THE RISE OF WILDFIRES IN ACADEMIA: A DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENT-INITIATED CONFRONTATION AS EXPERIENCED BY SOCIAL WORK EDUCATORS

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, there is mounting evidence to suggest that both within and outside of the classroom, post-secondary educators are the objects of increasingly concerning behaviours initiated by students, which range from incidental rude and disruptive behaviours to more intentional ongoing hostile, aggressive, and even violent behaviours. These student-initiated confrontations (SICs) can pose personal and professional challenges for post-secondary educators and are often exacerbated by a lack of guidance and support by institutional administration, as well as inadequate training with respect to SIC and classroom management. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand the essence of the experience of SIC among post-secondary social work educators across Canada, and to discover what they identified as potential mitigators in and outside the classroom environment. In addition, this study was an examination of the institutional response to SIC. Particular interest was paid to the implications of SIC for social work education. Fifteen post-secondary social work educators were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Interview data were analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological approach. Anti-oppressive practice and intersectionality were the theoretical underpinnings of this study, as they helped to understand the connections between power and SIC. Findings suggest that SIC is a present and serious problem within schools of social work that has implications for social work educators, social work education, and ultimately, the profession itself. Unlike previous studies that positioned SIC as occurring with a student-educator dyadic relationship, this study suggests SIC is a triadic phenomenon. Much like a fire that has three elements (heat, fuel, oxygen), SIC also consists of three elements: student behaviours, educator vulnerabilities, and institutional leadership's response and failure to respond. It is the interplay between these three elements that either fuel or extinguish the SIC fire. Findings specific to social work education suggest that increased mandatory training for educators on

classroom management and SIC, as well as increased support for educators by institutional leadership are important in preventing and mitigating this phenomenon.

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They say it takes a village to raise a child. So too, does it take a village to "raise" a doctoral student. The doctoral process is not an easy one. Although there are many who were integral in supporting me in this journey, there are a few that I would like to acknowledge specifically.

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Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents vii

List of Tables xiii

List of Figures xiv

List of Appendices xv

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview 1

Defining SICs 3

Why Research on SICs Is Important 4

Purpose of My Substantive Area of Research and Its Relevance to Social Work 6

Research Question 9

Organization of Chapters 9

Chapter 2: Literature Review 10

Theoretical Underpinnings: Understanding the Connections Between Power and SIC 11

Shifts in the Student-Educator Dynamic 12

Education as an Oppressive System for Students 13

Educators as Targets of Oppression 14

Educator Vulnerabilities as Targets of SIC 15

Empirical Underpinnings: A Review of SIC Research 19

Nature and Prevalence of SIC in Post-Secondary Education 19

ACPH 19

ETB 21

Student Incivility 23

SIC in Post-Secondary Social Work Education 25

Effects of SIC on Educators 27
Personal Effects of SIC on Educators 28
Professional Effects of SIC on Educators 29
Reporting Situations Involving SIC 30
Contributing Factors to SIC 32
Societal Factors 32
Neoliberalism in Higher Education 32
Technology 33
K–12 Factors Contributing to SIC 35
Student Factors Contributing to SIC 36
Mental Health 36
Narcissism 39
Educator Factors Contributing to SIC 40
Training and Education Regarding SIC 41
What Do We Know About SIC Training Based on K–12 Teacher Training and Educational Programs? 41
Post-Secondary Education and Training Related to SIC 43
Current SIC Prevention and Mitigation Strategies 44
Prevention Strategies 44
Mitigation Strategies 48
Inconsistencies and Gaps in the Current Literature 50
Inconsistencies in Terminology 50
Methodological Inconsistencies 51
Gaps in the Current Literature 52
Chapter Summary 54

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology 55
Research Design and Method 55
Qualitative Research Approach Rationale 55
Descriptive Phenomenology 57
Colaizzi's Seven-Step Method 59
Researcher Positionality 59
Theoretical Orientation: Power and Oppression as a Factor in SIC 63
AOP 64
Intersectionality 65
Methodology 67
Sampling and Recruitment Strategies: Sample Size 67
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria 67
Participant Recruitment 68
Data Collection 70
Data Analysis 72
Research Rigour 74
Credibility 75
Transferability 76
Dependability and Confirmability 76
Ethical Considerations With Human Participants 76
Informed Consent 77
Confidentiality 78
Potential Benefits and Risks of Harm 79
Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data 80
Chapter Summary 80

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings 81
Participant Demographics 83
Themes Regarding What SIC Is 84
Participant Definitions of SIC 85
How Is SIC Manifested? 86
Attacks on Personal and Professional Character 86
Threats 87
Physical Violence 88
Less Intense Uncivil Student Behaviour 88
When Is SIC Manifested? 89
Student Discontent Around Grades 89
Student Discontent With Assignment Expectations 90
Student Dissatisfaction and Discontent With Course Content 93
Lack of Student Accountability 94
Factors Contributing to SIC 96
Consumerism 96
Student Mental Health and Coping 98
Lack of Preparedness and SIC 100
The Media, Social Media, and Social Climate as Contributing Factors 102
Educator Identities as Factors Contributing Towards SIC 104
Social Work–Specific Contributors to SIC 107
Impacts of SIC 109
Stress, Fear, and Anxiety Regarding Future Incidents of SIC 109
Insecurities and Doubts About Teaching Abilities 110
Impacts on Teaching and the Classroom Environment 111

Concerns About Future Academic Employment 113
Should I Stay or Should I Go? 114
Concerns About Reputation and the Community 116
Themes Regarding Institutional Leadership Responses and Responsibilities 116
Participant Experiences of Not Reporting 117
Participants Experiences of Reporting 119
Lack of Support 119
Support With No Action 121
Support and Action 122
Implications of Institutional Leadership's Responses for Participants 123
It's Just Part of the Job… 123
Capitulating to Student Demands 124
Themes Regarding Preparation and Training 126
Prior Training and Education Related to Teaching Pedagogy and SIC 126
Identified Training and Educational Needs Regarding SIC Mitigation 130
Additional Identified Needs to Mitigate SIC 132
Current Teaching Practices and Prevention and Mitigation Strategies 134
Not Taking SIC Personally 134
Accessibility 135
Setting Expectations and Guidelines 139
Effectiveness of Strategies to Prevent and Mitigate SIC 142
Themes Regarding Implications of SIC for Social Work 143
Concerns for Students as Future Social Workers 143
Concerns for the Future of Social Work Education 144
Concerns for the Future of Social Work as a Profession 148

Chapter Summary 149
Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Discussion 151
SIC as a Serious Phenomenon 151
SIC Behaviours and the Significant Impacts 151
Serious Implications for the Social Work Profession 155
The Essence of SIC: A Triadic Phenomenon 158
The Essence of SIC Is Like a Fire 158
Students as Heat in the SIC Fire Triad 159
Educators as Fuel in the SIC Fire Triad 164
Educator Vulnerabilities 164
Social Work Educator as an Identity 166
Educators and Lack of Training 167
Institutional Leadership as Oxygen in the SIC Fire Triad 169
Strengthening and Spreading the Fire: Power and Fear as Contributors 172
Students, Fear, and Power 173
Educators, Fear, and Power 177
Leadership, Fear, and Power 182
Chapter Summary 188
Chapter 6: Conclusion 189
Summary of Key Findings 189
Contributions of This Study to Social Work Research and the Overall Profession 191
Limitations and Areas for Further Study 193
Concluding Thoughts 196
References 199

List of Tables

Table 1 List of Acronyms and Associated Terms 10

Table 2 Findings Themes and Sub-Themes 82

Table 3 Participant Demographics 84

Table 4 Fear and Power Table 172

List of Figures

Figure 1: Colaizzi's Seven-Step Method 73

Figure 2: Fire Triangle 159

Figure 3: Student-Initiated Confrontation Fire Triangle 159

List of Appendices

Appendix A : Recruitment Flyer 212

Appendix B : Invitation to Participate 213

Appendix C : Informed Consent Form 214

Appendix D : Interview Guide 219

Appendix E : Participant Data Analysis Chart Template 222

Appendix F : ICEHR Approval 223

Appendix G : Renewal of ICEHR Approval 224

Appendix H : Oath of Confidentiality for Transcribers 225

Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

> I don't like the way you graded my paper. If you don't change it to a higher grade, I'm going to go to the dean and also tell the media what an awful instructor you are!
>
> - Student

The desire to inspire a new generation of students, a passion for a given subject area, and the opportunity to be a positive influence in their students' lives are often significant drivers for educators to enter the social work field. An assumption is frequently made that knowledge, professional experience, and subject-matter expertise are the primary, if not only requirements for teaching effectiveness in higher education. There is an additional assumption that students will be less likely to direct disruptive and confrontational behaviours towards educators by virtue of their age and life stage, interest and commitment in attaining advanced knowledge, and the voluntary nature of post-secondary education. As such, the aforementioned example of a threatening statement is not one that many new educators, particularly those in the post-secondary academic sector expect to hear from students.

Social work education is founded upon core social work values and ethics and as such, there is an expectation that social work educators and students alike will consistently adhere to these values and ethics, both in the field and within the academic setting. Hostile, aggressive, and even violent confrontational behaviours initiated by social work students may be considered even more inconceivable than when these same behaviours are initiated by students enrolled in other disciplines. As a result, educators may not anticipate a need to be concerned about such behaviours and thus, they may be ill prepared to understand and mitigate these types of situations. According to Holton (1999), "conflict in the classroom has been a part of education since its inception" (p. 11). However, over the past 30 years, there is mounting evidence to suggest that post-secondary educators, including social work educators, are increasingly experiencing situations involving behavioural issues initiated by students (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Christensen et al., 2020; May & Tenzek, 2018; Lampman et al., 2009; McKay et al., 2008; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Wahler & Badger, 2016). These

behaviours can range from incidental disruptive behaviours to more intentional, and at times, hostile, aggressive, and threatening confrontations with the potential implication to challenge the educator's authority and professional credibility as well as their personal character both in and outside the classroom environment (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Christensen et al., 2020; May & Tenzek, 2018; Lampman et al., 2009; McKay et al., 2008; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Wahler & Badger, 2016).

Existing literature uses various terms to identify the aforementioned behaviours and phenomenon including academic contrapower harassment (ACPH; Christensen et al., 2020; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; Taylor et al., 2017), student incivility (Alberts et al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boice, 1996; Wahler & Badger, 2016; Sterner et al., 2015), educator-targeted bullying (ETB; de Wet, 2010; de Wet & Jacobs, 2006; May & Tenzek, 2018), student bullying of teachers (Pervin & Turner, 1998), and teacher-targeted bullying (Terry, 1998). These are not mutually exclusive terms. Each of these terms denote a range of student-initiated behaviours, but there is significant overlap amongst them. There is also a range with respect to how the behaviours are perceived and experienced by educators. Some educators may have trouble aligning their experiences with their knowledge and understandings of the specific terms, whereas others may be unaware that their experiences could even be considered as falling within the parameters of an existing phenomenon. For example, one educator may view a situation as an act of bullying by a student, another may perceive it as a racist or discriminatory act, and another may view the situation as a mere frustration or annoyance. Due to the variety of terms used in the literature, and the range of student behaviours and educator experiences they represent, it was important to establish a singular term that could be used within this study that could accurately and holistically represent the phenomenon. Although the various terms used in the literature may possess unique elements, they all encompass facets of student-initiated confrontation (SIC), and as such, this is the term used in my research study.

Defining SICs

The challenge in creating a new term was ensuring that it encompassed the breadth of actions and behaviours represented by the various other terms used in the literature. Whereas some of the terms focused on more discourteous and disruptive behaviours (e.g., student incivility) the term SIC represents a continuum of behaviours ranging from minor disruptive behaviours, such as the aforementioned incivility, to more intentional, aggressive, and threatening behaviours. SIC includes both verbal and non-verbal behaviours and can occur both in and outside the classroom environment. Despite the range, the characteristic feature of all SIC behaviours is the inherent challenge they pose to the educator's professional authority, expertise, personal character and even their sense of self. Specifically, SIC includes behaviours such as hostile or threatening verbalizations or written communication, following or stalking an educator, damage to the educator's property, or physical violence against the educator and/or someone in the educator's life. Other examples of SIC include hostile or aggressive demands for higher marks (even if the educator does not deem the student's performance to merit that increase), demands (versus requests) for extensions on assignments often without a clearly articulated rationale or acknowledgement of personal responsibility for needing the extension in the first place, and antagonistic responses to verbal or written feedback on classroom and/or assignment performance. Finally, SIC can include making threats. Students may threaten to appeal to those in leadership positions, such as the dean and higher-level administrators, who can then overrule or discipline the educator. They may also threaten to take the matter to the media, including social media, if their demands are not met.

Questioning marks, educator feedback, or course content are not inherently problematic behaviours, and in some cases, need to be encouraged. Students should have the option and prerogative to inquire as to why they received specific feedback regarding grades or other types of academic performance. In addition, the ability for students to grapple with various concepts and engage in lively debates and discussions with their classmates and

educators can be advantageous to the learning process. It should be noted that inquiring about academic performance or engaging in lively debates is not SIC. SIC occurs when students do not approach educators collegially or inquisitively to engage in a dialogue regarding their concerns and instead, they direct a hostile, demanding, and sometimes threatening manner and associated tone towards the educator, which marks those behaviours as confrontational.

Why Research on SICs Is Important

The mitigation of situations involving the various degrees of SIC can present challenges and stress for educators as the consistent, persistent, and intense nature of the encounters can affect the educators' mental and physical health, as well as their motivation, effectiveness, and perception of their professional role (Abraham et al., 2022; Ahmed, 2021; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Cassidy et al., 2017 Christensen et al., 2020; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Rawlins, 2017; Robertson, 2012). Student behavioural issues in general are cited as one of the most frequently reported concerns and sources of disillusionment for educators at all academic levels, and they often serve as the primary reason educators choose to leave the field (Alvarez, 2007; Eisenman et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2014; Merritt & Wheldall, 1993; Seeman, 2009). However, as post-secondary educators are generally hired for their subject-matter expertise, they do not typically receive training specific to the art of teaching in general or classroom management in particular (Boice, 1996; East & Chambers, 2007; May & Tenzek, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Seeman, 2009; Sterner et al., 2015; Woudstra et al., 2018). As such, they are often more ill prepared to manage these types of situations than their K–12 counterparts (Boice, 1996; East & Chambers, 2007; May & Tenzek, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Seeman, 2009; Sterner et al., 2015; Woudstra et al., 2018). This is also the case in post-secondary social work education, especially as there is an assumption that experienced social workers can easily and successfully transfer their practice skills to the academic setting (East & Chambers, 2007). For example, although some social work programs provide doctoral students opportunities to

instruct courses, they are not generally provided with training and education related to teaching strategies, adult learning theories, or techniques to manage class dynamics and confrontational behaviours initiated by students both in and outside of the classroom environment (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; East & Chambers, 2007).

The lack of training related to SIC may be in part because post-secondary academic institutions are deficient in acknowledging this phenomenon as a problem and as such, they often do not incorporate the necessary education and strategies to handle them in faculty orientation sessions, nor do they provide additional professional development opportunities such as workshops, guest speakers, and classroom observations centred around this subject, despite research findings suggesting these opportunities are desired by post-secondary educators (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Boice, 1996; East & Chambers, 2007; May & Tenzek, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Sterner et al., 2015; Woudstra et al., 2018). In addition to the lack of training on effective management of SIC, many educators do not feel comfortable reporting their concerns to colleagues or supervisors for fear of the negative impacts to their present and future career trajectory (Boice, 1996; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012).

Situations involving SIC not only impact post-secondary educators, but student learning is likewise inhibited, and the overall classroom environment can be negatively affected for all involved. For example, current literature suggests that SIC can have detrimental impacts on educators' health, mental health, and well-being (DeSouza & Fansler, 2003; Lampman et al., 2009; May & Tenzek, 2018; Robertson, 2012). SIC may also negatively impact an educator's work performance or the overall teaching and learning process (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Christensen et al., 2020; Lampman et al., 2009; May & Tenzek, 2018), particularly if they do not feel supported by their institutional leadership. As such, if educators feel demoralized and unsupported, this may further impact their decision to remain in the field, and post-secondary institutions may lose qualified and talented educators. However, it is the serious implications SIC can have on the future of both social work

education and the overall profession that is the most concerning. Social work programs train students to work with some of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. As social work educators, it is our responsibility to ensure that students are provided with the education and preparation needed to be competent professionals. If educators alter their teaching practices to avoid encounters with SIC or in more extreme situations, leave the teaching profession, students may not receive the training and education necessary to effectively work with the client populations they serve. Furthermore, students who engage in SIC may be more likely to behave in a similar manner within social work organizations (Wahler & Badger, 2016). Thus, when SIC goes unaddressed at the institutional level, practicum and future clients may then be placed at increased risk of harm.

Purpose of My Substantive Area of Research and Its Relevance to Social Work

Social work education may be considered the foundation of social work practice. As such, there is an expectation that social work educators act as role models and assist students in developing professional identities and behaviours consistent with the profession's core values and ethics (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; East & Chambers, 2007; Wahler & Badger, 2016). However, as previously mentioned, if educators do not feel safe, secure, and supported within their institutions as a result of their experiences with situations involving SIC, their personal well-being can suffer as well as their ability to teach effectively. Students' abilities to learn and to feel safe may in turn be jeopardized. Educators who are targets of SIC can become entangled in what Alvarez (2007) described as a "cycle of negative interactions" (p. 1114). This means that educators are forced to direct their attention to the problem behaviours and situations rather than focusing on teaching and learning, and supporting students in their journey to become professionals in their chosen field of study (Alvarez, 2007; Morrissette, 2001).

Although the term SIC may suggest that students are the sole individuals implicated in the presence and maintenance of this phenomenon, the literature suggests that SIC may be

considered a complex circular process in which both educators and students play an integral role in the occurrence, management, and reinforcement of this phenomenon (Alvarez, 2007; Boice, 1996; Connelly, 2009; Lashley & De Meneses, 2001; Rawlins, 2017). However, social work education may differ from other disciplines in relation to educators' perceptions of their experiences with SIC as well as their identified needs to manage these types of situations. For instance, social work students are taught how to develop advocacy skills to address social injustice and as such, social work educators may encourage students to appropriately and professionally question authority and evaluation methods, as well as engage with them as a way to demonstrate advocacy skills, perhaps even to the extent of not viewing the more hostile and aggressive exchanges to be problematic (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Canadian Association of Social Workers [CASW], 2005; Otters, 2013; Wahler & Badger, 2016).

There is limited research pertaining to SIC at the post-secondary level as compared to the K–12 academic sector (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Misawa, 2010, 2015; Seeman, 2009). Furthermore, much of the existing literature highlights the student perspective regarding SIC (Asio, 2019; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund and Rehling, 2009; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Sterner et al., 2015) and/or the focus is more on the less intense uncivil student behaviours rather than the more severe, aggressive, and violent behaviours educators may experience (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Burke et al., 2014; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Sterner et al., 2015). Even less literature related to social work educators' experiences and training related to SIC currently exists. As such, this research study aimed to address the void in social work literature and to gain an increased understanding of the essence of post-secondary social work educators' experiences with SIC, as well as their experiences and identified needs in regards to the necessary training to mitigate this phenomenon. This research is based on an assumption that social work educators should be trained and prepared to understand the essence of SIC, the interplay that exists between students and educators in the presence of this phenomenon, and strategies to

prevent and mitigate situations involving SIC that are consistent with social work values while "still encouraging students to exhibit proper behaviour without being oppressive" (Wahler & Badger, 2016, p. 349). A further assumption is that social work educators who are educated and prepared to prevent and mitigate SIC will have an increased sense of well-being, decreased burnout and other mental health concerns, and increased teaching effectiveness. Literature suggests that decreased incidences of SIC allow educators to focus their energy on teaching and become better equipped to devote time and positive energy to their students, creating a classroom environment that is more learner-centred (Alvarez, 2007; Dicke et al., 2015; Martin, 2006).

Although this research study focuses specifically on social work educators and their experiences with SIC, findings have the potential to benefit students as much as educators. This may include students involved in initiating the confrontational behaviours as well as those impacted as a result of situations involving SIC. Findings from this study also have the potential to heighten awareness within post-secondary social work programs as to the prevalence of SIC as well as the various implications these situations can have on both educators and students. Increased awareness among faculty and leadership has the potential to enact change within institutions and lead to the implementation of more effective policies and improved support structures for educators, while also highlighting the need for improved training and preparation, especially for those new to teaching. In addition, as limited training currently exists for post-secondary social work educators in relation to SIC, findings may lead to the development of training workshops related to the prevention and mitigation of SIC, incorporating content specific to social work educators' needs. Lastly, this research study will not only allow post-secondary social work educators to feel they too have a voice regarding this subject and aid them in feeling more adequately prepared to handle SIC in their own work, but the information gleaned can be beneficial for post-secondary educators across other disciplines and academic settings.

Research Question

The following research question informed this study: What is the essence of the experience of SIC among post-secondary social work educators in Canada, and what do they identify as needed to successfully mitigate SIC both in and outside the classroom environment? More specifically, the following five elements guided my study:

- How SICs are experienced by post-secondary social work educators
- How social work educators name their experience
- The training and educational needs of social work educators in relation to SIC
- The institutional response to situations involving SIC
- Implications for social work education

Organization of Chapters

In order to better understand the nature of SIC, the next chapter, Chapter 2, presents a review of the existing literature citing major contributors within the post-secondary and more specifically, the post-secondary social work academic sector. The nature and prevalence of SIC is discussed as are contributing factors and personal and professional impacts of SIC on educators. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and gaps of the current literature. Chapter 3 addresses the methodological considerations underpinning the research study. This chapter outlines the rationale for the overall design of the study as well as the theoretical and philosophical perspectives informing the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the recruitment and data collection and analysis process and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents a descriptive overview of the findings organized around the four themes that emerged: What SIC is, what the responses of the institution are, the level of preparation and training regarding SIC received, and the overall implications on social work education and the social work profession. Chapter 5 provides an in-depth analysis of the research findings. Chapter 6 concludes the study with a discussion of the overall contributions of the study, limitations, and areas for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

One of the challenges in reviewing literature pertaining to SIC, as indicated in the previous chapter, is the lack of a consistent term to describe the phenomenon. Hence, a search was conducted using a variety of terms such as student and classroom incivility, uncivil student behaviour, educator- and teacher-targeted bullying, the bullying of teachers by students, and ACPH (see Table 1 for a list of acronyms and their associated terms). Literature pertaining to racism and discrimination towards educators, based on elements such as gender and sexual identity was also reviewed. Another challenge concerned the range of student behaviours that were associated with the various terms. Although many of the terms used in the literature describe common behaviours, some terms such as incivility tend to focus more on disruptive or uncivil behaviours, and other terms like bullying describe more extreme threatening, attacking, and violent behaviours. As such, the literature review led to the development and operationalization of the term SIC to represent the continuum of behaviours reflected by the range of terms discussed in the literature.

Table 1

List of Acronyms and Associated Terms

Acronym	Meaning
ACPH	Academic contra-power harassment
ETB	Educator-targeted bullying
SIC	Student-initiated confrontation

The literature was reviewed in the context of the research question and its associated elements, specifically looking to what knowledge pertaining to the essence of the phenomenon of SIC could be gleaned. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part provides a review of the literature related to the theoretical underpinnings of the study. In

addition, how power and oppression may be a factor in SIC is also explored. The second part provides a review of empirical studies related to SIC, specifically literature related to the nature and prevalence of SIC within the post-secondary academic sectors and literature related to the pedagogy of teacher education and classroom management. The personal and professional impacts SIC may have on educators as well as the various factors contributing to SIC are then discussed. How the responses of colleagues, leadership, and the academic institution may contribute to the overall perceived effects of SIC on educators is explored. This chapter concludes with a discussion regarding training and education related to the pedagogy of teaching and SIC as well as an analysis of the gaps and inconsistencies in the existing literature as they relate to this study.

Theoretical Underpinnings: Understanding the Connections Between Power and SIC

Tisdell (1993) posited that power relations exist in all facets of society, including education. Power dynamics in education are ever-present, and those who are perceived as possessing the most power, privilege, and authority in society based on race, class, gender, and other interlocking forms of oppression are frequently thought of as having the most power within academic institutions (Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Kumashiro, 2000; Mullaly, 2002; Pittman, 2010; Tisdell, 1993). In more traditional understandings of education, and in particular, the student-educator relationship, educators are often recognized as occupying a position that elicits respect and authority. Educators typically retain power and authority over grades, recommendations and referrals, and in some cases, they contribute to the overall line of success and/or failures of students as they move through their educational journey. Although Terry (1998) viewed educators as possessing a specific type of positional power and authority "imbued by the state, which would under a strict definition, make bullying by their pupils improbably" (p. 256), as indicated by recent literature, this is not always the case.

Shifts in the Student-Educator Dynamic

Freire (1970) viewed education as an "act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (p. 72) through what he identifies as the banking system of education. Historically, educators were the vessels through which all knowledge and skills were imparted on students, (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970) and students were expected to maintain an air of "docility, receptivity, and obedience" (Dewey, 1938, p. 18). The student experience was initially premised upon rote knowledge, memorization of content, and recitation, and as such, student voices were silenced and questioning the teacher's expertise was typically forbidden (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970).

As the pedagogy of education within the North American academic setting has evolved, understandings of the student-educator relationship have shifted. Education has increasingly become learner-centred with greater emphasis on experiential learning and integration of knowledge and theory with real-life examples, including the use of student lived experiences in the classroom (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Sikandar, 2015). Thus, educators are no longer perceived as the sole providers of knowledge and expertise. Instead, the student-educator relationship has evolved into more of a collaborative partnership (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970) in which students may be considered "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire, 1970, p. 81). It is apparent that a shift in power has occurred in which the student-educator relationship has become less hierarchical in which students now have more power and privilege. This aligns with Dominelli's (2002) theory that those who are considered to be powerless can also exhibit power, and those in positions of power can also be powerless. As a result, this may encourage the emergence of uncivil, confrontational, and aggressive behaviours among students towards educators as they may feel it is acceptable to express these types of behaviours because of a shift in the balance of power. In their attempt to have a voice in their learning, students may now view themselves as possessing power which was not present previously.

Education as an Oppressive System for Students

In addition to providing knowledge and expertise, educators are not only expected to act as role models who "lead, supervise, and protect" (deWet, 2010, p. 190) their students, but they are also to continually acknowledge the various learning styles and environmental factors that best support student growth and development as they progress through their academic journey (Dewey, 1938). Educators now have an increased responsibility to create a positive, constructive, and collaborative environment for students (Dewey, 1938; Sikandar, 2015). However, the educational experience may not always be perceived as positive or welcoming for students, particularly for those who have non-dominant identities and/or come from marginalized backgrounds. As student populations in the post-secondary academic sector have become more diverse in recent years, students possessing non-dominant identities, including those identifying as female, persons of colour, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, or as persons with disabilities are frequently subject to discrimination, physical or verbal harassment, or exclusion by not only their peers, but at times by their educators as well (Kumashiro, 2000; Misawa, 2010, 2015). For instance, ethnic prejudices, stereotypes and/or racist and sexist ideologies exhibited towards female students or students of colour by educators often lead to different treatment than their White male student counterparts in that they are either ignored more frequently or they are considered to have lesser abilities (Kumashiro, 2000). In addition, students identifying as female or persons of colour are also less likely to be awarded educational financial support, research assistant positions, or fellowships as compared to White male students (Walkington, 2017).

According to Tisdell (1993), one of the primary objectives of North American educational institutions is to "pass on the values, the knowledge base, and the ideology of the dominant culture" (p. 203). Similarly, Collins and Bilge (2016) perceived post-secondary academic institutions as entities that "oppress and liberate" (p. 164) while also reproducing neo-liberalistic assumptions and reinforcing a culture of White dominance and privilege.

Students who are not part of the dominant culture based on identities such as race, gender, sexual identity, or ability, or as Kumashiro described, othered, may be further marginalized within the academy (Kumashiro, 2000; Mullaly, 2002). Kumashiro (2000) further posited that students who are typically marginalized within society may feel expected to "conform to the mainstream culture and become more like middle-class White Americans" (p. 27) to be successful. Additionally, as the curricula within most post-secondary disciplines tend to adopt dominant and colonial perspectives, students who do not originate from Western cultures may struggle to see themselves within the content taught and may become othered (Yee & Wagner, 2013). This has the potential to further silence and exclude students. As a response, some students may overcompensate by overachieving through academic, social, or extra-curricular means, and others may respond through the resistance of dominant values and ideologies, which may be a factor in the increase in situations involving SIC (Kumashiro, 2000). Foucault (2001) posited that dominance is often responded to with resistance, challenging the perspective that those who are considered oppressed are powerless to overcome the structures reinforcing and maintaining oppressive systems and practices (Mullaly, 2002). As such, it may be tempting to consider SIC as an act of resistance towards educators perceived as engaging in discriminatory or oppressive practices, the curriculum, or the academic institutions as a whole, especially if students do not feel they have a voice or are denied the same opportunities as their peers. However, it is important to reinforce that SIC is not an act of resistance as described by Foucault (2001). SICs refer to the disruptive, hostile, and threatening behaviours intended to challenge an educator's professional authority, expertise, personal character, or identity.

Educators as Targets of Oppression

Although the academy may be thought of as oppressive towards students, and despite the power, privilege, and authority that educators are typically viewed as possessing, they too can be targets of oppressive structures. This oppression can be initiated by the institutions in

which they are employed and also by their own students. According to Tisdell (1993), the labour force, including academia, may be viewed as a structure that sorts people into groups hierarchically based on their talent and ability. However, this sorting was primarily based on the "dominance and subordination of cultural groups which serves to reproduce a specifically raced, classed, and gendered labor force" (Tisdell, 1993, p. 204). Educators bring their multiple identities to their academic institutions, including race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual identity, and social class. Although diversity in the workplace can be an asset to the student experience and the institution as a whole, educators possessing non-dominant identities are more likely to be targets of workplace bullying, discrimination, and situations involving SIC (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2008; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Misawa, 2010, 2015; Mullaly, 2002; Sallée & Diaz, 2013; Tisdell, 1993; Walkington, 2017). For example, current literature suggests that the academy remains male-dominated and as such, female educators, particularly female educators of colour, continue to be underrepresented, are frequently paid less despite having higher workloads, and are less likely to secure full-time, tenure-track, or administrative positions as compared to their White male counterparts (Edwards et al., 2008; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Sallée & Diaz, 2013; Walkington, 2017). Additionally, educators identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ are also subjected to harassing, bullying, and discriminatory practices more often than their colleagues subscribing to heteronormative identities (Misawa, 2010, 2015; Sallée & Diaz, 2013).

Educator Vulnerabilities as Targets of SIC

Although educators rendered othered are more likely to be recipients of harassing, discriminatory, and other oppressive practices from colleagues and administrators, a dual oppressive structure may exist in which students are also complicit in directing similar types of behaviours towards educators (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Misawa, 2010, 2015; Sallée & Diaz, 2013; Tisdell, 1993). Johnson-Bailey (2015) posited that academia "provides an ideal environment for bullying" (p. 43) and that in any

situation in which differences may occur, uncivil, hostile, and even aggressive behaviours may ensue. As stated previously, educators bring their multiple identities to not only the academy, but particularly to their instruction in the classroom (Alexander-Snow, 2004; Johnson-Bailey, 2015). Those who do not represent the image of what students perceive educators to look like may create confusion and/or frustration, particularly among White students (Johnson-Bailey, 2015). This can often lead students to develop presuppositions about their educator's authority and competence prior to the first class (Alexander-Snow, 2004; Johnson-Bailey, 2015). Many students still perceive the stereotypical post-secondary educator as an older White male who emanates expertise and authority (Eisenmann et al., 2013; Johnson-Bailey, 2015). As such, educators who do not fit into this stereotypical image may be at an increased risk of being a target group to students (Eisenmann et al., 2013).

According to the literature, educators identifying as female, persons of colour, or international educators may be more likely targets of SIC (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Alexander-Snow, 2004; Boice, 1996; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; May & Tenzek, 2018). For example, some literature suggests that female educators tend to be challenged by male students more frequently than female students (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Pittman, 2010; Tisdell, 1993), particularly in relation to how assignments should be graded, how student interactions should be managed in class, and how accidental mis-statements should be handled (Pittman, 2010). Similarly, Alexander-Snow (2004) cited that she is "marked" as a result of her race, gender, and age and that "it is not [her] scholarship but [her] very body that students learn from in the classroom" (p. 28).

Zhang et al. (2011) posited that teacher credibility and competence are among the most pivotal attributes an educator can possess. As such, a student may be more likely to engage in SIC towards educators they do not perceive as possessing what they deem as appropriate credentials, credibility, or qualifications (Abraham et al., 2022; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Zhang et al., 2011). For instance, a White male educator's "aggressive prodding" may

be perceived as “intellectually challenging,” whereas the same behaviour exhibited by a Black male educator may be viewed as “hostile and argumentative” (Alexander-Snow, 2004, p. 28).

The literature suggests that SIC may occur as a result of students’ difficulty viewing a female educator as occupying a position of authority and expertise, especially one who is another nationality and/or identifies as a person of colour (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; May & Tenzek, 2018). Johnson-Bailey (2015) cited several examples of situations in which her credibility was questioned as a result of being a Black female educator. Comments such as “your co-authors have been very generous in giving you author position on publications so you could establish a record,” (p. 44) implied that she was not an active or legitimate part of her research, and that her name being first was only a result of being Black. In another comment made by a student, “I’m sure it must be easier for you to get published since you are a Black woman writing about race” (p. 44), Johnson-Bailey was accused of being able to publish solely as a result of her race and gender, and not because of her academic abilities. Rodriguez (2009) discussed similar experiences in which she was the recipient of hostility by students in her post-secondary classroom due to being a female person of colour. She described having her expertise, knowledge, and experience questioned by students in a way her colleagues had not expressed experiencing. As Alexander-Snow (2004) explained, SIC may also be a response to students’ discomfort with specific types of material being delivered, particularly by educators who are part of non-dominant, White populations, possibly causing students from the dominant culture to feel “deficient” as a result. According to Edmonds-Cady and Wingfield (2017), these faculty “force White students to confront their own biases” (p. 431) and privileges, which may then lead to discriminatory, confrontational, and even bullying-type behaviours. This discomfort and the associated behaviours can also be observed in social work education. Anti-oppressive practice (AOP) as a theoretical orientation has become a mainstay of social work education

and practice as a way to dismantle White Eurocentric ideology and concepts of White privilege and dominance that have been embedded throughout history and as a way to enable social workers and students to better recognize and understand the larger systems contributing to oppression (Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017). However, lack of familiarity and/or discomfort with AOP principles may also lead students to respond by engaging in SIC.

Although most students enter into social work programs because of a desire to help others, they may also bring with them various misperceptions about what social work education is and what it means to "help" (Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017; Wilson & Beresford, 2000). Students frequently misrepresent themselves as possessing skills and attributes that will be welcomed among oppressed individuals and communities because of previous volunteer or even paid experience working within the helping professions (Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017; Wilson & Beresford, 2000). Social work students may be more likely to seek what they consider to be "correct" practice interventions and solutions that align with their personal views and beliefs rather than acknowledge their own privilege or complicity in reinforcing oppressive structures (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). In addition, this may be the first time that many new social work students receive instruction from educators who are persons of colour or possess non-dominant identities, which can create an additional sense of discomfort (Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017; Wilson & Beresford, 2000). As such, these concepts can threaten students' views of being anti-racist and "colourblind" and lead to student "resistance to critical consciousness," (Edmonds-Cady & Wingfield, 2017, p. 431) potentially resulting in resistance of course material and discussions, and even educators themselves in the form of SIC.

It is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated SIC towards educators with non-dominant identities. For example, Abraham et al. (2022) conducted a study of undergraduate science instructors' perceptions regarding student incivility in the online classroom. It was found that educators identifying as female, particularly female

persons of colour, expressed an increase in student incivility since the start of the pandemic compared to their White male counterparts. Some of this was felt to be a result of backlash to the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020 or because of an increased awareness by persons of colour regarding the existence of uncivil student behaviour.

Empirical Underpinnings: A Review of SIC Research

This section provides a review of post-secondary literature pertaining to SIC followed by an exploration of the limited research on SIC within post-secondary social work education. Literature pertaining to specific themes related to SIC, such as the effects of SIC on educators, reporting of SIC, contributing factors, and training of educators is then be explored.

Nature and Prevalence of SIC in Post-Secondary Education

Given the variety of terms used in the literature and the range of behaviours associated with each term, a review of the empirical literature needs to begin with these terms being unpacked and explained. The terms ACPH, ETB, and student incivility are those most frequently used. Each is discussed in turn followed by a review of the literature with respect to the nature and prevalence of SIC as related to those terms.

ACPH

Contrapower harassment was initially coined by Benson in the 1980s to describe situations in which a "person with lesser power within an institution harasses an individual with greater power" (Lampman et al., 2009, p. 331). Lampman et al. (2009) then developed the term ACPH to describe similar situations in which students, who are generally viewed as having less power, engage in harassing or confrontational behaviours towards those in positions of authority, such as educators (Christensen et al., 2020; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; Taylor et al., 2017).

ACPH initially referred to situations involving harassment of a sexual nature, with students being the perpetrators and educators as the targets (DeSouza, 2011; DeSouza &

Fansler, 2003; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000). In a study by Matchen and DeSouza (2000) and then in a similar study by DeSouza and Fansler (2003), both college students and faculty members from a large Midwestern university in the United States were surveyed regarding their experiences with students engaging in sexually harassing behaviour towards faculty. Matchen and DeSouza (2000) found that over half of students reported to have engaged in sexually harassing behaviours towards faculty at least once and over half of the faculty participants reported experiencing at least one incident in which they were sexually harassed by a student. Similarly, results from DeSouza and Fansler's (2003) study found that approximately one third of student participants reported having sexually harassed a faculty member at least once, whereas over half of faculty surveyed reported experiencing at least once incident involving sexually harassing behaviour by students. In a more recent study conducted by DeSouza (2011), approximately two thirds of faculty respondents at a smaller university reported some form of sexual mistreatment by students within the previous 2 years of the study.

Although ACPH initially referred to sexually harassing behaviours initiated by students towards educators, the term has since expanded to include a broader range of disruptive and disrespectful behaviours, as well as other forms of violence and abuse (Christensen et al., 2020; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; Taylor et al., 2017). In addition, the literature suggests that ACPH is increasingly considered a "routine part" of being an educator in post-secondary education (Lampman et al., 2016, p. 2). For example, Lampman et al. (2009) surveyed faculty members at an Alaskan university and found that an overwhelming majority of women and men experienced at least one incident involving incivility or bullying by students. In a later study by Lampman et al. (2016), faculty members from various colleges and universities across the U.S. were surveyed regarding their "most serious" experience with ACPH. Results showed that over half of faculty surveyed reported at least one significant incident of ACPH at some point in their career. The most common types of

behaviours were cited as hostility/anger/aggression, rude and disruptive behaviours, and behaviours of a sexually harassing nature. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2017) reported that the majority of faculty participants surveyed experienced at least one encounter with ACPH during their careers and Christensen et al. (2020) found that more than half of faculty surveyed reported at least one incident involving ACPH.

ETB

De Wet (2010) defined ETB as "aggressive behaviour in which there is an abundance of power between the aggressor (learner/s) and the educator" (p. 190). Similarly, Terry (1998) perceived ETB as occurring in situations in which an "uneven balance of power is exploited and abused by an individual or individuals who in that particular circumstance have the advantage" (p. 161). These aggressive acts are viewed as persistent, deliberate, and repetitive with the intention to cause psychological, emotional, professional, or even physical harm to disempower and discredit the educator (deWet, 2010; deWet & Jacobs, 2006; May & Tenzek, 2018; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998; Woudstra et al., 2018). ETB can be verbal in the form of insults, taunting, swearing, starting rumours, threats, or other forms of verbal abuse, or nonverbal, which can include making inappropriate faces or gestures or ignoring the educator (deWet, 2010, deWet & Jacobs, 2006; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998). In addition, physical bullying can occur including damage to the educator's classroom or personal property, as well as threats or acts of physical violence, including those of a sexual nature (deWet, 2010; deWet & Jacobs, 2006; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Woudstra et al., 2018). ETB is not limited to the classroom setting and can occur outside the classroom through face-to-face and online communications.

