie, 2012). By studying a sample of a larger population, survey research is useful in making generalizations about the orientations and attitudes of a larger population in a condensed period of time (Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong, 2013).

In this study, a self-administered online questionnaire was utilized to survey students regarding their perceptions of classroom incivility. The logic behind using an online survey with social work students is that, compared to the general population, today's college students are highly connected to technology and heavy Internet users (Jones, 2008). According to Jones (2008), the average college student has integrated the Internet into his/her daily activity because they have grown up with Internet technology and communication that is as common as a television or home telephone. To highlight this point, of today's college students, 20% started using a computer by age 5, 85% of college students possess a computer, 86% went online (in contrast to 59% the general public), 72% check their e-mail at least once a day, and 66% have at least two e-mail addresses (Jones, 2008).

According to Neuman (2011), there are positives and negatives to a static online survey being economical. On one hand, the inexpensive nature of surveys allows for flexibility in design and quick implementation. On the other hand, being

economical makes online surveys easy to produce, which can result in bombardment with poor-quality Internet surveys. "Putting a poll up in the internet can be inexpensive, so many groups put polls without paying attention to quality" (Weisberg, 2009, p. 38). To address this disadvantage, vetted instruments were chosen for this study.

Another disadvantage of a web-based survey is protection of the participant's privacy (Neuman, 2011). The researcher for this study used a highly credible and confidential online survey service called SurveyMonkey™. The researcher did not identify or retain any internet protocol (IP) addresses of participants. All participant contact information was collected separately from the survey. Students who were interested in participating in a post-survey raffle were asked at the end of the survey to e-mail name and e-mail address to the researcher. All contact information utilized for the raffle incentive was shredded immediately after use.

An added disadvantage of an online survey is a potential for low response rate. In order to increase the potential response rate, Rubin and Babbie (2012) recommended offering an incentive to the participants in the form of reward or prize drawing. This study offered an optional raffle for respondents to elect to participate. The raffle offered five $50 Starbucks® gift cards.

According to Neuman (2011), a final disadvantage focuses on flexibility and complexity of the online survey. To address this disadvantage, only a few questions were asked per online screen. Also, a status bar was included as an indicator, both in gauge and percentage format, of how much of the survey had been completed and how

much of the survey had yet to be completed. Respondents were given the option to opt out of any survey question.

Site

For this quantitative study, the location was a 4-year public state university located in southern California. The university contains one of the largest student populations in the California State University (CSU) system (CSU, 2013). Although the size of the university student population promotes diversity on campus, there are differences between the diverse ethnic makeup of the surrounding region and the university student population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), the region surrounding the university consists of White (46%), Hispanic/Latino (40%), and Black and Asian American/Pacific Islander (13%) residents. According to the university's website, the ethnic makeup of the approximately 36,000 students on campus differs in two significant ways from that of the surrounding region. Even though the regional demographic makeup has White residents (46%) as the largest ethnic population, the university's White student population (23.1%) is approximately half that of the surrounding region, leaving Hispanic/Latin (39.7%) as the largest ethnic student population on campus. The percentage of American Asian and Pacific Islander (24.7%) students is 12% greater that that of the surrounding region and comprises the second largest ethnic population on campus.

Social Work Department

The university's Social Work Department was the specific site from which the participant pool was drawn. Initially established in the mid-1900s, this social work program is one of the oldest social work programs in the southern California region.

Both the bachelor of social work (BSW) and master of social work (MSW) programs are accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE; 2013c). The researcher contacted the department chair to request permission to survey the social work students. The site was accessible and conveniently located.

According to the university's website, as of fall 2014, there were 713 enrolled social work students, including 222 (31.1%) BSW students and 491 (68.9%) MSW students. Also reported by the university's website, 13.7% (98) of the social work students were male and 86.3% (615) were female. As discussed in Chapter 2, females outnumber males in professions such as social work, education, and nursing; these professions are often seen as more nurturing or associated with skills resembling mothering (Gilbelman, 2003; Khunou, Pillay, & Nethononda, 2012; Kim & Reifel, 2010).

The ethnic makeup of the social work program generally mirrors that of the university: Hispanic students (40%), Asian students (25%), White students (23%), and African American students (4%). A major difference between the ethnicity in the department and the university's overall diversity statistics is the lower number of African American social work students.

Sample

This section describes demographic and program information for the study's sample. Demographic information included age, gender, and ethnicity. The information about the program included program, BSW program status, and MSW program status and location. Count and percentages were calculated for students'

perceptions of the following areas: subject interests, classroom syllabi that discussed classroom conduct, and professors who discussed classroom conduct.

The sample initially contained 235 participants who began the study and completed the demographic section of the survey. However, 64 respondents did not fully respond to the severity and frequency scale questions. Rather than create answers for these participants based on their other responses, the researcher included only the 171 participants who answered all questions regarding severity and frequency of uncivil behavior.

Age

Age categories were assigned as follows: 18–20, 21–25, 26–30, 31–35, 36–40, and 41 and older. Although the age of the social work students ranged from 18 to 41+ years, the largest age group consisted of 26- to 30-year-olds. The survey included an opportunity for the participant to decline to report age.

Gender

The gender demographic variable was traditionally dichotomized: male or female. The survey included an opportunity for the participant to decline to report gender. There were more females than males in the sample, which is consistent with the literature that describes unequal differences in gender among social work students. For example, according to Earle (2008), 85% of social work graduates are female. Also, the social work industry tends to draw more females (80%) than males (NASW, 2008b). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013) reported that the percentage of woman employed as social workers in the United States was 80.3%.

Ethnicity

Ethnic categories were based on those reported on the university's website: Hispanic, African American, White, and Asian/Pacific Islander; two other options were offered in this study's survey: (a) mixed raced or multirace, and (b) decline to answer.

Program

The descriptive variable Program referred to the program (BSW or MSW) in which the participant was enrolled during the study. This variable was a gate-keeping variable that steered BSW students to questions focused on undergraduate study, MSW students to questions related to the graduate program, and non-social work students to a "thank you" page. Non-social work students were excluded from the study because they did not meet the study criteria.

BSW Program Status

The BSW program status referred to self-reported academic standing. The goal of the BSW program is to prepare social work students to work in entry-level social service positions and the focus is to train professionals with a generalist/holistic social work perspective. The curriculum is guided by standards and policies developed by CSWE (2008). Although a bachelor's degree requires 120 units of lower- and upper-division courses, the two options offered in the survey were Junior status (60–90 units completed) and Senior status (91–120 units completed).

MSW Program Status

MSW program status referred to self-reported academic standing. The MSW program requires 60 units of graduate-level courses. The goal of the MSW program is

to prepare social work students to work in more advanced clinical and leadership roles within the social service professional industry. Social work students in this department are given a choice of length of program: 2-year, 3-year, or 1-year (advanced standing). The survey asked for an enrollment status in the program: 1st year, 2nd year, or 3rd year.

Program Location

Program location referred to where the student physically took courses. The two options were (a) university main campus, or (b) a satellite campus located off the university's main campus.

Methods

Eligibility Criteria

The inclusion eligibility criteria for this study were as follows: (a) a BSW social work student currently enrolled either full time or part time and self-identifying as junior or senior status at the dissertation site and (b) an MSW social work student currently enrolled either full time, part time, or in advanced standing status at the dissertation site.

The exclusion eligibility criteria for this study were as follows: (a) BSW social work student of freshman or sophomore status and (b) student not currently enrolled in either the BSW or MSW program.

Recruitment

To address the research questions, nonprobability convenient sampling was conducted. According to V. L. P. Clark and Creswell (2014), the advantage of using nonprobability sampling is that the researcher "selects individuals because they are

available, convenient, and represent some characteristic the investigator seeks to study" (p. 184). The drawback of using this method is that nonprobability sampling limits generalizability of the collected data (V. L. P. Clark & Creswell, 2014).

The dissertation site was utilized due to its geographical convenience. The investigator met with the chair of the target social work program to gain access to the social work students in the department. Contingent on Internal Review Board (IRB) approval, the chair agreed to send an e-mail, with the link to the survey posted on Survey Monkey, to eligible social work students. The survey was sent multiple times throughout the first half of the fall semester in an attempt gather a sufficient number of completed surveys.

Incentive

The social work students were notified of an incentive at the beginning of the survey and were given instructions on how to participate voluntarily in the incentive drawing. According to Rubin and Babbie (2012), rewards and incentives are used to increase response rates on surveys. At the end of this survey, students were asked whether they would like to participate in a raffle for a chance to win one of five $50 Starbucks gift cards. Students who declined were sent to a thank-you page. Students who responded *yes* were sent to an instruction page that asked for name and e-mail address. After all data was collected, five students' names were drawn randomly and the students were contacted by e-mail to receive their gift cards.

Procedures and Data Collection

In January 2014 an extensive review of the literature was conducted to identify the history and potential causes of classroom incivility in higher education settings.

The review was also completed to search for studies that linked classroom incivility and social work education. As reported by Ausbrooks et al. (2011), the literature on social work education and classroom incivility is nearly nonexistent.

Preparation for the study continued in February 2014 by gaining permission from the authors of the Classroom Civility and Teaching Practices Survey (Black et al. 2011) to use a modified version of their vetted survey. Once permission was obtained, a target population was identified and the dissertation site was chosen based on accessibility and convenience to the researcher.

In June 2014, the methodology for the research was developed in collaboration with the dissertation chair. Variables for this study were identified. The independent variable was identified as classroom incivility and the dependent variable was identified as competence of professional knowledge in social work. The final version of the modified survey was constructed online through the service SurveyMonkey. Agreement by the department chair was obtained to access the social work students.

Prior to beginning the study, in September 2014, approval of the study design was obtained from the IRB and permission to conduct the study in the department was obtained from the department chair (Appendix A). The research was conducted in October and November during the fall 2014 semester. The department chair contacted potentially eligible students twice with a link to the survey. Data were collected throughout the semester. The operational procedures are listed in Table 1.

Instrument

A literature search was conducted to find survey tools that analyzed perceptions of classroom incivility. A survey used by Ausbrooks et al. (2011) focused on social

TABLE 1. Operational Procedures

Step	Date	Procedure
1	January 2014	Literature review, problem statement, and research questions developed
2	February 2014	Gained permission from authors to modify and utilize survey tool online
3	March 2014	Target population identified
4	June 2014	Research methodology and variables identified, modified online survey vetted
5	August 2014	Permission gained from dissertation site chair to access social work students
6	September 2014	Institutional Review Board approval and dissertation proposal defense
7	October 2014	Web link sent via e-mail by dissertation site chair to potential participants
8	October 2014	Data collected
9	November 2014	Web link sent a second time via e-mail by dissertation site chair to potential participants
10	November 2014	Data collected and coded.

work faculty and students' perceptions of students' disruptive behaviors, as well as teaching strategies to address the uncivil behaviors. The Classroom Civility and Teaching Practices (CCTP) survey was created by Black et al. (2011); the four-part, 76-item, mixed-methods survey assessed faculty perceptions of disruptive student behaviors and classroom management techniques. The survey tool contained three sections: faculty demographics, faculty perceptions of frequency and seriousness of disruptive student behaviors, and faculty perceptions of effective classroom management techniques used by faculty. The survey was developed taking into

account the experiences of the authors and a review of the classroom incivility and teaching practices literature; it was, reviewed by “35 faculty members, instructional designers, graduate teaching assistants, and administrators who gave constructive feedback to improve the clarity, organization, and practical application of strategies used to manage classroom behaviors” (p. 6). Ultimately, of the total 780 faculty members (385 female and 395 male) who were sent the CCTP, 228 (29.2%) completed the survey.