McKay et al. (2008) examined general workplace bullying between employees as well as ETB at a mid-sized university in Canada. Of those surveyed, "bottom-up bullying by students" (p. 94) was one of the most frequently reported forms of ETB experienced, with over one third of participants experiencing behaviours such as students challenging their

authority or decisions, students spreading gossip or malicious rumours about them, or students making derogatory or insulting remarks directly towards them. Asio (2019) surveyed college students in the Philippines to determine how college students understood ETB and their potential impacts on post-secondary educators. Results indicated that the participants had a moderate understanding of what ETB was and the potential negative impacts those behaviours could have on educators. Participants also acknowledged the existence of ETB within higher education and deemed these types of behaviours as "inappropriate." May and Tenzek (2018) are one of the few to conduct a qualitative study in which educators at various colleges and universities across the United States were interviewed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the narrative components involved in the construction of ETB as well as their experiences of being bullied by students. Findings indicated that participants experienced a range of verbal, non-verbal, and physical forms of bullying. Condescending or profane verbalizations aimed at the educator, attempts to discredit them, and threatening demands, particularly around grades, were examples of verbal attacks reported. Non-verbal behaviours such as throwing objects, slamming textbooks or doors, invading the participant's personal space, or physical aggression were noted. In addition, several participants also reported threats to their personal safety.

As virtual course delivery has increased in recent years, the issue of cyberbullying has become more prevalent. Although the majority of the literature focuses on cyberbullying within the K–12 sector, Cassidy et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative thematic analysis of both students and faculty from four Canadian universities regarding the impacts of cyberbullying. Online surveys, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Results indicated that students reported being cyberbullied primarily by other students and faculty participants reported cyberbullying by both colleagues and students. In addition, faculty reported several negative personal impacts including feeling anxious, humiliated, wounded, and marginalized. These personal impacts also affected the participants

professionally in that they began to question their own teaching abilities and their motivation to manage situations involving SIC, especially since many participants did not feel supported by their leadership or institution.

Student Incivility

Although ACPH and bullying have been used in the literature to describe the phenomenon related to SIC, much of what has been written related to the post-secondary academic sector has centred on what has been termed as student incivility or uncivil student behaviour. Boice (1996) was one of the earliest to report on student incivility in the classroom citing that it is "more common than uncommon" (p. 479) and that there has been a marked decline in respectful and civil behaviour in college and university classrooms over time. Uncivil behaviours can be defined as those that are disrespectful, disruptive, and discourteous (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boysen, 2012; Meires, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Wahler & Badger, 2016) and can occur both in-person and in virtual classroom environments. These types of behaviours can include arriving to class late and/or leaving early, sleeping or yawning during class, attempts to sidetrack the educator, or carrying on side conversations with other students (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boice, 1996; Boysen, 2012; Meires, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009). Use of cell phones or other forms of technology to engage in non-class-related activities are also considered uncivil classroom behaviour (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Burke et al., 2014; Sterner et al., 2015). In more extreme situations, sarcastic, taunting, threatening, and harassing remarks or even unwanted physical or sexual behaviour have also been cited (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boice, 1996; Sterner et al., 2015). Uncivil student behaviours are often initiated with the intention to interfere with the process of teaching and learning (Morrissette, 2001). As such, these types of behaviours not only inhibit the presence of a "harmonious and cooperative

learning atmosphere in the classroom" (Feldmann, 2001, p. 137), they can also act as a deterrent for the educator to meet the learning objectives of the class (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009).

Various trends with respect to uncivil behaviours are evident in the literature. Sarcastic, rude, and harassing remarks by students towards educators as well as side-talking in class are some of the most commonly reported (Alberts et al., 2010; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boice, 1996; Sterner et al., 2015). For example, Boice (1996) observed both students and faculty at a large public university in the United States across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. A small sample of students and their instructors were also interviewed. Findings showed that sarcastic and negative remarks targeted towards educators occurred in the majority of classes he observed, and both students and faculty agreed that these types of behaviours were consistently present. Boice (1996) also noted the presence of a small number of students he labelled as "classroom terrorists" whose purpose was to dominate the classroom by exhibiting "unpredictable and highly emotional outbursts" (p. 463). In a related study by Bjorklund and Rehling (2009), mainly undergraduate students at a large public midwestern university were surveyed to examine specific behaviours they perceived as being the most uncivil within the classroom environment as well as how frequently they observed those behaviours. Similar to the aforementioned studies, Bjorklund and Rehling's (2009) study showed that verbal abuse towards educators as well as the occurrence of side-talking and loud conversations despite being asked to stop by the educator were among the most reported by the student participants.

Disrespectful and disruptive behaviours, such as attending class late, interrupting class, inattentiveness, and use of technology for non-class related purposes were also among the most frequently cited types of student incivility in the literature pertaining to post-secondary education. For example, Alberts et al., (2010) surveyed pre-tenured geography educators at various colleges and universities throughout the United States regarding their

experiences with uncivil student behaviours. Results indicated that the majority of participants had experienced a range of student incivility during their careers. Inattentiveness or other related types of disrespectful behaviours including arriving to class late/early, interrupting the educator, or use of technology for non-class purposes were the most commonly reported. In a more recent study, Abraham et al. (2022) conducted a study to see if there was a perceived increase in student incivility in the online synchronous classroom as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Undergraduate science faculty across the United States were surveyed regarding their experiences with student incivility during the fall 2020 term. Over half of the participants reported experiencing some form of student incivility with demands for grade changes, excessive communication with the participant outside of class, cell phone usage in class, and sleeping in class as the most frequently cited.

Woudstra et al. (2018) conducted a study pertaining to the perceptions of graduated students and faculty regarding their perceptions of incivility in graduate classrooms. Although hostile, harassing, and threatening verbal attacks towards educators were rated as the most severe behaviours, checking email and other uses of technology for non-class related purposes were reported as the most frequently occurring behaviours, indicating that uncivil student behaviours are not limited to undergraduate levels of post-secondary education and can be present in graduate programs as well.

SIC in Post-Secondary Social Work Education

Having now broadly discussed SIC at the general post-secondary level, attention is now given to the SIC literature specific to social work education. Social work education and the associated curricula is founded upon core values, such as integrity in professional practice, the inherent dignity and worth of persons, and the importance of human relationships (CASW, 2005; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). Arguably, SIC can be viewed as misaligned with those values (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Wahler & Badger, 2016). Given that social work students are to adhere to social work values

and the code of ethics of the profession, it would seem implausible that SIC would be of concern to social work educators. However, the literature suggests SIC is an issue within the post-secondary social work academic setting, raising questions regarding the appropriateness and fit of students entering social work programs, as well as educators' overall effectiveness in socializing students to enter the profession (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Wahler & Badger, 2016).

Among the literature related to SIC in post-secondary social work education, Ausbrooks et al. (2011) surveyed both faculty and students from a single social work program in the United States to examine the existence, type, and frequency of uncivil student behaviours. They also sought to identify whether differences existed in the overall perception of incivility between the faculty and students as well as whether there were gender or identity markers among the faculty who were targets of incivility. Results indicated that students viewed acts of uncivil behaviour by their classmates as occurring more frequently and to be of a more serious nature than the faculty participants did. However, both student and faculty participants acknowledged several uncivil student behaviours as transpiring with sarcastic or offensive remarks and threats directed at educators by students being rated the most serious. In addition, rude and disrespectful behaviours, side-talking during class lectures and discussions, and use of laptops or other forms of technology for non-class related activities were perceived to occur most frequently and be "among the most troublesome" (p. 264) of all behaviours cited.

In a more recent study, Wahler and Badger (2016) surveyed a national sample of undergraduate and graduate social work educators across the United States regarding their experiences with uncivil student behaviour in the classroom. The most common behaviours cited were tardiness, eating in class, side-talking, packing up belongings prior to the end of class, and the domination of class discussions by specific students. Although less frequently

reported, more severe behaviours such as threats, stalking the educator, or acts of violence were reported in both graduate and undergraduate classrooms.

Ballan (2015) surveyed undergraduate and graduate level social work students at a public Southern California university regarding their perceptions of SIC as well as their levels of concern. Findings indicated that the majority of participants reported some level of concern regarding the severity of uncivil behaviours towards social work faculty. The most severe behaviours cited were threats, verbal, or physical attacks towards the educator. However, the most frequently reported behaviours were considered less serious disruptive and disrespectful behaviours including eating or texting in class, arriving late or leaving early, or use of technology for non-class purposes. Thus, the findings from all three studies specific to social work education were consistent with other non-social work-related literature.

In sum, many terms are used in the literature associated with the phenomenon of SIC. The most frequent terms used are bullying, ETB, ACPH, and incivility. The behaviours associated with SIC can range from seemingly mild (e.g., eye rolling, use of technology for non-class purposes) to more extreme (e.g., threats and physical violence). At the heart of SIC is positional power. However, this may be perceived as an inverse of power with students, who are often perceived as having less power as being the perpetrators, and educators, who are typically perceived as having more power, are then the targets. This phenomenon is prevalent in post-secondary education and rather astonishingly, in schools of social work.

Effects of SIC on Educators

Although the current literature regarding SIC suggests this phenomenon exists in various types of academic settings around the world, the majority of studies have not fully explored the impacts these behaviours have on the educators experiencing them. Even the studies that do cite the impacts of SIC are often limited in their depth and do not always adequately reflect the voices of those experiencing these types of situations (Abraham et al.,

2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Sterner et al., 2015). However, the literature that does exist consistently indicates that SIC can have detrimental personal and professional effects, which can be further impacted by the institution's overall response to these types of situations (Abraham et al., 2022; Ahmed, 2021; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Cassidy et al., 2017; Lampman et al., 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018; Morrissette, 2001; Rawlins, 2017; Robertson, 2012).

Personal Effects of SIC on Educators

Current literature suggests that SIC can negatively affect educators' overall health and well-being (Abraham et al., 2022; Ahmed, 2021; Cassidy et al., 2017; DeSouza & Fansler, 2003; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018; Morrissette, 2001; Rawlins, 2017; Robertson, 2012). Physiological impacts include headaches, stomach aches, sleep and eating disturbances, as well as other somatic complaints, and mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, stress, and fear have also been frequently reported (Abraham et al., 2022; Ahmed, 2021; Cassidy et al., 2017; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; Morrissette, 2001; Rawlins, 2017; Robertson, 2012). For example, some participants in the study by Cassidy et al. (2017) described their experiences with cyberbullying by students as "fear-inducing" (p. 9). Terms such as abuse, assault, attack, retaliation, and violence were among many cited by participants.

Feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, lowered confidence, and decreased self-esteem have also been cited as personal impacts related to SIC (Christensen et al., 2020; Cassidy et al., 2017; DeSouza & Fansler, 2003; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Rawlins, 2017). Ozkilic and Kartal (2012) posited that individuals experiencing hostile or bullying behaviours, particularly in the workplace, often view themselves as inferior, ineffective, and as though no one cares about them, whereas participants in the study by Cassidy et al. (2017) reported feeling demeaned and discredited, which negatively impacted their overall self-perception and self-image. Personal relationships and marriages were also affected in that

educators reported they either felt their moods were negatively impacted or they tended to take comments from partners in more defensive and accusatory ways than they were meant (Cassidy et al., 2017).

Professional Effects of SIC on Educators

SIC can also negatively impact an educator's work performance and the overall process of teaching and learning. Absenteeism, presenteeism, decreased job commitment and satisfaction, as well as reduced motivation and productivity have all been cited as impacts of SIC (Alberts et al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Christensen et al., 2020; Lampman et al., 2009; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Weeks, 2011). Educators may start questioning their teaching abilities and effectiveness as well as whether it is worth dealing with situations involving SIC (Cassidy et al., 2017). This can result in mediocre work performance and an educator lowering their expectations of students (Lampman et al., 2009; McKay et al., 2008; Morrissette, 2001; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Weeks, 2011). For example, some educators have reported altering grading practices to accept lower quality submissions from students, reducing the amount of work assigned, or even avoid acting on situations involving academic honesty violations to prevent conflict or further escalation with students, which in turn may lead other students to feel it is acceptable to also submit lower quality assignments or violate the academic honesty policy (Lampman et al., 2009; Morrissette, 2001; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Segrist et al., 2018; Weeks, 2011).

In more extreme situations, some educators have reported feeling forced to leave their institution or even the teaching profession as a result of SIC, possibly contributing to increased employee turnover (Boice, 1996; McKay et al., 2008). As such, students may be negatively impacted as their learning can be inhibited. Frequent employee turnover leads to inconsistency in the teaching environment for students, and those students may lose out on the opportunity to learn from highly experienced educators who choose to leave an institution

or the field. Even if educators do not resign, time spent mitigating SIC is time not spent on teaching and learning, which can lead to the integration of lower quality class activities and lectures, or the elimination of certain topics or expectations to avoid conflict with students (Alvarez, 2007; Morrissette, 2001; Rawlins, 2017; Segrist et al., 2018). Morrissette (2001) posited that if learning activities are unnecessarily interrupted, students are "short-changed" and these interruptions may even be considered a "violation of student rights" (p. 2). In addition, when educators feel disillusioned, ineffective, and no longer feel secure in their professional identities and ability to teach, it is not difficult to comprehend why they may begin to lack enthusiasm, develop ambivalence, and lower their expectations pertaining to their work and the students.

Reporting Situations Involving SIC

The way in which an educator's colleagues and institutional administration respond to situations involving SIC may alleviate or contribute to the deleterious effects experienced. When educators attempt to report incidents involving SIC to both colleagues and/or leadership, they are frequently not provided with the support and guidance needed to fully address the problem and as such, there may be a reluctance to report (Ahmed, 2021; Lampman et al., 2009; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Seeman, 2009, Weeks, 2011). For example, Lampman et al. (2009) found that less than one third of faculty participants reported their experiences with ACPH to their chairs or deans because of fears they would not be supported. Similarly, Weeks (2011) reported that most faculty members are hesitant to report academic honesty violations due to the "burden of carrying out cumbersome hearing procedures," (p. 33) particularly when institutions oftentimes dismiss or ignore these situations and the educators' concerns to avoid further escalation of situations.

Educators who do report SIC are frequently not taken seriously or are criticized by colleagues and leadership for not being able to address these situations independently, their

classroom management abilities may be called into question, and they may be made to feel ineffective (Ahmed, 2021; Boice, 1996; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Seeman, 2009; Weeks, 2011). In addition, the process for dealing with situations involving SIC, including academic honesty violations, is often inconsistent and in the favour of the student (Alberts et al., 2010; Boice, 1996; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008). Students are rarely held accountable for their actions (Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boice, 1996; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008) and the need to accommodate them is viewed as "more important than the protection of faculty" (McKay et al., 2008, p. 89). In situations in which students make false or "vexatious and frivolous complaints," (McKay et al., 2008, p. 90) they are not warned of potential consequences if the claims are unfounded. Although institutions may have guidelines surrounding general workplace bullying, there are often limited policies and procedures involving SIC, leading to these situations being dealt with on an individual basis instead of in a consistent manner (McKay et al., 2008).

Post-secondary educators may also be less inclined to report situations involving SIC due to the nature of hiring and promotional practices within higher education. Peer feedback is often intrinsic in the promotion of educators and as such, some educators may be reluctant to confide in colleagues or leadership for fear this may jeopardize their ability to retain a stable teaching position and/or obtain a tenure track position in the future. In addition, since course evaluations can also be instrumental to an educator's ability to secure their position or be considered for future promotions, some may acquiesce to the student or not report the situation to avoid possible repercussions on future course evaluations (Lashley & De Meneses, 2001; McKay et al., 2008). For example, according to McKay et al., (2008) students can "wield unhealthy power over the faculty member" through course evaluations, and as such, faculty may choose not to respond to these students for fear students will seek revenge through course evaluations or even social media forums (p. 93). Educators are often left to manage SIC on their own, potentially resulting in feelings of helplessness and

powerlessness (Christensen et al., 2020; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012). Thus, educators' fear of being viewed as ineffective and unable to manage the classroom environment, as well as the concern that they will not be supported or even lose out on employment opportunities, often outweighs the desire to seek guidance. However, failure to report situations involving SIC can foster the perspective among institutional leadership that SIC is not an issue within the academy and as such, is not something that needs to be discussed or addressed.

Contributing Factors to SIC

Although the exact causes of SIC are not fully understood, several contributing factors have been suggested in current literature. This includes societal factors and K–12-related factors. In addition, student and educator-related factors have been identified as contributing to this phenomenon.

Societal Factors

Neoliberalism in Higher Education

According to Yee and Wagner (2013), neoliberalism is "the ideology and practice by which to ignore how structures are shaped not only by historical events of domination and exploitation, but also by on-going colonial relations of power" (p. 332) that exist within many of today's institutions. Many post-secondary academic institutions are now founded upon neo-liberalistic ideologies in which there is increased pressure to "conform to a corporate model where they are competitors in the global marketplace" (Yee & Wagner, 2013, p. 332). As such, Saunders, (2007) posits that education may no longer be viewed as a "social good with intrinsic value, but instead it has been conceptualized as a commodity that a student purchases for his or her own gain" (p. 4). Consumerism as related to higher education has frequently been cited as contributing to the increase in situations involving SIC (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Burke et al., 2014; Christensen et al., 2020; Knepp, 2012; Lawrence et al., 2022; May & Tenzek, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Robertson, 2012). Students often perceive

themselves as consumers or customers rather than learners, and as such, their primary purpose in acquiring higher education is economically-based (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Lawrence et al., 2022; May & Tenzek, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009). For example, in the Higher Education Research Institute's report (Pryor et al., 2006), 69% of students surveyed admitted that higher earning potential was the primary reason for enrolling in a post-secondary program, up from 21% in 1976. Although those statistics have not been updated, it is probable that the percentage has increased significantly in recent years. Because of the high price students routinely pay for their education, the "customer is always right" mentality may lead students to feel entitled to high marks and ultimately a degree, regardless of their academic performance or educator critical feedback (Christensen et al., 2020; Lawrence et al., 2022; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008). There is an additional perception that it is acceptable for students to behave in whichever manner they choose, including engaging in hostile, confrontational, and aggressive behaviours because they are the consumers of education (Burke et al., 2014; Nordstrom et al., 2009).

Technology

Technology has been cited as another contributor to SIC (Abraham et al., 2022; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Burke et al., 2014; Knepp, 2012). The utilization of technology both in and out of the academic environment has significantly increased in recent decades and in particular, Millennials and younger generations have grown up only knowing a world that includes technology and electronic forms of communication (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Burke et al., 2014; Knepp, 2012). Multitasking using electronic devices is part of their daily existence and for many, the use of technology is their way of staying connected with others, often in a more informal manner (Burke et al., 2014; Knepp, 2012). However, this "heavy reliance on these impersonal forms of communication" (Burke et al., 2014, p. 173) may hinder students in developing the skills necessary to engage in appropriate and professional communication (Knepp, 2012). This may then result in the inability for students to recognize

behaviours such as texting, checking social media, or playing computer games in class as disrespectful or uncivil behaviour.

Another way technology can contribute to situations involving SIC relates to students' increased preference of electronic or asynchronous forms of communication such as email or online messaging systems over more traditional face-to-face interactions with educators (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Burke et al., 2014; Knepp, 2012). As such, students may engage in more informal communication towards educators, including the utilization of profane hostile, confrontational, or aggressive language, as this mode of communication may be viewed as more acceptable based on their experiences with social media examples (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016). For example, Bartlett and Bartlett (2016) suggested electronic forms of communication allows for a "false sense of anonymity" (p. 9) among students as compared to face-to-face interactions, leading to increased attacks on educators' character, teaching abilities, and even physical attributes. Inappropriate, insulting, and aggressive postings on social media or sites in which students can rate their professors have the potential to significantly damage educators' reputations and even their careers. This may encourage increased hostility in other students towards a particular educator prior to the start of a course based on what other students have written. Additionally, students' unrealistic expectations regarding the immediacy of educators' response times may also contribute to SIC. For example, if students do not receive immediate responses to electronic forms of inquiries, including evenings, weekends, and holidays, they will often continue to contact that educator until they get a response (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Burke et al., 2014). The tone frequently becomes increasingly hostile, and aggressive, which has been found to lead to additional threats to discredit or disparage the educator to their colleagues, administrators, or through the use of social media (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Burke et al., 2014).

K–12 Factors Contributing to SIC

Current literature on SIC implicates the North American educational system in the overall occurrence of this phenomenon (Alberts et al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Lawrence et al., 2022; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; McKay et al., 2008). Many students belong to the Millennial or now even younger generations, and according to Alberts et al. (2010) may be considered "less well-equipped to deal with college education than were previous generations owing to permissive parents, overly lenient grade school environments, and a regular diet of instant gratification entertainment" (p. 440). Fewer students than in previous generations are adequately challenged academically prior to entering post-secondary institutions, resulting in unrealistic expectations and a lack of preparedness for the rigours of higher education (Alberts et al., 2010; Lawrence et al., 2022; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Worsley et al., 2009). Part of this may be due to the elimination of content and learning activities that might cause distress or upset in students, lack of holding students accountable for their academic performance or behaviour, and increased academic accommodations (Alberts et al., 2010; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). A cultural shift has also occurred in which parents are taking a more active role in keeping their children under constant surveillance to protect them from harm or distress, and often praise mediocre performance (Alberts et al., 2010; Burke et al., 2014; Lampman et al., 2009; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). Thus, when students enter the post-secondary academic sector, they may not experience that same type of protection or coddling leading to an inability to cope with the expectations placed upon them, potentially leading to SIC.

From a social work perspective, Worsley et al. (2009) discussed how there can sometimes be an "expectations gap" between what students expect from a post-secondary social work education program and what the expectations are of the students themselves, particularly regarding the assessment process. When students felt they were not meeting expectations, reactions such as increased anxiety and lowered self-esteem occurred, which

then led to difficulty managing feelings and emotions when challenged about their assignments. Students in this study also cited how they did not feel that their experiences with previous assessment, whether in undergraduate or graduate social work programs, equipped them to handle the rigours and expectations of social work education. Thus, when a misalignment of expectations occurs in which students are unable to perform to the expectations of their post-secondary program and/or they are not provided with the same types of high praise and accommodations received in primary and secondary school, this can lead to frustration or anxiety which may in turn contribute to various confrontational and aggressive behaviours directed towards educators.

Student Factors Contributing to SIC

Mental Health

The rise of student mental health and emotional issues has been cited as a potential contributor to situations involving SIC (Amada, 1992; Burke et al., 2014; Lawrence et al., 2022; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Morrissette, 2001). Increased availability of psychotropic and other forms of medications to aid with mental health challenges has enabled students who may not have been able to attend post-secondary academic programs in the past to now appear in classrooms at a higher rate (Amada, 1992; Morrissette, 2001). In social work, it is not uncommon for students with past histories of mental health issues and trauma to gravitate towards this profession (Black et al., 1992; Lawrence et al., 2022; Rompf & Royse, 1994; Zosky, 2013) as a way to process their own experiences and help others. Zosky (2013) and Black et al. (1992) referred to this as the "wounded healer" phenomenon. Furthermore, those who have past experiences with trauma tend to pursue social work at higher rates than other disciplines (Zosky, 2013). This does not indicate that students with mental health concerns, including social work students, should not pursue post-secondary education. In helping professions such as social work, lived experience and the ability to empathize with clients can be an asset. However, when confronted with the additional stressors that often accompany

college and university life, mental health issues may arise or be exacerbated, potentially leaving students less equipped to handle them, particularly if they lacked effective coping skills previously, resulting in lashing out or SIC behaviours (Amada, 1992; Burke et al., 2014; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Morrissette, 2001). This also aligns with Burke et al. (2014) and Lampman et al. (2009) who found that students are experiencing higher rates of stress and anxiety than in previous years. As such, factors such as substance use, exhaustion, physical and mental health concerns, and other situational challenges can often lead to SIC, as students may not have faced these types of situations in the past, or they may have received more accommodations than post-secondary programs may be able or willing to provide. In addition, as students are increasingly navigating multiple responsibilities including part or full-time employment as well as family and caregiving obligations while attending school, the exhaustion and stress that can occur as a result may lead to an increased risk of situations involving SIC (Knepp, 2012; Robertson, 2012).

The COVID-19 pandemic also presented additional mental health challenges for students (Abraham et al., 2022; Birmingham et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2021; Wang, 2023). Recent studies have found that college and university students have reported a higher incidence of mental health symptoms including anxiety, depression, stress, sleep and appetite changes, and worry about their health, safety, and academic future (Abraham et al., 2022; Birmingham et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2021; Wang, 2023). Students also reported negative impacts on concentration and motivation, in addition to challenges with time management (Abraham et al., 2022; Birmingham et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2021; Wang, 2023). According to a study by Abraham et al. (2022), the pandemic contributed to situations involving SIC, and the online learning environment allowed for the further exacerbation of this phenomenon. For example, it was perceived that the challenge to teach virtually with minimal time and preparation combined with the overall stress and uncertainty presented by the pandemic "primed students to become more uncivil" (p. 1). In addition, because online communication

was often perceived as more impersonal as compared to face-to-face interactions, students have the potential to feel more anonymous, leading them to feel more inclined to act in an uncivil way towards others, including educators. More research is needed regarding this particular subject area, which may be seen as more time passes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the social work profession, social workers are often subject to high levels of stress and distress due to the nature of the field and as such, emotional demands may be placed on students within the academic setting in ways that may not be present in other disciplines (Black et al., 1992; Grant et al., 2015; Rompf & Royse, 1994; Worsley et al., 2009; Zosky, 2013). Grant et al. (2015) discussed how social work students often report high levels of psychological distress and Worsley et al. (2009) described how social work students often face the "double whammy" (p. 831) of general academic stress combined with the additional challenge of field placement and the competitiveness often associated with it. This stress can be considered a serious concern for social work students (Grant et al., 2015), and similar to research on stress in post-secondary students in general, this can potentially lead students to direct their stress towards their educators in the form of SIC.

In addition to the aforementioned situations, social work students are expected to develop advocacy skills and promote social work's mission in the fight against social injustice and oppressive practices (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; CASW, 2005; Otters, 2013; Wahler & Badger, 2016). Thus, it is not uncommon for students to be encouraged to think critically, question authority, and even respectfully challenge their educators as a way to develop their abilities "to act uncivily to fight against social injustice" (Wahler & Badger, 2016, p. 349). It should be noted that the act of questioning is not inherently the issue. There is a distinct difference between advocating in an appropriate and professional manner and aggressive or bullying-type behaviours. As mentioned earlier, one of the defining characteristics of SIC behaviours is the embedded intent of the student to challenge an

instructor's professional authority, expertise, personal character, and sense of self. Although students may be clumsy as they first develop their advocacy skills, these attempts are not SIC. Admittedly, it may be difficult for students as well as educators to differentiate between behaviours that are meant to be acts of advocacy and behaviours intended to be direct attacks towards educators' teaching acumen, personal character, or identities, but these are substantively different behaviours. This is discussed further later in this chapter.

Narcissism

Although literature suggests there is a correlation between students' propensity to engage in SIC and consumeristic ideals, narcissism has also been cited as a possible contributing factor (Burke et al., 2014; Nordstrom et al., 2009). The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision* (APA, 2022) characterizes narcissism as feelings of entitlement, a desire for "unwarranted" admiration, and a firm belief that one has exceptional or extraordinary attributes (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Those exhibiting narcissistic tendencies often display a lack of empathy towards others and view themselves as deserving of special privileges, even when those privileges are not earned or deserved (Lawrence et al., 2022; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Nordstrom et al., 2009), which can be seen within the academic environment. For example, Nordstrom et al. (2009) found that students with higher scores on the narcissism scale were more likely to "channel their hostility" (p. 3) towards their educator and the academic environment in general. Students exhibiting narcissistic attitudes may struggle to acknowledge how their behaviours affect others, including classmates and educators, or they may not view their actions as problematic (May & Tenzek 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Nordstrom et al., 2009). In addition, students displaying narcissistic characteristics may not respond amiably to feedback or critique by educators, instead deeming these situations as potential threats to their self-image (Lawrence et al., 2022; May & Tenzek 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Nordstrom et al., 2009). This can be particularly challenging for students if they

perceive their performance as deserving higher praise than they received, potentially leading to confrontational and aggressive behaviours towards their educators.

Educator Factors Contributing to SIC

Although students may be implicated in situations involving SIC, the literature suggests this phenomenon may be considered a complex circular process in which both students and educators contribute to its overall occurrence and reinforcement (Alvarez, 2007; Boice, 1996; Connelly, 2009; Lashley & De Meneses, 2001; Rawlins, 2017). As previously discussed, educators' identities may be a factor in SIC. However, they may also contribute to this phenomenon by virtue of their behaviours (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Boice, 1996; East & Chambers, 2007; Robertson, 2012; Sterner et al., 2015. For example, educators who are perceived by students as "distant, cold, and uncaring" (Boice, 1996, p. 464) or those who give the impression that they are disinterested in teaching, responding to students' inquiries, or getting to know their students and their various learning needs are at increased risk of experiencing SIC (Boice, 1996; Clark & Springer, 2007; East & Chambers, 2007). Similarly, educators who criticize students in front of their peers, fail to provide clarity around assignments and class expectations, and appear generally disorganized may also be more susceptible to SIC (Clark & Springer, 2007; Robertson, 2012). Even specific types of teaching methods can contribute to SIC. Educators who are too fast-paced in the delivery of course material, those who deliver what are perceived as being boring lectures, or those who do not continually try to actively engage students in class discussions or activities may be more likely to experience SIC (Boice, 1996; Burke et al., 2014; Clark & Springer, 2007) Additionally, if SICs occurring during class time are not addressed early on, especially at the beginning of the term, educators risk losing the respect and credibility of their students, which may further contribute to situations involving SIC (Boice, 1996; Burke et al., 2014).

Training and Education Regarding SIC

Research indicates that increased training and education to prevent and mitigate SIC is advantageous to educators of all levels, and in fact, many desire these opportunities (Alvarez, 2007; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Connelly, 2009; Korthagen et al., 2006; Lampman et al., 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Seeman, 2009; Sterner et al., 2015. Training on this subject has the potential to aid educators in better understanding the various types of problematic student behaviours that may occur and the resulting impacts, contributing factors, and effective strategies to help prevent and manage SIC in a way that increases educators' self-efficacy, confidence, and sense of empowerment (Connelly, 2009; Lebor, 2017; Lindquist, 2019; Sharplin et al., 2011). Opportunities for educators to engage in the collective sharing of their experiences of SIC as well as effective strategies they have previously used allow them to feel validated, encouraged, supported, and less isolated (Lebor, 2017; Lindquist, 2019; Sharplin et al., 2011). In addition, trainings of this nature can aid in the prevention of "reality shock, support teacher retention, and foster the cultivation of high-quality teachers" (Dicke et al., 2015, p. 8). Decreased incidences of SIC enable educators to direct their attention to the teaching and learning process and positively devote their time and energy to their students (Alvarez, 2007; Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Dicke et al., 2015, Martin, 2006). However, despite the advantages of training and education regarding SIC, many educators at all levels are often ill-equipped to manage and mitigate these types of situations due to a lack of available training and preparation.

What Do We Know About SIC Training Based on K–12 Teacher Training and Educational Programs?

Teacher education training programs are frequently geared towards those entering into the K–12 sector and as such, most of what is known about training related to SIC is found in the K–12 literature. Components of teacher training and education often focus on teacher pedagogy, such as the development of curriculum and lesson plans as well as assessment

methodologies to promote student engagement in the learning process (Borman et al., 2009; Loughran, 2006; Merritt & Wheldall, 1993). Content related to the prevention and mitigation of SIC is rarely included in teacher education programs and even when it is, content tends to be inconsistently dispersed throughout programs rather than being designated as its own entity within the curriculum (Alvarez, 2007; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Greenberg et al., 2014; Woodcock & Reupert, 2017). In addition, according to Evertson and Weinstein (2006), many training programs often position classroom management as a "mechanistic authoritarian orientation that minimizes the importance of positive interpersonal relationships and maximizes control and compliance" (p. 4). As such, many educators believe that the current ideology regarding classroom management needs to shift from that of the implementation of strategies aimed at controlling student behaviours to viewing it as a "resource" with the potential to improve the learning process (Eisenman et al., 2015).

In addition to the inconsistent integration of SIC and classroom management content, most training programs are not research- or evidence-based (Christofferson & Sullivan, 2015; Greenberg et al., 2014; Freeman et al., 2014). In a 2014 report by the National Council on Teacher Quality in the United States, 122 teacher education programs were reviewed across 33 states. Findings indicated that although themes related to classroom management were incorporated into the majority of programs reviewed, the actual amount of time devoted to the subject was only equivalent to eight class periods over the course of an entire program. Additionally, only one third of programs embedded practice activities or opportunities for mentorship and feedback. Similarly, Freeman et al. (2014) examined the number of U.S. states with policies mandating preservice teachers to receive evidence-based training focused on classroom management techniques, as well as how effectively these training programs met the policy requirements. Although most states required accredited teacher education programs to provide some form of training related to the management of student behavioural issues in the classroom, few were evidence-based and related content was often minimally

embedded throughout programs in an inconsistent manner. As a result of these findings, Freeman et al. (2014) suggested that preservice teachers may be ill-equipped to effectively manage student behavioural issues in the classroom due to a lack of consistent and thorough exposure to training and instruction. They are instead often expected to learn on the job (Christofferson & Sullivan, 2015; Freeman et al., 2014, Merritt & Wheldall, 1993). As such, many primary and secondary educators report dissatisfaction with the type and level of training received and therefore do not feel adequately prepared to handle student behavioural issues when they arise (Alvarez, 2007; Eisenman et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 20134; Merritt & Wheldall, 1993; Woodcock & Reupert, 2017).

Post-Secondary Education and Training Related to SIC

Post-secondary educators are frequently hired based on their knowledge and expertise within a given subject area and generally not required to receive training related to the pedagogy of teaching (East & Chambers, 2007; Seeman, 2009; Sterner et al., 2015). In addition, although the literature suggests that the development of clear policies and strategies to prevent and mitigate SIC are beneficial, (Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Connelly, 2009; Lashley & De Meneses, 2001; Rawlins, 2017; Segrist et al., 2018; Wahler & Badger, 2016) post-secondary educators are still less likely to receive training and preparation related to classroom management and SIC as compared to their K–12 counterparts (Asio, 2019; Boice, 1996; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Sterner et al., 2015; Woudstra et al., 2018). This may be in part because many post-secondary academic institutions do not typically recognize or want to acknowledge SIC as a more systemic problem that needs to be managed and as such, there are few training opportunities for educators to learn more about the phenomenon and associated mitigation techniques (Asio, 2019; Boice, 1996; May & Tenzek, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009 Sterner et al., 2015; Woudstra et al., 2018). There is also an assumption that adult students enter into the post-secondary academic sector due to a motivation to learn, and already understand what

constitutes appropriate and mature behaviours and communication. Many new educators are unaware they may encounter this phenomenon. Furthermore, social work education expects students to act in accordance with the CASW (2005) *Code of Ethics* and therefore, SIC would be misaligned with the profession's core values. Thus, educators may be considered disadvantaged in their ability to recognize, understand, and mitigate situations involving SIC, highlighting a significant need for more structured training and education for post-secondary educators from all disciplines, as well as training specific to social work educators.

Current SIC Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

Although post-secondary educators rarely receive training and education related to SIC, current literature does cite several strategies that educators can use to aid in the prevention and mitigation of these types of situations. Both are discussed in turn.

Prevention Strategies

Not all situations involving SIC are avoidable. However, an effective means of dealing with these types of situations may be to prevent them from occurring in the first place, and there are several prevention strategies educators can use as cited in the literature. Research suggests that students who are unclear of expectations may be more likely to engage in confrontational behaviours towards educators (Boice, 1996; Meyers, 2003; Meyers et al., 2006). As such, one commonly cited prevention strategy is for educators to ensure that clear expectations regarding course objectives, assignment guidelines, and classroom and non-class etiquette are established early on using multiple forums (Boice, 1996; Holton, 1999; Meyers, 2003; Meyers et al., 2006; Nordstrom et al., 2009). Moreover, incorporating clear and transparent guidelines and expectations in writing are less likely to produce confrontation with students later in the term (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Boice, 1996; Lebor, 2017; Mahvar et al., 2018; Meyers et al., 2006; Nordstrom et al., 2009). For example, syllabi can be used to outline the educator's specific expectations and guidelines for assignments as well as behavioural expectations both in and outside the classroom setting. These documents

can also include college or university policies such as student code of conduct policies, academic honesty policies, or even behaviour and diversity statements (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Wahler & Badger, 2016). In addition to explicitly stating guidelines and expectations in course outlines and syllabi, related information should be discussed on the first day of class and reinforced throughout the term (Knepp, 2012; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Segrist et al., 2018).

Transparency regarding expectations, guidelines, and policies further aids educators in establishing credibility with students (Boice, 1996; Mahvar et al., 2018) which may lead to decreased incidences of SIC. For instance, providing a rationale for expectations and guidelines allows students to understand the reasoning behind the various expectations as well as the potential consequences for not following them. Boice (1996) first discussed how educators' failure to be clear about expectations as well as their failure to address student behavioural issues quickly and efficiently can lead to decreased credibility in the eyes of students. Once that credibility is lost, it can have negative impacts on the remainder of the term and even the educator's overall professional reputation (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Boice, 1996). Although it is important for the educator to not be viewed as rigid or inflexible, it is also imperative that educators convey a sense of confidence and assertiveness from the start of the course as to what they are and are not willing to accept regarding student behaviour to avoid future incidences of SIC (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Boice, 1996; Holton, 1999).

Including students in the creation of classroom guidelines or class social norms has also been cited as an effective strategy to prevent SIC (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Holton, 1999; Mahvar et al., 2018; Meyers et al., 2006; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Segrist et al., 2018). For example, engaging students in the establishment of class norms can foster a favourable and inclusive classroom atmosphere (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Mahvar et al., 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009). Norms related to behaviours such as tardiness, cell phone usage, and what constitutes respectful (and disrespectful) behaviours, as well as consequences for lack of

adherence to the aforementioned acceptable behaviours can be included. They can also incorporate information regarding the educator's availability and accessibility, as well as how students can effectively and appropriately address questions and concerns pertaining to class content, upcoming assignments, and marks outside of class. There may be an additional benefit to using the class norms to develop into a contract signed by all students and the educator (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Nordstrom et al., 2009). Nordstrom et al. (2009) discussed how the utilization of the contract method could be effective in creating a level of cognitive dissonance in which students may be less likely to engage in SIC in an environment that favours appropriate and professional student and conduct. Furthermore, students may be more likely to be more influenced by their peers' opinion of their behaviours over their educator's (Nordstrom et al., 2009).

Effective SIC prevention strategies also tend to focus on rapport-building between the educator and students, both on an individual and larger classroom basis (Boice, 1996; Holton, 1999; Meyers, 2003; Meyers et al., 2006). As stated earlier in this chapter, educators perceived as warm, engaging, and who care about their students and their success are less likely to experience SIC. For example, Meyers (2003) discussed how demonstrating a sense of immediacy with students, that is, maintaining eye contact, having an open body posture, smiling, as well as conveying expressions of interest, can be an important preventative strategy. He suggested students tend to be more motivated and engaged when they feel a fondness toward their educator. Additionally, strategies such as learning student names and identifying features, arriving to class a few minutes early or staying late to engage in meaningful and often non-class related conversations where possible, or providing additional opportunities to interact with students are all potential strategies to build rapport with students and avoid future encounters with SIC (Boice, 1996; Mahvar et al., 2018; Meyers, 2003).

Along with rapport-building with students, the creation of an inclusive classroom environment and utilization of a dynamic teaching style may also prevent SIC (Boice, 1996; Lebor, 2017; Mahvar et al., 2018; Meyers, 2003). For example, the fostering of a discussion-based learning environment by educators allows students to actively share their insights, experiences, and even struggles in a supportive environment, and decreases potential triggers for SIC to occur (Boice, 1996; Meyers, 2003). Incorporating small and large group activities, case studies and similar practice activities, and the sharing of the educator's own experiences (including ones where the educator made mistakes in practice) can be more motivating and allows students to see the relevance the class material has to their lives and professional practice (Boice, 1996; Meyers, 2003). Some have suggested the utilization of learning goals with students may lead to decreased situations involving SIC (Nordstrom et al., 2009; Wahler & Badger, 2016). For example, students may be more likely to behave in an appropriate and professional manner if they understand how pre-established behavioural standards may apply to their role as professionals which can be reinforced through learning goals (Nordstrom et al., 2009; Wahler & Badger, 2016). Furthermore, Nordstrom et al. (2009) suggests that student learning goals counter some of the consumeristic attitudes students frequently enter into post-secondary programs with, as they place more emphasis on the importance of developing and mastering skills rather than being grade-focused.

Specific to social work, Wahler and Badger (2016) suggested that engaging students in a discussion regarding the profession's code of ethics and core values and competencies may help to decrease SIC. For instance, social work educators have opportunities to model appropriate and professional behaviour in their interactions with students and reinforce the importance of acting in a way that is in accordance with social work values and ethics. Furthermore, students may be less likely to engage in SIC if they are able to understand the connection between how SIC behaviour misaligns with professional standards. Wahler and Badger (2016) suggested student actions such as plagiarism and other types of academic

honesty violations can also be framed within the context of integrity in social work. Integrity in professional practice is one of the core values in social work (CASW, 2005; NASW, 2021) and as such, educators can discuss how academic honesty violations demonstrate a lack of professional integrity. Educators can establish the classroom and overall academic environment as one similar to what students might find in a professional setting, students may be less likely to engage in inappropriate behaviours towards their peers and educators. Finally, seeking out students who appear to be struggling academically or emotionally to individually discuss their situation and possible solutions can help them feel supported and avoid issues later in the term (Mahvar et al., 2018; Meyers, 2003; Meyers et al., 2006).

Mitigation Strategies

Even when various preventative strategies are implemented, educators may still be confronted with SIC both in and outside the classroom setting. As discussed earlier in the chapter, addressing situations right away is important for educators to establish credibility and reduce the chance that the situation will escalate (Boice, 1996; Holton, 1999; Segrist et al., 2018). However, where and when the situation is addressed can impact the overall outcome (Holton, 1999; Lebor, 2017; Mahvar et al., 2018). Some situations may benefit from being addressed in the classroom as they occur. For example, if a student is continually disruptive, reminding the entire class of the pre-established class norms can convey assertiveness in the educator while avoiding embarrassing the student and increasing the potential for more confrontational interactions (Holton, 1999; Mahvar et al., 2018; Segrist et al., 2018). In some situations, the student may need to be addressed directly in the class, especially as that not only establishes further credibility with other students and reinforces what types of behaviours will and will not be tolerated (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Mahvar et al., 2018; Segrist et al., 2018).

Many situations may be more constructive if addressed privately to ensure confidentiality. Moreover, if the student exhibits strong emotions, the literature suggests it

may be best to schedule a meeting at a later time when both the student and educator can address the situation calmly and constructively (Holton, 1999; Meyers, 2003; Meyers et al., 2006; Segrist et al., 2018). Once the meeting is established, the educator should be clear as to what the student's specific concerns are to ensure they fully understand what the issues are (Holton, 1999; Lebor, 2017; Mahvar et al., 2018; Meyers, 2003). The literature also suggests that validating the student's concerns and conveying that the educator desires to work with the student to identify solutions can aid in diffusing the situation (Holton, 1999; Lebor, 2017; Mahvar et al., 2018; Meyers, 2003). In addition, the educator should also be clear regarding the rationale for their position where applicable, as well as the type of behaviour that will not be tolerated throughout the meeting (Holton, 1999; Meyers, 2003).

Once the educator is clear regarding the student's perspectives, attempts to resolve the issue should be discussed, and where appropriate, students should be involved in brainstorming possible solutions to allow for the development of an action plan (Holton, 1999; Meyers et al., 2006). It is important for students to be clear as to the steps of the action plan, as well as the consequences for not adhering to the plan (Holton, 1999). Furthermore, students should also be provided with additional resources where appropriate, such as counselling or student success services referrals. Following the meeting, the educator should both document their interactions based on institutional protocol and send a follow-up email to the student clearly outlining the details of the meeting and expectations of both the student and educator as outlined in the action plan (Holton, 1999, Lebor, 2017). It may also be beneficial for educators to schedule a follow-up meeting or check in with the student at a later date, providing positive feedback when improvement is noticed (Holton, 1999; Meyers, 2003). Finally, consulting with other colleagues, supervisors, and additional supports throughout the process can be useful in receiving the necessary support and guidance to effectively mitigate the situation.

Inconsistencies and Gaps in the Current Literature

It is evident from the literature that situations involving SIC exist at all academic levels (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; deWet, 2010; Lampman et al., 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry, 1998; Wahler & Badger, 2016; Woudstra et al., 2018). These situations can impact educators both personally and professionally while also affecting students and the overall classroom environment (Abraham et al., 2022; Ahmed, 2021; Cassidy et al., 2017; DeSouza & Fansler, 2003; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018; Morrissette, 2001; Rawlins, 2017; Robertson, 2012). In addition, although there is no specific cause for the existence of this phenomenon, several contributing factors have been cited. However, there are definitive gaps and inconsistencies in the current literature including inconsistencies in terminology as well as methodological inconsistencies.

Inconsistencies in Terminology

As stated previously, several terms are used in the literature to describe the phenomenon of SIC and the continuum of behaviours associated with the phenomenon. Much of the current post-secondary literature focuses on the less severe side of the continuum, such as rude and disruptive classroom behaviours, (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boice, 1996; Boysen, 2012; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Sterner et al., 2015; Wahler & Badger, 2016) suggesting additional research focused on the more severe behaviours, such as hostile, threatening and violent acts of aggression is needed. An additional challenge is that much of the current research does not address the subjective nature of the educator's experiences. How educators experience SIC may in fact be influenced by how they define that experience (again returning back to the issues raised by the multiplicity of terms used in the literature) and by the specific term they use to frame it. For example, one educator may label their experience of SIC as bullying, and another experiencing something similar may use the term annoyance. Alberts et al. (2010)

explained this variance well when they suggested educators who feel secure in their roles may be more likely to view situations involving SIC as a "laughable event" while those who already feel marginalized within their institution may experience "significant discomfort" (p. 457) due to concerns about the negative implications those situations may have on their careers. Likewise, some educators may use terms such as racism, sexism, discrimination, or oppression to describe their experiences by virtue of their social location and identities.

Inconsistencies in terminology can have implications on participant recruitment in related research. For instance, using specific terms such as incivility or bullying may limit or prevent certain educators from choosing to participate in various research studies, as they may not identify with the term used in that study, despite having actually experienced the phenomenon. It is also possible that some educators may not feel comfortable admitting they experienced bullying by their students or characterizing themselves as victims for fear that their colleagues and leadership will perceive them as weak and ineffective in their roles (Agervold, 2007). Thus, it is difficult to know whether certain studies would have been able to elicit a larger or more diverse participant sample had different terminology been used, particularly in larger, quantitative studies. For this reason, using a broader and more encompassing term, such as SIC has its advantages.

Methodological Inconsistencies

Methodological approaches illustrated in the current literature indicate inconsistencies as well as gaps, particularly related to sampling procedures and the identified purpose of the study. For example, although data from certain studies represent a broader geographical sample across several institutions (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Cassidy et al., 2017; Wahler & Badger, 2016), most are either limited to one institution (Asio, 2019; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boice, 1996; Lampman et al., 2009; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Nordstrom et al., 2009) or across one specific school division (de Wet & Jacobs, 2006; Ozkilic & Kartal, 2012; Pervin & Turner, 1998; Terry,

1998; Woudstra et al., 2018). As such, it is uncertain as to whether different findings would have resulted if a wider geographical sample had been used across multiple institutions. In addition, it is possible that the nature of this subject area may influence whether an educator will decide to participate in a study or not. According to McKay et al. (2008), educators who have not only experienced SIC but experienced a lack of support and guidance from leadership may be more likely to participate in a study of this nature, as it may allow them to feel they have a safe and anonymous platform to share their experiences and feel a sense of validation they may not previously had access to. Additionally, since several studies used snowball sampling to recruit participants, those who volunteered to participate might already share similar experiences, values, and attitudes with other participants, which could have influenced the findings (May & Tenzek, 2018). Conversely, McKay et al. (2008) posited that some educators may actually be apprehensive about participating in a study pertaining to SIC for fear their anonymity may be compromised leading to potential future professional ramifications.

Finally, in each of the studies reviewed, “male” and “female” were the only terms used to identify gender among participants. This may have prevented individuals who are not comfortable identifying themselves within the binary gender construct from participating in a study if that was their only choice of identifying terms. Future studies would benefit from allowing participants to choose how they would like to be identified, acknowledging that some individuals may not subscribe to any particular gender terminology. It may be that educators who do not identify within the binary gender construct may be at greater risk for experiencing SIC (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Pittman, 2010; Tisdell, 1993).

Gaps in the Current Literature

As previously discussed, research within the post-secondary academic sector is limited as compared to the K–12 setting (Ausbrooks et al., 2011 Bartlett & Bartlett, 2016; Misawa, 2010; Seeman, 2009) and even less data pertaining to social work education exists

among the literature. As a result, social work educators may not be adequately trained or prepared to mitigate SIC. Thus, more research is needed to better understand how this phenomenon exists specifically within post-secondary social work education and what the specific identified needs of social work educators are in mitigating these types of situations both personally and professionally. In addition, as previously mentioned, the current literature is deficient in highlighting the depth of educators' experiences in their own words, the ways in which they are affected, and how their institutional leadership's response contributes to those experiences. Part of this may be due to the existence of larger numbers of quantitative survey-based studies that do not allow for a more in-depth exploration of educator's experiences with SIC as well as the effects those student behaviours and leadership's response can have. This may also be because the student perspective regarding SIC is often represented more frequently than, or in addition to, the educator perspective (Asio, 2019; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Sterner et al., 2015), limiting the ability to further understand this phenomenon from the educator's viewpoint. In addition, less research exists related to the more severe, aggressive, and violent student behaviours educators may experience as compared to incivility research. As such, more research is needed to not only better understand the experiences and impacts more severe behaviours may have on educators, but to also identify the resources, strategies, and policies that could both support educators and potentially mitigate SIC. Engaging in further qualitative research using a more all-encompassing term like SIC allows social work educators to have the opportunity to provide a more in-depth account of their experiences and the perceived impacts. In addition, the hope is that educators from other disciplines can also benefit from this research and feel they have a voice and opportunities to be more supported and equipped to handle SIC in their own work.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a review of the current literature related to SIC in post-secondary education. The literature was reviewed within the context of the research question and its associated elements. The first part of the chapter reviewed the literature related to the theoretical underpinnings of the study as well as how power and oppression may be a factor in SIC. The second part of the chapter provided a comprehensive review of empirical studies related to the nature and prevalence of SIC, and literature pertaining to the pedagogy of teacher education and classroom management was explored. The numerous detrimental personal and professional impacts of SIC on educators was presented as were the various contributing factors to SIC including consumerism, student mental health issues, lack of student preparation, technology, and educators' identities. How institutional leadership's responses to educator reports was discussed, particularly how educators frequently do not feel supported or do not feel comfortable reporting due to fears of being perceived as ineffective in managing SIC. This chapter concluded with a discussion pertaining to training and education related to teaching pedagogy and SIC, and provided an analysis of the gaps and inconsistencies in the existing literature as they relate to this study. The next chapter discusses the research design and methodological considerations used in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to understand the essence of SIC as experienced by post-secondary social work educators in Canada, and what they identified as potential mitigators both inside and outside the classroom environment. A qualitative design was used, drawing on Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological approach. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to share their experiences with SIC guided by the following five elements:

- How SIC are experienced by post-secondary social work educators
- How social work educators name their experience
- The training and educational needs of social work educators in relation to SIC
- The institutional response to situations involving SIC
- Implications for social work education

This chapter describes the research design and methodological considerations used for the study. I first explain the rationale for choosing a qualitative research design and more specifically, Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological approach. I then discuss my positionality as a researcher as well as the theoretical perspectives that informed this study. This is followed by a discussion of the research methods used, including the sampling and recruitment strategies and the data collection and data analysis processes. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the considerations taken to ensure this study was ethically sound.

Research Design and Method

Qualitative Research Approach Rationale

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) posited that selecting a research approach should be based on the research problem, purpose, and questions the researcher desires to answer. Therefore, it was of paramount importance to develop a research design that was valid,

reliable, and trustworthy. In addition, how a study is positioned as well as the positionality of the researcher provides the foundation to support the research findings. Consistent with the purpose of my study, which was to more fully comprehend the essence of SICs as experienced by social work educators, this study used a qualitative research approach, for the reasons outlined below.

The purpose of qualitative research is to "empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45) between the researcher and participants that may occur during the research process. Whereas quantitative studies are rooted in positivist ideology in which the scientific method and the generation of unbiased, precise, and generalizable statistical results are emphasized, qualitative research is founded upon a constructivist and interpretive perspective in which subjectivity is centred to encourage more in-depth understandings of the meanings of human experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rubin & Babbie, 2017). In addition, qualitative studies aim to understand the deeper meaning associated with a particular problem or phenomenon using both inductive and deductive analysis to establish patterns and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018, Rubin & Babbie, 2017).

As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature suggests an increase in incidences of SIC. However, current studies tend to use quantitative methods and rarely provide a platform allowing educators to voice their experiences in an in-depth manner. In addition, much of the current literature explores the student perspective regarding SIC, whereas there is limited research focusing on educators' experiences and their identified needs to help mitigate these types of situations. There is even less research devoted specifically to social work educators' experiences with this phenomenon. As such, using a qualitative approach allowed for the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives. The sharing of their narratives has the potential to raise awareness about this phenomenon,

which may facilitate the development of improved training and support structures that have the potential to benefit both educators and students alike.

Descriptive Phenomenology

Several qualitative research approaches could have been used to centre the participants' voices to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with SIC. For example, narrative research involves the collection of in-depth stories regarding the lived experiences of a finite number of participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018) and grounded theory uses participants' own narratives in additional to social processes, actions, and interactions that have been methodically collected and analyzed with the primary goal of generating a theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although both would have been sound methodological choices for my study, because my primary interest was to more fully understand the essence of a phenomenon (SIC) by way of participant narratives, a phenomenological approach more fully aligned with the goals of the study. Phenomenology still elicits participant narratives, yet goes beyond the retelling of stories to illustrate the commonalities associated with a specific phenomenon. Although the overarching goal of phenomenological research is not to generate a theory, findings still have the potential to contribute towards the development of a theory, which is important given the limited data regarding this topic, particularly in social work.

Founded by Husserl (1913/1982) as a countermovement to positivist research, phenomenology is primarily concerned with the study of personal experiences and looks to describe or interpret a common meaning or phenomenon experienced by multiple individuals (Beck, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Vagle, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenological researchers collect data from participants who have experienced a particular phenomenon in order to develop a "composite description of the essence of the experience" (p. 75). Not only does this description emphasize *what* the participants experienced but also *how* they experienced it.

Although there are multiple phenomenological research approaches, phenomenology is generally categorized as either descriptive or interpretive. Descriptive phenomenology, most associated with Husserl (1913/1982), emphasizes the "direct exploration, analysis, and description of a particular human phenomenon as free as possible from unexamined pre-suppositions, aiming at maximum intuitive presentation" (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2014, p. 24). In other words, the role of the researcher in descriptive phenomenology is to describe the essence of an experience based on the data presented. Interpretive phenomenology, also known as hermeneutic phenomenology, is associated with Heidegger (1994/2005) and seeks to elicit a deeper understanding of an experience to uncover hidden meanings within those experiences (Beck, 2021; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2014; Vagle, 2018).

I initially considered using an interpretive phenomenological approach for this study – more specifically, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA draws from phenomenological, hermeneutic, and idiographic principles, emphasizing how individuals perceive and make meaning of their world, and researchers then attempt to interpret and make sense of those meanings (Smith & Osborn, 2007). However, as the data collection process in IPA can generate vast amounts of data which can be overwhelming and exhaustive, particularly for a novice researcher (Alase, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018), it was recommended that I explore more structured types of phenomenology for my study. Because several types of descriptive as well as interpretive phenomenological research approaches exist, this can frequently lead to what Beck (2021) calls "method slurring" in which researchers combine various aspects of the different approaches, lessening methodological rigour. Thus, it was important to be clear about what type of phenomenological approach was going to be used and to ensure it was followed consistently throughout the process. As such, Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive methodological approach was used. This type of phenomenological approach is beneficial when data are limited and information known about a given issue, and the primary purpose of the research is to understand the most essential

meaning of a particular phenomenon from the participants' perspective. As there has been limited research highlighting the depth of post-secondary social work educators' experiences with the phenomenon of SIC, Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive method provided the opportunity to glean new information regarding the fundamental structures of this phenomenon.

Colaizzi's Seven-Step Method

Although descriptive phenomenology was founded by Husserl (1913/1982) more recently, it is often associated with Giorgi's (1985) methodological approach in which the researcher engages in the process of reduction and bracketing in order to be fully present with the participants and data collected. Giorgi (1985) understood the researcher's goal to be the exploration and understanding of the structure of the phenomenon being studied rather than the individual experience (Beck, 2021; Morrow et al., 2015; Vagle, 2018). Under the supervision of Giorgi, Colaizzi (1978) modified the approach to develop his own seven-step method, adding a process of returning to the participants to validate that the findings are accurate and credible (Beck, 2021; Edward & Welch, 2011; Vagle, 2018). This was considered quite controversial at that time. Colaizzi's (1978) method offers clear and sequential steps for the data analysis process, and is considered a rigorous and robust methodological approach that allows for increased reliability, dependability, and credibility (Beck, 2021; Edward & Welch, 2011; Morrow et al., 2015).

Researcher Positionality

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers consistently bring their various experiences, beliefs, and philosophical assumptions to their research, and it is these assumptions that guide their actions throughout the research process. This study drew from a constructivist epistemological perspective. Constructivist philosophy asserts that learning is an active process in which meaning and understanding is constructed through an individual's lived experiences and the process of reflecting on those experiences (Adom et al., 2016; Amineh & Asl, 2015). As such, these constructions are subjective representations of reality

that are unique to each individual. In this study, the participants had their own constructions of SIC that derived from their previous knowledge and experiences. However, as constructivist researchers position themselves within their work, their experiences, values, and attitudes influence how they engage in the research process and interpret the participants' narratives. Thus, it is important to acknowledge how I am positioned within my research.

As the daughter of an elementary school teacher, I was raised to value education. My mother impressed upon me the importance of respecting not only teachers and educators in leadership positions, but those in supportive roles, such as janitorial workers and administrative staff, as she firmly believed they were the backbone of a school. As such, although I may not have always agreed with or understood my teachers, professors, or educational staff, I consistently tried to maintain a respectful demeanor and acknowledge their position of authority. The idea of acting in a hostile, aggressive, or threatening manner would not have crossed my mind at any point during my academic journey in large part because of the values my mother instilled in me. However, during the latter part of my mother's career, she experienced increasingly challenging behaviours from her students, yet did not receive the kind of guidance and support from parents, colleagues, and leadership that she had hoped for and even expected. It is only since becoming an educator myself and embarking on this research that I have come to truly understand how deeply those experiences negatively impacted her both personally and professionally, and how they can impact other educators as well.

Until this past year, I was employed in a full-time educator role as the Program Chair of an undergraduate social work program at a local college. Early on in this role, I became the recipient of SICs both as the chair and as a course instructor. In addition, I engaged in numerous discussions with my own faculty and other colleagues who shared their own similar experiences with SIC. I now know firsthand how SIC can negatively affect educators on a personal and professional level. Similar to many participant experiences, I too, have

experienced anxiety, worry, and sleepless nights related to these encounters, and I have often reflected on how my own motivation, teaching style, and communication with students has changed over the years as a result of situations involving SIC. I also understand how disappointing and disheartening it can be to feel dismissed by leadership, or to be told these situations involving SIC are more of a classroom management issue, suggesting my team and I are incompetent in our roles as educators. This has been especially challenging for me as creating a safe space for clients, staff, and now students to ask questions, voice concerns, grapple with difficult concepts, and receive guidance has always been of the utmost importance to me. However, over time, I increasingly struggled not only with my own feelings around my experiences with SIC, but also with feeling I no longer had the ability to fully support and advocate for my team. It was through these experiences and hearing the stories of other educators that my interest in learning more about this phenomenon emerged with hopes that raising awareness about SIC will lead to the development of improved training and support structures for both student and educators alike.

When I initially started this research process, I viewed the increase in SIC as a response to a changing culture which condones entitlement, consumerism, and other forms of neoliberalism in academia. However, I have come to realize that this phenomenon is much more complex, and that issues of oppression and discrimination are other potential contributors. Acknowledging how researchers' beliefs, values, and experiences may influence all aspects of the research process, and it is also important to be aware of how their social position including gender, race, class, and immigration status may also influence the research experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Growing up as a White American female in an affluent Connecticut suburb outside of Manhattan afforded me numerous privileges as well as opportunities to advance my education that others living in a different type of environment may not have had. Conversely, as a female educator, I have experienced gender discrimination, particularly by students. I have been disrespected, dismissed, and have had

my credentials questioned by male students more than my male faculty counterparts regardless of their rank. However, my identity as a White, cisgender, and heterosexual female still affords me a status and privilege that educators possessing non-dominant identities do not always have. Understanding my own positionality in relation to my research topic was an important consideration in the participant recruitment process and how I interpreted the data. As such, it was necessary to take the appropriate steps to ensure that I engaged in bracketing to avoid allowing my own experiences and associated values to interfere with the research.

In phenomenological research, researchers engage in the process of *bracketing* in which they identify and acknowledge their own personal experiences with the phenomenon being studied, which is then set aside to focus on the experiences of the participants (Beck, 2021, Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike certain other methodological approaches, phenomenology allows for researchers to insert their own experiences into the research process, encouraging the readers to decide whether the researcher was able to separate themselves from their experiences to fully focus on those of the participants (Beck, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Colaizzi's (1978) approach calls for researchers to identify and interrogate their pre-suppositions, attitudes, and beliefs related to the phenomenon being studied prior to the data collection process, as they can interfere with both the data collection and analysis processes. Researchers are encouraged to reflect on questions such as why they seek to study a particular phenomenon and how might their values or pre-suppositions bias how and what is being investigated (Colaizzi, 1978). However, Colaizzi (1978) also acknowledged that it is not possible for researchers to bracket completely, and it is more important for researchers to have awareness of their pre-suppositions and attitudes in order to be fully present within the participant experience.

Because I have experienced the phenomenon of SIC as an educator, there was the potential that I would allow those experiences to influence how I engaged with the participants, as well as how I interpreted and analyzed the collected data. As such, it was

important to engage in reflexive practice throughout the research process to ensure that my own experiences did not overshadow those of the participants, or that I did not construct themes that were not actually present. To that end, I maintained a methodology journal throughout the research process. Because the majority of interviews took place following my workday, prior to each interview, I took some time to reflect on how I was feeling going into the interview and assessed whether there were aspects of my day that could be potential interferences with the process. Following each interview, I spent time reflecting and recording notes on thoughts, opinions, and feelings that emerged before, during, and after the interview process. This was especially beneficial as I was experiencing several of my own challenges similar to those experienced by many participants, and wanted to ensure that I was fully present and focused on their experiences instead of comparing them to my own. In addition, I also used the process of member checking (described below) to ensure that I accurately reflected their narratives, and I engaged in regular dialogue and review with my PhD supervisor and members of my supervisory committee throughout the research process.

Theoretical Orientation: Power and Oppression as a Factor in SIC

Turner (1995) defines theory as an "organized body of concepts that attempt to explain some aspect of reality in a manner that has been or is capable of being verified in an acceptable empirical manner, [and that] responsible and accountable" (p. 2258) research is the result of the presence of a strong theoretical foundation. This study is founded upon the assumption that academic institutions may be viewed as oppressive structures towards both students and educators, potentially contributing to the rise of situations involving SIC. As discussed in Chapter 2, post-secondary academic institutions may be viewed as neoliberal entities that serve to reinforce a culture of White dominance and privilege (Collins & Bilge, 2016). The literature suggests that students with non-dominant identities are more likely targets of discrimination, harassment, and exclusion by their peers and educators (Kumashiro, 2000; Mullaly, 2002; Misawa, 2010, 2015) and educators with non-dominant identities are

more likely targets of workplace bullying, discrimination, and even SIC. These types of hegemonic institutions constrain and shape relationships and interactions, and often create unequal power relations such as student-educator relationships, that are reinforced by institutional policies and procedures. Given that the phenomenon under study takes place within and across academic institutions, and previous research has revealed that individuals with intersecting levels of oppression are often over-represented within SIC's, it was important that the theoretical orientations chosen within the study could help to illuminate these facets. As such, this study drew from AOP and intersectionality theoretical perspectives, particularly within a social work context.

AOP

AOP theory is rooted in various social movements (Campbell, 2003) and draws upon anti-racist, post-structural, and post-modern theories of practice (Mullaly, 2002; Yee & Wagner, 2013) as a response to the struggles of those who possess non-dominant identities in order to challenge power structures and systems of oppression (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). Tisdell (1993) postulated that one of the primary objectives of educational institutions is to "pass on the values, the knowledge base, and the ideology of dominant culture" (p. 203). Similarly, Collins and Bilge (2016) perceived academia as entities that "oppress and liberate" (p. 164) while reproducing neo-liberalistic assumptions and reinforcing a culture of White dominance and privilege.

As power dynamics are ever-present within education, those who are thought of as having the most power, privilege, and authority in society based on race, gender, class, and other interlocking forms of oppression are generally considered to have the most power within academic institutions (Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Kumashiro, 2000; Mullaly, 2002; Pittman, 2010; Tisdell, 1993). For example, although educators are often viewed as commanding a level of power, privilege, and authority, those with non-dominant identities are more likely to be recipients of harassing, discriminatory, and oppressive practices from

not only colleagues and administrators, but by their students (Alberts et al., 2010; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Misawa, 2010; Sallée & Diaz, 2013; Tisdell, 1993), especially as the student-teacher dynamic has shifted in recent years (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970). In addition, as the North American educational system and curricula, including social work education, is founded upon dominant Western and colonial ideologies, there is an expectation that students who have non-dominant identities must conform to the mainstream culture to be successful (Kumashiro, 2000; Mullaly, 2002). Thus, they may struggle to see themselves represented within the content taught (Yee & Wagner, 2013) or are more subject to racist and discriminatory practices (Kumashiro, 2000; Misawa, 2010).

Intersectionality

Although oppression may be considered a present entity in higher education and more specifically, social work education, it is also important to examine the various ways in which different forms of oppression intersect. Intersectionality examines how various forms of oppression, such as racism, cis-genderism, patriarchy, heterosexism, and non-dominant identities intersect and interlock as a way to fight for the rights of those being impacted (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Although the concept of intersectionality is rooted in the Black Feminist movement in the 1960's and 1970's, it has evolved into a mainstream conceptualization that has broadened to include all persons impacted by a position of oppression. Crenshaw revisited the concept of intersectionality in the late 1980's. Crenshaw (1991) postulated that although identity politics have certain advantages in that they may serve as a source of strength and intellectual development within certain communities, "intragroup differences" are often ignored or conflated (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). As such, by placing significance on the most privileged members of a particular group, the oppression and marginalization experienced by those who are "multiply-burdened" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140) is continually reinforced.

In academia, both students and educators possess multiple identities. Although diversity within the academy can significantly benefit the student experience and the institution as a whole, students possessing non-dominant identities are also more likely to be targets of bullying, harassment, and discrimination, not only by their peers but by their educators as well. For example, female students and students of colour are often subject to ethnic prejudices, stereotypes, and/or racist and sexist ideologies exhibited by educators as compared to their White male counterparts in that they are either ignored more frequently or they are considered to have lesser abilities (Kumashiro, 2000). They are also less likely to receive educational funding, research assistant positions, or fellowships as compared to White male students (Walkington, 2017).

Although students with non-dominant identities may experience oppression, educators may also be targets of oppression and discrimination by virtue of their identities. The literature suggests academia remains male-dominated. Female educators, particularly those who are persons of colour, continue to be underrepresented, are often paid less, and are less likely to secure full-time, tenure-track, or administrative positions as compared to their White male counterparts (Edwards et al., 2008; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Sallée & Diaz, 2013; Walkington, 2017). Educators identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ also tend to be targets of bullying and discriminatory practices by colleagues and leadership who are heterosexual and subscribe to heteronormative ideologies (Misawa, 2010, 2015; Sallée & Diaz, 2013). However, those who do not represent the dominant image of what students visualize post-secondary educators to look like are more likely to have their credentials and credibility questioned (Alberts et al., 2010; Alexander-Snow, 2004; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; May & Tenzek, 2018; Rodriguez, 2009; Zhang et al., 2011). They are also more likely to experience various levels of uncivil and confrontational behaviours by students solely by virtue of who they are and/or what they look like (Alexander-Snow, 2004; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Zhang et al., 2011). Because this study not only focused on post-secondary social work educators'

experiences with SIC but also explored their experiences with reporting and the responses received by colleagues and leadership, it was important to understand how the participants' identities as well as systemic oppression within the academy contributed to their perceptions of this phenomenon.

Methodology

Sampling and Recruitment Strategies: Sample Size

Prior to the start of this research study, a sampling plan was developed outlining the sampling method, sampling size, and recruitment process. In phenomenological research, participants are generally sampled deliberately based on their ability to provide sufficient data and information to more fully understand the phenomenon being studied, and inclusion and exclusion criteria may be adjusted as needed based on initial findings that emerge (Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Additionally, sample sizes generally range from 1 to 25 participants, depending on the form of phenomenology being used (Alase, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2007). However, although Colaizzi (1978) posited that sample sizes will vary depending on various factors including the richness of data shared by individual participants, he suggested 12 participants as an average number. As such, my initial plan was to sample approximately 12 to 15 participants, and 15 were sampled in total.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Unlike some other research approaches, the objective in phenomenological research is not to generalize or indicate that the sample represents a broader population. Instead, participants should be selected based on their ability to present the most in-depth and rich data pertaining to the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Criterion sampling is frequently associated with phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018), and was the sampling method used for this study. Criterion sampling is the process of selecting participants who meet pre-determined criteria related to their shared experiences with a specific phenomenon (Creswell

& Poth, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Thus, the selected participants needed to meet the following inclusion criteria:

- 18 years of age or older,
- Past or present experience as a post-secondary social work educator in Canada, and
- Experience with SIC at some point in their career as a post-secondary social work educator.

Participants would be excluded from participation if they had been or were currently involved in any type of supervisory relationship with myself or any member of my supervisory committee, or if any other type of conflict of interest existed between them and myself, including potential candidates with whom I had a close personal relationship and past or present clinical clients. Additionally, if during the actual data collection process, it became clear from the participant's answers to the interview questions that their motivation to participate in the study was a way to exercise a personal vendetta or revenge against other persons and/or their institution, I would have ended the interview. All material and information collected up until that point would have been excluded, and all participant information would have been destroyed. The participant would not have been informed that their data were to be excluded from the study to avoid risk of the participant becoming distressed or potentially escalating the situation during or following the interview. Fortunately, this never actually occurred.

Participant Recruitment

To elicit the participant sample, a recruitment flyer and recruitment information invitation (see Appendix A and Appendix B) were developed outlining the purpose and intent of the study, what SIC may include, the criteria to participate in the study, expectations of the participants, and my contact information. In addition, mention was made of a $20 Amazon.ca gift card that would be emailed to all participants, following their interview. Because this study focused on post-secondary social work educators' experiences with SIC, college and

university social work programs across Canada were targeted as a primary recruitment source. A list of post-secondary social work programs and their associated deans and directors was compiled following a comprehensive online search, and the recruitment documents were then sent as individual emails to those contacts from approximately 36 schools. Additionally, the recruitment documents were emailed to provincial professional social work associations requesting that the information be shared through online communications and newsletters. Snowball sampling was also permitted, allowing either participants or those viewing the recruitment information to pass it along to other colleagues who they knew had experienced SIC.

Although my contact information included both my phone number and email, all interest in participating in the study came directly through email. An email response was then sent back to first confirm that the potential participants met the criteria. This was important as a surprising number of inquiries did not meet the criteria. A large number of practicum supervisors from one geographical area reached out expressing interest in participating in the study. It was later discovered that one institution not only sent the recruitment information to social work faculty, but to their list of social work practicum supervisors as well, rendering significant interest from supervisors. Although this is clearly an area for future research, practicum supervisors were excluded from participating in this particular study.

Once it was determined that criteria were met, the individual was emailed a copy of the Informed Consent Form, (see Appendix C). All potential participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and schedule an additional informational phone call. As part of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2; Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2018) requirements, the informed consent form needed to be signed and returned prior to the scheduled interview.

Criterion sampling requires that participants meet specific criteria justified by the research question and purpose, and the TCPS2 (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2018) also cites that the participant recruitment process must be fair and equitable. As this study draws from AOP and intersectionality theoretical perspectives, and there was a possibility that some participants may have been targets of SIC due to interlocking systems of oppression and possessing non-dominant identities, it was imperative to select participants representing diverse backgrounds including gender, race, sexual identities, age, geographical area, and teaching experience to determine if those identities emerged into possible phenomenological themes. Selecting a broad range of participants also helped to ensure that I was not re-centring dominant voices from a solely White-centred lens (including my own). As such, a total of 15 participants were selected representing a diverse set of identities and geographical backgrounds.

Data Collection

There are multiple avenues to collect data in phenomenological research including focus groups and interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Although focus groups have several advantages and may have yielded beneficial information related to SIC, because the study's topic correlates to a sensitive employment-related issue, there was a high potential for a conflict-of-interest situation to occur. Because of the smaller number of post-secondary social work programs in Canada as compared to the United States or other similar nations, it was very likely that participants might have previous knowledge of one another, compromising confidentiality and ultimately leading to negative professional implications for some. As such, interviews were used as the source of data collection for this study.

Open-ended interviews are one of the most frequently used methods of qualitative data collection because of their capacity to yield in-depth information in ways that other methods do not (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, Colaizzi

(1978) favoured interviews as the most effective method due to their ability to provide the richest data. Colaizzi (1978) used the term *dialogue interviews*, emphasizing the need for the researcher to be attune and present to not only what the participants verbalize, but to their nonverbal behaviours and subtle nuances of speech (Beck, 2021; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Furthermore, as research has been cited as being rooted in oppression and colonization, particularly in relation to the power relations existing between the researcher and participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), Colaizzi (1978) argued for the dismantling of hierarchical structures that are often present within the research process in order for an interview to be considered dialogical. As such, open-ended interviews were the method of collecting data for this study.

Rubin and Babbie (2017) identified three types of open-ended qualitative interviews: informal conversational interviews, the general interview guide approach, and standardized open-ended interviews. The informal conversation interview is considered the most open-ended interview and tends to occur as an unplanned interaction between the interviewer and participant during the course of fieldwork observation (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). No pre-determined sets of questions are developed the participant may not realize the interaction they are having with the interviewer is part of an actual interview (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). This study adopted the general interview guide approach and standardized open-ended interviews. Although this approach used a pre-determined list of interview questions, unlike other more structured and standardized interviews in which all participants are asked the exact same questions in the same sequence, the interview guide approach afforded me the opportunity to adjust the wording and sequencing of questions based on the individual participant's responses.

Aligning with Creswell and Poth (2018), the research question and associated elements were used to inform the interview guide (see Appendix D). The interview guide consisted of eight demographic informational questions (e.g., race, age, gender, geographical

location, teaching information, etc.) and 10 formalized open-ended questions. Because of the desire to elicit participants from a broad range of geographical locations as well as the continued presence of COVID-19 at the time of data collection, all interviews took place virtually using my Zoom Business (https://zoom.us) account and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Participants were encouraged to choose a time and location that ensured their privacy and confidentiality would be maintained. I conducted all interviews from my home office which was private and well sound-proofed. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed using the Zoom Business platform. I also took notes, particularly of the words and phrases that stood out as significant.

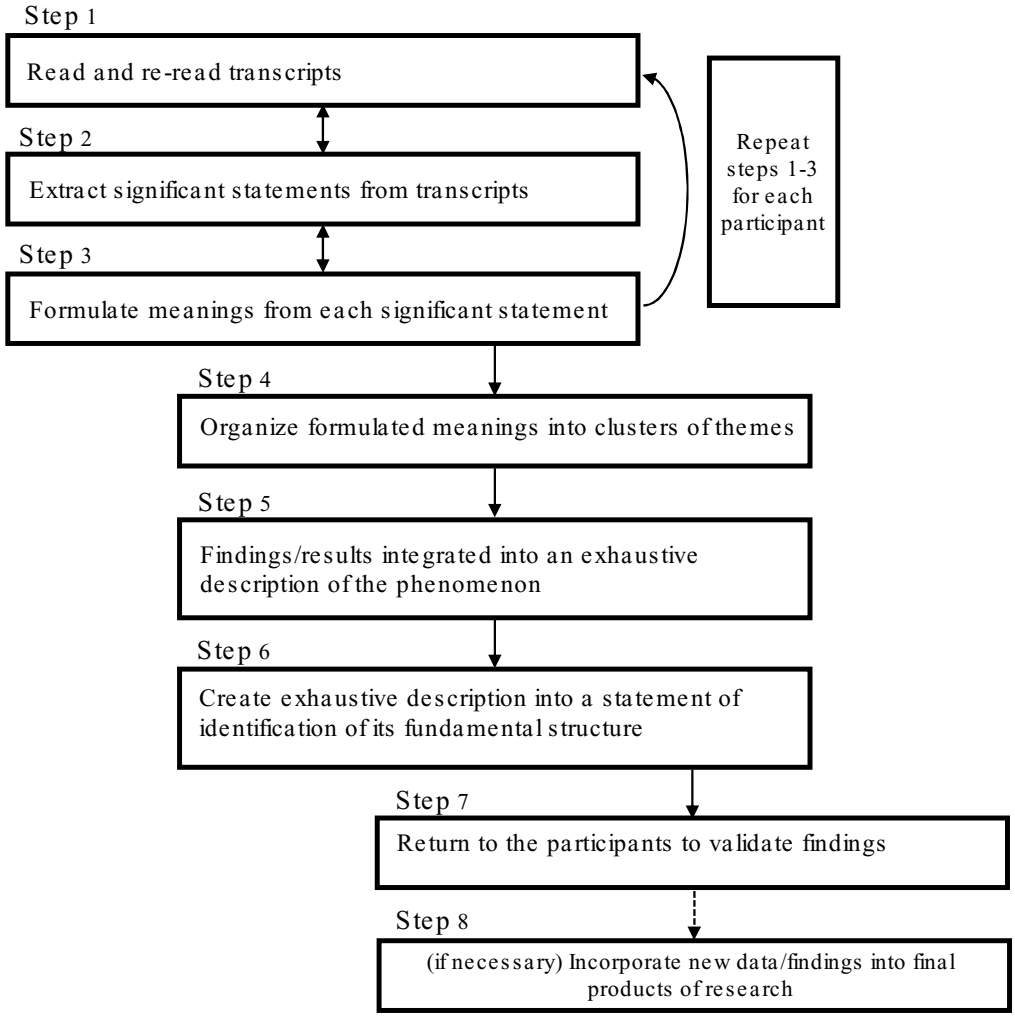
Upon completion of the formalized questions, participants were given the opportunity to share any additional information that had not been discussed during the interview. This was followed by a debrief. During the debrief, participants were once again thanked for their time, and they were informed about their ability to review the transcripts once their name and identifying information had been removed. Participants were then reminded about confidentiality and how their information would be securely stored, and that they were permitted to withdraw from the study without penalty up to 2 months following the interview. In addition, participants were reminded about the mental health resources provided in the informed consent form should they be experiencing distress as a result of the content discussed in the interview. Following the interview, participants were emailed a link to a $20 Amazon.ca gift card using their preferred email address.