Section 1

For Section 1 of this study, the demographic and program information section was modified to include questions to collect student data. Along with demographic questions that focused on age, gender, and ethnicity, students were asked program questions relating to the following: (a) whether they were in the BSW or MSW program; (b) whether they were junior (60–90 units completed) or senior (91–120 units completed) status; (c) whether they were in the 2-year, 3-year, or advanced standing (1-year) MSW program; (d) whether they took MSW classes on or off campus; (e) whether student’s perceived any of their syllabi discussed classroom conduct; (f) whether students’ perceived any of their professors discussed classroom conduct; and (g) what were their social work subject areas of interest.

The researcher was unable to find a survey tool or scale to analyze the effects of classroom incivility on social work student knowledge of professionalism. For the purpose of this study, a perception of uncivil classroom behavior scale was developed using the professional standards established by the CSWE (2008) in its educational competencies. The sole question on this scale asked, “Do any of the previously

mentioned classmate behaviors affect your ability to learn any of the following social work standards?" The data collected from this survey question were used for descriptive purposes only. This survey question was reviewed by three social work professors (serving as experts) for validity. The question was also given to five social work students (not members of the sample population) for piloting. The feedback from the experts and student panel informed streamlining and clarifying the language and formatting of the question.

Section 2

Section 2, only the seriousness and frequency scales of the original CCTP survey tool were used, omitting the qualitative questions. The severity scale asked respondents how serious they perceived each item on a list of 24 identified disruptive classroom behaviors: eating, groans/sighs, using a computer, arriving late/leaving early, dominating discussion, vulgarity, challenging faculty, verbally attacking, sleeping, physical attacking, inappropriate e-mail, threats, talking on cell phone, texting on cell phone, cell phone ringing, sarcasm, talking, wearing hats, unpacking/packing, reading newspaper, interrupting, making offensive remarks, poor hygiene, and inappropriate dress. To measure the students' perceptions of severity, respondents were given the list of 24 disruptive classroom behaviors and were asked to rate each on a Likert-type scale as *not serious, somewhat serious, serious, very serious*, or *decline to answer*. Likewise, for the frequency of uncivil classroom behaviors, students rated the same 24 disruptive classroom behaviors on a scale of *infrequent* (1 time or less per academic year), *somewhat frequent* (a couple of times a semester), *frequent* (a couple times a month), *very frequent* (1 or more times a week),

or *decline to answer*. The teaching management scale on the original survey was removed because it was not relevant to this study.

Variables

The purpose of this research was to study students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behaviors in social work education. The researcher surveyed students from a southern California state university social work program via a modified version of the CCTP by Black et al. (2011). Student and program demographic data were collected and used as variables. All severity and frequency items were utilized as variables. The Overall Severity variable was a summed score for each participant's total severity item scores. The researcher added all the answered from all the severity items together so the sample had a total score. Perceived learning items were used to measure the impact of uncivil classmate behaviors on social work professional competencies. The perceived learning items were used as descriptive variables and may be utilized in future studies. Descriptions of uncivil behaviors can be found on Table 2.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, *Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?* The following categorical demographic variables were used: age, gender, and ethnicity. All of the severity items were measured on an ordinal scale. Therefore, the researcher constructed a continuous scale variable of Overall Severity from participant responses of perception of severity of the 24 classroom behaviors listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Descriptions of Uncivil Classroom Behaviors

Number	Behavior	Description of the Behavior
1.	Eating	Students consuming food or drink during class time
2.	Groans/Sighs	Students making displeasing or dissatisfied noise during class
3.	Use computer	Students using the computer for non-classroom related activities
4.	Arrive late/leave early	Students arrive after class has started or leave before class is done.
5.	Dominate Discussion	Students who inappropriately dominate the classroom discussions
6.	Vulgarity	Students who use rude or offensive language during class
7.	Challenging Faculty	Students who challenge the faculty's knowledge or competence
8.	Verbally Attacking	Students who use verbally attack a classmate or faculty
9.	Sleeping	Students who nap or doze during class
10.	Physical Attack	Students who use physically contact to harm a classmate or faculty
11.	Inappropriate E-mail	Student who send inappropriate e-mails to the faculty
12	Threats	Students who make threats to a classmate or faculty
13	Talking on Cell	Students who talk on their cell phone during class
14	Text on Cell	Students who text on their cell phone during class
15	Letting Cell to Ring	Students who let their cell phone ring during class.
16	Sarcasm	Students who make sarcastic remarks during class
17	Students Talking	Students who carry on conversations with other students during class
18	Hats	Students who wear hats during class
19	Packing, Unpacking	Students who pack or unpack their backpacks during class

TABLE 2. (Continued)

Number	Behavior	Description of the Behavior
20	Reading Newspaper	Students who read the newspaper during class
21	Interrupting	Students who interrupt out of turn or interrupt others
22	Offensive Remarks	Students who make offensive remarks during class
23	Hygiene	Students who keep poor hygiene during class
24	Inappropriate Dressing	Students who dress inappropriately during class

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, *Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?* First, to measure severity, participant responses to the severity scale listing 24 disruptive classmate behaviors (Table 2) were used as variables. These responses ranged on a Likert-type scale from *not serious* to *very serious*. To measure frequency, participant responses to the frequency scale, made up of the same 24 disruptive classmate behaviors (Table 2) were used as variables. Response choices ranged from *infrequent* to *very frequent*.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, *Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?* The variable age was recoded, as were frequency and severity. Age was measured as a categorical variable; due to extremely unequal group sizes, the researcher created a dichotomous age variable: Group 1 ages 18 to 25 and Group2 ages 26 and older. All items in the

frequency and severity scales of uncivil classmate behaviors were chosen to analyze generational relationship with the recoded age variable.

Data Analysis

The data from Sections 1 and 2 of the survey were downloaded from the online survey program. The information was electronically transferred to and analyzed via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22 analytical software. All data were cleaned, prepared (coded), recoded, and organized by the researcher for analysis. Appropriate descriptives for the survey data were computed. In the resulting data, a higher score represented a higher value for each variable. For example, the scale used to measure perception of frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors was coded as 1 = *infrequent*, 2 = *somewhat frequent, 3 = frequent,* 4 = *very frequent*.

The sample initially contained 235 participants but the sample was decreased by 32 when respondents who failed to complete the demographic and descriptive questions of the survey were removed from the dataset. Demographic and descriptive statistics were based on 203 respondents. Also, 32 participants did not fully complete the severity and frequency scales. Rather than generate answers for these students based on their other responses, responses of only those participants ($N = 171$) who answered all survey questions were included in the statistical analysis. In all, 64 participants were eliminated from the data analysis due to incomplete surveys. A code book was generated so that data could be organized and tracked.

According to V. L. P. Clark and Creswell (2014), once data have been rescored, cleaned, prepared, and organized, statistical analysis can be performed. Prior to conducting statistical analysis, a review of the sample population revealed an

uneven distribution of the sample and a few cells contained fewer than five responses. Parametric testing (e.g., analysis of variance [ANOVA] or *t* tests) required a normal distribution of the sample and a minimum of 30 non-repetitive responses per cell (Pallant, 2013). The data did not meet minimum assumptions to conduct robust parametric statistical tests (Pallant, 2013).

As a result of failure to meet the minimum assumptions, nonparametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis) were conducted. The advantage of nonparametric statistical analysis is that it does not require equal group sizes, can be used with a low level of measurement, and requires few assumptions for distribution of data (Pallant, 2013). The disadvantages of nonparametric analysis are that it is less powerful that parametric analysis, it is less likely to uncover an association between two variables, and the results are more difficult to interpret based on a mean rank difference between two groups with a minimum of five per cell (Hoskin, 2012).

The Mann-Whitney U and the Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric tests were used to address Research Question 1. Nonparametric Chi square and correlational analyses were performed to address Research Questions 2 and 3.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to examine all demographic and program information gathered in this study. According to V. L. P. Clark and Creswell (2014), descriptive statistics assist researchers in encapsulating the "central tendency and variability" of the data (p. 213). For this study, the mode, median, range, the minimum/maximum values of the variables, percentages, skewness, and kurtosis were calculated for all items (V. L. P. & Creswell, 2014). The mean and standard deviation

were calculated only for the variable Overall Severity. Since the remaining data were at a lower scales of measurement (categorical and ordinal), means and standard deviations were not calculated.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, *Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?* A Mann-Whitney (also called the Wilcoxon rank-sum) is a nonparametric test to determine differences between independent groups. This is the nonparametric version of a parametric independent-samples *t* test. This statistical analysis was used to determine whether there were differences in perceptions of overall severity based on gender.

A Kruskal-Wallis (one-way ANOVA) is a nonparametric test to determine differences between more than two independent groups (Pallant, 2013). This is the nonparametric version of a parametric one-way ANOVA. This statistical analysis was used to determine whether there were differences in perceptions of overall severity based on age or ethnicity.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, *Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?* A Spearman correlational coefficient (also known as the nonparametric correlation) was performed. This method measures "the degree of the relationship between two variables" (Yockey, 2011, p. 158). The Spearman correlation was used to measure the

relationship between the participants' responses regarding perceptions of severity and frequency (Pallant, 2013).

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, *Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?* A Chi square test of independence was used to analyze the association of students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors and the recoded age variable. According to Yockey (2011), a Chi square test is utilized to examine the independence of two categorical variables. This flexible nonparametric test looks for associations or relationships among variables and requires at least five responses in at least 80% of the categories (Pallant, 2013). A Spearman correlational coefficient (also known as the nonparametric correlation) was also calculated. This test analyzes whether a relationship exists between variables and, if so, to what degree (Yockey, 2011). The Spearman correlation was used to measure the relationship between the recoded age variable and perceptions of uncivil classmate behaviors (listed in Table 2).

Protection of Subjects

For the protection of human subjects, ethical guidelines and principles were followed by the investigator (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). A review of the literature highlights that students are sensitive to language that might be construed at accusatory, as well as questions relating to causality of classroom incivility (Boice, 1996; Braxton & Bayer, 2004; Braxton, Bayer, & Noseworthy, 2004; Braxton & Rogers Mann, 2004; Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). Therefore, the focus of this study was social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behaviors. Due to the sensitivity of the

language related to classroom incivility, the investigator was respectful of individual beliefs and was careful in explaining the purpose of the research.

Participants were provided an electronic consent form that described the rights of participants in survey research (V. L. P. Clark & Creswell, 2014). The consent form was approved by the IRB (reference #15-086s); the research did not commence until that approval was given. With regard to the incentive offered for participation in the study, personal information that was provided by participants to take part in the incentive offer was separated from survey data to protect the identity of participants. Confidential data and study-related materials will be stored in a locked cabinet for 3 years.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the quantitative methodological foundation of the study. The dissertation site and sample population were identified and described. Procedures, data collection methods, methodological design, instrument, data analysis, and participant protection were reviewed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Classroom incivility is a growing issue in higher education (Baker et al., 2008; Boice, 1996; C. M. Clark, 2008; C. M. Clark & Springer, 2007) there is limited research relating it to social work education (Ausbrooks et al., 2011). The purpose of this study was to examine differences and relationships between students' perceptions of severity and frequency of classmate uncivil behavior in social work education. An online survey, a modification of the Classroom Civility scale developed by Black et al. (2011), was administered. The survey tool focused on participant and program demographics and students' perceptions of severity and frequency of disruptive classroom behaviors. This study was guided by three research questions: (a) *Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?* (b) *Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?* and (c) *Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?* This chapter reports study's demographic and program descriptive results, followed by results related to each of the research questions.

The online survey was distributed via e-mail by the Social Work Department Chair to all enrolled social work students (N = 713); 235 online surveys were collected, for a response rate of 32.9%. After initial cleaning of the data, some

surveys were removed due to missing data; demographic results are based on 203 participants. Because 64 of those students did not respond completely to the perception of severity and frequency of classmate behavior scale questions, the sample size for analysis of the results related to the research questions was 171.