Data Analysis

This study drew from Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step model for phenomenological data analysis (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Colaizzi's Seven-Step Method



Note. Adapted from *Introduction to Phenomenology: Focus on Methodology*, by C. T. Beck, 2021, p. 23. Copyright 2021 by SAGE.

Although the steps are sequential, it is important to note that some overlapping can and did occur. During the first step, I familiarized myself with the content of the data by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. Because I used Zoom Business to transcribe the interviews which relied on voice recognition, it was vital to verify transcripts for errors. This was completed by listening to each interview recording and making corrections in the transcripts as necessary first before reading them multiple times. All identifying information

on the transcripts was removed in that process and each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

During step two of Colaizzi's (1978) approach, significant statements directly related to SIC were extracted from the participants' descriptions of their experiences. For each participant, a data analysis chart was created, (see Appendix E) which contained three columns: significant statements, themes, and meanings. The significant statements column was organized according to the interview questions. *Formulated meanings* were then created out of those significant statements in order to discover hidden meanings that "go beyond what is given in the original data and at the same time, stay with it" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59). These formulated meanings were then organized into themes, which were validated by referring back to the original transcripts. The themes and meanings from each completed participant chart were then reviewed several times and integrated into what Colaizzi (1978) calls an "exhaustive description" of the phenomenon. This process was instrumental in constructing the main themes that emerged from the data to develop the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. In addition, this step helped to eliminate statements that appeared redundant or were not essential to the structure of the phenomenon, increasing rigour.

In the final step of Colaizzi's (1978) method, the researcher returns to the participants to validate the findings and confirm that what is included in the written work accurately represents their experiences of the phenomenon being studied. Participants were provided the opportunity to both review their transcripts as well as the draft findings chapter, and were invited to share comments, questions, or concerns. Although no participant requested this, they also had the opportunity to arrange an additional phone call or meeting to discuss the findings. Necessary modifications were integrated into the final written product.

Research Rigour

In order for a qualitative study to be considered rigorous, researchers must go beyond solely capturing participants' narratives and perspectives (Beck, 2021; Creswell & Poth,

2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). They must also assess the accuracy of their findings to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Beck, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In qualitative studies, trustworthiness is concerned with maximizing researcher objectivity while minimizing researcher bias (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). Furthermore, in post-positivist research, trustworthiness also examines whether the multiple subjective realities as presented by the participants are depicted as accurately as possible (Rubin & Babbie, 2017). In this study, trustworthiness was achieved by applying the four criteria as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1986): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

For a qualitative research study to be considered credible, the findings must be an accurate representation and record of what is being studied (Beck, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In other words, credibility "relates to the confidence one can have in the truth of the findings" (Beck, 2021, p. 118). Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggested several strategies to ensure credibility, of which member checking and debriefing with my PhD supervisor were used in this study. As stated previously, engaging in a reflexive process throughout the research was important to not only be transparent about my own positionality and interest in the topic, but to ensure that I was not allowing my biases and presuppositions to interfere with the analysis and interpretation of the data. Thus, detailed accounts of participant narratives, as well as direct quotations were presented in the overall findings of this study. Collaboration with the participants through the process of member checking was another strategy used to ensure credibility. Participants were able to provide feedback throughout the interview process, and they were provided with opportunities to review their transcripts and the findings section to ensure the accuracy of the data being presented which several did.

Transferability

In order for a qualitative study to be considered transferable, findings must be applicable to other contexts and settings (Beck, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). This can be accomplished by providing a rich, thick description of the participants and research process. This was achieved through the detailed description of the data collection and analysis processes, allowing the reader to determine whether the findings are transferable to other contexts.

Dependability and Confirmability

In order to ensure a study is dependable and confirmable, it is suggested that an audit trail is maintained (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In other words, can the processes and procedures involved in the data collection and analysis process be tracked while also demonstrating a commitment to neutrality of the researcher? As stated previously, a methodology journal was maintained detailing reflective thoughts throughout the data collection and analysis processes. In addition, transcriptions of interview recordings, notes taken during interviews, and participant data analysis charts were used to document the steps taken and decisions made throughout the research process to ensure that the presented findings were informed by the participants and not my own biases, interests, or motivations which made me as neutral as possible (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Ethical Considerations With Human Participants

As previously mentioned, the nature of the research problem, the research question, and the study's overall purpose influence the researcher's chosen qualitative research approach. However, regardless of the type of methodological approach used, researchers must consistently consider the ethical implications their research may have on the participants. It is the responsibility of the researcher to "uphold academic freedom and high ethical, scientific, and professional standards" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research,

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2018, p. 5). The required ethics approvals were obtained from the Interdisciplinary Committee of Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) on December 8, 2021 (see Appendix F and Appendix G), prior to the commencement of this study, and all stages of the research process were conducted in accordance with the 2018 TCPS2 as well as the CASW (2005) *Code of Ethics'* guidelines for ethical practice concerning research with human participants.

Informed Consent

The TCPS2 (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2018) deems that all research involving human subjects should demonstrate a respect for the inherent worth of all human beings by adhering to their three core principles: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice, which is also consistent with the CASW (2005) guidelines for ethical research. For example, respect for persons "recognizes the intrinsic value of human beings and the respect and consideration they are due" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2018, p. 6). Thus, it is required that participants have the ability to exercise free will in their decision to participate in a study through "free, informed, and ongoing consent" (p. 6). Participants were advised during the initial screening, during the review of the study protocols, through the written informed consent form, and at the start and end of the interview session that participation in the study was voluntary and that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty up to 2 months following the interview when the data analysis process would begin. They were also informed that they would be able to keep the $20 gift card if they withdrew from the study. Participants were then emailed an informed consent form (see Appendix C) to

review, sign, and return to the researcher prior to the commencement of the interview. The consent form also included the following:

- The purpose of the research and what the study asked participants to do,
- Compensation for participating in the study,
- The benefits and risks in participating in the study,
- The measures taken to protect participants' confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy including procedures for the transcribing and storage of data, and
- The process for the sharing and reporting of results

Confidentiality

Several steps were taken to safeguard the confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of participants. All identifiable information including the participant's name, geographical location, and institution name were removed prior to the data analysis process, and all participants were given a pseudonym which was used on all documents. In addition, no identifiable information was shared with members of the supervisory committee. Participants were informed that all data would be reported in aggregate form and that ranges would be used instead linking pseudonyms to specific demographic information (e.g., ages, number of years' teaching experience) so that it was not possible to identify individuals. It was recognized very early into the data collection process that even terms such as diploma, bachelor of social work (BSW), or master of social work (MSW) as well as province names had the potential to identify participants. As such, a decision to instead use more generic categories such as undergraduate/graduate and Western/Central/Eastern Canada was made early on. A master list was created electronically linking participant names with pseudonyms in the event the data needed to be re-linked, which was encrypted and stored on my personal and password-protected laptop. Although an oath of confidentiality agreement form (see Appendix H) was created in the event that research assistants were used, the form was not

needed as Zoom's transcription feature was used and I was the only person involved in the transcription process.

Potential Benefits and Risks of Harm

In accordance with the TCPS2's (2018) call for justice in research, all participants must be informed of any potential benefits or risks of harm associated with the research, and that all unnecessary risks will be eliminated as much as possible. One benefit to participants was the insight and knowledge gained regarding SIC, including what it is and the potential impacts it can have on social work educators. In addition, there may have been increased opportunities for validation and catharsis in sharing their stories and experiences regarding SIC, and the information gleaned may assist in raising awareness of this phenomenon, leading to improved support structures and training for educators.

Although there were some benefits to the study, there were also some potential risks. Because participants were asked to share potentially painful or uncomfortable stories related to their experiences with SIC, some emotional distress or vulnerability during or immediately following the data collection process could have occurred. Participants were advised that if at any point during the interview they did not feel comfortable answering the question or continuing on in the interview, they did not have to do so. They were also provided with a list of mental health resources in the informed consent form including Crisis Services Canada, Canadian Crisis Hotline, and Crisis Line Canada. A debrief was conducted at the close of the interview, which allowed for an assessment of the participants' level of emotional distress, as well as to discuss self-care options following the interview if needed. Although this did not occur during the data collection process, should a participant have required immediate support, the interview process would have been paused to further assess risk and provide therapeutic intervention including crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques as indicated. Once the participant indicated they have settled, they would be asked if they would like to continue with the interview process or reschedule for another time. They would be

reminded that they are free to withdraw at any time at no risk to them, and if a participant chose to reschedule the interview, I would follow-up with the participant later that day or early the next day to discuss potential next steps regarding further participation in the study.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data

All electronic data including consent forms, digital interview recordings, and transcripts were encrypted and securely stored on my password-protected personal laptop which only I have access to. In addition, multifactor authentication was used for increased security. After the transcription process was complete and all identifying information was removed from all documents, digital interview recordings were erased from both my Zoom account and laptop. Hard copy paper data were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my private home office which is not accessible to anyone else. In accordance with Memorial University's policy on integrity in scholarly research, participants were informed that all data related to this study will be retained for 5 years. All electronic data will remain securely stored and encrypted on my personal laptop during the 5-year period, and hard copy data will remain in a locked filing cabinet in my private home office. After the 5-year period, all electronic and hard copy data will be erased or destroyed.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the qualitative research design and Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step descriptive phenomenological approach used to explore post-secondary social work educators' experiences with SICs. This included a discussion about the positionality of the researcher and theoretical perspectives that informed the research. A description of the various steps taken to collect and analyze the data was presented including methods to ensure rigour and trustworthiness. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the considerations taken to ensure that the study was ethically sound and in accordance with the TCPS2 and the CASW in working with human participants. The next chapter presents the findings and themes that emerged from the participant interviews.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents the findings that emanated from the following interview questions:

1. What does SIC look like according to the participants' experiences, including how they define and label their experiences, who are being targeted and who are the students instigating these behaviours?
2. What do participants see as the factors contributing to SIC?
3. Did participants report their experiences and if so, to whom and what was the response?
4. What were the impacts on participants both personally and professionally?
5. What strategies have participants incorporated to prevent and mitigate SIC?
6. What types of teaching training and training related to mitigating SIC did participants have?
7. What do participants see the implications of SIC as being on social work education and the social work profession?
8. What types of training and additional needs do participants see as being needed to mitigate SIC in the future?

As the goal of Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological approach is for researchers to identify emergent themes and ultimately an exhaustive description of the phenomenon, the findings outlined in this chapter are descriptive and are not meant to act as a summary of each participant's experiences with SIC. Instead, the purpose is to identify and present the various themes that emerged from the participants' narratives as a way to uncover the essence of the phenomenon of SIC. The presentation of the findings has been organized around four broad themes and the associated sub-themes (see Table 2). These themes are introduced after a brief presentation of participant demographics. Chapter 5 presents an in-depth analysis of the findings as well as a summary of the implications for social work education and the social work profession.

Table 2

Findings Themes and Sub-Themes

Broad themes	Sub-themes
What is student-initiated confrontation (SIC)?	Words used to describe SIC – how participants define and label their experiences • Participant definitions of SIC How is SIC manifested? • Attacks on personal and professional character • Threats • Physical violence • Student incivility When is it manifested? • Discontent around grades • Discontent with assignment expectations • Discontent with course content Contributing factors • Consumerism • Student mental health and coping • Lack of preparedness • Media, social media, and social climate • Educator identities • Social work-specific contributors Impacts of SIC (effects) • Stress, fear, and anxiety regarding future incidents of SIC • Insecurities and doubts about teaching abilities • Impacts on teaching and the teaching environment • Concerns about future academic employment • Should I stay or go • Concerns about reputation and the community
Institutional leadership responses and responsibilities	Experiences of not reporting Experiences of reporting • Lack of support • Support with no action • Support and action Implications of institutional leadership's responses for participants • It's just part of the job • Capitulating to student demands
Preparation and training	Prior preparation and training Identified training needs Current teaching practices and prevention and mitigation strategies • Not taking it personally • Accessibility • Setting expectations and guidelines • Effectiveness of strategies
Implications for social work	Concerns for students as future social workers Concerns for the future of social work education Concerns for the profession

Participant Demographics

Fifteen post-secondary social work educators were interviewed for this study. Participants were asked to provide demographic information about their specific identities as well as information related to various aspects of education. For example, participants were asked to identify their gender, race, age, and geographic location. In addition, they were also asked to specify the highest level of education they completed, the levels of education they taught, and their years of teaching experience. It was recognized early in the data collection process that due to the small number of post-secondary social work programs in Canada as compared to the United States, for example, the reporting of certain demographic information, such as the participant's province or even terms such as BSW, MSW, or diploma, could potentially identify the participants, even if presented in aggregate form. In addition, linking the participants' pseudonym to certain demographic information, such as age or specific race could also potentially identify participants. As such, more generic categories such as undergraduate/graduate and Western/Central/Eastern Canada and ranges were used in the reporting of findings to ensure the participants' confidentiality and anonymity are maintained. See Table 3 for a demographic summary.

Twelve participants identified as female and three identified as male. Out of those 15, 12 identified as White and the remaining three identified as persons of colour. The ages of participants ranged from 30s to 70s, suggesting that educators of all ages can experience SIC. There was cross-Canada representation with nine participants teaching in Western, two in Central, and four in Eastern Canada. Nine of the participants held PhDs in social work whereas the other six held MSW degrees, suggesting higher levels of education may not be a protective factor against SIC. At the time of the interviews, two participants were enrolled in PhD programs that were not in social work. Teaching experience ranged from 5 to 40 years with a mean of 18 years and median of 13 years. In addition, the majority, 11 out of the 15

participants, taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and four taught solely at the undergraduate level.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Characteristics	Categories	*n*
Gender	Female	12
	Male	3
Race/ethnicity	White	12
	Person of colour	3
Age	Age 30–39	3
	Age 40–49	4
	Age 50–59	4
	Age 60–69	2
	Age 70–79	2
Geographic region	Western Canada	9
	Central Canada	2
	Eastern Canada	4
Highest level of education completed	Master in Social Work	6
	PhD in Social Work	9
Years of teaching experience	5–10	6
	11–20	4
	21–30	2
	31–39	1
	40–50	2
Level of education taught	Undergraduate	4
	Undergraduate and graduate	11

Themes Regarding What SIC Is

In this study, SIC was operationally defined as student behaviours ranging from minor disruptive behaviours to more intentional, aggressive, and threatening behaviours challenging an educator's professional authority, expertise, personal character, or identity. These behaviours can occur both in and outside the classroom setting. In trying to better understand the essence of the participants' experiences with SIC, all participants were asked to share their individual experiences. Some chose to highlight one or two specific incidents whereas

others focused on themes and trends they were seeing and/or experiencing as related to this phenomenon. Of particular interest was whether and how participants' understandings of SIC was in alignment or strayed from the operational definition.

Participant Definitions of SIC

Although SIC was the term used in this study, because of the subjective nature of the participants' experiences with this phenomenon, it was important to understand the terminology they chose to label or describe their experiences with SIC. The terms used are listed here:

- Incivility
- Bullying/entitled bullying
- Student-initiated abuse
- Student-initiated entitlement
- Student-initiated projection
- De-professionalization of the classroom/unprofessionalism
- Student-initiated protection against vulnerability
- Acting out/defensive behaviour
- Racism/sexism
- Harassment
- Grade-grubbing

Eleven participants stated they were familiar with the term *incivility* and felt their experiences aligned with that term, with some also feeling that these situations could also be considered unprofessional or a de-professionalization of the classroom. Seven participants described their experiences as involving a form of bullying, harassment, or abuse, whereas other participants were uncomfortable with the term bullying. They felt there was a power dynamic at play in which they still had more power than the students and as such, they did

not feel bullying accurately reflected the nature of situations involving SIC. Racism and sexism were terms also mentioned by some. However, the majority of participants stated that they favoured the term SIC and felt it encapsulated the broad range of behaviours associated with the phenomenon.

How Is SIC Manifested?

Attacks on Personal and Professional Character

The majority of participants reported attacks to their personal and professional character as a manifestation of SIC. Michelle stated, "Where it crosses the line into confrontation is the tone and language. It might get kind of personal. Or feel personal." For some, these encounters were directed specifically at the participant either verbally or via email. Comments such as "You're not a clinician," "As always, you're ineffective and unwilling to be helpful," "You're not compassionate," or "You don't care," were cited by several. Being told they were only "in it for the money" or that they were terrible social workers were also reported. For example, Patricia shared an incident in which a student told her she was surprised that as a social worker, Patricia did not know the answer to something. Patricia went on to state, "So it's like 'okay.' Now we are talking about my credibility as an instructor."

Two participants shared examples of students spreading false rumours about their professional credibility, as well as aspects of their health, personal lives, and even about their loved ones. Other participants discussed having false accusations made against them that were often times brought to the attention of leadership by the students initiating these accusations. Over half of the participants reported being accused of racist or discriminatory practices, largely by students who were either uncomfortable with course content or unhappy about a grade or assignment expectations. Notably, these accusations were made against all of the participants who identified as persons of colour, not just those who identified as White.

In addition to the aforementioned direct types of attacks on participants' personal and professional character, indirect attacks through student course evaluations and social media forums were also noted. Comments made by students on course evaluations about the course being a waste of time or the participant "playing favourites" were cited by multiple participants, as were negative comments about the participants' character or teaching ability. The use of social media as a way for students to insult participants or rant about situations in which the student did not get their needs met and how the participant was a terrible instructor was another manifestation of SIC cited by several participants. Facebook (https://www.facebook.com), WhatsApp (https://www.whatsapp.com), and Rate My Professor (https://www.ratemyprofessors.com) were cited among the top forums students used in these situations as a way to vilify educators.

Threats

Threats were identified as another manifestation of SIC. Some participants discussed how students threatened to go to external sources, such as the media or lawyers, when they did not feel their needs or demands were being met. Ben shared a situation in which a student became hostile towards him after it was discovered the student had violated the academic honesty policy. When Ben was not willing to overturn the decision, the student started sending numerous threatening emails including one stating, "I'm going to go to the newspapers. I've called a lawyer. I'm waiting for a call back from the dean's office." Like Ben, most participants' experiences with student threats related to threats to go to higher levels of administration or leadership if their demands were not met. Several participants shared how they would receive multiple emails with threats to go to their direct supervisors or leadership. These emails rarely involved requests for a solution-focused direct conversation with the participant as a first step. For example, Marcus stated, "The email isn't 'Hi Professor. I got the impression you might have said this. I wasn't sure but I wanted to clarify.' It's 'you said this. I'm going to go above you to address this.'"

Similarly, Shelley discussed how many of these threatening encounters felt like a "full on assault." Like Marcus, she stated that

> there's no "I'm wondering if" or "Can we have a conversation about …?" It's "you this, this, and this." They put it in writing and that becomes the gospel truth to be able to take it to higher levels of leadership.

As Susan stated, "they're not afraid to go right to the top and then try to hang you."

Physical Violence

Although more extreme forms of violence towards educators have been cited in the literature (Christensen et al., 2020; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; Taylor et al., 2017), none of the participants shared experiences of being physically harmed. However, Sarah discussed a situation in which an older student engaged in an action that had the potential to cause her injury while she was teaching. Not only was Sarah shaken by this incident, but she stated that the other students were also distressed. Sarah shared that she addressed the situation in the class, expressing that she did not find the situation funny and that she could have been seriously injured, which also would have been "cruel and traumatizing" for some of the other students. The student did eventually come forward later that class, yet tried to blame Sarah for not having a sense of humour in what Sarah described as a "very minimizing, defensive" manner in which no accountability for the significance of his actions was taken.

Less Intense Uncivil Student Behaviour

Over half of the participants experienced rude, disrespectful, and disruptive behaviours, particularly in the actual classroom setting. Ignoring class expectations and policies was cited, including use of cell phones, laptops, and other technology in class for non-class purposes, refusal to turn on microphones or cameras during virtual classes even when required by the institution, and more recently, disregard for COVID-19-related policies such as mask wearing and vaccination requirements. Other types of behaviours, or "microaggressions" as one participant described them, were more personal to the participant including eye rolls, groans, snide comments, and "sharp retorts" by students. Coming to class

late, leaving early, and even falling asleep in class were also mentioned. In a more extreme example, Jennifer shared how she had experiences with students on a regular basis coming to class intoxicated. Anne described many of these situations as "passive resistance, [a] lack of engagement, [and a] subtle undermining of activities." These situations impacted the participants trying to teach the class, and also fellow students, the bystanders or witnesses to these behaviours. Andrew described students engaged in these less intense uncivil student behaviours as taking the perspective,

> I have the right to not engage and to overtly not engage. To overtly do something else and overtly distract my fellow students by me doing something else. And it's not your right to say that's not ok as I'm entitled to that.

When Is SIC Manifested?

Student Discontent Around Grades

Thirteen out of the 15 participants cited student demands for higher grades to be a significant motivator for SIC. Interestingly, the majority of participants noted the pushback was generally received from students who received an A-minus or B on an assignment and rarely from a student receiving lower grades. For example, Patricia stated, "I don't know what it is about the A-minus phenomenon." She believed about 90 per cent of the SICs she experienced had been from students who received A-minuses on an assignment demanding an A or A-plus. Similarly, Marcus shared an example of how he was yelled at for 30 minutes by a student who was dissatisfied after receiving a B on an assignment until he finally told the student he was no longer comfortable continuing the conversation.

Some participants reported receiving communications from various students prior to the start of the course, indicating they were historically A-students and would not accept anything less than an A in any course. The majority of participants felt this pressure to receive high grades was due to the pressure to be accepted into more advanced educational programs. For instance, Susan shared that

> students would contact me at the beginning of the course and say "Look, I'm trying to get into blah blah blah program. I need an A in this course. I need a 4.0. I'm just letting you know, don't give me anything below that."

Sarah stated she frequently heard students say things like "Oh my gosh, my life is over if I get a B. I won't get into X-university."

Student Discontent With Assignment Expectations

Another area in which students engaged in SIC resulted from their discontent with various aspects related to assignments. Susan discussed a situation in which a student questioned her credibility as an educator and insisted Susan could not force that student to do certain assignments. She went on to share that

> They were refusing to do parts of the assignment … and then the second semester came on and they started a letter writing campaign with other students to get me fired from the institution. They were doing all kinds of things to destroy me.

Some other situations of student discontent related to group presentation assignments. Shelley discussed how in one of her courses, she gave students the opportunity to choose one of two options for a required group assignment, stating she was "trying to be accessible and let them pick their strengths." She stated how students were provided with the assignment guidelines and rubrics in advance and they had 10 days to decide which option they would like to choose. Students who did not express a preference by the due date would automatically be placed in a group by Shelley, which was the outcome for several students who did not confirm their preference on time. When the list of groups was sent to the students, Shelley reported the "onslaught of emails came in" with various excuses why it was not the students' fault for missing the deadline. According to Shelley,

> I've got about six of them going back and forth on email with me. And I say to them, "I don't want to keep doing this on email. My answer is not going to change." They just feel entitled to come back and basically verbally berate me. I've gotten emails that said "You've never been supportive. You're using your power differential here and I didn't feel safe to tell you which one I wanted." There's no comeback for me. I haven't done anything wrong, but it's becoming personal.

Shelley reported that she had never had these students in class in the past which made it even more difficult to be accused of never having been supportive, especially when the purpose was to allow students to have agency over their choice in the assignment.

In a similar group-related situation, Patricia spoke of an incident in which a student expressed she wanted to be assigned to a different presentation group, yet did not give rationale as to why. Patricia tried to engage the student in conversations about this situation to try to find a solution, yet the student initially ended the conversation and would not respond to other attempts at communication. The student then started sending continuous emails to Patricia stating such things as "you're discriminating against me," "I find you racist," and "You really don't care about your students." At one point, the student emailed Patricia stating Patricia knew what she needed to do, in that Patricia needed to put this student in a different group, and that there was nothing more the student needed to say on this matter, ultimately refusing to talk to Patricia again. When Patricia refused to initiate any changes, in a follow-up class, the student attempted to make a scene in front of the class, making demands that Patricia reassign her in group and stating that Patricia's actions were "unfair." Not only was this uncomfortable for Patricia, but it put the other students in an uncomfortable situation as well.

According to one third of the participants, accommodations regarding assignments were another source of discontent. Shelley shared an example of this in which a few days prior to the date student groups were supposed to present to the class, a student emailed stating that she had an accommodation and would not be presenting in class with her group members. Instead, the student informed Shelley that she would be presenting virtually. Shelley remarked on how there was no request for a conversation about the issue and she was instead informed what the student was willing and not willing to do, even though group presentation accommodations were not part of the student's actual accommodation plan. Subsequently, Shelley discussed how other students in that student's presentation group

confirmed that this particular student had presented in other classes in the past and as such, they were looking to Shelley to be the "deciding factor." However, even though the student did not have an accommodation related to group presentations, the mere fact that she had an accommodation plan, Shelley stated "come hell or high water, you know I'm not going to be the one" to make that type of determination for fear of being seen as discriminatory by the student and leadership.

Rebecca also expressed that accommodations were a frequent source of confrontations and conflict, primarily due to students requesting more provisions than what they had initially been granted in their accommodation plans. She shared a situation in which a student who had a specific accommodation to receive extra time requested to not do a required presentation. Rebecca wanted to be understanding and accommodating, yet this situation also created "tension over who we're supposed to be graduating and the fundamental competencies related to the profession itself." According to Rebecca,

> I tried to make this doable to create an experience of success towards something that's going to allow her to fulfill her competencies. This student got really angry at me for doing that. She didn't want to present on what I was telling her to do. She was asked "What do you want to present about? Let's move to then a position of self-empowerment related to what do you feel you can confidently take on within the confines of the course?" The confrontation happened later when the student wanted to make this an issue. You know, make this an issue and … let's talk about it from the perspective of human rights.

Rebecca reported that even though she thought she and the student had come to a solution, on the day of the presentation, the student refused to present stating she was being made to do something she did not want to do and was again being discriminated against. Rebecca expressed her distress, stating, "Here I am letting you do what you want. Here I am – you've changed the whole assignment in order to manage yourself. … How did I find myself here?" particularly when the student was demanding something that was not part of her accommodation.

Student Dissatisfaction and Discontent With Course Content

Several participants indicated SIC was the result of course content that created distress and discomfort in the students. For example, Jennifer discussed how "the topic that I teach is very sensitive – addiction. It gets to be very difficult because they're using [substances]. And they don't want to be reminded at all or informed that this is an issue." Similarly, Erin mentioned how she received pushback from students for presenting content they considered to be "too international" or "not useful."

Other participants discussed how themes related to identity politics including racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination were often the source of SIC. In these situations, participants, despite their identified race or gender, were accused of being racist or discriminatory because of the content they were teaching. Sarah shared how she had several negative interactions with a male student: "anytime I would bring up anything around feminism, he would be quite confrontative. He was one of the people who would talk a lot about reverse racism. He had his own agenda." Marcus described one situation in which a male student was "extremely disruptive and engaged in a kind of aggressive confrontation with the lecture material I was talking about." The class was discussing the concept of feminism within the domain of a specific topic. In this situation, Marcus reported the student became "aggressive" and denied that what he was sharing with the class was true. Marcus felt that this student expressed himself in a way that was more "conspiratorial" and not conducive to scholarly engagement. In another situation, Marcus had a student request to meet with him outside of class, yet proceeded to "lecture" Marcus about how he should be lecturing on a different topic. Marcus reported that a few students who identified as White told him that what he was presenting was problematic from a racial perspective, and that the insinuation was that he was showing content that was racist. This was particularly concerning for Marcus, as he stated, "I'm a person of colour. So, to be confronted by two White students about this was interesting."

Emily also shared examples of students who became confrontational over the content she was presenting in class, particularly related to "White students' fragility with racism" being "called out." In one example, Emily stated,

> I had a White student get quite angry with me. Called me a race traitor in the class and said that she learned absolutely nothing. That I targeted her because she was straight. And I am a queer person, so I think that enraged her as well. I'm White and I hold so much privilege in that space. But they get really upset when I'm challenging them on their Whiteness.

Emily also reported that at times when she encouraged her students to "think about pieces outside their heteronormativity, it really enrages a lot of folks" and that she has been accused of being disrespectful of their Christian beliefs and heteronormative marriages. In one example, Emily discussed a situation in which a student made a "shrieking scream" sound, took the microphone she was using to teach the class, and proceeded to yell to the class how Emily was "discriminating against her, racist, a hypocrite" and that she was asked to think about and do things she did not want to do. This was particularly distressing for Emily as well as for the other students witnessing this occurrence.

Lack of Student Accountability

Many of the student interactions discussed by participants were understood as coming from a place of stress and distress which in itself was not the problem. It was the manner in which these interactions took place that participants experienced as confrontational. Most of these interactions did not involve the student reaching out to inquire where they lost points and how to improve on future assignments. Several participants discussed a lack of student accountability for not following assignment directions, submitting assignments late, or giving justifications for what they could have done instead of what they did do in an assignment, which were often the reasons why students received lower grades. As Michelle stated, these SICs were not generally "approached as a collegial conversation or constructive conversation, but it's more kind of stating demands: 'This is the way it's going to be. And are you going to make that happen?'" Patricia shared a situation in which a student made a demand, yet ended

the response with “thank you for your consideration.” However, to Patricia, “there’s no consideration, baby!” in these types of situations as she felt communications were around students issuing demands. Anne shared that some students expected her to give them higher marks because she “should know” that the student was more capable despite not actually performing well on the assignment. Similarly, Erin discussed how she had students inform her that she “misunderstood” their work and that they should have received an A as a result of this.

Multiple participants equated student demands for higher grades with what Patricia called an “unrealistic bargaining” in which students dictated to their instructors what types of grades and feedback they felt they should be receiving. In some instances, students were actually given opportunities to resubmit their assignments, particularly in situations where they did not follow assignment guidelines, or they were allowed to readjust the assignment to meet their needs, yet a few participants were still met with resistance.

Rather than dealing with their discomfort or disappointment around grades or the other sources of discontent, students often circumvented having further conversations with the participant and instead chose to go directly to those they perceived as having more power and authority. For example, Lynn shared an incident in which she gave a student who submitted an incomplete assignment an opportunity to resubmit it. She never received a response from the student, yet several days later, she received an email from the program coordinator of a different program stating that the student was having issues with her and felt discriminated by her based on a specific aspect of the student’s identity that Lynn was not even aware of. According to Lynn, she had only been in contact with this student over email and had never actually met or seen this student. Rebecca discussed a related situation in which a student was given the opportunity to alter an assignment to meet her needs, yet when it was time to present the assignment, the student refused and proceeded to file a complaint with higher levels of administration at her institution. In another example, Erin discussed how

a student did not want to reflect on the topic they were asked to reflect upon for a specific assignment, and as such, the student lost marks on the assignment. Even though it was not part of the program's process, Erin decided to give that student the opportunity to rewrite the assignment according to the assignment guidelines. However, Erin reported that the student refused to resubmit the assignment:

> I thought it was a pity that [the student] hadn't reflected what they understand. [The student] didn't quite call me a bitch. I can't remember what language, but it was close to that. And [the student] said that they put a lot of effort into the paper and that wasn't recognized – and I did not understand the background that [the student] came from.

Julie discussed how not only did she experience confrontational behaviours from students regarding grades, but she also stated,

> I had a couple of irate parents show up at my doorstep. Not just phoning me … And they showed up to have a very vocal discussion with me about how I wasn't treating their child well … That I wasn't giving them the chances they needed to be successful and I should give them more chances.

In this situation, Julie expressed an initial surprise at being contacted by the parents of adult students. Due to confidentiality guidelines, she was unable to engage in a conversation with these parents, which further angered them and the student. In another situation, Ben discussed his experiences with international students using guilt as a way to engage in bargaining over grades. Instead of the students taking accountability for poor academic performance, they would instead tell him that they would not be able to remain in the country unless they were given higher grades.

Factors Contributing to SIC

Consumerism

In this study, all but one participant discussed consumerism as a factor contributing to SIC. Consumerism was seen as connected to a shift from traditional to more neoliberal models of education in which institutions tend to be viewed as businesses that are more interested in revenue generation than a place for students to learn. According to Marcus,

> Twenty, 30 years ago, the model of the university was still kind of classical in so far as the overriding assumption or the pervasive assumption was that we were there to learn and learning was an end in itself. Things started to change. Learning became no longer an end in itself but a means to an end. You learn to get a job. You learn to get an A. University slogans changed. Their advertising materials changed. Everything changed...The neoliberal model of education. The way that students were conceived or conceptualized changed. The relationship between student and professor changed...Now the model and the relationship between faculty and students is very much one of false equality.

In keeping with the theme of consumerism, Ben discussed how education has become more expensive to deliver and as a result, post-secondary institutions have been significantly impacted by neoliberalism in the need to generate revenue. According to Ben, this means "keeping students happy as part of the business model" instead of holding them accountable for their performance or actions. Student retention was seen as necessary for cost recovery by several participants. In addition, half of the participants specifically mentioned how they had observed this shift in the last two decades, and that the way academic institutions perceived education and the value of the learning process had changed substantially since they were in school.

Like Marcus, Sarah discussed how she views the shift in the academy as the "commodification of education" which has "permeated down into students where they are paying for a service. They are demanding a service." There is the notion that because students are paying tuition, they view themselves as consumers rather than learners and as such, they should automatically be given high marks or the overall degree. Anne shared how she felt like students often emitted an attitude that because they paid for the course, they should automatically receive an A, and Julie described the overall perspectives from students as "Just give me the degree. I don't have to do the work for it. I paid for this class. Just give me the grade."

According to Sarah, "students feel very much like customers who are demanding to speak to the manager" when they do not feel their needs are being met. Several referred to students as donning a "customer" or "student is always right" mentality because they were

paying for a perceived service. As a result of this perspective, many participants felt that educators were no longer seen as being in a position of authority or deserving of respect. Anne shared how she felt like her role as an educator was to "entertain" students while also telling them "What they are supposed to learn in a way that's easy" for them to understand and does not require much effort in order to receive an A grade. Sarah described feeling that educators are just "widgets who work in the widget factory" and that they are no longer valued for their knowledge and expertise as they once were. She went on to discuss feeling like educators are often perceived by students as "faceless entities" and "depersonalized cogs" who do not have feelings or value. As such, the student as consumer model is what most participants felt led to a feeling of student entitlement to not only receive high marks and a completed degree, but it was also seen as a licence to engage in SIC. For example, Emily stated that "students feel like because they're paying this money, they think we're rich. That we're all just pocketing this money. That they're entitled to be abusive and to get whatever they want."

Student Mental Health and Coping

A common theme among participants related to how social work students are often inspired to apply to social work programs as a result of their own lived experiences and as such, there was a recognition that many situations involving SIC may be a result of larger mental health concerns or issues students had previously faced that they were still healing from. Patricia discussed how students come into social work programs "with their bones and baggage" and Erin described social work programs as "attract[ing] students with significant histories of trauma." For example, Erin discussed how she had encountered several students with serious substance use issues which she felt were sometimes "locked in child abuse." She also spoke of how some students were veterans who struggled with mental health issues and addiction and ended up leaving the program. Students who had experienced refugee trauma or other forms of violent traumas were also mentioned by some of the participants,

particularly in how these students had a higher likelihood of misreading social cues among their peers and instructors or may be triggered by certain course content. COVID-19 was mentioned by some as exacerbating mental health issues in several students. For example, Jennifer discussed how she experienced COVID-19 as bringing out increased anger, depression, and substance use issues, particularly as a way to deal with the feelings of isolation many were feeling.

Several participants attributed student histories of oppression, marginalization, and discrimination with educators, educational content, and institutions as contributing to SIC. With respect to a specific incident Lynn shared, she viewed that student as coming from a history of oppression and that the student was "carrying not only his own burden, but the burden as a whole group." Similarly, Rebecca discussed how she experienced various students engaged in SIC as having experiences with feeling discriminated or marginalized, and that it "doesn't take much to create a flashpoint of retaliatory aggression. We're into something deeper than I know."

Although having certain lived experiences was seen as being an asset in students' ability to assist others in the social work field, Patricia stated,

> They haven't done the work and they think that serving is going to be the remedy. But it's not. It's not. And then when you haven't done your work and you take things personally, you are very sensitive and you have triggers of different things.

Ben shared a similar view:

> The wounded healer thing is a big thing. Folks come into social work education hoping sometimes to learn about themselves and to work through some of their stuff. And that means when they're writing papers, there's just so much more of them in the paper. Then when it gets criticized … it seems like some of the reaction to me is as though I was their therapist as opposed to an instructor and provided a critique they didn't agree with.

Thus, when students had not engaged in their own healing processes or viewed social work programs as a place to do that healing, it was felt that students could more easily be triggered, leading to confrontational and lashing out behaviours towards educators. For

example, Jennifer spoke about how she believed that student confrontation was about educators "scratching something that is really bothering them." However, she also stated that often times they do not share what is going on for them except through their actions. As Rebecca stated, when there is a level of psychological injury present, "people's retaliatory stances are deep-seated into their own psychology."

In addition to significant histories of trauma and mental health among students, general anxiety and stress were also cited as a contributing factor towards SIC by participants. Several participants noted that a substantial number of their students were trying to manage numerous responsibilities, such as parenting, caregiving for other relatives, and additional employment, while being enrolled in their programs. As Ben stated, "It's easy to take that stress and frustration out on instructors. It's an easy place to project that."

Lack of Preparedness and SIC

Several participants discussed a lack of preparation for the rigours of post-secondary social work education as a source of stress and anxiety potentially leading to SIC. It was strongly felt that students were not being challenged at the K–12 level and as a result, students often had difficulty navigating the expectations of higher education. Part of this was due to a cultural shift in which students were being touted as all being equal and they were not held accountable for their individual actions and learning. For example, Shelley described the K–12 sector as a place "where nobody can fail and everybody gets pushed through and everybody's unique and special and best of the best." Phrases such as "everybody's a scholar" and "everybody gets a medal nowadays" were also mentioned.

Critical feedback was seen as no longer being encouraged and grade inflation was occurring on a regular basis. Furthermore, grade inflation was felt to lower expectations of students and according to Shelley, "very little of what anyone's actually learning is actually worth the grades they're given. And so, they have this artificial sense of accomplishment and

acuity that's not really there." Similarly, in discussing grade inflation and lowered academic expectations, Rebecca stated,

> When they have to submit a paper, anxiety goes through the roof because they don't know how to write. And once you have that happen, then aggression doesn't follow too far behind because [students] are under too much pressure to perform. And they haven't had the scaffolding.

Cultural shifts in which parents have become more involved in their children's lives was seen as reinforcing the lack of preparedness rooted in the K–12 sector. Andrew discussed how in recent years, "goal-oriented parenting" has created a phenomenon in which the "position of the child [is] given preference over the position of the classroom or teacher or coach." Some participants used terms such as "coddling" or "snowflake parenting" to describe this shift in parental involvement. In addition, parents' emphasis on obtaining a learning disorder or mental health diagnosis to be used for accommodation purposes was also noted by several participants. For example, Rebecca felt that there was an increase in diagnoses among students coming from privileged backgrounds as a way for them to have "more ability to navigate" their education including extra time or changes on assignments, or the ability to modify assignments to meet their requests. She continued to inquire, "Is this a legitimate diagnosis or a bought diagnosis? We'll get the diagnosis and then they can pull on the diagnosis when they need to." Shelley stated that 56 per cent of students in one of her classes have an accommodation, mainly for mental health. Ben discussed how he did not see a problem with making learning more accessible and providing accommodations where appropriate. However, he felt like there has been a "pendulum swing where it's over-accommodation" and there is an expectation from students that they should be granted all requests for accommodations, even if the accommodation requests are not justified. As such, if students are not given the accommodations they claim to have, it is then viewed as an injustice, often leading to confrontational behaviours.