Demographic Results

Descriptive Statistics

This subsection reports the demographic statistical results for the sample (N = 203) for the variables age, ethnicity, and gender. The median and most frequently reported age group was 26–30 years, the median and most frequently reported ethnicity was Hispanic, and the median and most frequently reported gender was female. The median, mode, skewness, kurtosis of these demographic variables are listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Summary of the Demographic Statistics for the Sample (N = 203)

Statistic	Age	Ethnicity	Gender
Median	26-30	Hispanic	Female
Mode	26-30	Hispanic	Female
Skewness	.990	1.271	2.959
Kurtosis	.892	2.965	8.298

Note. Since the demographic data were measured at lower scales of measurement (categorical and ordinal), the mean and standard deviation were not calculated.

Age. The variable age was divided into categories. The ages of the sample ranged from 18–20 (4.9%, n = 10) to 41+ (3.4%, n = 7). The two largest age groups

in the sample were 21–25 (35.5%, *n*= 72) and 26–30 (39.9%, *n* = 81). One participant (0.5%) declined to answer this question. Table 4 summarizes this information.

TABLE 4. Sample Age Count and Percentages

Age Group	*n*	%
18-20	10	4.9
21-25	72	35.5
26-30	81	39.9
31-35	26	12.8
36-40	6	2.9
41-older	7	3.4
Decline to Answer	1	0.5

Gender. The demographic sample (*N* = 203) included 21.7% (*n* = 45) BSW students and 78.3% (*n* = 158) MSW students: 25 (10.6%) males and 209 (88.9%) females. There were 20 (11%) male and 163 (89%) female MSW students, and 4 (8%) male and 47 (92%) female BSW students in the sample. The demographic data for the Social Work Department and the university where the study took place were gathered from the institutional website. Table 5 summarizes the gender data for the sample.

The proportion of male students in the Social Work Department was 29.3% less than that in the university and the proportion of female students in the Social Work Department was 29.3% more than in the university (Table 6).

TABLE 5. Gender Distributions of the Sample by Student Status, the Target Social Work Department, and the Target University

Group	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Bachelor of Social Work	4	8.9	41	91.1	45	100.0
Master of Social Work	16	10.1	142	89.9	158	100.0
Social Work Department	98	13.7	615	86.3	713	100.0
University	14,820	43.0	20,989	57.0	36,809	100.0

The results indicated that the study's sample was representative of the Social Work Department. The Department student enrollment was comprised of 13.7% males and 86.3% females, and the sample was comprised of 9.8% males and 90.1% females, for a difference of 3.9% (Table 7).

TABLE 6. Comparison of Gender Distributions in the Social Work Department and the University

Group	Department		University		Difference
	n	%	*n*	%	%
Male	98	13.7	15,820	43.0	29.3
Female	615	86.3	20,989	57.0	29.3
Total	713	100.0	36,809	100.0	-

Ethnicity. According to the information on the institutional website, the university enrollment was 39.7% (13,270) Hispanic, 23.1% (7,734) White, 24.7% (8,256) Asian, and 4.3% (1,427) African American. The same source reported that

58.8% (419) Hispanic, 13% (93) White, 10.8% (77) Asian, and 7.1% (51) African American students enrolled in the Social Work Department. The study sample contained 47.3% (96) Hispanic, 30.5% (62) White, 9.8% (20) Asian, and 7.4% (15) African American social work students (Table 8).

TABLE 7. Comparison of Gender Distributions in the Social Work Department and the Sample

Group	Sample		Department		Difference
	n	%	*n*	%	%
Male	20	9.8	98	13.7	3.9
Female	183	90.1	615	86.3	3.9
Total	203	100.0	713	100.0	-

TABLE 8. Comparison of Ethnic Distributions in the Study Sample, Target Social Work Department, and Target University

Ethnicity	Sample		Department		University	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Hispanic	96	47.3	419	58.8	13,270	39.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	20	9.8	77	10.8	8,256	24.7
African American	15	7.4	51	7.1	1,427	4.3
White	62	30.5	93	13.0	7,734	23.1
Total	203		713		33,416	

Note. Not listed are 5 students (2.5%) who listed multiple or other ethnicities, and 5 (2.5%) students who declined to answer the question.

There were 19.1% more Hispanic and 2.8% more African American students in the Social Work Department than in the university. Conversely, there were 13.9% fewer Asian and 10.1% fewer White students in the Social Work Department than in the university. The 5 (0.9%) students who declined to answer the question were not compared. Table 9 illustrates the differences between the Social Work Department and the university on ethnic distribution.

TABLE 9. Comparison of Ethnic Distributions in the Social Work Department and the University

Group	Department *n*	Department %	University *n*	University %	Difference %
Hispanic	419	58.8	13,270	39.7	+19.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	77	10.8	8,256	24.7	-13.9
African American	51	7.1	1,427	4.3	+2.8
White	93	13.0	7,734	23.1	-10.1
Total	713		33,416		

The results indicate that the sample differed from the Social Work Department in two ethnic categories. First, the sample was comprised of 30.5% White social work students, 17.5% more than the 13.0% enrolled in the Social Work Department. Second, the sample included 47.3% Hispanic students, 11.5% less than the 58.8% in the Social Work Department. There were 0.3% more African American students and 1.0% fewer Asian students in the sample than in the Social Work Department. Table

10 illustrates the differences in ethnic distribution between the sample and the Social Work Department.

TABLE 10. Comparison of Ethnic Distributions in the Social Work Department and the University

Group	Sample		Department		Difference
	n	%	*n*	%	%
Hispanic	96	47.3	419	58.8	-11.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	20	9.8	77	10.8	-1.0
African American	15	7.4	51	7.1	+0.3
White	62	30.5	93	13.0	+17.5
Total	203		713		

Note. Not listed are 5 students (2.5%) who listed multiple or other ethnicities, and 5 (2.5%) students who declined to answer the question.

Program Descriptives

The descriptive statistics for the sample ($N = 203$) included the following variables program: program, BSW program status, MSW program status, and MSW program location. Table 11 reports the median, mode, skewness, and kurtosis values for these variables.

Social work program. This variable delineated whether a respondent was enrolled in the BSW or MSW social work program. Based on responses, 21.7% (51) were enrolled in the BSW program and 76.3% (184) were enrolled in the MSW program (Table 12).

TABLE 11. Descriptive Statistics for Program Variables

Measure	BSW Program Status	MSW Program Status	MSW Program Location
n	45	158	158
Median	1.47	1.00	1.00
Mode	Junior	Year 1	On campus
Skewness	0.138	0.102	3.622
Kurtosis	-2.075	-2.015	11.258

TABLE 12. Program Distributions in the Sample and the Social Work Department

Program	Sample		Department		Difference
	n	%	*n*	%	%
Bachelor of Social Work	51	21.7	222	31.1	-9.4
Master of Social Work	184	78.3	491	68.9	9.4
Decline to Answer	1	1.9	0	0.0	NA
Total	215	100.0	713	100.0	

BSW program status. The BSW program status variable identified whether the participant student was a Junior (60–90 units completed) or a Senior (91–120 units completed). Within the BSW sample, 50.98% (26) declared Junior status and 47.06% (24) declared Senior status.

MSW program status and location. The MSW program status variable identified whether the participant was in the full-time or part-time program, as well as year in the graduate program. Participants reported being enrolled as follows: 21.20% (39) in the 1st year of the 2-year program, 18.48% (34) in the 2nd year of the 2-year program, 16.85% (31) in the 1st year of the 3-year program, 16.30% (30) in the 2nd year of the 3-year program, 19.02% (35) in the 3rd year of the 3-year program, and 7.61% (14) in Advanced Standing. The students were asked whether they were taking courses on or off campus. Of the 158 MSW students who responded to the descriptive section of the survey, 93.48% (147) reported being enrolled on the university campus and 6.52% (11) reported being enrolled at a satellite campus. The medians and modes were taking classes on campus and being in the 1st year of the 2-year program.

MSW subject areas of interest. Students in the MSW program were presented a list of social work subject areas and asked, "What social work subject areas are you most interested in?" The listed subject areas listed were culture and diversity, ethics, direct practice (e.g., case management, clinical work), human behavior and social environment, grant writing, macro practice (i.e., administration), policy practice, research practice, electives, none of the above, decline to answer, and other (asked to specify). Students were instructed to check all that applied. The most frequently chosen subject interest was direct practice (169, 79.72%). Table 13 summarizes this information.

MSW class syllabi discussion of classroom conduct. The MSW sample was presented the same list of social work subject areas and asked, "In which of the following curricular areas does your social work class syllabi have a section that

TABLE 13. Participant Master of Social Work Students' Areas of Interest (N = 203)

Area of Interest	n	%
Culture and Diversity	138	65.09
Direct Practice	169	79.72
Human Behavior and Social Environment	130	61.32
Grant Writing	33	15.57
Macro Practice	64	30.19
Policy Practice	50	23.58
Research Practice	30	14.15
Electives	67	31.60
Other (Seminar)	10	4.72
None of the Above	1	0.47

discusses classroom conduct?" The listed subject areas were culture and diversity, ethics, direct practice (e.g. case management, clinical work), human behavior and social environment, grant writing, macro practice (i.e., administration), policy practice, research practice, electives, none of the above, decline to answer, and other (asked to specify). Students were asked to check all that applied. The top two subjects that students perceived classroom conduct in the syllabi were human behavior and social environment with 87 (41.23%) and direct practice with 82 (38.86%). About one fifth of the MSW students (41, 19.43%) responded that they did not perceive classroom conduct being discussed in the syllabi in any of the subjects listed in this study (Table 14).

TABLE 14. Master of Social Work (MSW) Class Syllabi That Contained a Discussion of Classroom Conduct (N = 203)

Course Syllabus	*n*	%
Culture and Diversity	72	34.12
Direct Practice	82	38.86
Human Behavior and Social Environment	87	41.23
Grant Writing	13	6.16
Macro Practice	28	13.27
Policy Practice	78	36.97
Research Practice	57	27.01
Electives	42	19.91
Other (Seminar)	10	4.74
None of the Above	41	19.43
Declined to Answer	11	5.21

MSW professor discusses classroom conduct. The MSW sample was given the same list of social work subject areas and asked, "In which of the following curricular areas does you social work professors discuss classroom conduct?" The listed subject areas were culture and diversity, ethics, direct practice (e.g. case management, clinical work), human behavior and social environment, grant writing, macro practice (i.e., administration), policy practice, research practice, electives, none of the above, decline to answer, and other (asked to specify). Students were asked to check all that applied. The top two subject areas where the course professor discussed classroom conduct were direct practice with 95 (45.45%) and human behavior and

social environment with 83 (39.71%). Remarkably, almost one fourth of the MSW sample (48, 22.97%) responded that no professors discussed classroom conduct in any of the above listed subject areas (Table 15).

TABLE 15. Master of Social Work (MSW) Courses in Which the Professor Discussed Classroom Conduct

Course	*n*	%
Culture and Diversity	72	34.45
Direct Practice	95	45.45
Human Behavior and Social Environment	83	39.71
Grant Writing	12	5.74
Macro Practice	30	14.35
Policy Practice	67	32.06
Research Practice	51	24.40
Electives	42	20.10
Other (Seminar)	8	3.83
None of the Above	48	22.97

Student behavior questions. The MSW sample was asked, "Do any of the previously mentioned classmate behaviors affect your ability to learn any of the following social work standards?" The question listed nine standards aligned to the CSWE (2008) professional competencies. The response scale was *strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree*, and *strongly disagree*.

Professional standards 1 through 4 are (a) professional social work roles and boundaries; (b) professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication; (c) professional time management skills and accountability (punctuality, attendance, paperwork, and assignments); and (d) ability to engage in learning, including appropriate use of supervision and consultation. The sample was fairly consistent in responding *somewhat agree* concerning the first four professional standards (Table 16).