Participants made the connection between this cultural shift in parenting and educational practices and students' inability to effectively manage discomfort, as these students have not been given enough opportunities to build effective distress tolerance and coping skills. As Rebecca noted,

> A lot of the frustration tolerance that goes into education isn't necessarily being scaffolded … People's ability to tolerate frustration and hold themselves in strength-building processes is much, much less. Aggression happens quicker because their frustration tolerance is lower.

Decreased tolerance for distress and frustration was also a result of students' lack of ability to tolerate various social work concepts and course content. Moreover, this was often viewed by participants as a factor leading to SIC. Several participants felt students were uncomfortable being challenged intellectually or ideologically, and content that triggered them was often met with pushback and aggression in ways they had not seen in previous years. For example, Marcus suggested students entered social work courses with an assumption that "when they sit down, they're going to get what they are expecting. And they want to feel good about it." Patricia also discussed how students were averse to doing or hearing anything that would make them "uncomfortable" or feel "triggered." Others shared similar sentiments that they too felt like students only wanted to hear what they wanted to hear, and that their ability to sit with discomfort, particularly when they were asked to engage in their own critical reflection processes, often led to SIC. As Marcus stated, "people don't seem to want to put their foot down and say 'You have to get through this.' I wouldn't blame the students. Blame adults, parents. Blame us as instructors," for not pushing them to think more critically.

The Media, Social Media, and Social Climate as Contributing Factors

Social media and the overall social climate of North America was cited by nine of the 15 participants as influencing the increase in SIC. There was a general feeling that civil conversation and decorum has significantly decreased in recent years. Trump was mentioned

on a few occasions as being a major contributor to this phenomenon. Sarah referenced the Trump era: "Blame Trump solely in the othering and the finger pointing and the depersonalization of people who think differently than me or disagree." Several others felt that this cultural shift had been occurring long before Trump as a result of social media but had become more pronounced since the Trump presidency. Andrew discussed feeling that social media tends to "invite rebellion" and that there has been a "rise in willingness of people to feel that they are entitled to express opinions in whatever way they want to express opinions." Julie discussed similar sentiments in which she felt social media and the current social climate gives permission to people to say what they want in whatever manner they want, including the use of slander and libel. Even though social media forums often show an individual's name or identifying information, there can be a false sense of protection when their opinions and feelings are expressed in a virtual manner, which then translates to feeling it is appropriate to voice those same feelings and views in direct ways that can be aggressive or harmful to others. This was noted as being particularly true in situations involving differences, including differences of opinions or differing identities. Shelley furthered this notion citing "cancel culture" as a factor which has

> Taken us in a whole other direction where anything goes. Nobody's held accountable. Anything you want to think, say, or feel is fine as long as it doesn't offend my sensibilities, in which case I'm going to come after you.

The entertainment industry was also identified as contributing to SIC. Andrew discussed how reality television creates what he calls "argument conflict." Using the Kardashians as an example, he explained how conflict around arguing is frequently used as a way to entertain viewers. Media sources depicting conflict as entertainment has been glorified and validated, leading individuals to feel empowered to initiate and engage in conflict. Patricia shared this idea:

> When I started college, I was just getting into the computer. There was no Tik Tok. There was no Facebook. There was a lot of privacy in people's lives. I think seeing people emotionally dysregulated – whether it's TV shows or Facebook or Tik Tok or

> Instagram – seeing those memes is commonplace now. So, I can just show my emotions. I can just let it rip and you've just got to deal with it. And that's the equivalent of coming into my room, vomiting, and leaving it and wanting me to clean it up.

Although the media and social media were thought by some to have socialized individuals, particularly children, towards assertiveness which can often turn to aggression, these types of forums have also led individuals, including students, to be inundated with information and places to seek information that may not always be advantageous. For example, many of Jennifer's students referenced information from what she considered to be "illegitimate sources" with conspiracy-theory influences. Marcus also discussed having experiences with students discounting evidence-based research presented in class, instead promoting conspiracy-theory perspectives: "I think a lot of students get these ideas from social media. Or it gives them a sense of exaggerated knowledge. 'I watched a YouTube clip' or 'I saw this on Twitter'. Therefore, it's important." It was noted that when students disagree with content being delivered by their instructors or classmates and feel that their own opinions are not validated, confrontational and even aggressive verbalizations towards the instructor can be the result.

Educator Identities as Factors Contributing Towards SIC

Two thirds of participants felt their identities made them more vulnerable to SIC, specifically regarding how students perceived their identities. Despite Andrew identifying as a White male, he noted, "racism and sexism is very alive in student evaluations and have become mechanisms in which students can bully instructors and do so behind the screen of anonymity." He acknowledged that as a White male, he was more likely to get positive reviews from students than some of his colleagues with non-dominant identities. He went on to discuss how "attractive" faculty are also more inclined to receive positive evaluations than those considered unattractive, and Black-identifying faculty tended to receive the worst evaluations. Most of the participants who had experiences with racist and discriminatory

student behaviours reported they took place directly towards the participant either privately or in front of the class and not just in student evaluations.

Two out of the three instructors who identified as persons of colour felt their race was a factor in them experiencing SIC. For example, Lynn grew up outside of Canada and English was not her first language. She noted how that led to her being challenged at times by students who identified as White. Emily identified as White, yet discussed how early in her career, she witnessed a Black instructor being verbally attacked by a student as a result of her race. Marcus felt that his identity as a person of colour was a factor causing him to be being targeted, stating, "All of the students that I've had these kinds of interactions with have been White students. Every single one. Not a single one was not White." He went on to state that he never experienced SIC from students of colour, including international students, whom he had taught many times in his role as a post-secondary social work educator.

Susan, Erin, and Emily discussed how the intersection of their various identities, including their identity as White women, were part of why they were targeted. Susan felt her identity as a White woman was part of why she was targeted by Indigenous and students of colour, including international students. She experienced non-White students accusing her of giving higher marks to White students even though she made it clear to the students making the accusations that they had lost marks because they did not meet the assignment guidelines. Susan described one situation in which some non-White students went to higher leadership to try to get her fired because they felt she was grading their assignments differently than she was grading the assignments of White students, which she denies doing.

Erin had an experience with a student identifying as a person of colour, who after receiving a poor grade on an assignment, accused Erin of discriminating against her because of her race, age, and growing up in another country. In addition, Emily discussed how her identity as a queer White person was targeted on multiple occasions by both White students and students of colour: "I don't have evidence to say it, but I do think it comes out of me

being queer." She went on to state how White middle-aged female students often targeted her because they felt their Christianity and heteronormativity were being questioned and disrespected when being asked to consider their positionality, privilege, and biases as cisgender White individuals. Similarly, Emily discussed how she felt targeted by Muslim and international students as a result of her sexual identity stating,

> They don't have to respect my sexual orientation or queerness because of their religion. And while they say it in a very nice way, that's not a nice statement … I've had students who are Muslim say, "Your sexual orientation is wrong." I have never known how to address that one.

In addition to other discriminatory behaviours by students, sexism was also experienced by various female-identifying participants. For example, Sarah was asked a personal and inappropriate question by a student that related to her appearance as a woman that she felt a male instructor would not be asked. She also felt being female was a primary reason she was targeted by the male student who tried to play a potentially dangerous prank on her in the classroom. This student was reported to have demonstrated discomfort with the idea of women in control, which was evident in the way he spoke to Sarah and other females in the classroom. This caused Sarah to feel unsafe meeting with him without others present. Similarly, in Rebecca's situation, she reported being bullied by a male student who she described as "remarkably aggressive" and who was known by her colleagues as frequently trying to "take women faculty on." Although Lynn discussed her race as a target, she also commented on how she felt "Being a woman – being a minority woman" was part of why she and other female faculty were often challenged by students, especially if they did not necessarily have anything else to complain about regarding that faculty member. She went on to state, "I wonder if the student would behave the same towards a White male professor the same way [as me]? I can't help thinking, what kind of discrimination [faculty] may have" as a result of their differing identities.

Social Work–Specific Contributors to SIC

Six out of the 15 participants felt social work programs specifically invited certain types of confrontational and aggressive behaviours. For example, Erin discussed how unlike teaching in other post-secondary programs, social work students come into her courses with previous field-related employment experience as well as lived experiences. Although she recognized the value of bringing knowledge, work experience, and lived experiences to the classroom setting, she also found that students with previous social-work-related experiences did not feel that their educators had anything valuable to teach them or that they only wanted to learn what they felt was important, which did not always align with what was being delivered.

A recurring theme in the participant interviews was student resistance and confrontation that resulted from the delivery of course content that made students feel discomfort. Much of this material centred on themes that would not necessarily be discussed in other types of courses or other academic disciplines, and many of those themes encouraged students to critically examine their own biases and assumptions. Like several others, Marcus discussed feeling that "content discussed in social work classrooms can create tension and confusion" leading students to often push back against the material, particularly if it made them uncomfortable. Susan discussed how she saw distinct differences between students in her social work courses and students she taught in in other programs: "the same student in a [non-social-work] course won't challenge you, but they'll challenge you in the social work class. In social work, students are terrible to the social work instructors. But they're not like this" in other types of courses.

Some participants felt SIC may be related to students having differing expectations for social work educational programs and in turn, social work educators, as compared to programs in other disciplines. Susan discussed how social workers are "supposed to be nice people. We're social workers. We're touchy feely." She felt there was a perceived

expectation from many students that social work educators should act in more of a therapist role than that of an academic. As such, social work educators should be more accommodating than educators in other disciplines and ultimately "bend over backwards for the social work students." Similarly, Patricia felt students viewed showing intense emotions or lashing out behaviour towards social work educators as acceptable by virtue of what those educators do, particularly instructors identifying as clinicians. When participants attempted to set boundaries and clarify their roles as educators and not clinicians, that was often seen as "offensive," leading to SIC.

Unlike many other disciplines, a primary focus of post-secondary social work education is to teach students to be assertive and to advocate for social justice. However, it was felt by some participants that there was a misperception among students regarding what advocacy actually was. For instance, students would often mistake not getting what they wanted as an injustice. Furthermore, advocacy meant fighting back and being aggressive in situations in which their needs were not met, including the academic and classroom setting. For example, Shelley stated,

> All these concepts we're teaching them, they hurl back your way … I am for people advocating. I am for them practicing advocacy skills for themselves in anticipation of advocating for somebody else. But there seems to be a disconnect between advocating for something and unwillingness to accept responsibility or back down when they're given the rationale for why [something] happened.

According to Michelle there was a "fine line between advocacy and aggression":

> In social work, we're training students to be assertive. And it takes practice, so they may be practicing some of that. And it takes practice to accomplish that. And maybe it doesn't come out that way. It's probably a safer place [in the classroom] to practice.

Thus, the social work classroom and social work educators were seen as softer places for students to engage in what they considered to be advocacy behaviours than in their practicums or with employment supervisors.

Impacts of SIC

Participants were asked to share the perceived personal and professional impacts of SIC. Some participants focused more on the mental health aspects of their experiences although the majority focused on the professional impacts of SIC and how they intertwined with personal effects. Even participants who shared that they did not feel overly impacted on a personal level still recognized the significance of the phenomenon on an educator's mental health and well-being.

Stress, Fear, and Anxiety Regarding Future Incidents of SIC

Stress, anxiety, and fear were terms frequently cited by participants. Not only was dealing with specific incidents of SIC considered stressful, the anticipatory anxiety and fear of future situations occurring as well as the anticipated lack of support they would receive by leadership created additional stress and worry. For example, Susan discussed how she has come to "dread" grading assignments, as she felt that anything below a 90 percent would be challenged. Additionally, based on her previous experience, she received little to no support from administration. Susan taught both social work and non-social-work courses, yet she did not experience any anxiety about grading in her non-social-work courses in the way she felt "huge anxiety" grading her social work courses. Students in non-social-work courses were more accepting of their grades regardless of the score received. Marcus worried about saying something in class that would lead to SIC, stating, "there's always a sense of fear or hesitation about saying the wrong thing because of how it could be misconstrued or used or taken out of context." Some of these situations related to SIC were described as "really stressful" and contributed to some further negative mental health effects. Marcus continued:

> You feel like you're being targeted unjustly … I have had many, many a night, many a moment where I was just stressed about it and worried. It stresses you out because you know there's a threat. Does this need to go to a level further?

As a result, he reported avoiding certain topics that he knows may create conflict and confrontation from students. Rebecca also shared that she worries about future incidents

involving SIC, and how her goal is to make it to retirement in the next few years and "get out alive." She stated,

> We're here in the industry of education and ensuring that we're providing what we're supposed to provide. And to some utility that is constructing what we call a social worker that will then be meeting with the public and working with highly marginalized people. The tensions of all that are remarkable in terms of how much energy it absorbs out of any given day. And every moment of hiccup or tension you think, "Ok, this could go south."

Emily felt consumed by a sense of hesitancy and fear to continue teaching. At the time of the interview, she had taken a significant break from teaching but was scheduled to teach a course in the upcoming semester. She expressed feeling scared to return to teaching: "I'm really nervous. I am scared. I am terrified of what's going to happen in that classroom as well as I fear I won't have support from my leadership. So yeah, a lot of hesitancy with teaching." Shelley went so far as to obtain a note from her primary care physician requesting that she be able to teach the remainder of her course virtually in order to have the ability to record the classes as evidence of what was actually happening in the classroom with students. Although she noted the importance of having "proof of every word and every syllable," she also stated it "hurts your mental health. It hurts your ability to be spontaneous and take a conversation somewhere in the classroom. It impacts your teaching, and it basically makes me show up every day with sweaty palms. Like, I hate going."

Insecurities and Doubts About Teaching Abilities

Multiple participants discussed developing insecurities and doubts about their teaching abilities and having their legitimacy as an educator questioned. Rebecca shared how self-doubting thoughts "takes up a lot of space in [her] head" and Julie discussed how eventually she started to think she was a "terrible" educator and questioned her approach to social work and mentorship altogether. Erin discussed how her experiences with SIC left her feeling "emotional, insecure, and uncertain" about her abilities to handle these types of situations. Similarly, Emily described how her mental health was significantly compromised

as a result of her experiences with SIC and the lack of support she received from her leadership. As a result, this led to self-doubting thoughts such as

> I'm not good enough to be an educator. I'm not competent in my professional abilities. Then I just feel it does trickle out into my personal life where I'm crying. I'm upset … I'm always able to hold it together in the class. But [it] disrupts my personal life.

Although Shelley expressed concern about not being invited back to teach in future semesters, she also expressed uncertainty as to whether she wanted to return because of the possibility of SIC and the lack of support received by her leadership. She stated,

> Maybe I'm just not cut out to teach in the new world of social work because there's no other place on the planet where this happens. Nobody went to the Ministry of Transportation and said, "I call foul because you didn't give me a copy of the driver's exam before I took it."

Impacts on Teaching and the Classroom Environment

SIC and the subsequent unsupportive response from institutional leadership was reported to have negative impacts on several of the participants' teaching practices and their overall work performance. For instance, decreased motivation, spontaneity, and creativity resulted from some participants' experiences with SIC. Much of this had to do with the weariness that resulted from the time and energy spent handling the specific incidents involving SIC, navigating situations with leadership, and working towards preventing future situations. Patricia discussed how the constant reading and responding to confrontational emails from specific students was exhausting and took away from the time she would normally spend preparing for her next classes. Despite planning to take on additional courses, she ended up deciding to take a break from teaching for the remainder of the year, stating, "I just need a break to recoup … I did feel tired because I can tell you, if I didn't have this experience, I would have taught some more." Anne discussed a lack of motivation and creativity in her teaching performance sharing, "I feel like I have some gifts and a lot of creativity. That was something I [am] no longer willing to do." She felt the joy was taken out of teaching as a result of her experiences with SIC and leadership's unsupportive responses.

As a result, she did not feel she was as present with the students and was not as able to present or communicate in as effective a manner as she had previously, stating, "I couldn't pull in as much as I would have done if I'd had more physical, emotional, and spiritual energy … The students didn't get the maximum of what I could offer. They got the minimum of what I could manage."

Participants' complacency and their lowered expectations of students were also viewed as an impact of SIC. For example, Shelley reported that as a result of student complaints even after offering them choices in an assignment, she no longer offers any element of choice: "All I take away from this is you will never get a choice from me again in the future." Rebecca discussed how she has "become quite complacent" in her teaching and interactions with students. She felt it was easier to lower her expectations of student performance to avoid being challenged, stating, "I don't want to take on the conflict anymore and I don't necessarily want to navigate it because it feels too hot." Similarly, Sarah reported she did not take situations involving SIC personally, yet she still felt "demoralized and betrayed" after she believed she had done so much to be supportive and accessible to her students. This "took a toll" on her, resulting in decreased motivation and creativity. She went on to state,

> I'm an instructor who always goes the extra mile. Like I go out of my way. I stay late. I check emails when I shouldn't. I give extensions. I always go the extra mile and I thought, "I'm being punished" … It can really take a toll on instructors in terms of just depleting you, your resources. And it can be a drain.

SIC also had an impact on faculty-student relationships. Some participants felt they needed to adopt a more rigid and structured approach with students rather than demonstrating a warm and accessible demeanor. For example, Ben discussed a shift in his teaching pedagogy and teaching style due to his experiences with SIC:

> I try to teach in a way that doesn't reinforce the academic sort of power dynamics. But then that makes me feel as though I need to keep more boundaries between me and the students. Or I need to assert more authority in the academic situation, which is not how I want to be as an instructor.

Marcus shared a similar feeling in that he has donned a less open and warm demeanor as a result of his experiences with SIC. He continued,

> I feel like it would be better for students if I was more open and warm. But I choose not to be as much as I would be as a person dispositionally because there isn't this institutional backing to push against students that might abuse that.

Similarly, Lynn discussed how although she was aware that she will not be "loved" by all of her students or be able to please them all, her experiences with SIC "ruined the feeling of connectedness" with them. She compared her situation to that of a "filled balloon" in which the incident was "like a needle that pops the balloon. And poof – everything's gone. And I have no energy left. No motivation."

Some participants even went so far as to compare the classroom to a "battlefield" or "battle zone" and felt they needed to act accordingly. As Julie explained, "seeing students in another class/term – it was like you know that you're walking into a battle zone. You had to be on your toes all the time … It meant being really mentally prepared for class. Really being clear." Lynn also discussed feeling as though she needed to put on a suit of armour, saying, "just before you enter the classroom, you have to be very strong. You have to prepare yourself fully. It's like putting on our armour. Going to a battlefield. You need the helmet. You need your sword." Additionally, Lynn compared her situation to that of a court room in which she was "thrown into a trial without knowing anything was going on. And then I was simply told, 'You are guilty' and then thrown out of the courtroom." The less support participants felt they had from colleagues and leadership, the more stress, anxiety, and fear they reported experiencing should future situations involving SIC arise.

Concerns About Future Academic Employment

Some participants expressed fear about how SIC might impact their future careers as a post-secondary educator. This was particularly worrisome for those teaching on a sessional or part-time basis and who relied on continual contracts to retain their positions. For example, Shelley questioned if she would be invited back to teach in the future because of her previous

history and leadership's lack of support with SIC. She expressed feeling like a "worm on a hook." Ben also worried about being hired to teach a course again, emphasizing how student evaluations could potentially impact the hiring process. However, both Ben and Julie discussed how their experiences with SIC and the associated impacts influenced their decision to not move forward as full-time academics. For example, Ben had thought about becoming a career academic, yet his experience with SIC and the destructiveness of student complaints as well as the lack of backing from leadership to hold students accountable was described as a "bit of a turn-off." He stated,

> It's not necessarily that I need to be liked by students. But to think of entering a career where I'm going to be constantly put in conflict with people that I'm trying to service is scary … Disgruntled people complain, right? And if they want to make your life hard, it's not impossible for them to do that. And so, that really does concern me as I think about this career. And it may very well be that I just stay a sessional.

Like Ben, Julie also started teaching in a post-secondary social work program with the dream of eventually acquiring a full-time teaching position while maintaining a clinical practice on the side. However, after she stopped receiving opportunities to teach at that institution as a result of her experiences with SIC being brought to her leadership team, she decided not to pursue a doctoral degree or a career in academia. Julie never taught again, stating, "I felt like I got left and hung out to dry. And I wasn't willing to put myself into that situation again."

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Some participants, as a result of their experiences with SIC and the lack of support and action received by leadership, considered leaving their academic position. Erin described feeling her "legitimacy as an instructor" had been diminished as a result of her leadership not holding students accountable for their actions. As such, she contemplated retiring early, stating,

> I can't deal with this conflict and feeling undermined … It's not the workload. It's not the team. It's not the university work environment. It's the conflict with the students.

> It's left me uncertain about what the way forward is and how to negotiate that in a way that is both fair and equitable.

Shelley and Lynn discussed being tempted to leave their positions after their experiences with SIC. Shelley described herself as a "fairly strong cookie," yet things became terrible enough that she almost left in the middle of the term. She considered getting her doctor to place her on an immediate medical leave for the remainder of the term allowing her to say to her leadership, "So effectively, I'm quitting today. You figure it out." Lynn also reported feeling her mental health was strong overall. However, she did report feeling "burdened" by her experiences with SIC, leading her to feel "defeated, misjudged, [and most of all] sad" that there were no opportunities for direct communication with the student or with her leadership team. As a female and person of colour, she described feeling especially hurt that she could be accused of being discriminatory when she faced her own types of discrimination. As a result, Lynn's first reaction was to resign, as she did not want to continue being an educator and face students anymore. She reported, "You just need one incident, one student to ruin everything. To ruin your whole year. Your whole term. Your classes." In some ways, she reported she would "rather work as a cashier at Safeway" than have to manage situations involving SIC and the associated lack of support from leadership.

Three participants reported they eventually left teaching either for an extended time period or permanently. As mentioned previously, Julie chose not to pursue her dream of becoming full-time academic following her experiences with SIC. Anne discussed how she ended up leaving teaching for a time, although she did report that SIC was only one of a variety of factors leading her to quit. Susan reported leaving teaching on more than one occasion, the first being after her initial incident with a student spreading false personal rumours about her. She stated that incident, "caused me to leave what I thought was the job that I was going to retire from with a full pension. I just decided I couldn't do it any longer." Not only did Susan leave her position as an educator, but she left the geographical area

altogether as a result of her experiences with SIC and her leadership's response. For a significant time after, Susan described experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and sought therapy for 2 years to address this incident. At one point, she was facilitating a trauma group. Some of the group members mentioned a connection to the region she had left. This triggered a trauma reaction with Susan reporting "I had to leave [the group]. I just couldn't hold it together."

Concerns About Reputation and the Community

Although several participants expressed concerns about how SIC could impact their teaching careers, some also expressed fear and worry about how their reputations in the community and within their external social work practices could be negatively impacted. For instance, Shelley discussed how situations in which students made "serious statements that are grossly inaccurate" about her directly and via social media resulted not only in her feeling she had no recourse within her institution, but she was also worried about how those types of statements could damage her reputation in her community. Ben and Julie discussed how they feared that the slander and other derogatory remarks they received by students on social media and online forums could damage their reputations in the community as clinical practitioners. According to Julie, "word of mouth can spread and be quite voracious" and as such, there was a potential to influence her and others' ability to recruit and retain clients as well as have other employment opportunities in the future.

Themes Regarding Institutional Leadership Responses and Responsibilities

Participants were asked whether they reported their experiences with SIC to colleagues and/or leadership and if so, what those responses were and what level of support they felt they received. A range of responses were reported. Twelve participants reported at least one incident to either colleagues or leadership. However, there were times that some participants chose not to report, even if they had at other times. For example, five participants did not report either because they chose not to, which was the case for one participant, or in

the case for four participants, they never had the opportunity to report because students had reported them to higher levels of administration first. Although a small number of participants reported feeling supported by leadership, most expressed they did not feel they received the type of support that would have been beneficial.

Participant Experiences of Not Reporting

Various reasons factored into whether participants reported their experiences with SIC or not. Marcus did not report the first time he experienced SIC, mostly because as a new faculty member, he was not fully aware of the process and procedures regarding handling these types of situations. Additionally, Marcus spoke of trying to handle most situations on his own where possible. Sarah discussed how for a long time she did not share her first experience with SIC, which involved the student asking her a personal and inappropriate question in front of the class. She indicated she felt embarrassed and felt she might get reprimanded or blamed for being perceived as "losing control of the classroom," which she feared would lead to issues in retaining her teaching position. Sarah continued: "I didn't feel safe to tell anybody. I didn't feel I could say anything or ask for help for many, many years."

Four out of the 15 participants did not report their experiences with SIC as they never had the opportunity to do so. In these situations, students went directly to higher levels of leadership to issue complaints rather than first reach out to the participants. Lynn, for example, did not even know the student had an issue with her or the assignment in question until the department chair of another program reached out to inform her of the student's complaint. When the associate dean from her own program was made aware of the situation, Lynn did not feel she received much support or understanding despite having known the associate dean for quite some time. Naturally, Lynn expressed confusion and distress that she was being questioned, yet the student was not redirected to discuss their concerns with her first. She felt she was put in court and then told "you are guilty" and thrown out of the courtroom without being given the chance to defend herself.

The other three participants who had a student complain about them to leadership also reported feeling they did not have the opportunity to share their perspectives or defend themselves when questioned. Julie shared an incident in which she was informed by leadership that they talked with a student about a complaint, but they had not redirected the student to her. She felt leadership made a decision in the student's favour without looking at the circumstances around the situation or what she had tried to do to manage it. Erin discussed a similar situation in which her department chair approached her about complaints received by students, yet she was unaware these students had an issue as they had not alerted her to their concerns first. She felt she was not given an opportunity to communicate with the students, nor was she provided the opportunity to offer her side of the situation, stating,

> It wasn't only that she [department chair] reported a complaint, but that she'd already made a decision about my work. And she's somebody who knows my full repertoire and had interpreted something with a quick glance in a particular way. And she wouldn't allow me to speak to the students. Wouldn't identify who they were.

Erin eventually learned who the students were and tried to engage them in a conversation. However, she reported that at that point, "the damage had already been done." The following term, Erin reported that another instructor experienced a similar situation with the same students.

Shelley discussed how she never had the opportunity to go to her director because the students always went to him first. She referred to the example of how several students in her class were unhappy with the grades they earned on a particular required course assignment. After providing specific rationale for why the students received the grades they did, she thought she had handled the situation. However, she later found out from her department chair that the students had gone to him to report her. She stated, "I didn't report it. I just handled my ducks. They reported me." She discussed how she consistently kept a tracking chart of student engagement each week so she had a documented record. However, even though she had documentation to justify the rationale for the students' grades, the chair

reportedly told her, “I don’t care. You didn’t put it in writing [in the syllabus] so I’ll support a grade appeal.” Shelley responded back, “Well if you’re going to support a grade appeal, then what’s the point?” of even keeping track of participation or defending herself in the first place. The following year, Shelley experienced a situation in which 14 students in her class issued a letter of complaint to the director regarding discontent with marks they received on an assignment. Even though Shelley put specific assignment guidelines in writing in the syllabus per the director’s feedback the previous year, when she tried explaining her rationale for the grades, her director responded by saying, “You don’t really want a difficult semester, do you? I mean, last semester wasn’t great for you.” Shelley viewed that response as a veiled threat that if any student issues arose, it could jeopardize her ability to retain a teaching position in the future. In the end, she raised their grades to avoid further escalation of the situation.

Participants Experiences of Reporting

The 12 participants who reported incidents of SIC received a range of responses from leadership. Some felt they were not supported. Others felt emotionally supported but that in the end, leadership took no action. The best experiences seemed to be for those participants who felt leadership both supported them and took action.

Lack of Support

The fear of being blamed for incidents involving SIC and in turn, of losing their teaching positions, was mentioned by multiple participants. For example, although Michelle discussed how she consistently tried to consult with colleagues and leadership regarding situations involving SIC, she did recognize that in situations that may not be as clear cut as threats of physical violence or serious code of conduct violations, she was “cautious about bringing anything forward because it could be construed as ‘How did she contribute to this?’ And that would always be called into question.” There was an acknowledgment that there

was a lot that could be at stake in the decision to report, particularly in relation to an educator's reputation and ability to remain at the institution.

The participants' position and title as an educator was mentioned as a factor in deciding whether or not to report SIC in that participants who were sessional instructors perceived themselves to have less support than those in full-time or tenure-track positions. There was an expressed fear of not receiving another teaching contract if situations involving SIC became known among leadership. For instance, Shelley discussed the differences in contract versus full-time faculty, stating how she perceived full-time faculty as "untouchable" and being able to do whatever they want in a way that she could not as a sessional faculty member. As a sessional instructor, Julie discussed how she did not feel she was supported as much as she would have if she had a secured full-time position. Although she acknowledged her director had a complicated role in that he has to "wear both hats" in balancing the needs of students and faculty, Shelley did not feel like she had his full support because his motivation was primarily to "somehow appease the students." She continued by stating, "I also feel like I can't advocate for myself or say, 'You're not actually being supportive and you're making this problem worse – and here's why', because I need him to hire me next year." Erin discussed that although there is a power differential that must be acknowledged by leadership, what was not acknowledged was the "vulnerability of instructors, and especially in the neoliberal context." Erin is a full-time faculty member yet recognized the increased vulnerability sessional instructors often experience, stating, "I'm permanent. The precarity is much different for someone in a temporary contract."

Emily also discussed feeling that as a sessional instructor, she does not have the same voice as a full-time faculty member:

> Sessionals are not afforded the same privileges that faculty members are. If you're a tenure-track professor, you can use your voice in ways that as a sessional, if I already have someone that doesn't necessarily think I'm the most competent instructor, they can use this as a way to never hire me.

Furthermore, in her discussions with other social work sessional faculty members at her institution, Emily reported they "will not come forward about abuse. And so, it doesn't get addressed. Students get away with it." Finding a group of other sessional faculty who provided support has been very helpful for Emily, who stated that, "we know we're disposable and we feel like we can share with each other. And that has made it bearable."

None of the aforementioned situations allowed the participants to feel supported or that any action was being done to defend them. Shelley discussed feeling that in each experience, her director did not "back [her] up" even when she had written communications from students demonstrating confrontational and aggressive behaviours: "There's no recourse for me. I can't take that email, go to the director, and say 'This needs to be addressed,' because we're in the business of keeping them happy." Similarly, Lynn stated, "I don't feel I received enough support from management. Maximum is some neutral investigation."

Support With No Action

Although some participants felt an expression of empathy and support by a direct supervisor such as a program coordinator, chair, or director, there was limited to no action to hold students accountable for their behaviours. Julie discussed a situation in which multiple students cheated on an exam, yet she was told that instead of receiving zeros on the assignment, the students should be given an opportunity to redo the exam. She described her program lead as a "very nice lady and very supportive of me," yet Julie did not feel she was willing to do anything around how the institution addressed the situation. Instead, Julie was told she would not "get anywhere" by taking the issue to higher leadership and that it was "not worth the time, which is a really a sad thing for a leader to say." When Emily reported the situation regarding the student who called her a "race traitor" to her administrator and associate dean, she initially felt emotionally supported by her associate dean's response of "I'm sorry that happened to you. That's really unfair. Our students aren't being responsible." However, she then reported that nothing happened and the student was not held accountable,

nor did they receive any consequences for their actions. This was reported to be a common occurrence when issues involving SIC were raised with leadership at her institution.

Rebecca also shared feeling very supported by her program director:

> To my director's credit, I got a lot of support … Thank God I had an administrator that said "I'm in your court. I'm willing to support you. I'm here with you as much as you would want me to be. And I'll support you in whatever way I can. But just know that I've had an incident like this too. It's something that happens. Just don't worry about it. You haven't done anything wrong."

Rebecca expressed the gratitude she felt for receiving that type of administrative support and validation. She went on to state, "I will pledge my allegiance to that person for the rest of my life because he was a decent human being." However, despite receiving significant emotional support, Rebecca was told by her director that she was not going to receive any help from higher levels of administration. Students were ultimately supported over faculty in her program.

Support and Action

In a few situations, although inconsistent, participants expressed feeling supported by their leadership emotionally and through action after reporting their experiences with SIC. Erin reported receiving a range of responses when she reported her experiences with SIC to her leadership. Although she did not feel supported in most situations, she did share one situation in which the chair of her department sat down with both Erin and a student who was upset by some feedback she received on an assignment. In that situation, Erin reported feeling that her chair was supportive and helpful. Similarly, Susan reported that in one of the three incidents involving SIC she reported to her administration did she feel "fairly supported." In this situation, Erin's department leaders followed through on holding a student accountable after they were found cheating.

Patricia felt it was her "duty to file and make these reports" to her department's leadership in situations involving SIC. She reported being transparent with leadership regarding what she was experiencing, particularly in a situation in which she felt she was

being bullied by a student through what she described as “strong and distasteful” emails. Her leadership inquired as to how they could support her and gave her the opportunities to share ideas regarding how she wanted to move forward with the student. Leadership willingly received Patricia’s documentation on the matter and supported her suggestions as to how she wanted to manage the situation with the student. Marcus also reported feeling “lucky” to be supported by two of the deans in his department in “their verbal kind of support, expression of support, but also their actions” when he reported situations involving SIC. He shared that when he reported the situation involving the student who was yelling at him to the dean, “it was received very well.” Despite feeling supported by his department leaders, Marcus also recognized that this was “probably not the norm” in other social work programs.

Implications of Institutional Leadership’s Responses for Participants

It’s Just Part of the Job…

As previously discussed, even in situations in which the participants received support from leadership, their overall experiences demonstrated that very little, if any, action was taken to hold the students accountable. Eventually, the overall expectation was that the participants would not receive the needed support in situations involving, SIC. In turn, they were left to handle these situations on their own. Andrew corroborated this notion stating “I have not had an expectation that I will get much backing from the university. So, I’ve lowered my expectation around that.” Michelle felt leadership tended to take threats of violence or concrete examples of code of conduct violations more seriously than other situations, such as grade appeals. Andrew stated that the overall message from leadership was to “do your best and find your way through the semester.” Similarly, Shelley felt the “goal is to get to the end of the semester without being in front of the dean. Just save yourself.”

Multiple participants discussed receiving the message that SIC is “just part of the job,” particularly from colleagues. Patricia initially felt that SIC was part of the role of being an educator and because she had the clinical skills to handle these types of situations, it was

acceptable student behaviour. However, she reported that upon reflection, she was able to "stop and say 'Wait. This needs to be reported. Not only reported, but this person needs to be held accountable.' And it was really empowering." Unfortunately, Patricia was the only participant who was able to challenge the message that SIC is part of the job and gain the support of her leadership. By comparison, Rebecca discussed receiving the message that SIC is part of the job from leadership in her department along with the message that she and her colleagues should do whatever it took to be professional and keep situations from escalating. Andrew discussed receiving some validation and support from colleagues, but the recurrent theme was "You know it's going to happen. So let it happen." Ben reported receiving positive support from his director, yet found the coordinator of the course he was teaching to be "very jaded" and have a negative perspective of students as a result of their own experiences of SIC. The message was that these incidents happen and not a lot will be done to hold students accountable. He discussed struggling between not wanting to adopt a jaded perspective of students, yet after experiencing SIC, it was difficult for him not to recognize and understand some of those jaded views. Michelle also concurred with the view that SIC is part of the role of an educator comparing it to that of a flight attendant:

> Part of our role is to take or deal with that [SIC]. It might not be pleasant … but it's part of the role, I guess. You're like a flight attendant and for each course, it's like a trip somewhere. And we might have some people who aren't happy with the food or might throw the food at us or whatever. But then it's kind of part of the role.

Capitulating to Student Demands

Participants were asked whether they thought leadership at their institution was aware that SIC was happening. The general consensus was that leadership was aware of this phenomenon, but it was often "swept under the rug" or "brushed under the carpet" mainly due to concerns about the institution's reputation or the financial implications that could ensue if negative attention was drawn to these types of situations. In the previous section, neoliberalism and more specifically, the focus on revenue generation and student retention in

post-secondary institutions was cited as one of the primary contributors to SIC. Likewise, these factors were thought to be central to why faculty were frequently not given the backing and support they requested. Shelley reported feeling that leadership is well aware of the issues:

> I think leadership 100 per cent agrees with what faculty are saying and what they're seeing rollout – and the problems with it. I think they do not want to be sued. They do not want the social media backlash … and that the school's reputation will be hurt. They're facing financial crunches and they want bums in seats. And once you put that bum in the seat, particularly in a professional program like social work, it doesn't look good if you fail them.

Julie felt leadership was aware of the phenomenon, yet they did not take SIC seriously stating that leadership "roll over and give everybody their belly." She felt the message that she and her colleagues received was that dealing with confrontational students was the "price of doing business" and that leadership's "hands were tied." When Julie discussed her experiences with other colleagues in the program, because of administration's concerns over negative press and the need to fill admissions seats, she was told it was not worth reporting these situations to higher levels of leadership. She continued:

> They gave me the same song and dance that my program lead [did]. "It's a lot of work [to report]. You're not going to get anywhere. The students are not really held accountable through the university. It's a lot of paperwork for nothing."

As such, SIC was never discussed in team meetings, nor were faculty provided with guidance as to how to effectively deal with situations other than to give in to student demands. Marcus also felt leadership had an astute awareness that SIC regularly occurs:

> I think that everybody I have spoken to is aware of this issue. It has come up in department meetings where other people are having problems with students. It's not a secret that students are initiating these confrontations …. There is a public relations kind of dimension to this. And I think higher levels of administration are, whatever reason that may be, are hesitant to take action in any kind of – I'm being very careful with my words here – serious way.

Marcus followed up by discussing how he felt that leadership was concerned about not only the issues with the institution's reputation in the immediate sense, but also in terms of implications on admissions numbers in the future. As a result, he captured the sentiments

of several other participants in that academia has created a "culture where faculty and administration capitulate to student demands uncritically."

Themes Regarding Preparation and Training

Prior Training and Education Related to Teaching Pedagogy and SIC

Participants were asked to share their experiences with training and education received related to both post-secondary teaching pedagogy as well as training related to SIC. Out of the 15 participants interviewed, only five had received some type of required teacher training prior to teaching their first course. Of those five, only Ben and Sarah received mandatory training through their institutions. Ben reported being mandated to attend a 1-day orientation when he was first hired as a sessional. He was grouped with faculty from a variety of disciplines and the focus was more on library resources and designing course outlines as opposed to more extensive teaching pedagogy or classroom management. Sarah was required to complete a multi-day new-teacher training when she became a full-time faculty member, which was after she had already been teaching as a sessional for 10 years. The training was provided to individuals brand new to teaching and those who had been teaching for over 20 years. Sarah reported not finding the training overly useful in providing tangible teaching skills.

For the remaining three who had received prior training, it had been completed as part of their own social work studies. For example, Emily reported receiving a 2-day teacher training as part of her MSW coursework and Rebecca completed one course on social work education in her doctoral program. Lynn completed a post-secondary teaching certificate program during her PhD studies which provided information on teaching techniques. Mentorship opportunities were also a part of the certificate program in which students were observed and mentored by seasoned professors. The remaining participants reported that the trainings they received were minimal and tended to focus on basic teaching pedagogy, such

as structuring lessons, developing curriculum, and building assessments and rubrics, with limited opportunities to practice or receive coaching and feedback.

Because of the lack of mandatory training prior to entering into the teaching profession, the majority of participants sought out training opportunities on their own either prior to or concurrent with their teaching responsibilities. For instance, Patricia knew she wanted to teach at the post-secondary level, yet did not feel her clinical skills and workshop facilitation skills were enough to help her feel confident in entering into the academic sector. She completed a teaching and learning certificate at a local university prior to accepting a sessional teaching position elsewhere and has since completed several additional courses related to adult education. The other participants sought out opportunities once they started teaching. Several participants mentioned their institutions had institutes or centres focused on teaching and learning that provided trainings and micro-credential opportunities. Participants tried taking advantage of the opportunities offered, although none were mandated by their university to complete any extensive training prior to becoming an instructor. Nevertheless, several mentioned how these trainings were generally at their own expense and were often time consuming or conflicted with times they were already teaching a class, making it impossible to attend. This was even more difficult for sessional instructors who worked in other capacities outside their institution. Ben shared this sentiment: "When you're a sessional instructor and have a full-time job outside, there just isn't really time for those things –and they're not required."