TABLE 16. Participants' Perceptions of the Effects of Uncivil Behaviors on Professional Standards 1 Through 4

Standard	Strongly Agree *n*	%	Agree *n*	%	Somewhat Agree *n*	%	Disagree *n*	%	Strongly Disagree *n*	%	Mean	*SD*
Professional social work roles and boundaries	41	20.3	27	13.4	44	21.8	51	25.3	39	19.3	2.90	1.40
Professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication	36	17.8	39	19.3	44	21.8	46	22.8	37	18.3	2.96	1.37
Professional time management skills and accountability: punctuality, attendance, paperwork, and assignments	45	22.3	37	18.3	43	21.3	42	20.8	35	17.3	3.07	1.41
Ability to engage in learning, including appropriate use of supervision and consultation	44	21.8	48	23.8	40	19.8	43	21.3	25	12.4	3.22	1.34

Professional standards 5 through 9 are (a) critical reflection to assure continual professional growth and development; (b) knowledge about the ethical value base of the profession; (c) ethical reasoning to arrive at principle decisions; (d) self-awareness of personal values and biases in a way that allows professional value to guide behavior; and (e) recognize and tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts. The sample appeared fairly consistent in responding *somewhat agree* with the effects of these standards (Table 17).

TABLE 17. Participants' Perceptions of the Effects of Uncivil Behaviors on Professional Standards 5 Through 9

Standard	Strongly Agree *n*	Strongly Agree %	Agree *n*	Agree %	Somewhat Agree *n*	Somewhat Agree %	Disagree *n*	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree *n*	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	*SD*
Critical reflection to assure continual professional growth and development	42	20.8	31	15.4	44	21.8	55	27.2	30	14.9	3.0	1.36
Knowledge about the ethical value base of the profession	40	19.8	35	17.3	33	16.3	59	29.2	34	16.8	2.94	1.40
Ethical reasoning to arrive at principle decisions	38	18.8	35	17.3	38	18.8	57	28.2	33	16.3	2.94	1.37
Self-awareness of personal values and biases in a way that allows professional values to guide behavior	48	23.8	31	15.4	38	18.8	52	25.7	32	15.8	3.05	1.42
Recognize and tolerate ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts	38	18.8	31	15.4	46	22.8	54	26.7	32	15.8	2.95	1.35

Result Related to the Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions: (a) Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors? (b) Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors? and (c) Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age? All severity and frequency items were utilized as variables in this study. Table 2 presented descriptions of the 24 disruptive classroom behaviors used to study social work students' perceptions of uncivil behaviors. Table 18 provides a summary of the links among the research questions, the variables, and analysis procedures utilized in the study.

TABLE 18. Research Questions, Variables, and Related Analyses

Research Question	Variables	Analysis
Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?	Overall Severity Gender Age Ethnicity	Nonparametric tests Mann-Whitney test Kruskal-Wallis test
Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?	Severity Behaviors Frequency Behaviors	Nonparametric tests Correlational
Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?	Age Recoded Severity Behaviors Frequency Behaviors	Nonparametric tests Chi square Correlational

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked, *Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?* The variables used to address this question were Overall Severity, Gender, Age, and Ethnicity. First, descriptive statistics were conducted for the Overall Severity variable. Then the following nonparametric analyses were selected: Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test. The Mann-Whitney test serves to determine differences between two independent groups and the Kruskal-Wallis test serves to determine differences among more than two groups (Pallant, 2013).

The sample was comprised of 156 (91.2%) females and 15 (8.8%) males. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant χ^2 differences between genders in perceptions of overall severity: males ($Md = 90.77$, $n = 15$) and females ($Md = 85.54$, $n = 156$), $U = 1098.5$, $z = -.391$, $p = .696$, $r = .03$. There was no significant difference.

The sample contained 10 (5.84%) students 18–20 years old, 80 (46.78%) students 21–25 years old, 56 (32.75%) students 26–30 years old, 68 (39.77%) students 31–35 years old, 16 (9.36%) students 36–40 years old, and 9 (5.26%) students 41 years or older; 1 (0.58%) student declined to answer the age question. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no significant χ^2 differences in perceptions of overall severity by age group (Group 1, $n = 10$, 18–20 years old; Group 2, $n = 80$, 21–25 years old; Group 3, $n = 56$, 26–30 years old; Group 4, $n = 68$, 31–35 years old, Group 5, $n = 16$, 36–40 years old, Group 6, $n = 9$, 41 years or older; Group 7, $n = 1$, declined to answer), χ^2 (6, $n = 171$) = 6.13, $p = .409$. There were no significant differences.

The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to look for differences in students' perceptions of overall severity according to student ethnicity. The ethnic make-up of the sample was 74 (43.27%) Hispanic, 7 (4.09%) African American, 59 (34.5%) White, 18 (10.53%) Asian, 10 (5.85%) multi-ethnic, and 3 (1.75%) declined to answer. The test revealed no significant χ^2 differences in perceptions of overall severity by ethnic groups (Group 1, n = 74, Hispanic; Group 2, n =7, African American; Group 3, n = 59, White; Group 4, n = 18, Asian; Group 5, n = 10, multi-ethnic; Group 6, n = 3, declined to answer), χ^2 (5, n = 171) = 7.18, p = .207. There was no significant differences.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, *Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?* The variables used to address this question were Severity of Behaviors and Frequency of Behaviors. To examine these data, the researcher utilized frequency data and Spearman's correlational coefficient analysis. The correlational analysis was performed to determine whether there was a significant relationship between two variables (Pallant, 2013).

Most respondents were in the middle of the range of overall severity scores (M = 55.96, SD = 12.6). Possible severity scores ranged from 24 to 96; actual scores ranged from 25 to 81, indicating that most respondents had concerns about all of the items combined (Table 19).

In general, perceptions of frequency of uncivil behaviors were polarized. Results indicated that these students clearly perceived selected disruptive behaviors to

occur either *very frequently* or *infrequently*. The five most frequent uncivil behaviors perceived by respondents were eating in class (M = 3.65, SD = 0.77), texting on cell (M = 3.4, SD = 0.90), arriving late or leaving early (M = 3.21, SD = 0.96), using a computer (M = 3.21, SD = 0.96), and dominating class discussion (M = 2.85, SD = 1.07). The five least frequently perceived uncivil behaviors were physical attack (M = 1.03, SD = 0.26), threats (M = 1.05, SD = 0.34), verbally attacking (M = 1.10, SD = 0.41), inappropriate e-mails (M = 1.31, SD = 0.74), and reading newspaper (M = 1.34, SD = 0.82). Table 20 summarizes perceptions of frequency of uncivil behaviors.

Spearman's correlational coefficient analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a relationship between perceptions of *severity* and perceptions of *frequency* of uncivil behaviors. In general, numerous moderate and a few strong negative relationships were found between perceived severity of uncivil behaviors and frequency of the uncivil behaviors. The following inverse correlations results mean that as one variable increases, the other decreases, however, due to the nonparametric statistical analysis used, it cannot be determine which variable is increasing or decreasing; only that a negative relationship exists.

Severity: Use of computer. The independent severity variable of use of computer had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, r = -.340, n = 171, p = .001.

Severity: Arrive late and leave early. The independent severity variable of arriving late and leaving early had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, r = -.302, n = 171, p = .001.

TABLE 19. Participants' Perceptions of Severity of Uncivil Classroom Behaviors

Behavior	Not Serious *n*	%	Somewhat Serious *n*	%	Serious *n*	%	Very Serious *n*	%	Mean	*SD*
Eating	189	91.0	14	6.8	2	1.0	1	0.5	1.08	0.31
Groans/Signs	71	34.0	74	53.0	40	19.0	20	9.7	2.04	0.96
Use computer	65	31.5	53	25.7	49	23.8	39	18.9	2.32	1.10
Arrive late/leave early	65	31.6	62	30.1	49	23.8	30	14.6	2.21	1.04
Dominate discussion	50	24.3	71	34.5	46	22.3	38	18.5	2.35	1.05
Vulgarity	44	21.6	65	31.9	48	23.5	46	22.6	2.48	1.07
Challenging faculty	63	30.9	76	37.3	39	19.1	25	12.3	2.13	0.99
Verbally attacking	9	4.4	11	5.4	17	8.3	167	81.9	3.69	0.75
Sleeping	50	24.5	34	16.7	53	26	67	32.8	2.68	1.17
Physical attack	9	4.4	2	1.0	3	1.5	188	92.2	3.85	0.63
Inappropriate e-mail	20	9.8	28	13.7	44	21.6	111	54.4	3.22	1.01
Threats	9	4.4	4	1.9	13	6.4	177	86.8	3.78	0.67
Talking on cell	40	19.6	37	18.1	49	24	78	38.2	2.82	1.14
Text on cell	81	39.7	76	37.3	31	15.2	16	7.8	1.92	0.93
Letting cell ring	48	23.5	60	29.4	55	26.9	41	20.1	2.44	1.06
Sarcasm	43	21.2	78	38.4	60	29.6	22	10.8	2.3	0.93
Students talking	45	22.2	64	31.5	66	32.5	28	13.8	2.38	0.98
Hats	190	93.6	7	3.5	4	1.9	1	0.5	1.09	0.39
Packing, unpacking	165	81.3	29	14.3	7	3.5	2	1.0	1.24	0.56
Reading newspaper	73	35.9	63	31.0	43	21.2	23	11.3	2.08	1.01
Interrupting	38	18.7	83	40.9	58	28.6	24	11.8	2.33	0.92
Offensive remarks	10	4.9	23	11.3	59	29.1	111	54.7	3.33	0.87
Hygiene	55	27.1	56	27.6	61	30.1	30	13.8	2.3	1.03
Inappropriate dress	70	34.5	71	35	36	17.7	25	12.3	2.1	0.96

TABLE 20. Participants' Perceptions of Frequency of Uncivil Classroom Behaviors

Behavior	Not Infrequent		Somewhat Frequent		Frequent		Very Frequent		Mean	*SD*
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%		
Eating	5	2.5	21	10.3	14	6.9	161	79.3	3.65	0.77
Groans/Signs	51	25.1	60	24.6	45	22.2	53	26.1	2.5	1.14
Use computer	22	10.8	33	16.3	49	24.1	98	48.3	3.1	1.04
Arrive late/leave early	14	6.9	33	16.3	52	25.6	103	50.7	3.32	0.96
Dominate discussion	28	13.8	46	22.7	53	26.1	72	35.5	2.85	1.07
Vulgarity	105	51.9	54	26.7	31	15.4	10	4.9	1.73	0.90
Challenging faculty	88	43.6	80	39.6	22	10.9	8	3.9	1.75	0.81
Verbally attacking	182	90.1	9	4.5	4	1.9	1	0.5	1.10	0.41
Sleeping	124	61.4	43	21.3	15	7.4	14	6.9	1.59	0.91
Physical attack	192	95.1	0	0.0	1	0.5	1	0.5	1.03	0.26
Inappropriate e-mail	159	78.7	10	4.9	17	8.4	5	2.5	1.31	0.74
Threats	188	93.1	1	0.5	1	0.5	2	0.9	1.05	0.34
Talking on cell	125	61.9	37	18.3	2	0.9	32	15.8	1.7	1.10
Text on cell	11	5.5	22	10.9	44	21.8	124	61.4	3.4	0.89
Letting cell ring	78	38.6	62	30.7	24	11.9	35	17.3	2.08	1.10
Sarcasm	84	41.6	54	26.7	27	13.4	35	17.3	2.07	1.12
Students talking	37	18.3	57	28.2	51	25.3	56	27.7	2.63	1.08
Hats	58	28.7	31	15.4	42	20.8	69	34.2	2.61	1.23
Packing, unpacking	31	15.4	45	22.3	30	14.9	95	47.0	2.94	1.15
Reading newspaper	159	78.7	19	9.4	4	1.9	13	6.4	1.34	0.82
Interrupting	55	27.2	56	27.7	43	21.3	45	22.3	2.39	1.12
Offensive remarks	138	68.3	42	20.8	13	6.4	4	1.9	1.41	0.71
Hygiene	150	74.3	18	8.9	4	1.9	24	11.9	1.5	1.02
Inappropriate dress	127	62.9	34	16.8	9	4.5	26	12.9	1.66	1.06

Severity: Verbal attacking. The independent severity variable of verbal attacking had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.305$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Sleeping. The independent severity variable of sleeping had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of (a) inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.397$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (b) cell talk, $r = -.333$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (c) reading the newspaper, $r = -.326$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Inappropriate e-mail. The independent severity variable of inappropriate e-mail had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of (a) talk-cell, $r = -.366$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (b) inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.342$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Threats. The independent severity variable of threats had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.315$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Talk cell. The first independent severity variable of talk cell had (a) a strong statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.465$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (b) a moderate statistically significant relationship with perceived frequency of cell ring, $r = -.312$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (c) a strong statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of newspaper, $r = -.421$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (d) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of interrupting, $r = -.313$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Text cell. The independent severity variable of text cell had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of (a) inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.363$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (b) packing and unpacking, $r = -.305$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Cell ring. The independent severity variable of cell ring had (a) a strong statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.416$, p = .001; (b) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of talk cell, $r = -.312$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (c) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of newspaper, $r = -.313$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Sarcasm. The independent severity variable of sarcasm had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of (a) inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.350$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (b) talk cell, $r = -.327$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Student talking. The independent severity variable of student talking had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of (a) inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.371$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (b) newspaper, $r = -.306$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Reading newspaper. The independent severity variable of newspaper had (a) a strong statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.415$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (b) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of talk cell, $r = -.359$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Interrupting. The independent severity variable of interrupting had a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of (a) inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.378$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (b) talk cell, $r = -.353$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Hygiene. The independent severity variable of hygiene had (a) a strong statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.432$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (b) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of talk cell, $r = -.354$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (c) a moderate statistically significant moderate negative relationship with perceived frequency of cell ring, $r = -.314$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (d) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of sarcasm, $r = -.348$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (e) a strong statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of newspaper, $r = -.438$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (f) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of interrupting, $r = -.339$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Inappropriate dress. The independent severity variable of inappropriate dress had (a) a strong statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, $r = -.446$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (b) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of talk cell, $r = -.365$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; (c) a moderate statistically significant moderate relationship with perceived frequency of hats, $r = -.321$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$; and (d) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of newspaper, $r = -.375$, $n = 171$, $p = .001$.

Severity: Overall severity. The overall severity variable had (a) a strong statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of inappropriate e-mail, r = -.461, n = 171, p = .001; (b) a moderate statistically significant negative relationship with perceived frequency of talk cell, r = -.394, n = 171, p = .001; and (c) a moderate statistically significant moderate negative relationship with perceived frequency of newspaper, r = -.364, n = 171, p = .001. Table 21 summarizes the results of correlational coefficient tests.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, *Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?* The variables used to address this question were (a) age group, and (b) severity and frequency of disruptive behaviors, tested by Chi square and Spearman's correlational coefficient. The Spearman's correlational coefficient was used to determine whether there was a relationship between the age group variable and perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors; the results of this analysis, no significant relationships existed. As a result of no significance in the data from the correlation coefficient, a Chi square test was performed to determine whether there was an association.

Severity and age recoded. The Chi square test indicated no significant association between the recoded age variable and the majority of perceptions of severity of uncivil classmate behaviors. However, the independent variable Use of Computer had statistically significant association with age recoded, x^2 = 19.124, p = .001. Also, there was a statistically significant association between wearing hats in

TABLE 21. Correlation Coefficients of Relationships Between Perceptions of Severity and Perceptions of Frequency

Severity Behavior	Frequency Behavior	*r* value	*p* value
Use computer	Inappropriate e-mail	-.340 (moderate)	.001
Arrive late/leave early	Inappropriate e-mail	-.302 (moderate)	.001
Verbally attacking	Inappropriate e-mail	-.305 (moderate)	.001
Sleeping	Inappropriate e-mail	-.397 (moderate)	.001
	Talking on Cell	-.333 (moderate)	.001
	Newspaper	-.326 (moderate)	.001
Inappropriate e-mail	Talking on Cell	-.366 (moderate)	.001
	Newspaper	-.342 (moderate)	.001
Threats	Inappropriate e-mail	-.315 (moderate)	.001
Talking on cell	Inappropriate e-mail	-.465 (strong)	.001
	Cell ring	-.312(moderate)	.001
	Newspaper	-.421 (strong)	.001
	Interrupting	-.313 (moderate)	.001
Text on cell	Inappropriate e-mail	-.363 (moderate)	.001
	Packing and unpacking	-.305 (moderate)	.001
Letting cell ring	Inappropriate e-mail	-.416 (strong)	.001
	Talking on Cell	-.312 (moderate)	.001
	Newspaper	-.313 (moderate)	.001
Sarcasm	Inappropriate e-mail	-.350 (moderate)	.001
	Talking on Cell	-.327 (moderate)	.001

TABLE 21. (Continued)

Severity Behavior	Frequency Behavior	*r* value	*p* value
Students talking	Inappropriate e-mail	-.371 (moderate)	.001
	Newspaper	-.306 (moderate)	.001
Reading newspaper	Inappropriate e-mail	-.415 (strong)	.001
	Talking on Cell	-.359 (moderate)	.001
Interrupting	Inappropriate e-mail	-.378 (moderate)	.001
	Talking on Cell	-353 (moderate)	.001
Hygiene	Inappropriate e-mail	-.432 (strong)	.001
	Talking on Cell	-.354 (moderate)	.001
	Cell Ring	-.314(moderate)	.001
	Sarcasm	-.348 (moderate)	.001
	Newspaper	-.438 (strong)	.001
	Interrupting	-.339 (moderate)	.001
Inappropriate Dressing	Inappropriate e-mail	-.446 (strong)	.001
	Talking on Cell	-.356 (moderate)	.001
	Hats	-.321 (moderate)	.001
	Newspaper	-.375 (moderate)	.001
Overall Severity	Inappropriate e-mail	-.461 (strong)	.001
	Talking on Cell	-.394 (moderate)	.001
	Newspaper	-.368 (moderate)	.001

Note. Only statistically significant results are listed.

class and age recoded, $x^2 = 8.773$, $p = .032$. This Table 22 reports the results of tests for association of age recoded and perceived severity of behaviors.

Frequency and age recoded. A Chi square analysis indicated no significant association between the recoded age variable and the majority of perceptions of

frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors. However, there were statistically significant associations between age recoded and (a) Dominating Class Discussion, $x^2 = 10.299$, $p = .016$; (b) Sarcasm, $x^2 = 9.710$, $p = .021$; (c) Student Talk, $x^2 = 9.504$, $p = .023$; (d) Reading Newspaper, $x^2 = 15.236$, $p = .002$; (e) Interrupting, $x^2 = 13.152$, $p = .004$; and (f) Hygiene, $x^2 = 12.524$, $p = 006$. Table 22 reports the results of tests for association of age recoded and perceived frequency of behaviors. This may mean that older students could perceive dominating class discussion, sarcasm, interrupting, and students talking during class more frequently than younger students. Tables 23 and 24 report count and percentage results of these relationships by dichotomized age group.

TABLE 22. Associations of Recoded Age Variable and Severity and Frequency

Behavior	Severity of Behavior χ^2	*df*	*p*	Frequency of Behavior χ^2	*df*	*p*
Eating	0.375	2	.829	3.455	3	.327
Groans/Signs	5.312	3	.150	0.531	3	.912
Use computer	19.124	3	.000	3.757	3	.289
Arrive late/leave early	3.212	3	.360	3.312	3	.346
Dominate discussion	3.822	3	.281	10.299	3	.016
Vulgarity	7.216	3	.065	3.500	3	.321
Challenging faculty	0.607	3	.895	0.843	3	.839
Verbally attacking	2.332	3	.506	2.092	3	.553
Sleeping	2.723	3	.436	3.093	3	.377
Physical attack	2.920	3	.404	3.250	2	.197
Inappropriate e-mail	2.563	3	.464	5.298	3	.151
Threats	3.377	3	.337	5.423	3	.143
Talking on cell	7.303	3	.063	6.120	3	.106
Text on cell	2.628	3	.453	3.373	3	.338
Letting cell to ring	2.868	3	.412	6.942	3	.074
Sarcasm	4.027	3	.259	9.710	3	.021
Students talking	2.848	3	.416	9.504	3	.023
Hats	8.773	3	.032	5.842	3	.120
Packing & unpacking	0.775	3	.051	6.797	3	.079
Reading newspaper	1.831	3	.608	15.236	3	.002
Interrupting	3.243	3	.356	13.152	3	.004
Offensive remarks	1.297	3	.730	.790	3	.852
Hygiene	6.158	3	.104	12.524	3	.006
Inappropriate Dressing	1.494	2	.474	6.574	3	.087

TABLE 23. Correlation Between Age Recoded and Perception of Frequency of Uncivil Classmate Behaviors

	Infrequent				Somewhat Frequent				Frequent				Very Frequent			
	Age < 26		Age 26+		Age < 26		Age 26+		Age < 26		Age 26+		Age < 26		Age 26+	
Behavior	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Eating	1	0.13	4	0.28	9	3.15	12	2.11	8	3.21	6	1.73	57	11.60	103	17.46
Groans/Signs	17	2.22	33	2.31	18	6.29	32	5.63	18	7.23	27	7.80	21	4.29	32	5.42
Use computer	7	0.91	15	1.05	8	2.80	25	4.40	19	7.63	30	8.67	41	8.37	56	9.49
Arrive late/leave early	5	0.65	9	0.63	11	3.85	22	3.87	15	6.02	37	10.70	44	8.98	58	9.83
Dominate discussion	6	0.78	21	1.47	13	4.55	33	5.81	19	7.63	34	9.83	37	7.55	35	5.93
Vulgarity	34	4.43	71	4.96	21	7.34	32	5.63	15	6.02	16	4.62	5	1.02	5	0.85
Challenging faculty	33	4.30	55	3.84	30	10.50	49	8.63	7	2.81	15	4.34	4	0.82	4	0.68
Verbally attacking	68	8.87	113	7.90	4	1.40	5	0.88	1	0.40	3	0.87	1	0.20	0	0.00
Sleeping	44	5.74	79	5.52	15	5.24	28	4.93	7	2.81	8	2.31	8	1.63	6	1.02
Physical attack	72	9.39	119	8.32	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.40	0	0.00	1	0.20	0	0.00
Inappropriate e-mail	57	7.43	101	7.06	4	1.40	6	1.06	11	4.42	6	1.73	2	0.41	3	0.51
Threats	71	9.26	116	8.11	0	0.00	1	0.18	1	0.40	0	0.00	2	0.41	0	0.00
Talking on cell	42	5.48	82	5.73	14	4.90	23	4.05	2	0.80	0	0.00	16	3.27	16	2.71
Text on cell	4	0.52	7	0.49	6	2.10	16	2.82	13	5.22	31	8.96	52	10.61	71	12.00
Letting cell ring	25	3.26	53	3.70	22	7.69	39	6.87	8	3.21	16	4.62	20	4.08	15	2.54
Sarcasm	30	3.91	53	3.70	13	4.55	41	7.22	13	5.22	14	4.05	19	3.88	16	2.71
Students talking	13	1.69	24	1.68	13	4.55	44	7.75	21	8.43	29	8.38	28	5.71	28	4.75
Hats	16	2.09	42	2.94	11	3.85	20	3.52	21	8.43	20	5.78	27	5.51	42	7.12
Packing, unpacking	9	1.17	22	1.54	11	3.85	34	5.99	14	5.62	16	4.62	41	8.37	53	8.98
Reading newspaper	52	6.78	106	7.41	10	3.50	9	1.58	4	1.61	0	0.00	9	1.84	4	0.68
Interrupting	21	2.74	34	2.38	11	3.85	45	7.92	20	8.03	23	6.65	23	4.69	21	3.56
Offensive remarks	50	6.52	87	6.08	18	6.29	24	4.23	5	2.01	8	2.31	2	0.41	2	0.34
Hygiene	48	6.26	101	7.06	11	3.85	7	1.23	1	0.40	3	0.87	15	3.06	9	1.53
Inappropriate dress	42	5.48	84	5.87	13	4.55	21	3.70	5	2.01	4	1.16	15	3.06	11	1.86