As a result of the lack of mandated and accessible training opportunities, not surprisingly, several participants reported feeling unprepared when they first started teaching or even now after having taught for multiple years. For example, when Anne first started teaching, she felt there was a mismatch between her expectations as to what her adult learners would be able to understand and complete and what they were actually able to do. She did not feel she had been adequately prepared to be an educator at her institution and that it was "not

something anybody really guided me to do. It was something I had to figure out on my own." Despite completing that post-secondary teaching certificate during her doctoral studies, Lynn did not feel she received enough training on developing course content or strategies to make course content more interesting. Some participants were told to just use previous instructors' course outlines and syllabi instead of receiving any type of training and orientation to the program, course, or the art of teaching in general. As such, there was an expectation that educators should just "learn on the fly" or "learn as you go in the classroom." Marcus stated, "They don't prepare you for this" and Julie remarked that she "went in blind." This was also the case for Shelley as she described how she was given no orientation to the course, program, or even department area:

> Thank God I just showed up and taught because nobody checked. Nobody cared. I didn't even get an orientation to a photocopy code or a key or how to get a parking pass. To this day, I don't have a photocopier code. I don't even know where the photocopier is!

When asked about training specific to SIC, not one participant reported being mandated to receive training on this subject by any institution that had hired them. In fact, several discussed how they had limited awareness, if any, that they would have to deal with confrontational and aggressive students, especially since it was difficult for many participants to imagine acting in that manner when they were students themselves. Very few participants received training that had any relation to dealing with confrontational or challenging students. Julie had been selected by her institution to attend a 2-week post-secondary educators' workshop after she first started teaching. It mainly focused on how to teach at the university level and did touch on how students and the university should be held accountable in situations involving violations of academic honesty. However, Julie reported feeling her experience was "incredibly frustrating" in that her own institution merely provided "lip service" that students should be held accountable yet were not. Additionally, the training focused on academic honesty violations and not on classroom management or confrontational

situations initiated by students. Ben reported that during a week-long conference he voluntarily attended on teaching pedagogy, there was mention of the importance of holding students accountable for their actions, yet it was not specific to SIC and "didn't really address the issue of what happens if they don't like being held accountable." Erin reported there was no training specifically related to SIC at her institution. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent trainings "focus a lot on student engagement and how to get the best out of it. So, it doesn't look at confrontation. But it does look at how to build an environment that is successful for students" which she hoped would reduce opportunities for SIC to occur.

The majority of training and education received by participants focused on the use of field-related skills. Two participants mentioned having previous degrees related to education, including special education, which they felt helped them to be more sensitive to the various learning needs and subsequent ways to support students with emotional and behavioural issues. Group and workshop facilitation skills training and experience were also mentioned as somewhat useful in managing the classroom environment, particularly related to how to move about the classroom and manage both more silent and more overactive or challenging students, as one would in a social work group situation. Conflict management skills training was also mentioned by some. This included trainings and workshops on managing high conflict individuals/clients, having critical/difficult conversations which participants reported using within their organizations and with clients.

Shelley shared how because of her experiences with SIC, she had been actively searching for trainings and education specifically related to SIC in the post-secondary sector and had yet to find any. The trainings she did find were more focused on teaching pedagogy and "if they touch on anything on classroom management, it's so superficial, there's nowhere even to go." Unlike educators in other disciplines, several participants mentioned feeling like there was an assumption that because social workers are typically trained to deal with conflict with clients and de-escalate situations involving emotional dysregulation, they already

possessed transferable skills that could be used in the post-secondary academic sector. For example, Patricia felt the message she and her other social work faculty colleagues received from leadership was "because you have the skills to deal with them, maybe you can just keep on dealing with them." However, assuming that social work educators automatically have the ability to handle situations involving SIC by virtue of the nature of what they do was seen to be problematic. For example, Emily stated,

> I think there is this idea that because we are social workers, we should be able to handle conflict with our students without [leadership] understanding it's not the same as working with clients or working in groups or the community.

Identified Training and Educational Needs Regarding SIC Mitigation

Thirteen out of the 15 participants discussed the need for more mandatory training and professional development related to SIC. This was not surprising given that the majority of participants reported they had not received any previous training related to this subject from their institution or externally. Of those 13 participants, over half discussed the need for an initial orientation to alert new educators to the existence of SIC and the types of issues that may arise. For example, Rebecca discussed how new hires often have "no clue" that SIC could be an issue unless they had "been through the eye of the needle," stating, "Nobody at the level of dean or anybody bringing in new staff is offering any kind of truth to the idea of what you really need to know and where your own professional risk is." Lynn discussed how because new faculty are generally hired as a result of their research specialization, they often do not possess the knowledge or skillset to manage SIC. Similarly, Emily discussed how she felt it is important to "let instructors know that it's not *if* confrontation happens. It's *when* – and there are some strategies to diffuse it."

Four of the participants felt it was important for faculty to be informed of students who have had a history of confrontational or aggressive behaviour if they are to have those students in their classes. For example, Patricia acknowledged the importance of student privacy and confidentiality, yet she also felt that intentionally withholding information about

a student with an abusive history from a new instructor was unethical. She discussed how if she had known that one of the students exhibiting confrontational behaviour had acted in this manner with another instructor prior to the start of her class, she would have been better prepared to handle it, and she would have felt less isolated in her experience.

In addition to a general orientation to the existence of SIC, the majority of participants also expressed the importance of learning about various strategies related to classroom management, diffusing situations involving SIC, and the institutional policies and processes involved when situations escalate. For example, Anne discussed the importance of training and resources focused exclusively on the "nuts and bolts of classroom management" and intervention, and Sarah suggested that all new educators receive a general orientation on what is considered acceptable and unacceptable student behaviour. She also felt that training regarding tools and strategies to handle SIC using role plays and simulation activities to allow educators to practice responding to various situations was imperative in preventing and mitigating SIC.

Although the majority of participants felt that more training related to SIC was needed for educators, particularly new hires, Julie, Erin, and Marcus suggested training alone was not enough to address SIC. They expressed concern that training of this nature has the potential to position individual educators as the problem instead of acknowledging the systemic and institutional factors that were reinforcing and maintaining this phenomenon. For example, Julie expressed wanting to see more training related to SIC. However, she felt that if social work programs and the institution as a whole were not aligned in holding students accountable for their behaviours and supporting their staff, individual instructors are limited in their ability to handle situations effectively. Erin also saw some value in providing SIC training to educators, yet was concerned that training sends a message that educators are responsible for the occurrence of SIC:

> I don't think it's about training and I don't think it's about putting it onto the instructor. That's part of it, of course. It is the orientation to the training. There's a strong sense that it is very much our responsibility to set up students for success so that students shouldn't be failing. And that you're failing if a student fails. And I think that message needs to change.

Marcus expressed his own uncertainty about training as he felt the larger academic climate needs to change and that there needs to be a renewed focus on the importance of learning and not confirming what students want to hear. He felt that training reinforces neoliberal ideologies within the academy:

> The message is that the problem is in the classroom. Therefore, let me give you training so you can address this at the individual level. But the actual problem, I think, is more so social and institutional … if there is some sort of concerted training effort, I feel like that's the nail in the coffin. I feel like that would be the symbol of the death of the classical university.

Additional Identified Needs to Mitigate SIC

Although more opportunities for training and professional development were cited, all of the participants discussed the importance of improved administrative structures within their institutions to support educators experiencing SIC. Patricia, Shelley, and Susan felt this begins with the admissions process. They each discussed the need for improved admissions evaluation and screening processes. For example, Patricia discussed how some students "have a 3.8 but they don't have people skills" or abilities to regulate their emotions. Implementing more intentional screening practices were thought to help identify students who would be more likely to engage in problem behaviours and may not be suitable for social work programs.

As several participants felt their institution or direct leadership did not acknowledge the existence and/or significance of SIC, there was an expressed desire for leadership to be more transparent in their recognition of the phenomenon and for them to provide increased opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in direct, honest, and open conversation about their experiences with SIC. Creating more open dialogue whether in staff meetings, trainings, or in individual conversations with direct supervisors about SIC was thought to allow faculty

and staff to feel less isolated in their experiences, share helpful strategies with one another, and to feel more supported in a way that felt safe and would not jeopardize their careers. Patricia suggested implementing mentorship opportunities, especially for new and sessional educators, to help them to feel connected to their colleagues, and to help them build tools to handle situations involving SIC. Julie even discussed how sessional faculty should be given longer-term contracts, such as a 5-year contract, so that if an educator has challenges with one particular cohort, their ability to secure another contract will not solely be determined by that one student group. She felt that longer-term contracts provide universities the opportunity to see the quality of instruction over an extended time period which can be assessed based on a variety of factors and not just student opinion.

The establishment of clearer institutional policies and procedures related to student complaints and the management of SIC was also viewed as a way for leadership to better support educators. For example, Lynn and Shelley discussed the benefit of a flow chart or template outlining the various steps for students to make complaints with initiating contact with instructors as the first step. Lynn suggested clearer processes for students would protect both students and educators, and that they should not be about "blaming or finger pointing" but instead focus on facilitating improved communication and passing along information. Several participants also discussed the need for clearer processes for educators related to reporting and managing situations involving SIC. Knowing who to speak to, the logistics around documentation, and how the review process is conducted is important for educators as well as students to understand.

Shelley suggested that individuals in other departments, such as accessibility coordinators and those who are part of student code of conduct and academic honesty review teams, should be invited to faculty meetings to provide information and explanations about processes, procedures, and how decisions are made. This has the potential to reduce confusion and ensure that situations are being dealt with in a consistent manner. However, it

was also discussed how leadership needs to be more consistent in upholding policies and holding students accountable for their actions. This includes removing students from classes when they are not acting in accordance with code of conduct policies and the CASW (2005) *Code of Ethics*, issuing grades commensurate with academic honesty violations, and even removing students from courses or the program when it is clear that students have either violated policies multiple times or are not viewed as suitable to continue in social work education. In the end, several participants expressed wanting to feel supported, backed, and believed by their direct leaders and the larger administration. As Emily stated, knowing that colleagues and leadership believe that what an educator is reporting is real is "really helpful and that they have your back … I think we need to believe instructors and not just see that it's part of the job. I don't think it should be part of the job to expect abuse from students."

Current Teaching Practices and Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

Not Taking SIC Personally

Some participants were able to not take SIC personally and instead acknowledged that the students' words and behaviours most likely originated from a place of student stress and distress. This reframe was found to decrease the personally deleterious impacts of SIC. For example, Michelle discussed trying to look at the content of the message she received from students and compared that content to the tip of an iceberg, recognizing there was probably more going on for the student than the issue at hand. She looked at each incident as an opportunity for personal and professional growth, and that "if the tone hit on more of a personal level, that's mine to deal with and unravel." Patricia discussed how she did not feel overly personally impacted by her experiences with SIC, even stating that she felt "empowered professionally" in reporting situations to her leadership, working towards holding students accountable for their actions, and collaborating with other instructors to alert them to potential issues with specific students so they did not have to experience what she did.

Patricia, Michelle, and Andrew acknowledged that their age and field experience also helped them to feel less dramatically impacted by SIC. For example, both Patricia and Michelle discussed how upon reflection, had they experienced some of these incidents 10 or 20 years ago, they may have felt less equipped to deal with them personally and professionally. Michelle stated that had she experienced SIC earlier in her career, "Well, that would be it for me. You know, cry. Go home and cry and eat ice cream the rest of the night." In addition to age, having sound clinical skills was also mentioned as being helpful. Andrew discussed how his extensive experience working in the field with clients who were violent or had personality disorders allowed him to "develop tolerance to handle situations." Patricia also discussed how her clinical skills to help clients de-escalate and regulate their emotions were useful in dealing with aggressive and confrontation students. However, Andrew and Patricia both discussed how institutional leadership should not assume that social work educators enter academia having pre-existing skills to effectively manage and mitigate SIC. There was also a sense that just because educators have the ability to handle these types of situations and/or they do not seek guidance from leadership does not mean the phenomenon does not exist, nor is it a not a significant issue. As Patricia stated, "Just because I'm not crying or whining or hysterical" does not mean it is not a problem.

Accessibility

The majority of participants cited the importance of accessibility and being available to students, whether by phone, email, or in-person as a way to both prevent and diffuse SIC. Strategies included consistently encouraging students to reach out if they had questions, confusion, or concerns, and inviting students to meet if they suspected students were struggling in some way. Michelle reported that she consistently arrives early to class as a way to "spot if someone comes in upset." She felt this opened space for further conversation with that student, and that "being available, being fully present" for the student can diffuse situations before they begin or escalate. She and Shelley also discussed the benefit of

remaining after class to allow space for students to talk to them individually if they had concerns. Similarly, Jennifer discussed how she never turned her back on her students and consistently reaches out to individual students who appear distressed in order to "find the root of the problem." She felt it is important to show students that she cares and is invested in helping them problem-solve, which often helps to diffuse situations initially based on anger and aggression.

Taking time to meet one-to-one with students, whether in person or through virtual means, was cited as a way to mitigate and de-escalate situations once they had started. Several participants mentioned throughout the interview that they recognized SIC as emerging from a place of stress and distress, and that trying to understand the origins of these types of behaviours with empathy and understanding was beneficial. This was particularly useful in managing SIC centred on grades. For instance, Patricia discussed the importance of trying to "unpack issues" and look for meaning behind why students were fixated on grades. She described situations in which students engaged in SIC as a result of discontent with grades and encouraged those students to focus on how grades are earned and not assigned. Responding to student concerns with questions such as "So you only get A's. What does that mean for you? How does it get value?" or "Are you grade driven or growth driven?" were thought to help students go beyond their immediate discontent and instead reflect and identify their own meaning in situations. Encouraging students to focus on how grades are earned and not assigned was thought to be a teachable moment by several of the participants including Marcus who tried to communicate with students in a way that helped to shift the fixation on grades to the process of learning.

The way in which participants managed the classroom and associated content were also thought to have an impact on SIC. For example, some felt it was important to anticipate the types of situations that may lead to conflict with students. As such, alerting and preparing students for upcoming difficult content was one strategy discussed by some of the

participants to eliminate surprise triggers where possible. Lack of awareness of upcoming triggering material was thought to create stress and distress in some students which would often lead to the student being unable to regulate emotions, leading to aggression towards both classmates and educators. When discussing difficult and potentially triggering content, both Anne and Jennifer discussed how they developed in-class activities in which students would be placed in small discussion groups as a way to support to one another and provide each other with feedback in a way that was less challenging and triggering than when executed in a larger group discussion.

Engagement of students in class discussions and activities were also thought to be important in preventing and mitigating SIC. Utilization of small group learning activities, such as case studies, values clarification exercises, and other activities that integrated real-life and relatable examples helped engage students more. In addition to being given the space to appropriately share relevant lived experiences, the more relatable and relevant the content was for students, the more students positively engaged with the participants and one another in the classroom. Even the manner in which participants maneuvered in the classroom was thought to help increase engagement with students. For example, Andrew discussed how he uses his own physical presence in the classroom as a way to engage students, including walking around the room, role playing examples, and sitting next to students if they were struggling with a concept. He discussed this idea:

> Students gain more power the more physically distant you are from their presence in the classroom. The more you engage all of the students in the classroom and make the entire space instructional space, active structural space, you diminish that power.

In addition to being accessible to students and engaging them in the classroom, some participants discussed how their own demeanor and ability to self-reflect was a factor in preventing and mitigating situations involving SIC. This included acknowledging and apologizing to students when they had made a mistake or misunderstood something. For example, Michelle admitted she can have “blind spots and be wrong,” and Patricia discussed

how she felt it is important to apologize to students if she is wrong about something. Additionally, over one third of the participants discussed how engaging in critical self-reflection was an essential tool in managing SIC. Part of the students' learning experience was focused on self-reflection and as such, it felt important for them to model those same behaviours.

Although adopting an empathetic and understanding demeanor could be helpful in preventing and diffusing situations involving SIC, it was also noted by several participants that there was a limit to the types of behaviours they would and would not tolerate. Lynn discussed how she encouraged her students to reach out if they had questions or concerns about a grade. However, they needed to be prepared for that meeting, stating,

> You can argue with me. I encourage you to do that. But when you come to me, you come with a good reason – the evidence in your assignment. Why I should grant you those marks. After that, no more questions.

Susan told students they should take at least 3 days to review the feedback on an assignment before setting up a meeting with her. Unless they were looking for clarification regarding feedback or ways to improve on future assignments, they were told not to reach out to her unless they were able to find a minimum of three errors in an assignment, especially if it was only worth a small percentage towards the overall final grade. Ben discussed how if he felt a discussion with a student regarding grades reached an impasse, he would stop the conversation from going further and reiterated the appeal process to the student. He would assure the student he was not upset with them but rather, he no longer felt they were able come to a mutual agreement.

Some participants reported they were not necessarily afraid to "call out" students on their behaviour where appropriate. For example, Erin discussed how in the past, if students reacted to her in a rude or "cocky" manner, she responded with statements such as, "You know, the way you approached this doesn't sit well with me and for this and this reason," which usually led to the student apologizing. Sarah also let students know when she felt their

words were inappropriate or hurtful. In many of those situations, she reported that students were not aware of the impact of their words or demeanor and were apologetic. However, if situations began to escalate to the point of aggression, several participants specifically expressed they would no longer be willing to engage further with the student and ended the conversation or referred them elsewhere. In meetings with students, Anne discussed how if situations became a "matter of character" she would not address them any longer, and Emily shared if she was unable to diffuse a situation, she would request that the student take some time to reflect on the situation and arrange to meet at a later date. Various social work skills typically used with clients, such as relationship-building, mirroring, reflecting and group facilitation skills were also mentioned by several participants as beneficial in dealing with students. As Patricia discussed, refusal to fight or engage in aggressive situations models for the students the same "soft skills" social workers "need to be doing in the field."

Setting Expectations and Guidelines

Setting clear expectations and guidelines with students in advance as a way to prevent and mitigate SIC was cited by the majority of participants. This often started with the development of detailed syllabi which were extensively reviewed during the first class and throughout the entire term. Several participants mentioned how their syllabi had increased in length over the years with some being between 15 and 20 pages long. Patricia stated how "a good syllabus gives you a good platform" for the overall course, and that putting things in writing in a detailed fashion gives students something to refer back to. This was thought to help eliminate many of the questions and confusion students have which may often lead to SIC. Patricia reinforced this idea: "I find students can get easily rattled when something's not clear" and by making expectations and assignments as clear as possible, it is more difficult for students to have sound rationale to be confused or make complaints against their instructor.

Articulation of class policies and behavioural expectations were cited as another strategy participants used to prevent and mitigate SIC. The inclusion of behavioural statements in course outlines and syllabi were mentioned by several participants, including the connection to acting in accordance with the CASW (2005) *Code of Ethics*. Although putting these expectations and policies in course outlines and syllabi were cited as important, engaging students in discussions around these policies, particularly during the first class of the term, was also cited as a strategy used to prevent SIC. Several participants discussed with students how social work courses lend themselves to fruitful discussions in which differing opinions are encouraged as a way to grapple and understand new and complex concepts. However, as Emily stated, it was also important let students know that "abuse is never tolerable" whether towards other students or staff, and that aggressive and confrontational behaviour does not align with class or professional expectations.

Engaging the class in a collaborative activity to allow them to identify class norms and expectations on the first day of class was thought to help reinforce the idea around what is and is not acceptable behaviour. This also helped to facilitate additional conversations with students regarding how to create a classroom space that feels safe and is based on mutual respect. For example, Emily discussed how she asks her students what their perspectives are on how to create a classroom space in which differences of opinions can be articulated without causing harm to others. Additionally, during the first class of the term, she asks students to share their opinions regarding their typical approach and response to critical feedback. She went on to state,

> starting a class that way is really helpful because students who may go right to anger when they get feedback … I've been able to see people be able to slow down a little bit and say, "You know, maybe I don't respond in the best way to feedback. I go towards confrontation or aggression."

Developing this insight at the start of the term was thought to help some students work on improving their reactions to feedback and lessen the likelihood of SIC.

Although setting clear class policies and expectations related to student behaviour was deemed as a way to prevent and mitigate situations involving SIC, several participants also felt that it was important for them to articulate what students should expect of them during the term. For instance, including specific information both verbally and in writing regarding how and when students may contact the participants was cited as an important strategy. If students know in advance that they may not receive a response from their educator right away, the thought was that they would be less likely to contact that person multiple times in an aggressive manner in order to get a response. Patricia discussed how she is clear with students that she does not respond to inquiries during evening and weekend hours: "My weekends are off and I'm modelling how your weekend can be off as well."

Transparency regarding how and when assignments will be marked was also identified as a helpful strategy by over half of the participants. Providing students with detailed rubrics in advance of assignments was found to reduce the number of questions and complaints about grades. Some participants also discussed how they spent a significant amount of time reviewing assignments and offering critical feedback. Lynn reported she reviewed each assignment thoroughly and "made [her]self work longer and harder in greater detail" to ensure she was able to provide sound rationale for why specific points were deducted. Ben shared how he believes "students have a right to expect detailed feedback. That's part of their learning." He continued stating that he does not want "just the students who complain to be the ones who get the most out of education."

In addition to written and verbal discussions related to class and behavioural expectations, several participants discussed how they reviewed institutional policies such as attendance policies, academic honesty policies, and student code of conduct policies at the start of the term and included the associated links in course outlines and syllabi. Processes for issuing complaints and appealing grades were also articulated both in class and in writing, as it was felt it was both important for students to be aware of their rights and to act in

accordance with institutional processes and seek guidance from their faculty member first instead of immediately going to leadership.

Multiple participants reported engaging in check-ins with students throughout the term to determine how they viewed the course and whether they felt the learning objectives were being met. Anne, Susan, and Michelle also reported that they frequently asked students for feedback on aspects such as assignment guidelines, and rubrics. Emily discussed using anonymous surveys with additional open-ended questions multiple times during the term: "it helps them to feel more heard and so it helps when they feel like I care a little bit more." Adjustments to assignments or the overall course would then be made based on student feedback where appropriate, which was thought to be useful overall.

Effectiveness of Strategies to Prevent and Mitigate SIC

As previously discussed, several strategies were used by the participants to prevent and mitigate SIC. Some found the implementation of various strategies to be helpful in reducing SIC, particularly ones focused on setting clear class and behavioural expectations at the start of the term. For example, Patricia viewed "those little tweaks" in how she set up course expectations as making a positive difference: "All of those things helped me when the big bomb arrived. I've done all I can do. And that's what helps." However, other participants did not feel the strategies made a significant difference in reducing the rate of incidences involving SIC. Andrew felt the strategies he implemented worked 50% of the time "depending on the emotional positionality of the student." Susan spent a lot of time developing detailed syllabi, rubrics, setting clear expectations, and eliciting student feedback, yet she did not feel those strategies were very effective. Rebecca did not think there is anything educators can do to prevent SIC from happening as much of this phenomenon is related to students' psychology. She continued:

> You put all these things in place to try to manage the absolute craziness that's happening around us. But do I think that prohibits any of it from happening? I don't because I think it's unregulated chaos. It's emotionally driven by people's drama.

Themes Regarding Implications of SIC for Social Work

Concerns for Students as Future Social Workers

All 15 participants expressed significant concerns for the future of social work as a result of the prevalence of SIC within post-secondary social work programs as well as the lack of initiative by institutional leadership to uphold code of conduct and related policies. Half of the participants noted that when SIC is allowed to occur and students are not held accountable for their actions, educators are then put in a position in which they feel pressured to "water down" content that may be triggering or uncomfortable for students, inflate grades, or "give in" to student demands. Alteration of other aspects of their teaching to avoid further conflict, particularly because they did not feel they would be supported by their administration was also cited. For example, Erin discussed how she felt staff morale was negatively impacted as many do not feel they can "take a stand" and defend themselves because they do not have the backing or support from their institution. Shelley viewed educators as feeling their only choice was to give in to student demands because it was easier than arguing with students. Without positive student evaluations, faculty risked not being hired again in the future. As such, Julie discussed how educators will often "kowtow to the students because the threat is that they will wreck you."

Furthermore, participants such as Andrew and Julie felt that these alterations to teaching practices give other students the message that confrontational behaviours and even academic honesty violations are acceptable. They both discussed how students constantly watch to see how situations involving SIC, including academic honesty, are handled by faculty and leadership. Andrew continued by stating, "They're watching to see the degree to which the university will protect them. But they're also watching to see how professionalism is handled in response to the behaviour. So, we're also modelling to the other students." When universities are touting the importance of student adherence to policies related to code of conduct and academic honesty, yet these policies are not upheld, this may give the

message to students that is acceptable for them violate said policies because there will not be any ramifications.

Concerns for the Future of Social Work Education

The majority of participants expressed concern for how the alteration of educational practices as a result of SIC diminishes the overall quality of social work educational programs, and that students are not being prepared in the way they need to be both in terms of basic academic skills and social work skills. Part of the concern is rooted in the lack of rigour at the K–12 level. By the time students enter the post-secondary academic sector, there is a reported overestimation of abilities because of previous grade inflation and a lack of opportunities to learn how to respond to being challenged. For instance, Patricia discussed how in some cases, students are being accepted into post-secondary programs, including social work, when they may not be the best candidates because of the difficulty determining true eligibility and legitimacy related to their previous academic performance. Rebecca also felt that many students are unable to perform at the university level yet, "They got in, and we're managing it now." Marcus reported feeling these factors have contributed to a decline in education over the last 20 to 30 years:

> I think that this decline in education has been going on for so long that I think there are students who are not getting a proper undergraduate education. There are students that are not getting proper master's education. And there are students who are not getting a proper doctoral education. But that does not mean that they don't go on to become academics.

In many cases, various topics considered controversial or triggering were often avoided in class. Four participants used the term "watered down" to describe much of the social work content being delivered because it was felt students were unable to manage difficult or uncomfortable situations. In addition, several participants discussed how critical feedback was often withheld from students to avoid future conflict, which was thought to lead to missed opportunities for student growth and learning. For example, Lynn believed a

lot of educators feel nervous or insecure to share critical feedback with students. However, she went on to state that if instructors hold back feedback, comments, and reflections,

> Students, who are future practitioners, may lose some opportunities to hear about the issues they can improve on, especially missing the opportunities of acquiring some important skills such as dealing with confrontations. Dealing with constructive feedback or unconstructive feedback. How to hold your ground."

Similarly, Shelley also felt there were missed opportunities for mutual growth and learning:

> I am unable to have difficult conversations with [students] where they can learn and grow and I can learn and grow. And we sort of stretch and grow together because there's this element of if you say something they don't like, they're running to the director. Therefore, I'm short-changing them on their education because when they can't learn through a difficult conversation with me … they're not going to know how to do that with a client.

This avoidance of topics and critical feedback was particularly concerning for the majority of participants given that social work students are being trained to work with some of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. As Emily explains, social workers "work with vulnerable, marginalized folks and you're putting [students] out there who have very problematic beliefs as well as no emotion regulation." Concern for how students may respond to someone they do not agree with was expressed as well as how students will "enact power when a client doesn't do what they want them to do." Julie also expressed worry about how clients could potentially be harmed by students with a previous history of engaging in SIC, particularly in relation to power dynamics:

> What are you going to do with clients that you have power over? You end up in children's services. Are you going to browbeat these families that have had a problem and need support? And are you just going to take the kids away?

Several participants discussed how social workers are to adhere to the CASW (2005) *Code of Ethics* and engage in constant critical self-reflection. However, when students engage in SIC with no recourse, there was a concern that they would engage in other unethical practices in the field. For example, Patricia discussed her worry about how unaddressed SIC within social work programs can lead to unethical behaviours:

> You don't wake up and say, "I'm going to be unethical." It's over a time with that lack of critical reflection. Lack of emotion regulation and lack of dealing with your stuff. You can segue into unethical decisions and behaviours which compromises the field of social work and social work education. It saddens my heart.

As a result of the aforementioned concerns, questions as to whether certain students were emotionally mature or suitable to enter the field were cited by two thirds of the participants. There was a shared concern that if students were unable to handle feedback and triggering content in the academic setting, they would not be able to handle hearing difficult content or feedback from clients or supervisors, which is a significant part of being a social worker. Ben reinforced this idea stating how "clients can give social workers a lot of negative feedback. How will students cope if they can't receive feedback in school?" Erin also discussed similar feelings:

> Students have to be able to come into this environment anticipating that both clients or services users or people that we work with will be stressed. And that service providers will be stressed. And they have to understand how to work in that environment. So, if they can't do it with us, then they won't be able to do that with others.

Problem student behaviours were not only an issue within the academic setting, but social work agencies and organizations were also viewed as having to bear the brunt of this phenomenon. For example, Rebecca discussed her concerns regarding this issue:

> If our field instructor were here, she would say it's wrong that we're passing this problem into the field and into the workplace. Because now, the workplace is going to have to manage this. And we've put a stamp on these people and say that they're fit to practice and they're not. Now the workplace is going to have to get rid of them – if they can get rid of them. And that's not fair. Some of the people that we are hiring to provide field practice education to – the people who identify red flags – are asking for our support in saying this person is not suitable to the profession. Nine out of 10 times, red flags get passed.

Erin reported noticing an increase in requests from practicum supervisors to implement more effective screening tools prior to sending students into practicum. As such, further concerns as to how situations involving SIC within the field would reflect on the reputations of social work programs were also cited. One third of the participants reported fearing that relationships that had taken time to build with agencies would be jeopardized or

even severed as a result of SIC, particularly if agency supervisors did not feel situations were being addressed at the institutional level. Sarah noted that "whether we like it or not," students represent the social work program they are enrolled in and problem student behaviours in their practicum placements do not reflect the program in a positive light. Shelley discussed her concern that the social work program at her institution would develop a poor reputation by virtue of this phenomenon and as a result, certain agencies would no longer want to select students for practicum placements or paid employment from her institution.

Some participants discussed concern regarding the implications for students not engaging in SIC. When educators avoid class topics, inflate grades, or do not give rich and critical feedback for fear it may lead to SIC, the learning process is disturbed, and all students lose out on opportunities to learn and grow. For example, Ben suggested if students are no longer challenged, they will be impacted negatively and lose out on valuable knowledge. Lynn stated, "Social work education will suffer. Our academic freedom will suffer and eventually the quality of practice will suffer … [students] will eventually not be able to learn as much as they could have." Julie and Emily discussed how they had received communication from students who expressed their own concern about fellow classmates engaging in SIC and exhibiting problem behaviours. Julie described some of these students as feeling demoralized because they did not want to be placed at practicum sites with classmates engaging in SIC and felt "absolutely disgusted" because they knew they would still end up collaborating with them in paid employment roles in the future. Emily shared how she received messages from students after class stating they felt "disturbed that a certain person is going to be a social worker and will be one of their colleagues." She continued saying that the students looked to her to rectify these situations, yet she felt stymied in her ability to manage the situation due to lack of support from her leadership.

Concerns for the Future of Social Work as a Profession

The majority of participants expressed concern regarding how the profession of social work would be impacted as a result of SIC, especially if these types of situations were not addressed at the institutional level. Andrew discussed how allowing SIC to be maintained within academic settings and in the field erode the CASW (2005) *Code of Ethics* which in turn, devalues the profession. Two thirds of the participants expressed that if problematic student behaviours go unaddressed, it undermines the credibility of social work among the public. Marcus and Patricia felt social work has historically not been perceived as rigorous or is not taken as seriously as other human services disciplines, such as psychology and psychiatry. Patricia shared, "Social work is seen as cheaper. More bang for my buck. You can assess, you can diagnose, and you can give out bus tickets?" She went on to discuss how there is a significant need for social workers:

> Social workers are so diverse. It's a field that you can do so many diverse things which is great. But if you cannot handle the diversity, if you cannot handle the challenges, it's going to discredit. It's going to weaken the potency of the field … people won't take the field seriously.

Emily noted social work is a regulated profession with a *Code of Ethics* whose purpose is to serve others, thus situations involving SIC need to be taken more seriously by administration because of the potential to do harm to others. Emily and Marcus furthered this idea discussing how in addition to not being viewed as rigorous as some other disciplines, social workers also have a negative or "checkered" reputation as a result of their previous involvement with the Indigenous residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, child and family services organizations, and other forms of oppression towards vulnerable populations. Marcus discussed how social work's credibility and reputation can only improve with the establishment of a rigorous education and by holding students and the institution to high ethical standards, which includes holding students accountable for their actions and ensuring

that they act in accordance with the *Code of Ethics* (CASW, 2005) and professional standards.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings that emerged from the interviews with 15 post-secondary social work educators regarding their experiences with SIC. Themes regarding the participants' experiences focused on what SIC is, including how and when it is manifested, as well as the contributing factors and impacts. SIC was reported to have manifested as uncivil or disruptive behaviours, attacks on the participants' personal or professional character, or threats to go to the medial or higher levels of administration. Several contributing factors to SIC were cited including neoliberalism and consumerism, lack of preparation for the rigours of higher education, societal climate, faculty contributions, and social work-specific contributions.

Many participants discussed experiencing significant negative personal and professional impacts as a result of SIC, especially as many did not feel supported or backed by their administration in holding students engaging in SIC accountable for their actions. In addition, the majority of participants did not receive training and education related to the pedagogy of teaching at the post-secondary level, nor did any participants report receiving training specifically related to classroom management and the prevention and mitigation of SIC. As such, there was a general feeling of not only being ill-prepared in the art of teaching, but also in the ability to handle situations involving SIC. Despite the lack of training, participants cited several strategies they had implemented to both prevent and mitigate SIC including setting clear expectations and guidelines around course, assignment, and behavioural expectations and being accessible and available to students.

All of the participants expressed a significant concern regarding the implications SIC has on social work education and the social work profession. This included fears that students who engage in SIC in the academic environment will further engage in similar behaviours in

their practicums and paid employment, leading to potential harm and unethical behaviour towards vulnerable and marginalized populations. In addition, as social work was already felt to be regarded as less rigorous as compared to other similar disciplines, such as psychology or psychiatry, and because social work has been implicated in past oppressive actions, there was concern that not holding students accountable for negative behaviours and sending them into the field will further decrease the credibility of the profession in the eyes of the public. As a result, several participants expressed a desire to see the implementation of mandatory, intensive, and specific training regarding SIC, particularly for new faculty. Although training was deemed to be useful and important, there was an overarching theme that SIC is a larger systemic issue that needs to be addressed at the institutional level and not solely at the individual level.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the essence of SIC as experienced by social work educators in Canada, and to discover what they identified as needed to mitigate SIC both in and outside the classroom environment. The previous chapter presented the findings of this study and the four themes that emerged: what SIC is, what the responses of the institution are, the level of preparation and training regarding SIC received, and the overall implications for social work education and the social work profession. As phenomenology is about understanding the essence of a phenomenon, this chapter provides an analysis of the findings and a discussion regarding how these themes contribute to our knowledge of the essence of SIC. The chapter begins by introducing and discussing a key finding, specifically that not only is SIC a prevalent phenomenon in schools of social work, but also one that poses serious and deleterious implications for social work educators, social work education, and the profession itself. The next section provides an analysis of the findings using the metaphor of a fire as it effectively reveals the ways students, educators, and post-secondary academic leadership contribute to and reinforce SIC. This is followed by an exploration of the challenges in mitigating and ultimately extinguishing SIC, and the role power and fear play as well as how SIC can be effectively addressed.

SIC as a Serious Phenomenon

SIC Behaviours and the Significant Impacts

Student behavioural problems are not a new phenomenon and have been documented throughout history (Holton, 1999). What may initially have been thought of as a student-initiated and isolated event may in fact be representative of a much larger and systemic phenomenon with serious implications. The serious nature of the phenomenon was evident in the participants' descriptions of the types and the intensity of incidents they had experienced. Admittedly, over half of the participants mentioned experiencing the less intense rude and disruptive behaviours frequently associated with incivility (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et

al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Bjorklund & Rehling, 2009; Boice, 1996; Boysen, 2012; Burke et al., 2014; Meires, 2018; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Sterner et al., 2015; Wahler & Badger, 2016), such as arriving to class late/leaving early, ignoring class policies and procedures, and the use of technology for non-class-related purposes. However, there was also considerable mention of the more intense, threatening, and severe behaviours.

Similar to the bullying and academic contrapower literature, (Cassidy et al., 2017; Christensen et al., 2020; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2017) many of the participants described situations involving student threats to go to higher levels of administration, lawyers, or even the media when their demands were not met. In Sarah's case, a deliberate action initiated by a student had the potential to cause physical harm. In other situations, participants experienced significant attacks on their personal and professional character. For example, some of these attacks related to participants' credibility as instructors in that students accused them of not caring about them or teaching, or that the participants were unwilling to help the students. Moreover, some of the participants were on the receiving end of what they considered to be blatant lies, and for others, their personal lives were the focus of the attacks. Some were even told they were "terrible" social workers with their professional character and identity the focus of attack. What was even more concerning were the attacks on participants' identities, including their race and gender.

The behaviours described by the majority of participants went beyond feelings of annoyance and frustration and instead, resulted in significantly more emotional duress. Similar to the literature (Abraham et al., 2022; Ahmed, 2021; Cassidy et al., 2017; DeSouza & Fansler, 2003; Lampman et al., 2009, 2016; May & Tenzek, 2018; Morrissette, 2001; Rawlins, 2017; Robertson, 2012), stress, anxiety, and worry were commonly experienced by the participants. Additionally, not only was their mental health negatively affected as a result of their experiences with SIC, but their self-perceptions as educators were also compromised.

Insecurities and doubts about their teaching abilities and legitimacy as an educator were commonly reported, which then exacerbated the existing mental health symptoms associated with their experiences of SIC. This was articulated best when Emily discussed how her experiences with SIC caused her to feel she was "not good enough" or "not competent enough" in her professional abilities as an educator.

Although SIC led to a multitude of negative impacts for many participants, fear underpinned the majority of their experiences. For example, fear often exacerbated the impacts of SIC as a result of the poor responses educators received from their program and higher levels of leadership. The constant fear educators felt as a result of their experiences of leadership's inadequate response was pervasive and kept many awake at night with worry. Marcus captured this best when he said, "I've had many, many a night, many a moment where I was just stressed about [SIC] and worried." If participants did not feel that leadership would support and back them, there was a significant fear about what the implications would be both within and external to the institution. Additionally, there was a noted fear that they would not be supported by program leadership and as such, lack of student accountability would send the message to other students that engaging in SIC was acceptable and even encouraged behaviour, potentially targeting educators at an even higher rate. As such, the fear associated with SIC not only has the potential to impact an educator's mental health and well-being, but it can also impact their teaching practices leading to further serious implications on social work education and the profession.

The literature suggests that problematic student behaviours are the primary reason educators decide to leave the field (Alvarez, 2007; Eisenman et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2014; Merritt & Wheldall, 1993; Seeman, 2009). The findings in this study also suggest that for almost half the participants, their experiences of SIC were so distressing they were tempted to, or actually did stop teaching. Ben decided not to embark on a full-time teaching position after experiencing SIC and the lack of support by leadership, even if that was the

original intent. Others, like Anne, Julie, and Susan, decided to leave teaching either for a designated time or permanently. Susan's situation became so negative that not only did she leave her institution, but she felt she had no choice but to leave her geographical area. Even after relocating and finding a non-academic role, she still described experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of her experiences with SIC and the ineffectual response from leadership.

Findings of this research suggest that SIC and the resulting lack of support by leadership can lead to faculty attrition. If left unaddressed, institutions are at risk of losing dedicated and talented educators, and students are denied the opportunity to learn from those with extensive social work knowledge and expertise. Although situations involving SIC are not something that educators want to have to deal with, if they are trusted and endorsed by leadership to hold students accountable for their actions and behaviours, or they are backed by leadership when situations escalate, some of the stress and distress that accompanies these types of situations may be assuaged and easier to manage. However, these types of incidents can be exacerbated and lead to further distress for educators if they feel unsupported and no action is taken to hold students accountable for their actions. If that distress becomes too intense, educators may not feel it is worth remaining in the profession. Erin articulated this best when she said, "It's not the workload. It's not the team. It's not the university work environment. It's the conflict with the students" that caused her to contemplate leaving her full-time teaching role. When the classroom environment and interactions with students are likened to going into a "battle zone" or situations requiring a proverbial helmet or sword, it is not surprising that some educators choose to leave academia.