TABLE 24. Correlation Between Age Recoded and Perception of Severity of Uncivil Classmate Behaviors

	Not Serious				Somewhat Serious				Serious				Very Serious			
	Age < 26		Age 26+		Age < 26		Age 26+		Age < 26		Age 26+		Age < 26		Age 26+	
Behavior	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Eating	70	11.50	117	13.40	4	1.06	9	1.20	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.23	1	0.12
Groans/Signs	31	5.08	39	4.48	23	6.08	50	6.67	17	4.66	22	3.94	4	0.92	15	1.86
Use computer	34	5.57	27	3.10	11	2.91	42	5.60	21	5.75	28	5.01	9	2.06	3	0.37
Arrive late/leave early	29	4.75	34	3.90	21	5.56	40	5.33	16	4.38	33	5.90	9	2.06	20	2.48
Dominate discussion	23	3.77	26	2.99	26	6.88	43	5.73	14	3.84	31	5.55	11	2.52	27	3.35
Vulgarity	15	2.46	29	3.33	20	5.29	44	5.87	25	6.85	22	3.94	14	3.21	32	3.98
Challenging faculty	25	4.10	38	4.36	26	6.88	48	6.40	15	4.11	24	4.29	8	1.83	17	2.11
Verbally attacking	4	0.66	4	0.46	2	0.53	9	1.20	6	1.64	11	1.97	63	14.50	103	12.80
Sleeping	21	3.44	28	3.21	9	2.38	24	3.20	22	6.03	31	5.55	23	5.28	44	5.47
Physical attack	4	0.66	4	0.46	0	0.00	2	0.27	2	0.55	1	0.18	68	15.60	119	14.78
Inappropriate e-mail	10	1.64	9	1.03	11	2.91	17	2.27	14	3.84	30	5.37	40	9.17	70	8.70
Threats	4	0.66	4	0.46	0	0.00	4	0.53	6	1.64	7	1.25	65	14.90	111	13.79
Talking on cell	20	3.28	19	2.18	13	3.44	24	3.20	21	5.75	28	5.01	21	4.82	56	6.96
Text on cell	33	5.41	46	5.28	25	6.61	51	6.80	13	3.56	18	3.22	4	0.92	12	1.49
Letting cell ring	20	3.28	27	3.10	25	6.61	35	4.67	19	5.21	36	6.44	11	2.52	29	3.60
Sarcasm	17	2.79	26	2.99	26	6.88	51	6.80	27	7.40	33	5.90	5	1.15	17	2.11
Students talking	18	2.95	27	3.10	22	5.82	41	5.47	28	7.67	38	6.80	7	1.61	21	2.61
Hats	67	10.90	122	14.10	4	1.06	3	0.40	4	1.10	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.12
Packing, unpacking	59	9.67	105	12.10	9	2.38	20	2.67	6	1.64	1	0.18	1	0.23	1	0.12
Reading newspaper	30	4.92	43	4.94	22	5.82	40	5.33	13	3.56	30	5.37	10	2.29	13	1.61
Interrupting	18	2.95	20	2.30	31	8.20	51	6.80	17	4.66	41	7.33	9	2.06	5	0.62
Offensive remarks	4	0.66	6	0.69	9	2.38	14	1.87	18	4.93	40	7.16	44	10.10	67	8.32
Hygiene	26	4.26	29	3.33	15	3.97	41	5.47	25	6.85	35	6.26	9	2.06	21	2.61
Inappropriate dress	28	4.59	42	4.82	24	6.35	47	6.27	16	4.38	19	3.40	0	0.00	0	0.00

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the literature, the notion of classroom incivility dates back to the establishment of academic institutions and has persisted until present day; although many scholars have debated what constitutes uncivil classroom behaviors, the limited research indicates that classroom incivility is on the rise in higher education settings (Baker et al., 2008; Boice, 1996; C. M. Clark, 2008; C. M. Clark & Springer, 2007). Echoing the literature, Ausbrooks et al. (2011) reported that, despite the apparent increase in classroom incivility in higher education, little is known about the severity and frequency of uncivil classroom behaviors in social work education. The cause for this lack of research could be attributed to the following:

> Acknowledging problems of classroom incivility in social work education poses the risk of considering how well social work educators are socializing students to the profession as well as raising questions about the appropriateness of students relative to professional identify and fit. (Ausbrooks et al., 2011, p. 256)

This chapter presents the purpose and guiding questions of the research, a summary of the design and procedures utilized in the investigation, a summary of the results and findings, and implications for practice, policy, and future research.

Purpose and Guiding Questions

The purpose of this research was to utilize a quantitative cross-sectional online survey to study social work students' perceptions of the severity and frequency of

classmate uncivil behavior in social work education. Three research questions guided the study:

1. Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?

2. Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?

3. Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?

Summary of the Results

Of the 713 social work students enrolled in the study university's social work program, 235 completed an online survey (32.9% response rate). After initial cleaning of the data, 203 viable surveys were used for demographic and program descriptive statistics; 64 surveys were eliminated because the respondents did not respond to all items in the severity and frequency portions of the survey. Thus, 171 surveys were used for analysis of the data. This section summarizes the demographic and program descriptive results, as well as the outcomes related to three research questions.

Demographic Descriptive Results

The two largest age groups in the sample were 26- to 30-year-olds (39.9%) and 21- to 25-year-olds (35.5%). Fairly similar to the university (39.7%) and Social Work Department (58.8%) populations, the largest proportion of the sample was Hispanic (47%). Also similar to the Social Work Department, in which 89.9% of the students were female, 91.1% of the sample students were female.

Program Descriptive Results

MSW students (78.3% of the sample) responded to the online survey. BSW students also responded; 51.0% reported Junior status and 47.1% reported Senior status. Most of the MSW students (93.5%) reported being enrolled on campus, and about half (44.71%) reported that they were in their final year of graduate study. Of the numerous MSW subject areas of interest choices that respondents were offered, the largest response was for Direct Practice (79.72%); students could check all that applied), followed by Culture and Diversity (64.09%) and Human Behavior and Social Environment (61.32%).

Reports of students' perception of MSW class syllabi mentioning classroom conduct were consistently low. The largest response group was in Human Behavior and Social Environment (41.23%); followed by Direct Practice (38.86%) and Culture and Diversity (34.12%). Reports of students' perception of MSW professors discussing classroom conduct in the classroom were also low. The largest response group was Direct Practice (45.5%); followed by Human Behavior and Social Environment (39.71%) and Culture and Diversity (34.45%). Lastly, an unexpected category, Policy Practice (32.06%), delivered a comparable percentage.

The final program descriptive questions asked respondents whether any of the 24 uncivil behaviors listed in the survey affected their ability to learn social work competency standards. The list of nine social work professional and ethical standards that was provided on the survey was developed from guidelines established by CSWE (2008) and respondents used a Likert-type scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. Although the response that appeared most often was *Somewhat*

Agree, it seems that a majority of the students reported some level of agreement regarding the effects of uncivil classroom behaviors on the ability to learn social work standards: Standard 1 (55.5%), Standard 2 (58.9%), Standard 3 (61.9%), Standard 4 (65.4%), Standard 5 (58%), Standard 6 (53.4%), Standard 7 (54.9%), Standard 8 (58%), and Standard 9 (57%).

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, *Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?* It appears that due to the unequal sample sizes in each of the demographic areas of age, gender, and ethnicity, no statistical differences were found. With regard to perceptions of overall severity of uncivil behaviors, no statistical differences were found between males (8.8%) and females (91.2%). With regarding to perceptions of overall severity, no statistical differences were found by age group: 18–20 years (5.84%), 21–25 years (46.78%), 26–30 years (32.75%), 31–35 years (39.77%), 36–40 years (9.36%), and 41+ years (5.26%). No statistical differences were found for perceptions of overall severity by ethnicity groups: Hispanic (43.27%), African American (4.09%), White (34.5%), Asian (10.53%), and multi-ethnic (5.85%).

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, *Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?* Using the same 24 uncivil behaviors, respondents were asked how severe and frequent they perceived these classroom behaviors to be. Overall perceived severity scores, within a possible range of 24 to 96, ranged from 25 to 81. A majority of the responses were in

the middle of the range of overall perceived severity, average score 55.96. This indicated that most students had some concern regarding the listed uncivil behavior items as a whole. The respondents perceived more severe uncivil behaviors as Very Serious, in the following order of severity: Physical Attack (92.2%), Threats (86.8%), Verbally Attacking (81.9%), Offensive Remarks (54.7%), and Sending Inappropriate E-mail (54.4%). At the other end of the scale, the five behaviors perceived as least serious were Wearing Hats (93.6%), Eating (91%), Packing and Unpacking (81.3%), Texting on Cell (39.7%), and Reading Newspaper (35.9%). Also notable as not severe were Inappropriate Dress (34.5%), Arriving Late and Leaving Early (31.6%), and Use of Computer (31.5).

Frequency tests were performed on the responses regarding perceptions of frequency of uncivil behaviors. The majority of responses were essentially bipolar on the Likert-type scale; participants responded with either *very frequent* or *infrequent* regarding their perceptions of the frequency of uncivil behaviors in the classroom. The five most frequently perceived uncivil classroom behaviors were Eating (79.3%), Texting on Cell (61.4%), Arriving Late and Leaving Early (50.7%), Use of Computer (48.3%), and Dominating Class Discussion (35.5%). The five least frequently perceived uncivil behaviors were Physical Attacks (95.1%), Threats (93.1%), Verbally Attacking (90.1%), Sending Inappropriate E-mails (78.7%), and Reading Newspaper (78.7%). Also notable as infrequent was Offensive Remarks (68.3%).

A correlation analysis was performed to measure the association between perceptions of severity and perceptions of frequency of uncivil classroom behaviors. The one perception of frequency behaviors that appeared to indicate moderate or

strong statistically significant relationship was Sending Inappropriate E-mails with the following severity variables: Use of Computer, Arrive Late and Leave Early, Verbal Attacking, Sleeping, Inappropriate E-mail, Threats, Talk on Cell, Text on Cell, Cell Ring, Sarcasm, Student Talking, Reading Newspaper, Interrupting, and Overall Severity. The strongest negative correlation was between the perception of severity of Talking on Cell and the perception of frequency of Sending Inappropriate E-mail (-.465). A strong negative correlation appeared between perception of Overall Severity and perception of frequency of Sending Inappropriate Emails (-.461). A strong negative correlation appeared between perception of severity of Letting Cell Ring and perception of frequency of Inappropriate E-mail (-.415). Although the results indicated that negative relationships existed between perceived severity of uncivil behaviors and frequency of the uncivil behaviors, meaning that as one variable increases, the other decreases, it could not be determined which variable was increasing or decreasing; only that an inverse relationship existed.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, *Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?* The researcher used a recoded age variable against the perception of severity and frequency data to conduct a Chi square (association) and correlational (relationship) analysis. A Spearman's correlational analysis was performed to determine whether a relationship existed between age recoded and the perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil behaviors. There appeared to be no statistical significant relationships in this analysis.