For educators who decide to remain in the teaching field, the findings suggest that the way to manage the fear of SIC and its associated consequences is to alter teaching and grading practices. As indicated by previous literature (Alvarez, 2007; Morrissette, 2001; Rawlins, 2017; Segrist et al., 2018) and findings from this study, there is a tendency to water

down or avoid bringing up certain topics or concepts altogether that are more likely to trigger distress, discomfort, and confrontational reactions in students. These alterations to teaching practices can have serious implications for students, social work education, and the social work profession. Students may not be receiving the content nor developing the skills they need to be competent social workers. As the findings of the study suggest and consistent with Alvarez's (2007) arguments, SIC begins a cycle of negative interactions. Time spent managing SIC takes away time from the teaching and learning process, leaving some students feeling shortchanged regarding the knowledge they could have received. Additionally, educators who thrive on building relationships with their students may not be as able or willing to be as empathic or even accessible as they progress through their academic journey, which is particularly unfortunate for the many students who do not choose to engage in SIC. This was best captured by Marcus when he stated he would prefer to be more "open and warm" with students yet chooses not to "because there isn't this institutional backing to push against students that might abuse that."

Serious Implications for the Social Work Profession

Social work education is unique in that students are trained to work with some of the most marginalized, oppressed, and vulnerable populations. Thus, when important topics, especially those related to racism and oppression, are watered down or eliminated from the curriculum due to concerns about SIC, students are deprived of opportunities to develop the knowledge and training necessary to skillfully and competently work in social work spaces. Furthermore, honest and critical feedback is crucial in the social work students' ability to learn effective tools and strategies to work with a variety of populations and ensure that students are practicing ethically. As was indicated by several participants, social work students need to be able to receive constructive feedback, engage in critical self-reflection, and work calmly and effectively in stressful environments with individuals who may be in distress or crisis. Shelley articulated this best: "I'm short-changing them on their education

because when they can't learn through a difficult conversation with me … they're not going to know how to do that with a client." If social work students have difficulty regulating emotions and tolerating distress within the program and then are also deprived of opportunities to develop these skills, there will undoubtedly be practice implications. One of the primary concerns expressed by participants was that unaddressed SIC could lead to these students causing harm to clients in their placements or as future social workers. This harm could result from the students' misuse of power if they approach their work with the same sense of entitlement and lack of accountability that is characteristic of acts of SIC. The harm may also result from the students' inability to effectively cope and respond to client stories involving trauma, oppression, and even differing value systems, as this inability to cope with discontent is also characteristic of SIC. In these instances, students could be at risk of further reinforcing oppression or victimization towards clients through their words or actions, even if that is not their intention.

Another implication of unmanaged SIC within social work programs is that problematic student behaviours are being passed from the academic institution to social work agencies, thus leaving agency supervisors and staff to manage these situations. If students have difficulty receiving feedback from educators within the academic setting, they may also struggle to receive feedback from agency supervisors, staff, and even clients which is a critical part of the learning process in social work. This is a burden on agencies that are often already underfunded and understaffed. Although some agencies may counter this by refusing to accept students from a particular institution, if the phenomenon continues to be a widespread issue within the post-secondary academic sector, refraining from taking students because of SIC becomes more challenging. However, agencies and agency supervisors are not only dealing with the repercussions of SIC at the practicum level. If students engaging in SIC are not held accountable for their actions and are allowed to graduate, social work

agencies are now forced to deal with these graduates who are deemed fit to practice by their institutions, when they are not. This was articulated best by Rebecca who stated,

> The workplace is going to have to manage this [phenomenon]. And we've put a stamp on these people and say that they're fit to practice and they're not. Now the workplace is going to have to get rid of them – if they can get rid of them. And that's not fair."

Several participants expressed concerns that unaddressed SIC may ultimately undermine the credibility of the profession and erode social work's core values and ethics. For example, Marcus, Patricia, and Emily all spoke about how social work as a profession has historically struggled with its reputation and overall image and has not been perceived to be as rigorous as other human services disciplines such as psychology or psychiatry. Furthermore, social work has also been implicated in the reinforcement and maintenance of oppressive systems and structures including racist and discriminatory practices. Social work's role in Indigenous residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and the high rate of removal of Black and Indigenous children from their homes as compared to White children were mentioned by multiple participants. In keeping with Marcus's point, social work's credibility and reputation will worsen if social work students, employees, and the academic institutions they graduate from are not held to a rigorous and ethical standard. If students continue to be allowed to engage in SIC, not only may this be perceived as unprofessional, but it is misaligned with social work values and ethics.

In sum, SIC is more than isolated incidents that create some stress and frustration for educators. SIC is a phenomenon that is both serious and systemic, which if minimized or left unaddressed, has dire consequences for educators, social work education, the profession, and ultimately for clients. It is imperative that schools of social work tackle this problem directly and systemically. But in order to do so, it is important to understand how the phenomenon works, what keeps it going and what makes it so difficult to manage.

The Essence of SIC: A Triadic Phenomenon

Previous literature has typically asserted that the SIC is dyadic process in which both educators and students contribute to the overall existence and even maintenance of SIC (Alvarez, 2007; Boice, 1996; Connelly, 2009; Lashley & De Meneses, 2001; Rawlins, 2017). As such, there is a temptation to view SIC solely as a result of inappropriate and confrontational student actions combined with educators' inability to effectively prevent and mitigate these types of situations. Although students and educators play a pivotal role in the construction and maintenance of SIC, a key finding of this study is that the origins and makeup of this phenomenon is far more complex than the dyadic educator-student dynamic.

The Essence of SIC Is Like a Fire

The metaphor of a fire can be used to explain the essence of SIC. A fire occurs naturally when three elements: oxygen, heat, and fuel are present and combine in a specific manner (Carle, 2021) which is shown in Figure 2. Each element in isolation is not inherently problematic, and if any one of those elements is removed, the fire will either not ignite or be extinguished. How these elements interact with each other in combination with external climate and topographical forces determine whether a fire will ignite, strengthen, and spread (Carle, 2021). Just like the aforementioned three elements are needed for a fire to ignite and be sustained, SIC must also have three elements present before it can be ignited and sustained. These three elements are student behaviours, educator vulnerabilities, and leadership's response and failure to respond within post-secondary academic institutions (see Figure 3). If one of those elements is removed or altered, SIC can be extinguished. Similar to a strong wind and a drought that can cause a small fire to become a raging one, there are two factors, fear and power that exacerbate SIC and cause further destruction.

Figure 2

Fire Triangle

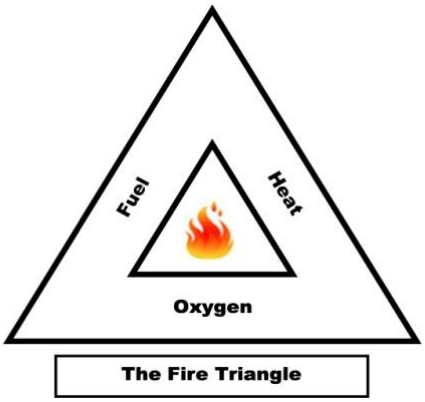


Figure 3

Student-Initiated Confrontation Fire Triangle

Students as Heat in the SIC Fire Triad

In the development of a fire, heat is needed to ignite the fuel source (Carle, 2021). In situations involving SIC, the student behaviours themselves act as the heat and ignition source. But what causes the heat? A key finding from this study suggests that student discontent raises the temperature. Participants revealed that student discontent has a variety of sources, the most commonly reported sources being grades, critical feedback, assignment expectations, and course content. Participants also indicated this discontent was rooted in the attitudes students developed and the experiences they had prior to entry into post-secondary

education. Findings from this study suggest that students' prior experience with K–12 education negatively impacted their ability to manage and cope with the rigours and expectations of post-secondary education.

As discussed in Chapter 2, students are typically not adequately challenged academically within the North American K–12 sector (Alberts et al., 2010; Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Lawrence et al., 2022; McKay et al., 2008). Moreover, they are not consistently held accountable for their individual academic performance and behaviours as compared to students in previous generations due to what Alberts et al., (2010) described as "permissive parents, overly lenient grade school environments, and a regular diet of instant gratification entertainment" (p. 440). This sentiment was echoed by participants, who cited grade inflation, lack of honest feedback regarding students' academic performance, and increased rates of academic accommodations at the K–12 level as contributing factors leading to SIC. Students who have been overpraised and over-accommodated in their K–12 years become used to receiving feedback and grades that may not necessarily be accurate reflections of their actual capabilities. These students may then assume that within higher education, excessive praise and over accommodation is likewise the norm. Without an accurate measure of their abilities, these students may not have the necessary scholarly acumen or resilience needed to succeed at the post-secondary level and beyond. These sentiments articulated by participants align with the literature regarding students' self-perceptions regarding how their abilities may not match the realities (Burke et al., 2014; Lawrence et al., 2022; May & Tenzek 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Nordstrom et al., 2009). As Shelley stated, "very little of what anyone's actually learning is actually worth the grades they're given. And so, they have this artificial sense of accomplishment and acuity that's not really there." Notably, this misalignment leads to feelings of discontent, which can raise the temperature sufficiently enough to ignite the SIC fire.

Although the excessive praise and over-accommodations described above contribute to the academic challenges students may face in post-secondary education, there are other factors that decrease students' abilities to cope with stress and adversity and may likewise raise the proverbial temperature. Many of the study participants believed parental over-involvement in their children's lives, "coddling," or "snowflake parenting" contributed to SIC. For example, children constantly protected from situations that may cause hurt or distress lose the ability to develop the skills necessary to cope with future challenges. Part of this parental involvement has increasingly been viewed within the context of their influence over curriculum decisions, particularly the removal of content deemed too upsetting or distressing for students. This was articulated by Marcus when he stated, "People don't seem to want to put their foot down and say, 'you have to get through this.' I wouldn't blame the students. Blame adults, parents. Blame us as instructors" for not pushing students to sit with discomfort and to think critically about difficult subject matter. Removing content that may create a sense of discomfort in students deprives them of the opportunity to grapple with difficult concepts, problem-solve, and open their minds to other alternative ways of viewing situations. These actions may in the short-term lower the heat by creating temporary positive feelings and a stronger sense of confidence in students. However, in the long run the temperature continues to rise.

Participants in this study strongly felt that students' inability to cope as a result of mental health challenges can likewise raise the temperature, a sentiment supported in the literature. According to the literature, more students with mental health issues are being admitted to post-secondary educational programs now as compared to previous years (Amada, 1992; Burke et al., 2014; Lawrence et al., 2022; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Morrissette, 2001). For example, both Amada (1992) and Morrissette (2001) suggested students are now attending post-secondary academic programs, when they may not have been able to previously due to the emergence of medications to aid with mental health challenges.

Poor mental health may be connected to the point made earlier that students may be ill-prepared to cope with the various challenges and stressors that often accompany post-secondary education. This study's findings are similar to the literature (Amada, 1992; Burke et al., 2014; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Morrissette, 2001) which suggests that when students are faced with stressors, mental health issues may occur or be exacerbated, potentially leaving students even less equipped to handle them, increasing the likelihood of SIC. This was best articulated by Ben when he stated, "it's easy [for students] to take that stress and frustration out on instructors. It's an easy place to project that." In conclusion then, the inability to handle stress, whether due to the poor preparation in K–12 years, over-protective parents or compromised capacity due to mental health challenges can either singularly or in concert turn up the heat to levels that ignite the SIC fire.

Not only do social work students need to cope with the stresses associated with higher education, but also those unique to social work education. As discussed in Chapter 2, because of a desire to process their own experiences and help others who have experienced similar situations, post-secondary social work programs often attract students with histories of trauma and lived experiences (Black et al., 1992; Lawrence et al., 2022; Rompf & Royse, 1994; Zosky, 2013). Having past experiences with trauma or having mental health issues need not preclude a student from becoming an effective social worker. Those lived experiences may actually be an asset in their ability to empathize with others. However, many participants in this study expressed a concern that unresolved trauma and mental health issues in students can lead to difficulties navigating and coping with program-related expectations. Students struggling with pre-existing mental health challenges may be extra-sensitive to critical feedback or poor grades in their social work courses if these do not match their perception of what they deserve. For example, Ben discussed the "wounded healer" concept in which many students enter into social work programs to learn more about their own lived experiences and work through past mental health challenges. As Ben explained, when they

are then asked to write papers requiring them to reflect on their own experiences and values, "There's just so much more of them in the paper. Then when it gets criticized … it seems like some of the reaction to me is as though I was their therapist as opposed to an instructor and provided a critique they didn't agree with." As such, we can again trace the influence of poor coping mechanisms and unresolved mental health issues in increasing student discontent and raising the temperature.

This study suggests there may be unique aspects of social work curricula that likewise increases student discontent. Students in any discipline may find certain concepts unappealing or uninteresting. Social work courses, however, may be unique in that alongside a focus on systems of oppression and social injustices, students are encouraged to critically examine their own biases, prejudices, and assumptions. Alberts et al., (2010) and Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) suggested that frequently within the K–12 curriculum, content and learning activities deemed to be too distressing for students are being eliminated (Alberts et al., 2010; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). Consequently, social work students may for the first time in their academic lives be challenged by course content that can trigger discomfort and force them to confront their own privilege and prejudices. For many of the reasons stated above, social work students may not be adequately prepared to handle these types of topics and as such, their discomfort increases as does the heat and the risk of ignition. In addition, as was mentioned by various participants and discussed in the literature, (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Otters, 2013; Wahler & Badger, 2016) social work education focuses on developing advocacy skills to fight against social injustices and systems of oppression. As Shelley stated, there is a "disconnect between advocating for something and unwillingness to accept responsibility or back down when they're given the rationale for why [something] happened." Thus, students may struggle with differentiating between what advocacy is and misperceiving it as the act of fighting back when they do not get their needs or demands met, which raises the temperature even further.

Educators as Fuel in the SIC Fire Triad

If students provide the heat igniting the SIC fire, educators are the fuel. The intersection of educator identities and how students respond to these identities fuel the fire. Fuel is also provided by educators' lack of basic post-secondary teaching pedagogy and specific training related to preventing and mitigating SIC. Each is discussed in turn.

Educator Vulnerabilities

In some situations, it is the educator's vulnerability by virtue of their identity that fuels the SIC fire. As the literature suggests, the academic world can replicate society. Educators who are viewed as occupying the most power, privilege, and authority in society based on race, gender, and other interlocking forms of oppression are often thought of as having the most power within academic institutions (Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Kumashiro, 2000; Mullaly, 2002; Pittman, 2010; Tisdell, 1993). As stated in Chapter 2, educators bring their intersectional identities into the classroom (Alexander-Snow, 2004; Johnson-Bailey, 2015). The literature suggests that students may enter the post-secondary academic sector with a vision of a typical educator as an older White male (Alexander-Snow, 2004; Eisenmann et al., 2013; Johnson-Bailey, 2015). When these students are then presented with educators who do not fit this image, they can develop false assumptions about that educator's credibility, competence, and authority. These assumptions can be tied to students' lack of familiarity and discomfort with those they perceive as different, or who present ideas and concepts that may be in conflict with the students' values or beliefs. For example, Andrew asserted he is more likely to receive a higher number of positive course evaluations than a person of colour, particularly a female person of colour. This is consistent with the literature that positions educators identifying as persons of colour as more likely targets of SIC as a result of their race and ethnic background (Abraham et al., 2022; Alberts et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2008; Johnson-Bailey, 2015; Misawa, 2010, 2015; Mullaly, 2002; Sallée & Diaz, 2013; Tisdell, 1993; Walkington, 2017). Only three educators identifying as persons of

colour expressed interest in participating in this study, yet two of those three felt their race factored into their experiences with SIC. Marcus specifically noted he was the target of SIC only with White students. Lynn felt her intersectional identities as a female person of colour contributed to being targeted. She captured this best when she stated, "I wonder if the student would behave the same towards a White male professor the same way [as me]? I can't help thinking, what kind of discrimination [faculty of colour] may have."

Unlike the aforementioned literature, the majority of the participants in this study identified as White, yet they still felt their identities played a role in their experiences with SIC. For example, some participants reported being targeted and even called racist by students of colour when these students received lower grades than their White classmates. The students' accusations of racism were not accompanied by any sense of accountability for their actual academic performance and/or not meeting the guidelines of assignments. Participants like Lynn and Rebecca believed that some students of colour may have had their own experiences with racism and other forms of oppression prior to entering in the post-secondary academic environment. Lynn described this in her account of SIC in which she viewed the student as "carrying not only his own burden, but the burden as a whole group" as a result of his own history of oppression. These students may then assume that they will face similar experiences in higher education. As such, aligning with Freire's (1970) theories about power and domination, students may then engage in SIC as a means of fighting against educators whom they perceive to be reinforcing oppressive ideals and structures. This interpretation was well articulated by Rebecca, who discussed her experiences with SIC by students who had their own experiences with discrimination and marginalization. She observed, "it doesn't take much to create a flashpoint of retaliatory aggression."

In other situations, it could be the participant's vulnerability due to gender that fueled the fire. Sarah, Rebecca, Lynn, and Emily each felt that being female was at least part of the reason why they experienced SIC. They wondered whether a male educator would have

received the same response from students that they received. This was especially true for those who felt specifically targeted by male students and as Sarah described, their discomfort with "women in control." In addition to gender, sexual identity may also be a factor. Emily suggested her intersectional identity as a queer White female triggered SIC by both White and non-White students. Emily felt that when students had their heteronormative ideologies challenged and what they were learning in class conflicted with the pre-existing values and beliefs systems the students held, the discomfort they experienced led to SIC.

These findings suggest that although educators' vulnerability due to their personal and professional identities may fuel the SIC fire, it is less about the specific type of identity and more how the student perceives that identity, or intersection of identities, and the resulting discomfort it creates for them. It seems that SIC may be associated with students' previous knowledge, views, comfort levels, and abilities to manage difference, whether that difference be attributable to an educator's identity, to course content, and/or a combination of the two. Ultimately it is how the student manages difference, that is, by being open or defensive, which may determine if they are likely to engage in SIC.

Social Work Educator as an Identity

Much like identities such as race, gender, and sexuality, an educator's identity as a social worker may also fuel the SIC fire, especially for educators who specialize in clinical work. The therapy room is often viewed as an acceptable or safe space for individuals to display intense emotions and say whatever they need to in an uncensored way. Social work students may have had experience with counsellors and other mental health providers prior to entering into their respective programs. Some participants felt students may assume social work educators will act more like a counsellor or therapist, than an academic. As such, students may expect social work educators to be more understanding and provide more accommodations than educators in other disciplines. They may also feel it is appropriate to exhibit more intense emotions or "lash out" towards social work educators. When educators

then attempt to clarify their roles and set appropriate boundaries, students may feel confused and even offended. For example, as Susan indicated, social workers are "supposed to be nice people. We're social workers. We're touchy feely." Students may then misperceive the educator as being "terrible," "bad," or "uncaring" social workers when their academic and emotional needs and demands are not met, further fueling the fire of SIC.

Educators and Lack of Training

In the previous section, educators' identities were discussed as a partial fuel source in the SIC fire. Educators' inabilities to prevent and mitigate SIC due to their lack of preparation and training adds additional fuel. As discussed in Chapter 2, post-secondary educators are less likely to receive training and preparation related to teaching pedagogy as well as classroom management and SIC as compared to their K–12 counterparts (Asio, 2019; Boice, 1996; May & Tenzek, 2018; McKay et al., 2008; Nordstrom et al., 2009; Sterner et al., 2015; Woudstra et al., 2018). In addition, as stated in previous chapters, because post-secondary educators are typically hired based on subject matter expertise, they rarely have prior education or training in teaching pedagogy upon entering academia. In this study, two-thirds of the participants had not received any basic training related to best practices in teaching before teaching their first class. When training was received, participants tended to find information related to curriculum, syllabus, and assessment development useful, yet they felt there was insufficient information on effective teaching strategies and little opportunity for mentoring and feedback.

A lack of training related to both teaching practices and SIC has serious implications for educators and does not position them to be successful. This can be especially true for new faculty. Several participants cited feeling very unprepared upon entering the classroom, having had little to no training or even an orientation to the institution, course, or department for which they were hired. Even though Lynn had received a certificate in teaching while completing her doctoral studies, she still felt she had not received enough additional training

on delivering course content in a more interesting and useful way with students. As Anne stated, being trained in basic teaching pedagogy is not something institutions generally provide and is often something educators have to "figure out on [their] own."

When it comes to preparing for course delivery and classroom management, findings from this study suggest institutions expect educators to figure it out on their own and learn on the fly. Although many educators are able to do this successfully, the message itself can still lead to problems. For example, the literature suggests that educators who appear disorganized, who do not provide clarity around assignment and classroom expectations, and who do not try to engage students in class discussion and activities are more likely to be targeted by students (Boice, 1996; Clark & Springer, 2007; Robertson, 2012). Thus, when educators are not provided with the proper training and orientation prior to starting a course, any struggles they may have such as delivering an organized and dynamic class session, or even knowing how to navigate classroom technology and online learning systems, may lead students to perceive them as incompetent and lacking credibility, regardless of their experience and expertise. Furthermore, the literature suggests that educators can lose credibility and respect among students if they do not address SIC when it occurs early on in the term (Boice, 1996; Burke et al., 2014). Students may then feel it is acceptable to act in a disrespectful way and engage in SIC.

As is typical in post-secondary education, none of the participants in this study were mandated to receive training related to SIC prior to teaching their first class, and very few had received training since becoming an educator. Shelley discussed searching for training on this topic and even when she attempted to complete a workshop, "if they touch on anything on classroom management, it's so superficial, there's nowhere even to go." Several participants did not even realize SIC would be an issue as they assumed their students would be adult learners who would act in similar ways as they themselves acted when they were students.

Despite SIC being an issue that educators will most likely face at some point in their careers, participants did not feel program chairs, directors, or deans were forthcoming about these possibilities. When educators are not informed, they can feel blindsided, which makes it that much more difficult to know how to handle situations when they do arise. For instance, many institutions have academic honesty and student code of conduct policies that can guide educators in dealing with these types of situations. Yet, if educators are not oriented to these policies, or are unaware that SIC is something they might face, they will not know how to effectively handle a situation according to the policies. This could then result in educators handling situations in a way that is not in accordance with institutional policies which can then further exacerbate a situation in that the students might feel they are not being treated fairly. Furthermore, without prior training regarding SIC, educators may not be aware of prevention and mitigation strategies that could be useful in decreasing the occurrence or escalation of SIC. Thus, when institutions and programs are deficient in providing training and preparation opportunities, educators are disadvantaged in their ability to recognize, comprehend, and mitigate SIC when it happens. This study focused solely on the educator perspective regarding SIC. As such, it may have been difficult for educators to be objective about how their behaviours and perhaps also personality traits fueled the SIC fire. To address this limitation and also to get a more fulsome understanding of how all three elements of the contribute to the SIC triad, all three elements would need to be interviewed.

Institutional Leadership as Oxygen in the SIC Fire Triad

The third element in the SIC fire triad is institutional leadership's response or failure to respond. Institutional leadership provide oxygen in the SIC fire by failing to support educators by holding students accountable for their actions. Many participants in this study felt that program and higher levels of institutional leadership were acutely aware SIC was occurring and as Shelley stated, they "agree with what they are seeing rollout – and the problems with it." Yet, as participants revealed, institutional leadership at all levels

frequently prioritize student needs and demands over educator support. Some supposed that if leadership acknowledged SIC as a problem, they would then have to address it on a more systemic level and risk the reputational and financial repercussions that would ensue.

Several participants indicated that SIC is typically "swept under the rug" or "brushed under the carpet." This, it was felt, was primarily the result of the increasing importance institutions place on neoliberalist ideals and revenue generation, or as Sarah described it, "the commodification of education." Institutions need a certain number of students to be fiscally sound. Several participants viewed situations that lead to negative publicity and a blemished reputation as having the potential to decrease admissions numbers, which could then result in financial consequences for the institution. Shelley articulated this best when she said that because institutional leadership are facing financial problems, "They want bums in seats. And once you put that bum in the seat, particularly in a professional program like social work, it doesn't look good if you fail them." Furthermore, As Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) discussed, post-secondary universities are constantly "bombarded with directives" (p. 200) from internal and external sources with the message that any type of legal liability must be limited. Thus, program and higher levels of institutional leadership are "keen" to acquiesce to students to avoid risking further complaints, media publicity, and even campus protests, which have been documented at many colleges and universities across North America. As such, institutions may be perceived as trying to prevent and/or contain their own fires, which would account for why they are not supporting educators when situations involving SIC or even academic honesty violations occur or holding students accountable for their actions. Although institutional leadership may be preventing certain fires by giving in to student demands, they are part of the creation of a larger fire – the phenomenon of SIC.

Another way institutional leadership provide oxygen to the fire is by failing to provide training to educators regarding the pedagogy of teaching and SIC. Part of this may be related to the message several participants received from their institutions, specifically that SIC is

just a part of the job. Andrew articulated it best when he stated, “I have not had an expectation that I will get much backing from the university. So, I’ve lowered my expectation around that.” The message educators are left with is that they should just learn to deal with these types of situations on their own. Findings from this study suggest educators may not be receiving training is because leadership is making the assumption that previously developed field-related skills will be transferrable to the academic environment. Andrew, Patricia, and Emily felt that as social work educators, they are perceived as better situated to handle situations involving SIC than those in other disciplines, thus reducing the need for mandatory training in this area. For example, many social work educators come to the academy with group and workshop facilitation skills and experience. Andrew felt his experience working with high conflict clients enabled him to “develop tolerance to handle situations.” These skills can be useful both in terms of effective teaching techniques and managing problem behaviours with students, and several participants cited as such. Yet, this does not mean that all social work educators will have this type of experience and even if they do, working with clients, groups, and the community is not the same as instructing post-secondary courses and interacting with students. This was reinforced best by Emily who stated,

> I think there is this idea that because we are social workers, we should be able to handle conflict with our students without [leadership] understanding it’s not the same as working with clients or working in groups or the community.

Thus, social work educators should not be expected to rely on field training and expertise to navigate the challenges of course delivery and SIC.

In sum, students, educators, and institutional leadership each contribute to the SIC fire. Students are the heat that raises the temperature as a result of their discontent regarding grades, course and assignment expectations, and course content. Lack of preparation for the academic and program-specific demands as well as limited effective coping skills to manage challenging and potentially triggering course content further raise the heat. Educators are what fuel the fire both because of the interfacing of their intersecting identities combined

with student expectations of what educators should look like, as well as their lack of training and preparedness to effectively prevent and mitigate situations involving SIC. Institutional leadership provides oxygen to the fire in their failure to support educators and hold students accountable for their actions as a result of their fear that negative publicity as a result of escalating student complaints could impact revenue generation. However, fear and power also play a pivotal role in SIC and are discussed in the next section.

Strengthening and Spreading the Fire: Power and Fear as Contributors

Small fires become big fires with increased oxygen, fuel, and heat. In the case of forest fires, for example, drought increases the fuel as trees and ground vegetation become more flammable and wind increases the oxygen making the fire bigger and also more spreadable as embers are carried aloft (Carle, 2021). The findings of this research suggest there are two elements acting like drought and wind, which both strengthen and spread the SIC fire. These elements are power and fear, and they influence all three sides of the SIC triangle: students, educators, and leadership (see Table 4).

Table 4

Fear and Power Table

Role	Fears	Disempowerment/ unconstructive use of power	Strategies to constructively use power
Students	Poor grades Not being accepted into higher levels of education Inability to manage academic rigours/expectations of post-secondary social work programs Inability to manage mental health/stress concerns Inability to manage/tolerate challenging or triggering course content	Misunderstanding of what advocacy/social justice is Make threatening demands/avoid accountability instead of engaging in problem-solving process directly with educator Student makes reports/complaints to leadership before talking with educator Recruitment of other students to make complaints to leadership and/or use social media platforms in advancing negative view of educator Attempts to discredit educator/use of course evaluations to provide retributive feedback or use	Take responsibility/accountability for actions Take initiative to access additional academic resources to feel better prepared for academic challenges/expectations Seek resources to help develop effective stress management coping skills Discontent/confusion is discussed directly with educator with curiosity, focus on problem-solving strategies

Role	Fears	Disempowerment/ unconstructive use of power	Strategies to constructively use power
		social media to damage an educator's reputation	
Educators	Safety and well-being threatened Future incidences of SIC and their outcomes Fear they will not be believed/backed/supported by institutional leadership Fear of being blamed for SIC Fear they do not have abilities to be an effective educator/ability to effectively manage SIC Fear of damage to reputation/career within institution and externally in community Fear of not being hired again/promoted d/t negative course evaluations/situations involving SIC	Lack of awareness of existence of SIC/lack of training/lack of awareness of existing policies and procedures to deal with SIC leads to ineffective ability to implement prevention/mitigation strategies Lack of overall preparation to handle SIC situations Lack of reporting to leadership/reporting with minimal to no support or action from leadership Feeling "unsafe" to report to leadership No opportunity to report (students report to leadership first) Give in to students demands/alter teaching/grading practices to avoid SIC	Take initiative to seek out training/education re: SIC prevention/mitigation strategies to feel more prepared Advocate for improved trainings/professional development Familiarize themselves with institutional policies re: SIC, review policies with colleagues/supervisors Implementation of SIC prevention/mitigation strategies Build relationships/rapport with students Respond effectively/constructively to SIC (not getting defensive, taking it personally, how/where they have conversations with students)
Leadership	Program-level leaders fear not being backed/supported by higher levels of leadership Fear of negative publicity/damage to institution's reputation (media/social media) financial repercussions (admissions numbers/student retention) d/t escalating student complaints	Failure to acknowledge SIC as a problem – avoid systemic changes being made SIC "swept under rug" Failure to provide education/training to educators re: SIC, policies re: SIC, SIC prevention/mitigation strategies Educators left to handle situations on their own Capitulating to student demands	Implement support structures for educators/macro and micro-level strategies to prevent/mitigate SIC Establish institutional policies re: SIC/student code of conduct/academic honesty Educate faculty, staff, students re: policies on consistent basis Uphold policies and include faculty/staff/students in development and review of policies Backing, believing, supporting educators through providing training, reducing reliance on student course evals as primary means of rehiring, promoting an educator Encourage more open/honest dialogue re: SIC (staff meetings, conversations with supervisors) Take initiative to better understand social work/social work values and ethics in relation to the implications of unaddressed SIC Enact improved screening processes for social work students

Note. SIC = student-initiated confrontation.

Students, Fear, and Power

When contemplating the hierarchies that exists within post-secondary academic institutions, students may not be considered as possessing power as compared to faculty and

administration. This study suggests students do have power and it is the way in which they use/misuse that power that has the potential to fuel or extinguish the SIC fire. These findings are consistent with Dominelli's (2002) theory in which those typically perceived to be powerless can exhibit power, and those in positions of power can also be powerless. Feelings of fear and disempowerment influence the ways in which they use power. This study's findings can inform us about what these fears and feelings of disempowerment are and how they contribute to SIC.

The fear of not being accepted into higher levels of education may attribute to student discontent around grades. Moreover, the fear (and perhaps also the realization) that they do not have the ability to manage their pre-existing and academic-related mental health and stress concerns helps to explain the discontent students feel around challenging and potentially triggering course content. As study participants revealed, many students are ill-prepared for the academic and emotional rigours of post-secondary social work education, which, in part, is revealed by their lack of coping skills to manage their discontent, potentially leading to SIC. This was best articulated by Rebecca when stating, "A lot of the frustration tolerance that goes into education isn't necessarily being scaffolded … People's ability to tolerate frustration and hold themselves in strength-building processes is much, much less. Aggression happens quicker because their frustration tolerance is lower."

Participants also suggested students having a sense of entitlement may lead them to conclude they deserve higher grades than their performance merits. This was reflected by Julie who suggested because students are paying for courses, their overall perspective is "Just give me the degree. I don't have to do the work for it. I paid for this class. Just give me the grade." Furthermore, if students enter the academy with previous lived experiences of being marginalized or discriminated against, they may misperceive, as participants suggested, certain assignment feedback, grades, or even actions and characteristics of educators as discriminatory or social injustices. The aforementioned situations may lead some students to

feel disempowered. Results of this study suggest that these feelings of disempowerment combined with fear are associated with students' misuse of power.

As several participants experienced, students can also misuse power in making complaints to higher levels of leadership about an educator, particularly when they circumvent talking with the educator first as an initial step. In some of the situations described by the participants, students may go so far as to recruit other students in making further complaints to leadership with the goal of getting that educator removed from the course or even fired. Even in situations in which students do engage in dialogue with an educator, if the student does not like the response received or they do not feel their demands are met, this could lead them to direct more confrontational behaviour towards that educator or escalate their concerns to leadership. As Michelle noted, students are not approaching educators with the goal of a "collegial conversation or constructive conversation, but it's more kind of stating demands: 'This is the way it's going to be. And are you going to make that happen?'"

The attempt to discredit an educator among their colleagues, leadership, other students, and in environments external to the institution are other examples of students exploiting power. For instance, instead of using course evaluations to provide constructive feedback for future course delivery, some students use them as a way to provide retributive feedback regarding their educator. Given that course evaluation outcomes can be a determining factor in whether educators receive another teaching contract or promotion, students do have a certain amount of power in deciding that educator's fate. In addition to the slander some students provide on course evaluations, others may attempt to discredit an educator and damage their reputation through the use of social media forums. The way students use power in these types of situations can have detrimental impacts not only within the institution itself, but within the educator's community and with other career endeavors, creating further emotional and even financial duress.

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the student-educator dynamic has evolved into more of a collaborative partnership (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970; Sikandar, 2015) in which students are considered "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire, 1970, p. 81). This study's findings suggest some students are not engaging in collaborative partnerships and instead, SIC is fueled when students misuse their power in a reactive, aggressive, and as many participants described, "bullying" manner. Findings also suggest that, specific to social work, when students engage in SIC, some misperceive their actions as deriving from a place of advocacy or a social justice framework. For example, SIC occurs when students choose to make threatening demands or avoid accountability instead of investing in any attempts to engage in a problem-solving process with the educator. This may be viewed as an immature use of power. Shelley articulated this best when she stated, "there seems to be a disconnect between advocating for something and unwillingness to accept responsibility or back down when they're given the rationale for why [something] happened."

Although this study focused on SIC, arguably a misuse of student power, findings suggest students have opportunities to use their power in positive and productive ways. In situations in which students feel they lack the necessary skills to be successful academically, they can take the initiative to access additional academic success resources. They also have the power to seek resources to develop more effective skills to cope with the stress associated with academia. If they experience discontent or confusion regarding assignment feedback, grades, course content, or even something they feel the educator did or said, they can use power constructively by approaching that educator with curiosity. They can collegially seek clarification and focus on problem-solving strategies. Furthermore, if students feel they are being marginalized or discriminated against because of assignment or grade-related issues, they have the opportunity to discuss those concerns directly with that educator. They can also show openness to hearing the educator's rationale behind their actions. As Shelley noted, when students and educators can engage in open dialogue, "[students] can learn and grow and

[educators] can learn and grow. And [they] sort of stretch and grow together." In sum, students may not be able to avoid feelings of fear and disempowerment. However, they can respond to these feelings by using their power in productive, constructive, and collegial ways, thus turning down the heat in the SIC fire.

Educators, Fear, and Power

Post-secondary educators possess power. Similar to students, educators' fears and feelings of disempowerment influence how they use their power to either deplete or add fuel to the SIC fire. For instance, individual incidents of SIC produced fear among participants, especially if they felt their safety and well-being were threatened. This was illustrated in Sarah's example when she felt "unsafe" meeting alone with a male student who had been confrontational. Moreover, educators may fear future incidences of SIC and their outcomes, especially if they have experienced previous encounters with this phenomenon. These fears of future incidences of SIC often combined with anticipatory fears that the participants would not be believed, backed, or supported by program or higher levels of leadership if they reported situations involving SIC. Emily articulated this best when she said, "I'm really nervous. I am scared. I am terrified of what's going to happen in that classroom as well as I fear I won't have support from my leadership." There was additional fear that the participants would be blamed by leadership for the occurrence of SIC. Michelle expressed this when she stated she was "cautious about bringing anything forward [to leadership] because it could be construed as 'How did she contribute to this?'" Finally, situations involving SIC, particularly those that are unaddressed at the institutional level, may lead to additional fears regarding potential damage to educators' reputations and careers within the academy and their community and professional practices as well. Moreover, this study suggests that both full-time and sessional educators fear how situations involving SIC could negatively impact their future within the academic institution. However, participants identifying as sessional instructors expressed a deeper sense of fear that incidences involving SIC and/or negative

student course evaluations could impact their ability to retain future teaching contracts. Emily articulated this best when she discussed how sessional instructors are not afforded the same privileges that full-time or tenure track faculty are: “If I already have someone that doesn’t necessarily think I’m the most competent instructor, they can use this as a way to never hire me again.”

This study suggests the above-mentioned fears can lead to feelings of disempowerment for educators. Whereas student fears and feelings of disempowerment can lead to a misuse of power, this study suggests educators’ fears and sense of disempowerment often lead to either an ineffective use of power or a failure to exercise their power, further fueling the SIC fire. For instance, educators could constructively use their power to implement strategies to prevent and mitigate SIC, but in order to do so, they would need to be aware that the phenomenon exists at a post-secondary level. If they are not informed by institutional leadership of the existence of SIC, they may not be prepared to handle situations when they arise. As Marcus stated, institutions “don’t prepare you for this.” Moreover, if educators do not receive the necessary training and education to prevent and mitigate SIC, they may be further disempowered in their ability to know what to do, or that institutional policies exist regarding these types of situations. This could lead educators to ineffectively react or respond to students engaged in SIC, potentially exacerbating the situation. As study participants revealed, not knowing how to navigate SIC and not having the support and backing of institutional leadership can lead to insecurities and doubts about their teaching abilities, further fueling SIC. Emily articulated this when discussing how SIC led to self-doubting thoughts such as, “I’m not good enough to be an educator. I’m not competent in my professional abilities.” As such, these types of thoughts can lead educators to feel even more powerless to handle SIC.

Educators have the power to report situations involving SIC to leadership, yet this study suggests that many do not for a variety of reasons. This may be in part because they

have internalized the idea that they can or should handle SIC on their own. In other situations, educators may not get the chance to report their experiences to leadership because students have done so first. This was reflected by Shelley who stated, "I didn't report it. I just handled my ducks. They reported me." However, if educators do not feel they will be believed or backed by leadership, or they fear repercussions to their reputations and careers, they may choose not to report their experiences. When leadership does not take action and follow the proper policies and procedures regarding SIC, this sends the message to educators they are left to deal with situations on their own. Furthermore, if educators feel blamed by leadership for occurrences of SIC, or they feel they are viewed as ineffective in their ability to handle these situations, they may not feel safe to report their experiences, especially if they are new to teaching. This was best articulated by Sarah when she said, "I didn't feel safe to tell anybody. I didn't feel I could say anything or ask for help for many, many years." Thus, when leadership consistently capitulates to students demands, educators may then feel additional feelings of helplessness regarding SIC, further limiting their power in the ability to hold students accountable for their actions. As a result, this study's participants often felt they had to acquiesce to students through the alteration of teaching and grading practices to avoid igniting or escalating situations involving SIC. This was reinforced when Rebecca stated, "I don't want to take on the conflict anymore and I don't necessarily want to navigate it because it feels too hot."