Furthermore, the Chi square analysis showed no significant association between age recoded and the majority of perceptions of severity variables; however, two significant results emerged. Age recoded was statistically significantly associated with perception of severity of Use of Computer (p = .001) and with perception of severity of Wearing Hats (p = .032).

Utilizing a Chi square test between age recoded and the perception of frequency of uncivil behaviors, a majority of the results indicated no significant association. However, a few notable associations surfaced between age recoded and perceptions of frequency of (a) Dominating Class Discussion (p = .016), (b) Sarcasm (p = .021), (c) Interrupting (p = .004), and (d) Student Talking (p = .023).

Discussion of Findings

This study compared and contrasted students' perception of severity and frequency of classroom incivility in social work education. Although social work field internship is the signature pedagogy and an important component of this direct practice discipline, this study began investigating the issue of student perception of uncivil behaviors by focusing on the classroom setting. It is within the classroom setting where students being to develop the foundation knowledge of social work practice, initially introduced to the standards, ethics and expectations of the profession, and start the socialization of professional social work character and identity.

Although the results of this study are in agreement with those reported by Ausbrooks et al. (2011) and may be useful in further understanding student perception of classroom incivility in social work education, the study is limited in the capacity to

generalize results to the greater field of social work education. A significant difference of this study from Ausbrooks et al. (2011) is that the current sample was representative of the social work department with a response rate of 32%. However, these participants in this study seemed to have a larger percentage of Caucasian students (30%), seventeen percent higher than the number of Caucasian students in the department (13%) where the population was sampled. Also, the higher than normal response rate in this study may have been attributed to the raffle incentive offered for completing the survey.

Program Descriptives

According to the results, 79.72% of both BSW and MSW students in the sample identified Direct Practice as their highest area of interest (being invited to check all that applied), followed by Culture and Diversity (64.09%) and Human Behavior and Social Environment (61.32%). Being that participants in this study are still students learning about the profession, it could be argued that the lack of significant results in this study could be a reflection of where students are in the process of learning about how their conduct in the classroom aligns with the standards and ethics of the social work profession. It may be helpful to conduct a longitudinal study to see if the perceptions of these students change over time. At what point do students being to make the connection between personal conduct and professional expectations? Do perceptions of uncivil behaviors change over time? If so, to what degree?

Participants were also asked to report their perception of classroom conduct addressed in MSW course syllabi. The following subject areas were reported as the

top three courses perceived to that address classroom conduct in MSW course syllabi: Human Behavior and Social Environment (41.23%), Direct Practice (38.86%), and Culture and Diversity (34.12%). According to Paik and Broedel-Zaugg (2006), students seldom read a syllabus or program handbook on their own. While the syllabus may be considered the social contract of the classroom, social exchange theory may contend that students do not see a benefit in reading through the entire syllabus. One explanation for this failure is that students may view education through a consumeristic lens. Lippman et al. (2009) stated that the culture of youth rejects the traditional student role and sees the process of education from a self-centered perspective as a means to an end. Rather than view the educational process as an opportunity to learn, the youth culture may view the process as an economic exchange (Lippman et al., 2009).

The study's sample responded with their perception of subject areas that MSW professors addressed classroom conduct more often in the following curricular areas: Direct Practice (45.5%) and Human Behavior and Social Environment (39.71%); followed by Culture and Diversity (34.45%) and Policy Practice (32.06%). There appeared to be slight increases in the subject areas listed above in contrast to the previous question. A reason for this behavior may be attributed to parenting of the millennial generation (Zastrow, 2007), whereby students are accustomed to being coddled by their parents. Rather than seeing education as a responsibility, it is possible that students in the current generation see education as a right, potentially exhibiting slight tendencies of entitlement and narcissism (Twenge et al., 2008). Social Exchange theorist may suggest that these students continue to perceive a

reward for not reading syllabi (Meeker, 1971), instead expecting that all course information, material, assignments, and expectations will be offered to them explicitly (Trout, 1998). According to the literature, this behavior may be rooted in the way these students were trained at home and in the K–12 classroom (Twenge, 2006; Zastrow, 2007). Their experiences may have heightened their sense of entitlement and diminished their sense of academic responsibility (Nordstrom et al., 2009). If this is indeed a generational shift in the way students view the higher educational process, what classroom management techniques would be helpful for professors to use to address this interaction? How can administration support faculty in developing a better tools and understanding of this potential generational shift in attitude?

According to the literature, evidence suggests that classroom incivility plays a crucial role in diminishing the teaching-learning environment and may lead to heightened stress and anxiety for students (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009). Additionally, uncivil behaviors do not align with the social contract of the classroom environment and may affect the quality of instruction and learning (Feldman, 2001; Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). The final program descriptive questions asked participants whether any of the 24 uncivil behaviors listed in the online survey affected their ability to learn social work standards. The list of nine social work professional and ethical standards was developed from guidelines established by the CSWE (2008). The respondents were provided a Likert-type scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. Although the most frequent response was *Somewhat Agree*, a majority of the sample reported some level of agreement with regard to the impact of uncivil classroom behaviors on ability to learn social work professional standards. The results for each

standard category were as follows: Standard 1 (55.5%), Standard 2 (58.9%), Standard 3 (61.9%), Standard 4 (65.4%), Standard 5 (58%), Standard 6 (53.4%), Standard 7 (54.9%), Standard 8 (58%), and Standard 9 (57%). Social Exchange Theory may suggest that, students may be rewarded for accepting uncivil behavior and may have experienced negative consequences from their peers for speaking up (Nordstrom et al., 2009). Ultimately, these results indicate that further research may be needed to investigate how classroom incivility affects learning in social work education.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, *Are there differences based on demographics in the way social work students perceive severity of uncivil classmate behaviors?* The data revealed no differences within age, gender, and ethnicity. The following discussion explores how a result of no significance relates to the literature and theoretical framework, and speculates regarding this sample's perception of classroom incivility. Even though a discussion concerning possible explanations is purely conjecture, it may be beneficial to inform future research of student perceptions of classroom incivility in social work education. It may be helpful to note that 75% of respondents were under 30 years of age and 25% of respondents were undergraduate students; these facts may have been a contributing factor in regard to the results of this study.

According to the literature, perspectives, attitudes, values, and behaviors differ between Baby Boomers, Gen Y, and Millennials (Twenge, 2009), especially when it comes to the perception of personal rights vs responsibilities as citizens (National Association of Secretaries of State, 1998). The question is, do social work students in

this study carry this perspective into their roles as academia citizens? Rather than view their role as responsible students, where they perceive uncivil behaviors as personal accountability, these students may perceive their presence in a classroom setting as a right (National Association of Secretaries of State, 1998).

Another explanation for this generational shift in perception concerning uncivil behaviors, according to Zastrow (2007), may be the way in which millennial students were parented. Students in this generation may have been instilled a heightened sense of self-importance and praised by their parents for mediocre performance. This attitude of entitlement may have been carried into the academic setting, leading to a skewed sense of appropriate conduct. Students who may have been coddled by their parents may expect this entitled treatment in the classroom. This attitude may have resulted in an overinflated sense of self and a lack of interest in how their behavior or the behavior of others affected the classroom environment. This possible explanation may be in line with Social Exchange Theory that contends students will continue to behave that yield rewards and avoid behaviors that do not.

This entitled attitude may also have had an effect on the way students perceived the purpose of education. According to Lippmann et al. (2009), education used to be viewed as the pursuit of knowledge, but current students have shifted their mentality toward a more consumeristic perspective of the purpose of education. No longer is academia a place of building knowledge; it is now a means to acquire a higher-paying job for a better quality of life.

Finally, an added characteristic to consider is the evolution of technology in academia. Oblinger (2003) reported that part of the increase in observable classroom

incivility is rooted in the introduction of advanced technology in the classroom. Students have access to numerous devices that keep them connected to the world outside the classroom walls, and they may perceive the use of this technology as the new norm. The current generation of students seems to value staying connected by use of technology such as cell phones, tablets, and laptops, as well as programs such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. It appears that the social etiquette for use of technology in the classroom may still be evolving.

One way to summarize this discussion may be to look at the increase in classroom incivility from a larger overall generational culture shift, rather than from a gender, age, or ethnicity perspective. As the results indicated, there was no significant difference among these demographic variables. I wonder if this could mean that certain less severe uncivil behaviors in the classroom are the new accepted norm? Does this behavior feed a need for students from this generation? How do we as academic professionals help initiate a constructive dialog to further support students in their developmental process?

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, *Is there a relationship between social work students' perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classmate behaviors?* With a possible range of 24 to 96 on the severity scale, the overall perceived severity scores ranged from 25 to 81, with an average of 55.96. Although participants appeared to have some concerns about all 24 uncivil behaviors listed on the survey, only the least severe behaviors were identified as *not serious* and the most extreme behaviors were identified as *very serious*.

As noted in the literature, classroom incivility is a very subjective concept; each generation classifies what constitutes uncivil behaviors (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Cohon, 1998). Two items that were ranked least serious were wearing hats and reading newspapers. It is possible that wearing a hat indoors or dressing inappropriately was unthinkable half a century ago, and maybe, before the dawn of the technological age, reading a newspaper was commonplace but also seen as inappropriate in a classroom (Twenge, 2009). However, participants in this study also perceived uncivil behaviors such as eating, packing and unpacking, or arriving late or leaving early as not serious. According to Meeker (1971), SET would suggest that these are socially acceptable behaviors that continue to be rewarded. These behaviors may seem to reap the reward of thwarting hunger, signaling to a professor through meta-communication that the end of class time is near, or the entitlement of coming or going as one pleases; or perhaps many of these students are working hard to manage a job, family and school commitment amongst dealing with Los Angeles traffic.

Also, with the introduction of technology, a new set of appropriate etiquette is emerging in the higher education traditional classroom. According to the findings, 39.7% of respondents identified Texting on Cell during class time and 31.5% reported Use of a Computer for non-related classroom activities as not serious. These finding may view the use of technology as a form of multitasking and staying connected as positive activities.

Taking into account that students in this study are still in the evolving stage of their professional development, discussing how these behaviors could affect their readiness or fit to social work field internship or post-graduate professional practice

may be premature; however, these results do raise further questions. With field education accounting for 20% of the required curriculum in social work education, I do wonder what influence does preparation or participation in field internship have on the professional development of social work students? Also, what influence does graduation from a social work program have on perceptions of uncivil behaviors? Finally, would a longitudinal study that follows students from the beginning of a social work program, through graduation and beyond, be helpful in understanding how perception of uncivil behaviors evolve?

With regard to the frequency of perceived uncivil behaviors, with the introduction of computers, tablets, and cell phones, much of the literature that was once relegated to paper print is now created, distributed, and read on electronic screens. The high percentage of the reported low frequency of reading a newspaper (78.7%) may be attributed to an activity that has become rarer in society, as well as in the classroom. However, the top four perceived infrequent uncivil behaviors were Physical Attacks (95.1%), Threats (93.1%), Verbally Attacking (90.1%), and Sending Inappropriate E-mails (78.7%). SET might suggest that potential negative consequences of these behaviors in the classroom, ranging from academic discipline to expulsion, may have an influence on a decrease of their frequency. Similarly, students in this sample perceived the following uncivil behaviors as occurring highly frequently: Eating (79.3%), Texting on Cell (61.4%), Arriving Late and Leaving Early (50.7%), and Use of Computer (48.3%). Again, these behaviors may have more to do with how these behaviors feed a need rather than a direct intention of malicious intent. For example, the way a full-time and a part-time program is structured, as well

as, the type of students who typically attend each program, I also wonder, if a larger quantitative study looked to see if there is a difference between full-time and part-time students' perception of classroom incivility?

A correlation analysis was performed to measure the association between perceptions of severity and perceptions of frequency of uncivil classroom behaviors. Although the results indicated that negative relationships existed between perceived severity of uncivil behaviors and frequency of the uncivil behaviors, meaning that as one variable increases, the other decreases, it could not be determined which variable was increasing or decreasing; only that an inverse relationship existed.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, *Is there a generational relationship between social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behavior and age?* The researcher used an age recoded variable against perceptions of severity and frequency of uncivil classroom behaviors. With regard to the severity of wearing hats in class, there appeared to be a significant relationship. This could mean that older students may perceive using a computer or wearing a hat during class time as more severe than younger students. The literature may explain that those categorized as the millennium generation may see wearing hats as less severe due to their experiences in K–12 education (Owen, 1995) or how they were parented (Self, 2009). Similarly, there appeared to be a significant relationship between the perception of Use of Computer and the recoded age groups. According to the literature, with the flood of technology used by students in the past 10 years, the etiquette and appropriate social norms for

use of technology in the classroom are still being shaped (Oblinger, 2003; Weiler, 2005).

The results produced by the Chi square test between recoded age groups and perceptions of the frequency of uncivil behaviors indicated further relationships. Statistical significance was found between the age-recoded groups and Dominating Class Discussion, Sarcasm, Interrupting, and Students Talking. Utilizing a Chi square test between age recoded and the perception of frequency of uncivil behaviors, a majority of the results indicated no significant association. This may mean that older students may perceive dominating class discussion, sarcasm, interrupting, and students talking during class more frequently than younger students. Also, a common theme of these uncivil behaviors seems to be a sense of entitlement. Students may feel that they have the right to dominate the classroom discussion, be sarcastic, interrupt faculty or classmates, or talk to classmates whenever they wish. Again, possible explanations provided by the literature for increased perceptions of the frequency of these behaviors may be what students learned in K–12 education, how they were parented, or an overall perspective of entitlement.

Implications

Higher education plays an important role in shaping students' social and civic sense of responsibility (Boyer, 1990). A social work program is an opportunity for students to build academic knowledge that applies to professional practice through social interactions (Kirk, 2005). The literature and the results of this study indicate that classroom incivility is perceived as an issue in social work education.

In reflection of the findings, it seems that the participants differed in their perceptions of severity of uncivil classmate behaviors. The findings echo the literature that indicated uncertainty as to what constitutes classroom incivility (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Cohon, 1998). This ambiguity may be important to address in working with developing social work students in the classroom setting. An implication for social work education practice is reflected in the effects of uncivil behaviors on a student's ability to learn crucial social work standards and ethics. A majority of the sample reported that classroom incivility affected their ability to learn core social work professional competencies. One explanation for this would be the role of emotions in social exchange (Lawler &Thye, 1999). Along with rewards and costs, SET suggests five basic assumptions:

> Exchange produces emotions ranging from positive to negative; these emotions are internal stimuli; individuals seek to avoid negative stimuli and incur positive stimuli; the global emotions trigger cognitive efforts to understand their cause resulting in specific emotions; and individuals explain and interpret their global feelings in relationship to the group or network by connecting feelings to experience. (Lawler, 2001, p. 322)

According to Lawler (2001), emotions are an involuntary reaction to outside stimuli, universal in nature, and globally felt by everyone. This universal involuntary reaction focuses brain power away from cognitive functioning to address the emotional response. Hence, Lawler (2001) contends that emotional response diminishes cognitive processing and capacity. Echoing this perspective, C. M. Clark (2008) stated that uncivil classroom behaviors may stimulate an emotional response, consequently affecting a student's ability to learn. Again, the implication for social work education seems to be that the presence of classroom incivility takes away from learning professional standards and ethics. I wonder if future studies could be

conducted to better understand the effects of classroom incivility of social work education environments? Consequently, being that social work is a direct practice discipline, does further study on classroom incivility in social work education "poses the risk of considering how well social work educators are socializing students to the profession" and does further investigation raise "questions about the appropriateness of students relative to professional identify and fit" (Ausbrooks et al., 2011, p. 256).

Recommendations

Policy

According to Bruffee (1999), collaboration is a powerful tool in academic settings. Policy makers can utilize collaboration from a macro to micro level. At a macro level, I encourage university administrators to review the quality and quantity of student information regarding appropriate conduct that is disseminated to incoming and current students, to examine the methods for communicating appropriate student conduct (e.g., orientation, training, open forums) and collaborate with both campus and community partners in development of orientations, trainings and open forums to initiate a dialog on this topic. From a mezzo perspective, due to the increasing size of social work programs and the expansion of online social work education, I encourage social work department policy makers to collaborate with university officials to align the information, and potentially the method used to communicate, concerning appropriate student conduct on campus and in the classroom. Furthermore, I encourage policy makers at the department level to collaborate with faculty and staff to gather input on how to define, address, and standardize classroom management techniques and department policies regarding classroom incivility. Moreover, I

encourage department administrators to collaborate with faculty in creating appropriate professional development trainings to assist faculty to increase their classroom management knowledge and skills. One suggestion may be to create a committee that collaborates between academic and field education faculty to focus on how classroom conduct and internship conduct are addressed, and links with standards and ethics of the social work profession.

On a micro level, I encourage social work department policy makers to collaborate with student government and student social work groups to create opportunities to discuss appropriate classroom and professional conduct through in-person or virtual faculty-led town hall meetings or special presentations by industry-leading guest speakers (e.g., social work professionals, community partners, representatives from NASW). Ultimately, these collaborations should focus on how classroom conduct specifically links to social work standards and ethics relating to social work field internship and post-graduation employment.

Practice

From a practice perspective, I encourage faculty to establish classroom norms at the beginning of the course by emphasizing the importance of classroom conduct when reviewing the course syllabi. Furthermore, I encourage faculty to establish an interactive learning environment, create a solution-focused forum to establish positive dialog, and assist students in understanding the link between classroom and professional conduct. I also encourage faculty to communicate course rules and expectations to address uncivil behaviors that distract from the learning process; possibly having students sign a commitment to civility code at the beginning of each

academic and field related course. Additionally, I encourage to faculty members to model appropriate confronting behaviors as a necessary skill needed by social workers and refer back to the signed code to help students refocus back to a productive learning environment. Other modeling behaviors encompass setting a positive tone of the classroom environment, arriving early, being prepared, silencing cell phones, dressing appropriately, limiting sarcastic remarks, and addressing students in a courteous and respectful manner (C. M. Clark & Springer, 2010). As faculty model appropriate professional behavior, students learn not only by what they are told but by what they see. According to SET, Meeker (1971) suggested that "people choose things or behavior they value more than they choose things they do not value" (p. 489). Luparell (2008) built on this perspective by highlighting that behaviors are a reflection of an individual's values.

According to the literature, students may begin to take responsibility and ownership of formal classroom etiquette, diminish entitled and self-centered attitudes, and cultivate "subjective norms" that align with professional standards and ethics (Nordstrom et al., 2009, p. 24). There appears to be many ways that faculty can utilize class time to addressing appropriate conduct. The following are suggested classroom interventions that may assist with this process. Students may be encouraged to given oral presentations in class, hold small group discussions, watch a video, or discuss a vignette that addresses class norms and expectations. These student-focused techniques may help to build subjective norms that regulate less-severe uncivil behaviors through faculty-guided peer interactions. A student's ability to accept or reject social norms in an academic setting may be centered on his/her perception of

reward or cost benefit (Meeker, 1971). Ultimately, positive collaboration, communication, and modeling may build a classroom culture and values that reward the behavior of respecting others.

Future Research

The results of this research and the literature (Boice, 1996; Feldman, 2001; Morrissette, 2001; Schneider, 1998) show the problematic issues related to classroom incivility in higher education settings. This research demonstrated the uncertainty of social work students' perceptions of what constitutes classroom incivility. Due to the ambiguity of uncivil classmate behaviors , replication of this research with a larger sample size might yield more significant results. Also, Due to the unequal representation of males in the social work industry, it may be difficult to compare gender differences. However, with a larger sample size, a future study could focus on comparing perceptions on the basis of age and ethnicity of social work students. By including numerous programs, comparisons of public, private, and non-secular MSW programs could be made.

Additionally, it may be helpful to look at differences between bachelor and master of social work students. I wonder how much of this behavior is encouraged during the bachelor programs and by the time you get to the master's program, it just seems normative? Are there generational differences between younger and older students' perception of classroom incivility?

Social Exchange Theory suggests that uncivil behavior affects learning of social work standards, yet this was not fully investigated in this study. According to descriptive data collected in the study, a majority of the sample indicated that uncivil

behaviors listed in the survey affected the ability to learn core competencies outlined by the CSWE (2008). Does classroom incivility affect learning in social work education? Is there a gender, ethnic, or age differences in the way classroom incivility affects learning? The connection between learning and classroom incivility is an important topic for future research.

Another interesting study would be to look at this same population from a critical race perspective. Although this current study focused on generational and age differences, it may be interesting to look at students' perception of classroom incivility from other social identities such as a multi-culturalism and gender. Are there differences in the way students with various ethnic or multi-ethnic backgrounds perceive uncivil behaviors? Are environment, upbringing, or circumstance potential factors that influence student perception of classroom incivility? Does gender influence a student's perception of uncivil classroom behaviors?

Although the scale utilized in this study had strong reliability, with a Cronbach Alpha score of .88, the scale may need to be updated to reflect more current behaviors relevant to this generation. The results from this study and the literature indicated that technology was becoming an issue in classroom settings (Morrissette, 2001; Seidman, 2005). Examples of more current behaviors may relate to devices such as: tablets, Apple watch, or google glasses. Other examples of more current behaviors may deal with the use of social media: Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. A qualitative study asking students to describe what they see in the classroom with regard to uncivil behaviors would be beneficial in generating a more applicable list for future quantitative study.

Another interesting study would be to look at differences between part-time and full-time student perception of classroom incivility. Part-time students tend to be individuals who juggle multiple responsibilities such as work or parenting. Are there differences between part-time or full-time students' perception of uncivil classroom behaviors? Keeping with the theme of part-time students, it may also be interesting to see if there are differences in students' perception of on-line education versus traditional campus environments?

Beck (2009) conducted a triangulated mixed method study that researched the perceptions of students, academic faculty, and agency field instructors in nursing education. It may be interesting to replicate this method with social work education to not only focus on classroom settings, but explain and explore the issue of incivility in field internship as well. Also, building on this study, it may be helpful to expand this research into a longitudinal study that follows students through field internship, and beyond, into post-graduation employment to see if perception of uncivil behaviors changes over time.

Chapter Summary

According to Bjorklund and Rehling (2009), uncivil behaviors in classrooms play an important part in weakening the teaching-learning environment and may ultimately create heightened anxiety and stress for students. Classroom incivility does not align with the social contract of an academic environment and consequently leads to a diminished quality of instruction and learning (Feldman, 2001; Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). This study investigated social work students' perceptions of uncivil classmate behaviors in social work education. Although this research built on the

limited information about classroom incivility in higher education, it did not include classroom management techniques, as did Ausbrooks et al. (2011). Although some statistical correlations and relationships appeared to surface, no definite conclusions could be made based on the results. Unfortunately, this research did not clarify the issue of classroom incivility, but it generated more questions as to the possible causes, consequences, and effects of uncivil behaviors in social work education. Classroom incivility does not align with the standards and ethics established by the field of social work. The transition from college student to professional may be difficult; social work programs play an integral role in helping students to make the transition to the social work profession. Future research may offer more information to assist social work programs in understanding and managing classroom incivility.

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