Like students, educators also have opportunities to use power in effective and productive ways. Even though training focused on SIC prevention and mitigation strategies is not often mandated by institutional leadership, educators do have the power to seek out their own as a way to feel more prepared to handle SIC situations should they arise. Patricia exemplified this when she discussed enrolling in various professional development opportunities related to teaching pedagogy and adult education prior to instructing her first course. Some participants took the initiative to complete courses and trainings once they

started teaching. However, several participants expressed difficulty in participating in trainings due to schedule conflicts or financial constraints, particularly for those in sessional roles. Ben articulated this when he stated, "When you're a sessional instructor and have a full-time job outside, there just isn't really time for those things –and they're not required." As such, educators could use their power to advocate for additional professional development monetary allowances or trainings that are offered at times more conducive to those who work in other roles outside the institution. Furthermore, educators have the power to familiarize themselves with the institution's policies related to SIC prior to teaching their first course and reviewing those policies with their colleagues and direct supervisors. Educators who feel prepared to prevent and mitigate SIC will feel more empowered and less fearful if and when situations do arise, which can aid in the extinguishing of SIC.

This study's participants suggest that educators can also use their power constructively by implementing various micro-level prevention and mitigation strategies to further aid in extinguishing the SIC fire. For example, educators can use course syllabi, and ongoing interactive class discussions to ensure that course, assignment, and grading expectations are clearly and specifically outlined. Behavioural expectations both in and out of the classroom as well as expectations regarding the most effective way for students to contact educators and what to expect regarding response times should also be clarified. As Patricia expressed, "students can get easily rattled when something's not clear" which can then lead to SIC. Furthermore, the creation of an inclusive and discussion-based classroom environment that invites students to share their views and experiences, and delivers course content relevant to social work practice can further engage students, potentially decreasing SIC. Even the way educators use the physical space in the classroom can engage students and decrease students' misuse of power. Andrew articulated this best: "The more you engage all of the students in the classroom and make the entire space, instructional space, active instructional space, you diminish that power."

Building strong relationships with students is a way educators can exercise power constructively as a way to prevent and extinguish SIC. For example, several participants discussed the importance of being accessible, or as Michelle described, "being available, being fully present" for students whether before, after, or in between classes should they have questions or concerns about course or field-related topics. Taking the initiative to reach out to students who appear to be struggling can also be a useful technique to potentially diffuse a situation that could lead to SIC. As previously discussed, if students feel as though their educator has a vested interest in teaching and supporting students while also demonstrating empathy and a willingness to listen and learn from students, incidences of SIC may be reduced (Boice, 1996; Holton, 1999; Meyers et al., 2006).

If incidences of SIC do occur, educators can use their power constructively in the way they respond to the student and the overall situation. Not taking SIC personally and recognizing that many situations may originate from a place of stress and distress is a way for educators to avoid becoming defensive and respond to students in an ineffective way. This is aligned with Michelle's view that SIC is often the tip of the iceberg representing much larger issues the student may be dealing with. Educators have power in how and where they want to address a student engaged in SIC. Although there are times it can be advantageous to address a classroom-based situation involving SIC in that moment, most situations would benefit from arranging a private meeting with the student to avoid further escalating the situation in front of their peers and to protect confidentiality. However, educators can still set guidelines as to how the meeting will be facilitated, what is expected of both the student and educator, and what the educator is and is not willing to tolerate regarding student behaviour. Educators can also call out students when their behaviour is inappropriate. This was best articulated by Emily who responded to students who she felt were rude by stating, "You know, the way you approached this doesn't sit well with me and for this and this reason" which frequently elicited an apology from the student. Furthermore, educators have the power to disengage

from an interaction that escalates, referring the student to other resources. Not only does this help to prevent a situation from intensifying, but it also models professional social work behaviours and as Patricia said, “soft skills [social workers] need to be doing in the field.”

In sum, educators may not receive training and preparation regarding SIC prior to starting their first course. They may not receive the backing and support from program and higher levels of leadership to hold students accountable for their actions, leaving them feeling disempowered and even helpless at times. However, situations involving SIC can be opportunities for personal and professional growth. As Michelle articulated, educators can have “blind spots and be wrong.” Engaging in their own critical self-reflective practices can be a way for educators to better understand their role and even response to SIC situations as a way to exercise power productively in the management of SIC. Educators may not be able to avoid SIC completely, yet they do have power they can use in constructive ways to effectively prevent, mitigate, and respond these types of situations, lessening or even extinguishing the SIC fire.

Leadership, Fear, and Power

Although it would seem that those in the highest positions within an academic institution should have the most power, this study suggests institutional leadership have their own fears and feelings of disempowerment, influencing the way in which they use power. The SIC fire is further fueled as a result of these fears and disempowerment. When discussing institutional leadership, it is important to consider the hierarchical structures within universities and the way in which program leaders are accountable to higher levels of leadership. Just like faculty may fear they will not be believed or backed by institutional leadership, program-level leaders, such as chairs or deans may also fear they will not be supported by higher levels of administration should student complaints escalate within the institution or even the media. As such, there may be an increased tendency for program-level leaders to acquiesce to students in order to avoid situations escalating to higher levels of

administration. This was articulated best by Julie who was told by her program lead she was "not going to get anywhere" by taking her issues to higher levels of administration, and that it was "not worth the time, which is a really sad thing for a leader to say."

Higher levels of administration such as vice presents, presidents, and provosts may have their own fears associated with SIC. This study suggests that the rise of social media has contributed to fears among leadership. As Andrew expressed, social media has the potential to "invite rebellion" and encourage individuals to publicly voice their opinions in ways that can be harmful to others and incite aggression and hate. This study's participants reveal a growing concern among all levels of leadership that students will take their complaints to the media and social media, resulting in negative publicity for the institution. Shelley affirmed this best when she stated, "I think [leadership] do not want to be sued. They do not want the social media backlash … and that the school's reputation will be hurt." Moreover, as the academy has shifted to a more neoliberal ideological stance, the "commodification of education" as termed by Sarah, has superseded the concept of education as a means of learning. Participants suggest that as institutions are increasingly reliant on tuition and high admissions numbers to operate, there is significant fear among institutional leadership that any negative publicity or damage to the institution's reputation could lead to decreased enrollment and therefore, revenue. As Ben noted, "keeping students happy as part of the business model" is the primary focus of institutions within the neoliberal context and is what drives their fears.

Institutional leadership's fears can lead to their own feelings of disempowerment. This study suggests leadership has the power to address and extinguish the SIC fire, yet their fears and disempowerment prevent them from constructively using the power, or even using their power at all. Like educators, leadership can use their power to implement various prevention and mitigation strategies regarding SIC on both a micro and macro level. They can use their power to support educators in a number of ways including providing training,

education, and mentorship opportunities related to best teaching practices and the overall management of SIC. Leadership can also use their power to more effectively hold students accountable for their actions by upholding policies related to SIC, further supporting educators. This includes redirecting students back to their instructors, especially if students have not communicated their concerns to their instructor first. However, as many participants revealed, leadership often fails to acknowledge SIC as a problem as a means to avoid making larger systemic changes. Instead, SIC is "swept under the rug" for fears of the reputational and financial implications that could ensue as a result of escalating student complaints. Marcus articulated this best when he said, "It's not a secret that students are initiating these confrontations … There is a public relations kind of dimension to this. And I think higher levels of administration are hesitant to take action in any kind of … serious way."

Rather than being supported and guided by leadership through situations involving SIC, this study suggests educators are often left to handle situations on their own despite having limited training to know how to effectively do so. As Rebecca stated, "Nobody at the level of dean or anybody bringing in new staff is offering any kind of truth to the idea of what you really need to know and where your own professional risk is." As such, the overarching theme was that SIC is "just part of the job." Moreover, participants in this study revealed that even when program-level leadership validate and agree with educators' concerns regarding specific incidences of SIC, little to no actual action is taken and instead, they capitulate to students' demands instead of holding them accountable, providing additional oxygen to the SIC fire.

Like students and educators, institutional leadership have opportunities to use power in productive and constructive ways. Institutions have the power to put structures in place to support educators in navigating situations involving SIC. One way to do this is by establishing clear institutional policies specific to student code of conduct and academic honesty that specifically outline the processes, procedures, and sanctions associated with

various types of violations. Several participants in this study discussed the benefit of having a template or flow chart outlining the various steps and the appropriate people to contact should SIC occur. This clarity would enable leaders to redirect students back to their instructors if they had attempted to bypass this step by first seeking a solution with program and higher levels of leadership. Institutions have the ability to provide mandatory orientations at the start of and throughout the academic year for educators, particularly new hires, and students that include information regarding these types of policies and where to access them. Furthermore, leadership can use their power to engage faculty, staff, and students in a collaborative effort to develop new policies and/or review existing ones since they are the ones most impacted by SIC and as such, the associated policies. Positioning leadership in the role of initiating the development and implementation of policies related to student conduct removes educators from being solely responsible for setting behavioural expectations.

A primary identified need among participants was to feel supported, backed, and even just believed by leadership when SIC occurs. Support begins with the recognition and acknowledgement by leadership that SIC as a phenomenon exists and can have significant consequences for those involved and beyond. Emily reflected how it is important to "let instructors know that it's not *if* confrontation happens. It's *when* – and there are some strategies to diffuse it." As such, leadership can support educators by providing mandatory training regarding both teaching pedagogy and SIC and classroom management training. Although some participants expressed concern that mandatory training opportunities regarding SIC serve to reinforce neoliberalist principles and position educators as needing to manage incidents on an individual level, as previously discussed, SIC is something that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. As such, it would seem that institutions have a responsibility to both make educators aware that this phenomenon exists and to provide them with the training and skills necessary to mitigate situations when they do arise, particularly before they instruct their first course.

Program leadership can also better support educators by reducing the reliance on student course evaluations as the primary means of determining whether an educator should receive a future teaching contract, promotion, or tenure-track status. As Julie suggested, contracting sessional instructors for longer than one semester would allow them to be viewed over time rather than by virtue of one solitary course taught. Instead, program leaders can use other modalities to evaluate the effectiveness of educators; modalities such as classroom observations and reviews of lesson plans, course assignment creativity and explanations, rubrics, and overall grading practices. Furthermore, given that participants revealed faculty's vulnerabilities increase when they are sessional or contracted employees, leadership can advocate for more or full-time faculty appointments, decreasing that vulnerability. As was expressed by several participants, it is important for program and overall institutional leadership to encourage more opportunities for educators to engage in open and honest discussions regarding their experiences with SIC whether in staff meetings or in conversations with direct supervisors. These types of forums can allow educators to feel less isolated in their experiences, learn new mitigation strategies, and even reduce the stigma of SIC.

Unaddressed SIC was a unique concern for the participants in this study given their roles as social work educators. As previously discussed, social work students need to be trained and prepared to work with marginalized or vulnerable populations. The concern is well-articulated by Emily who noted social workers "work with vulnerable, marginalized folks and [social work programs are] putting [students] out there who have very problematic beliefs as well as no emotion regulation." Hence, it is especially important for institutional leadership including direct program leadership who do not have social work backgrounds, to familiarize themselves with social work core values and ethical practices to better understand the implications of SIC within the local community and larger social work profession. Moreover, student code of conduct policies may need to be amended for social work

programs to align more directly with social work values and ethics as well as the needs of practicum agencies and organizations.

As was suggested by several participants, additional measures for social work students could be implemented by leadership as a way to reduce incidences of SIC and ensure students are suitable for both the program and profession. This could begin with admissions screening by decreasing the emphasis on high grade point averages and instead, paying equal or greater attention to emotional regulation, relational, and problem-solving skills. As noted by Patricia, students may "have a 3.8 but they don't have people skills." Furthermore, if students are admitted to social work programs with pre-existing mental health challenges, leadership has the power to institute increased support structures for students to more effectively manage these challenges. As such, this study suggests that if leadership could institute more intentional screening practices and student support services, those admitted into the program would be less likely to engage in SIC, thus decreasing the fire's spread and intensity.

Although the establishment of policies and the implementation of support structures regarding SIC is important, it is also vital that leadership is consistent in upholding these policies and practices. Enforcing these structures sends the message to students as to what is acceptable and expected behaviour. This will in turn convey to students and educators alike that there is an established and transparent conflict-resolution process in place. The findings of this study suggest SIC is a real and destructive phenomenon within social work programs. SIC is not dyadic but a triad. SIC acts like a fire. All three elements in the triad are necessary for the phenomenon/fire to ignite and each side of the triangle has the ability to control and perhaps even extinguish, the fire. Fear and the misuse of, or failure to use power increases the intensity of the fire and it's spread. The effective use of power can lead to its extinction.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a more in-depth analysis of the study's findings. Particular attention was paid to the seriousness of SIC as a phenomenon and the implications for educators, students, and most importantly, the profession of social work. Although literature has previously positioned the educator-student dynamic as the primary contributor towards SIC, this chapter used a fire metaphor to suggest that a third entity, the post-secondary academic institution, is also integral in the ignition and maintenance of this phenomenon. Several factors are involved in the growth, spread, and intensity of SIC and as this study suggests, this phenomenon is not easily contained or extinguished. However, there are steps that can be taken by both institutions and educators to prevent and mitigate situations involving SIC which will hopefully lead to an overall reduction in the intensity of this phenomenon in the future. Chapter 6, the final chapter, revisits the original research question and associated elements and provide a summary of the findings. Contributions to social work are discussed followed by a discussion of the study's limitations and areas for future research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter offers a summary of the key findings of the study in relation to the research question and the five associated elements. Contributions of this study to social work research and the overall profession are discussed. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations and possible areas for future research regarding SIC as well as providing some final thoughts.

Summary of Key Findings

The aim of this study was to better understand the essence of SIC as experienced by post-secondary social work educators across Canada, and to discover what they identified as potential mitigators both in and outside the classroom environment. In addition, this study was an examination of the institutional response to SIC. Particular interest was paid to the implications of SIC for social work education. Using a qualitative methodology, Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step descriptive phenomenological approach, four themes emerged from the data. These themes are (a) what SIC is, (b) what the responses of the institution are, (c) the level of preparation and training regarding SIC received, and (d) the overall implications on social work education and the social work profession.

Following the analysis of the data, a key finding that emerged was that SIC is a present and serious problem within schools of social work that has implications for social work educators, social work education, and ultimately, the profession itself. SIC can lead to significant personal and professional impacts on educators, negatively affecting their mental health, feelings of personal safety, their teaching potential, and their commitment to teaching. SIC also has serious implications for social work education. The time educators spend managing SIC is time not spent on teaching or supporting students, which can negatively impact all social work students, including those not engaging in SIC. Likewise, educators can water down course content in an effort to avoid student discontent and to minimize the possibility of students being triggered. Unlike many other academic disciplines, social work

education is unique in that it trains students to work with some of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. The concern is that students who engage in SIC in the academic environment will likewise engage in confrontational behaviours in their practicums and as future professionals if situations of SIC are not addressed at the program or academic level. This could then lead to unethical behaviour and potential harm for the populations these students will work with. Social work agencies are then positioned to have to manage these situations. Not only could relationships between social work agencies and social work educational programs be strained as a result of SIC, but the already fledgling credibility of the field of social work could be further compromised.

The findings of this study help us to understand the primary drivers of SIC, specifically student discontent (i.e., around grades, feedback, and course material) combined with their inabilities to manage their discontent in constructive versus confrontational manners. Findings also indicate SIC is a multifactorial phenomenon. Although students are instigating the confrontational behaviours, they are not solely responsible. Many factors contribute to the existence and maintenance of SIC including educator factors (e.g., their identity/identities, inadequate training), institutional factors (e.g., lack of explicit policies and a failure to provide support for educators) and societal factors (e.g., consumerism, technology, social media).

Previous research has positioned SIC as a student-educator dyad. This study offers a new perspective. Much like a fire requires three elements (heat, fuel, and oxygen) to be ignited and sustained, this study also suggests that SIC likewise requires three elements. In addition to student and educators, a third entity, institutional leadership, plays a significant role in the existence and reinforcement of SIC. Much of the strength and breadth of SIC has to do with how the aspects of power and fear are driving this phenomenon. Those in leadership positions may be thought of as having the most power within the institution and therefore have the ability to hold students accountable for their actions. Yet, because of the

academy's shift to a more neoliberal structure in recent years, the findings of this study suggest that institutional leadership frequently capitulates to student demands due to the fear that situations may escalate leading to reputational damage and moreover, financial consequences. As such, educators are not being supported or backed in the way that would be beneficial to them, allowing students to use power in an unproductive and even abusive way to get their demands met.

In keeping with the fire metaphor, change can occur with the alteration or removal of any element of the triad. For example, if students did not engage in SIC, if educators were better prepared to handle SIC, and if academic leadership provided more consistent support to faculty through training and holding students accountable for their actions, the entire dynamic of SIC would change or be extinguished. Because this study focused on the educator side of the triangle and their experiences with SIC, their identified needs were highlighted and the strategies they could implement that would weaken or extinguish the fire were solicited. Overall themes related to the participants' identified needs included the need for more mandatory training related to basic teaching pedagogy upon entering the academic sector and training related to classroom management and SIC, especially as most are hired as a result of their field and subject matter expertise and not teaching experience. Most importantly, institutional leadership need to do a better job of supporting their faculty, establishing clear policies and procedures related to the management of SIC, and upholding those policies. Although this is imperative for the well-being of educators and students alike, it is even more important in a field like social work because of the potential of students to do harm to others, particularly those who are already vulnerable and marginalized.

Contributions of This Study to Social Work Research and the Overall Profession

The bulk of the research on SIC pertains to the K–12 sector. As such, this study's focus on post-secondary education is a valuable contribution. Many of the existing studies use a quantitative approach and rarely do they include more in-depth narratives as was done

in this study. In addition, many studies have focused on student rather than the educator perspectives regarding this phenomenon, and they tended to dwell on uncivil student behaviour rather than the full range of behaviours including the more intense hostile, aggressive, and threatening behaviours. Even less research has been conducted on SIC within social work education, nor have they drawn from AOP or intersectionality as theoretical frameworks. As such, this study helped fill a notable gap in the literature regarding SIC in post-secondary social work education, and more specifically, social work education in Canada.

This study expands existing knowledge on the subject of SIC. Findings suggest that SIC is not just about student misbehaviours and educators' inability to handle situations when they arise. Instead, SIC is triadic. Students, educators, and institutional leadership all play a role in the existence and maintenance of SIC, and it is power and fear that are the primary drivers of this phenomenon. These findings are both new and significant as they inform how best to prevent and mitigate SIC at micro and macro levels, while also highlighting the serious consequences that can occur if the phenomenon is not addressed particularly from a social work perspective.

Previous literature, including social work-specific studies, rarely focuses on aspects such as training and institutional leadership's response in relation to SIC. The hope is that this study will lead to not only increased awareness regarding the overall seriousness of SIC as a phenomenon within the post-secondary academic sector, but that the uniqueness of SIC within social work programs will be better recognized among all levels of leadership. By increasing awareness, this may lead to the implementation of more effective policies and improved support structures for educators and all involved, as well as increased development and offerings of training workshops related to teaching pedagogy and SIC, particularly for new social work educators. Furthermore, the information gleaned from this study can be used to create more social work-specific workshops and training on this subject, especially as this

study suggests that social work educators may have additional needs in mitigating SIC that those in other disciplines may not have. Finally, although this research focused on social work education, the findings from this study still have the potential to benefit other academic disciplines in their understanding and mitigation of SIC. All levels across all disciplines need to be involved in truly addressing this phenomenon in a purposeful and productive way.

Limitations and Areas for Further Study

One potential limitation of this study is in the utilization of a qualitative methodological approach and small number of participants. Qualitative inquiry has often been critiqued for its smaller sample sizes and inability to generate generalizable results. However, quantitative research does not provide the breadth and depth of understanding qualitative inquiry can. This study was not meant to represent a broader population and instead aimed to gain a better overall understanding of the essence of the phenomenon of SIC using more in-depth narratives from fifteen social work educators. Nevertheless, further quantitative or mixed-methods research may be beneficial in furthering knowledge about SIC. For instance, a comparative study examining differences between educators who report their experiences with SIC to leadership and those who do not would aid in furthering research on how leaders can best provide support in situations involving SIC. In addition, determining if training educators decreases the incidents of SIC would be a useful study.

In addition to the small sample size, another limitation is in the lack of diversity among the participant sample. This sample primarily consisted of White and female educators. Moreover, no one identifying as Indigenous or First Nations expressed interest in participating in this study. It is uncertain whether the large number of female participants is connected to the continuation of social work as a female-dominated profession (Canadian Union of Public Employees, n.d.), or if there is a significantly lower number of males who experience SIC. Furthermore, it is unclear whether there is a correlation between the limited number of educators identifying as persons of colour and Indigenous in the sample and the

representation within social work educator roles across Canada. It is also possible that fear of possible employment repercussions should anonymity be compromised may have been a deterrent. For example, on two occasions, prospective participants cancelled the scheduled interview stating they were too fearful to participate in the study due to the potential of being "found out" by colleagues or leadership, thus compromising their teaching positions. It is thus unknown how many other social work educators may have wanted to participate in the study, but due to the small number of post-secondary social work education programs in Canada, they chose not to out of fear. As such, future studies would benefit from the inclusion of a more diverse participant sample, strengthening the intersectional analysis in relation to SIC. In addition, using researchers who identify as Indigenous, First Nations, or persons of colour may have attracted a more diverse participant sample.

This study focused solely on Canadian social work educators. It would be vital to repeat this study in the United States and other countries to see if similar themes emerge and to compare findings. In addition, it would be beneficial to conduct a similar comparative study with other human services disciplines, such as psychology, to identify similarities and differences in the participants' experiences. It would be interesting to know if educators in these fields also have fears for their respective professions that are related to SIC and these students' future interactions with clients.

If this study were to be repeated, there are some additional questions that might be beneficial to ask. For instance, although there were demographic type questions pertaining to various identities such as race, gender, and age, questions specific to sexual identity were not asked. That said, one participant did draw a connection between her sexual identity and being the target of SIC. Given that this study drew from an intersectional perspective and literature has positioned those identifying as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community as more likely targets of SIC, future replication of this type of study would benefit from incorporating a demographic question specific to sexual identity to see if that may also be a contributor to

SIC. Furthermore, although multiple participants identified as seniors with many years of teaching experience, their age was not cited as a contributing factor, nor did they speak of how changes in social work education's focus from post-modernist to more critical theoretical ideologies since they completed their programs and started teaching may play a role in SIC. Asking more specific questions related to how they view age and other specific identities as influencing SIC would provide an even deeper understanding of educator vulnerabilities. Additionally, although a few participants did address this, if this study were to be repeated, it may be useful to add another question pertaining to why those who remained in teaching continued to do despite their experiences with SIC.

Finally, given that the current literature focuses on either the educator or student perception of SIC, future SIC research may benefit from sampling institutional leadership and practicum supervisors regarding their overall experiences and perceptions of this phenomenon. This study asked the participants to speculate why they feel leadership is not supportive of them in situations involving SIC. Thus, it would be interesting to understand how leadership views the phenomenon and their views of support. It would also be beneficial to know if there are differences in the responses among program-level leaders (e.g., chairs and deans) and higher levels of leadership (e.g., vice presidents and provosts). Understanding what leadership identifies as needed to help educators feel supported and prepared to effectively address SIC may further contribute to working towards eradicating or at least reducing this phenomenon. Furthermore, an examination of the way in which various institutions' policies and procedures may reinforce neoliberal ideals and unequal power relations may reveal additional contributing factors to this phenomenon.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the recruitment information for this study was accidentally sent to a particular university's practicum supervisor list in addition to social work faculty. A surprising number of social work practicum supervisors reached out expressing interest in this study, stating they had their own experiences with SIC among

social work students. This is clearly an area that can be further researched, particularly as practicum supervisors are left to deal with students (and eventually graduates) engaging in SIC who may not be suitable for the field. Their perspective may aid in raising additional awareness as to the seriousness of SIC in social work education, particularly when it is unaddressed by program and higher levels of institutional leadership.

Concluding Thoughts

The journey to understand the phenomenon of SIC has been a complex one, and there is much more that needs to be understood. However, what is clear is that SIC is a serious problem that needs to be more effectively addressed at a systemic level. Although there are several strategies that can be used by individual educators to both prevent and mitigate SIC, institutional leadership needs to take a more direct approach in addressing this problem, and part of that is by supporting educators who are the backbone of the institution. To exist, post-secondary academic institutions require students. However, they also need qualified, talented, and dedicated educators. The role of an educator can be a challenging one that can be further exacerbated by SIC. When educators are not provided the support and preparation needed to effectively navigate situations involving SIC, programs risk faculty attrition. For those faculty who remain, as indicated by this study's participants, teaching and grading practices may be compromised, content may be eliminated or watered down, and less energy and creativity may be exuded. Students, including those not engaging in SIC, are thus negatively impacted, particularly in the decreased amount of field knowledge and preparation they may receive.

This study sought to understand the essence of the SIC phenomenon using the lens of social work educators. Some participants experienced one specific incident of SIC and others discussed the multiple incidents they had experienced. The number of incidents experienced was not what was important. It was the perceived intensity of the experience(s) that was significant for the participants. Each one of the participants was impacted by SIC in some

way. Yet what was even more striking was the participants' expressed concern and even fear for the implications of SIC on social work education and the overall profession. The concern participants expressed for the future of social work and for those who might be harmed by the students who had engaged in SIC overshadowed their concerns for their own personal and professional well-being. However, this is not to discount the depth to which many of the participants suffered. In keeping with the fire metaphor, some of these experiences burned or even left scars long after the incident had ended.

As a social work educator, I can identify with many of the experiences and impacts shared by the participants, and I have my own fears and concerns regarding the longer-term consequences of unaddressed SIC. I expected that many of the participant stories would be filled with intensity and that they would have various explanations for why they thought the phenomenon exists. Although I understood there were implications for social work education and even the profession as a whole, even I did not recognize the seriousness of this phenomenon. With each participant interview, it became overwhelmingly apparent how significant the implications are and how the impacts go far beyond the classroom and even the overall academic environment. My hope in conducting this study was to better understand the essence of SIC as a way to raise awareness regarding this phenomenon and to advocate for improved support structures and training for educators, more specifically, social work educators.

My other hope in conducting this study was to give social work educators a voice, especially since so many reported feeling isolated, alone, and even oppressed in their experiences with SIC. Before completing my analysis, I had participants review the findings as presented in Chapter 3 (see Informed Consent Form in Appendix E). It became clear to me that not only had participants felt validated after reading about others' experiences of SIC, but how much they needed to be validated. Responses such as "it was great to read others' experience and not feel in isolation," "I've never had the experience of feeling both affirmed

and deeply disturbed at the same time," and reading the chapter "was exactly what I needed" were common and suggest participants appreciated knowing they were not alone. One participant even went so far as to say,

> Seeing this in black and white allowed me to let go of some of the doubts I had about my experience, as there was always a part that wondered if I was making more of it than was necessary.

Social workers are in the business of advocating on behalf of those who are vulnerable and have difficulty advocating for themselves. What happens, then, when it is the student, the social-worker-in-training, who is actually placing others, in this instance social work educators, in vulnerable positions? Who is supporting and advocating for those in vulnerable situations in these instances? What happens when a student, who once engaged in SIC that was left unchecked, then becomes a social worker? Will they "graduate" to social-worker-initiated confrontations? If so, who will be the target? Will it be clients, supervisors, agency leadership? Is this how a small fire becomes an inferno? The phenomenon of SIC is not going to go away overnight, nor may it ever be eliminated completely. However, as this study suggests, students, educators, and institutional leadership all contribute to igniting and sustaining the SIC fire, and the good news is, each also have the opportunity and responsibility to mitigate and ideally extinguish it. As Emily stated, "we need to believe instructors and not just see that [SIC is] part of the job."

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Appendix A : Recruitment Flyer

"Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators"

- **Are you a post-secondary social work educator?**
- **Have you had experiences with disruptive, problematic, or confrontational behaviours initiated by students?**

YOU can help…

Over the past three decades, research indicates that post-secondary educators are increasingly experiencing concerning behaviours initiated by students that range from minor disruptive behaviours to more intentional, aggressive, and threatening confrontations. These behaviours can challenge the educator's authority, professional credibility, and personal character both in and outside the classroom environment. However, many educators can feel ill-prepared to handle these types of situations due to a lack of training, preparation, and institutional support.

My name is Thalia Anderen, and I am a doctoral candidate with the School of Social Work at Memorial University of Newfoundland. This study is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation requirement in order to learn from social work educators' experiences with student-initiated confrontations to better understand the personal, professional, and institutional challenges this phenomenon may pose, as well as strategies to best mitigate these types of situations.

Your stories and experiences can help. You are being invited to participate in a 60-90-minute Zoom interview in which you will be asked to share your experiences with situations involving student-initiated confrontations. As part of this study, you will be asked for some broad and non-identifying demographic information. If you would like more information or you are interested in participating in this study, please contact Thalia Anderen, MSW, RCSW, PhD (Candidate) at tsanderen@mun.ca or by phone at [phone number redacted].

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr.chair@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

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Appendix B : Invitation to Participate

"Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators"

My name is Thalia Anderen, and I am a doctoral candidate with the School of Social Work at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am conducting a research project called *"**Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators**"* as part of my doctoral dissertation requirements under the supervision of Catherine de Boer, PhD.

Over the past three decades, research indicates that post-secondary educators are increasingly experiencing concerning behaviours initiated by students. The purpose of the study is to explore social work educators' experiences with student-initiated confrontations to better understand the personal, professional, and institutional challenges this phenomenon may pose, as well as strategies to best mitigate these types of situations. Student-initiated confrontations could include such behaviours as minor disruptive behaviours to more intentional, aggressive, and threatening confrontations with the goal of challenging the educator's authority and professional credibility as well as their personal character both in and outside the classroom environment.

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in a 60-90-minute interview in which you will be asked to share your experiences with situations involving student-initiated confrontations. Interviews will take place virtually using the Zoom platform. You will be asked to provide broad and non-identifying demographic information which will be presented in the final written report as part of the description of the participant sample. This study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from this study at any time during the data collection process. To thank you for your time, you will receive a $20 gift card upon completion of the interview, which you can keep even if you choose to withdraw from the study.

Criteria to Participate in this Study:

- Participants must be age 18 or older
- Participants must have current or previous experience as a post-secondary social work educator
- Participants must have experienced student-initiated confrontations at some point in their career

If you would like more information or you are interested in participating in this study, please contact Thalia Anderen at tsanderen@mun.ca or [phone number redacted].

Thank you in advance for considering my request.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr.chair@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Appendix C : Informed Consent Form

Title: *"**Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators**"*

Researcher(s): ***Thalia Anderen, School of Social Work -Memorial University of Newfoundland, tsanderen@mun.ca, [phone number redacted]***

Supervisor(s): ***Catherine de Boer, PhD, cdeboer@mun.ca, [phone number redacted}***

Kathy de Jong, PhD, Brent Oliver, PhD

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled *"**Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators**"*

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, ***Thalia Anderen***, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

My name is Thalia Anderen, and I am a PhD doctoral candidate with the School of Social Work at Memorial University. As part of my doctoral thesis requirements, I am conducting research under the supervision of Catherine de Boer, PhD regarding post-secondary social work educators' experiences with student-initiated confrontations.

Over the past three decades, research indicates that post-secondary educators are increasingly experiencing concerning behaviours initiated by students. The purpose of the study is to explore social work educators' experiences with student-initiated confrontations to better understand the personal, professional, and institutional challenges this phenomenon may pose, as well as strategies to best mitigate these types of situations. Student-initiated confrontations could include such behaviours as minor disruptive behaviours to more

intentional, aggressive, and threatening confrontations with the goal of challenging the educator's authority and professional credibility as well as their personal character both in and outside the classroom environment.

What You Will Do in this Study and for How Long:

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a virtual interview using the Zoom Business platform lasting approximately 60-90 minutes long. You will be asked to provide broad and non-identifying demographic information which will be presented in the final written report as part of the description of the participant sample. All interviews will be recorded for later transcription. If you do not wish to be video recorded, and instead be audio recorded only, you have the option to turn off your camera. All recordings will be destroyed immediately after being transcribed, and transcripts will be stored in a secure location and will be destroyed after five years. After your interview, and before the data are included in the final written document, you will be able to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, modify, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. For more information on Zoom's privacy policy, please go to https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/.

Compensation for Participating in This Study:

You will not be paid to take part in this study but you will receive an e-gift card of $20 to thank you for your participation. You may keep the gift card even if you withdraw from the study.

Withdrawal from the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the data collection process without penalty/harm, including after you have received a copy of the transcript. You may also refuse to answer any interview questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. After your interview and before the data are included in the final project, you will have the option to review your transcript and written findings from their interview for accuracy and to indicate any additions or modifications as you see fit. You also have the opportunity to arrange for an additional phone call or meeting to discuss the findings. If you would like to review the transcripts and/or written findings, you can check the box below and you will be emailed a copy. However, after a period of two months from the interview, you will not be able to request the removal of your data, as the data analysis and writing process will have begun. If you decide to withdraw from this study, all recordings will be erased and transcripts will be destroyed.

Possible Benefits to You and Others if You Participate in this Study:

By participating in this study, you may find it helpful to have the opportunity to share your story and perhaps gain some new insights about your experiences and student-initiated

confrontations as a whole. In addition, your stories may also aid in raising awareness about this topic, potentially leading to more supports and training for social work educators as well as those in other disciplines.

Possible Risks:

Because you will be asked to share potentially upsetting or uncomfortable stories related to your experiences with student-initiated confrontations including the type of training or support by your institution regarding conflict or harassment, you may experience some emotional distress or discomfort. Prior to the start of the interview, I will provide you with a list of local support services and national phone helplines and online supports including Crisis Services Canada (1 888.456.4566), Canadian Crisis Hotline (1 888.353.2273), and Crisis Line Canada (crisiline.ca/1 866.996.0991) in the event you feel you need such supports.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal and demographic information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure. Therefore, every reasonable effort will be made to ensure your information is kept private and secure and all information you provide will be kept confidential or as required by law. Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance. Therefore, your name and identifying information will be removed from all data and replaced with a pseudonym to protect your identity. The consent forms will be stored separately from all other data, so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. In addition, you will not be identified in publications without your explicit permission.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:

All electronic data including consent forms, recordings, and transcripts will be encrypted and securely stored on my password-protected personal laptop. Any paper data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's private home office which only I have access to.

I will be the only person with access to participant contact and identifying information, and no names or identifying information will be shared with members of the research team. Some parts of the data from the transcripts will be shared with my PhD supervisor, Catherine de Boer, PhD once your name and all identifying information is removed. In addition, research assistants may be used to assist with transcribing the interview recordings and as such, they will be required to sign an Oath of Confidentiality for Transcribers form and consequences for any breach of confidentiality will be clearly stipulated. Once research assistants have finished transcribing the data, all copies of recordings and transcripts will be returned to me and any digitally stored files will be erased.

Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.

Sharing of Results with Participants:

Upon completion, my dissertation will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, and can be accessed online at:
http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses.
If you are interested in receiving copy, you can check the box below and you will be emailed a copy within four months of completion.

Reporting of Results:

The findings of the study will be part of the final written dissertation and potentially for future scholarly publications in professional journals or books or social work/academic conferences. Findings may also be used for professional workshops, including the development of training and educational material related to SIC as well as applications for funding proposals and/or other professional academic research interests. However, your identity will be kept confidential. Although I may include direct quotations from your interview in the final written project or future publications/presentations, you will be given a pseudonym, and all other identifying information including your geographical location, demographic information, contact information, and the name of your institution and your position will be removed. In addition, the data will be reported in aggregate form, so that it will not be possible to identify individuals.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you have questions or would like more information about this study, you may contact me at tsanderen@mun.ca or [phone number redacted]or my PhD supervisor Dr. Catherine de Boer at cdeboer@mun.ca or [phone number redacted].

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Consent:
Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.

- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that **point will be destroyed**.
- **You understand that you will not be able to request to have your data removed from the final project after a period of 2 months following your interview.**

I agree to be video recorded ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to the use of direct quotations ☐ Yes ☐ No

I wish to receive a copy of the final written project ☐ Yes ☐ No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your Signature Confirms

☐ I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

☐ I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.

☐ A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

_____ _____

Signature of Principal Investigator Date

Appendix D：Interview Guide

- Introductions
- Confirm that the informed consent form has been received/signed and answer any questions participant may have regarding consent form
- Remind participant that this interview should take approximately 1-1.5 hours and will be recorded
- Remind participant that they may refuse to answer a question and they may stop the interview at any time

Demographic Questions:

Age:

Gender:

Race:

Geographical Location:

Highest Level of Education:

Type of Post-Secondary Institution Taught At: (college, university, both)

Level of Education Taught (diploma, BSW, MSW, PhD)

Number of Years' Teaching Experience:

Interview Questions:

1. Please tell me about your experiences with student-initiated confrontations (SIC)

   Potential Prompts:

   - How long ago did this occur?
   - Were there other incidents? If so, please tell me more about those.

2. What was your response to this situation/these situations?

   Potential Prompts:

- Did you report these situations to anyone? If so, who? (i.e., colleagues, leadership, etc.)
- What type of response did you receive? How supported did you feel?
- How did/do you feel about those responses? What was helpful? If not, what would have been helpful?

3. How did your experiences with SIC impact you personally (mental health, fear, anxiety, depression, etc.)? Professionally (motivation/enthusiasm for teaching, changes in personality, etc.)?
4. How do you understand this phenomenon? In other words, what do you think are some reasons why this phenomenon is occurring?
    - How do you think leadership at your institution view this phenomenon?
5. If you were to use a term or label to describe your experiences with SIC, what would you use (racism, sexism, bullying, etc.)?
6. What type of training related to teaching/teaching techniques (course/syllabus development, lesson planning, classroom management techniques, etc.) did you receive prior to taking on a teaching role?
7. What type of training/education did you receive related to student-initiated confrontations?

    Potential Prompts:

    - Was this training offered by your institution or did you seek training on your own?
    - Was the training offered by your institution mandatory or voluntary?
    - What were some of the key points of the training you received?
8. What strategies have you used to be proactive in preventing or mitigating situations involving SIC? How effective do you feel they have been?

9. What do you see SIC's implications as being on social work education? The practice of social work as a whole?

   Potential Prompts:

   - How do you think this phenomenon may influence/impact social work students/graduates' effectiveness in the field?
   - How do you think this phenomenon impacts students not engaged in SIC?

10. Given your experiences, what types of training and educational needs do you think would be helpful to mitigate this phenomenon? Other types of needs?
11. Is there any other information you would like to share that hasn't been discussed during our time together today?

Debrief:

- Thank participant for their time.
- Remind participant about the ability to review their transcripts once their name/identifying data has been removed and confirm their response to the consent form.
- Remind participant about confidentiality and how their information will be securely stored as outlined in the information and informed consent forms.
- Remind participant that they may withdraw from the study at any time up to the point of data analysis and if they choose to do so, they may contact me directly.
- Remind participant about the resources provided should they experience any distress following the interview.
- Ask participants if they have any additional questions they would like to ask before ending the interview.

Appendix E : Participant Data Analysis Chart Template

"Pseudonym"

Significant statements	Themes	Meanings
Demographics:		
Question 1: Experiences:		
Question 2: Response/reporting of situations:		
Question 3: Personal/professional impacts:		
Question 4: Understanding of the phenomenon:		
Question 5: Label/term to describe phenomenon:		
Question 6: Training Related to teaching:		
Question 7: Prior teacher training:		
Question 8: Prevention/mitigation strategies:		
Question 9: Implications on SW education/profession:		
Question 10: Suggestions for training/educational needs:		

Appendix F : ICEHR Approval

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Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	**20221981-SW**
Approval Period:	December 8, 2021 – December 31, 2022
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Catherine de Boer School of Social Work
Title of Project:	*Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators*

December 8, 2021

Ms. Thalia Anderen
School of Social Work
Memorial University

Dear Ms. Anderen:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarifications and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* for **one year**. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed** by ICEHR. If you need to make additions and/or modifications, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical concerns, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before **December 31, 2022**. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the ***Applications: Post-Review*** link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

James R Drover

James Drover, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, ICEHR

JD/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Catherine de Boer, School of Social Work

Appendix G : Renewal of ICEHR Approval

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Anderen, Thalia Stephanie <tsanderen@mun.ca>

ICEHR Clearance # 20221981-SW – EXTENDED

1 message

dgulliver@mun.ca <dgulliver@mun.ca> Wed, Dec 14, 2022 at 7:39 AM
To: "Anderen Thalia(Principal Investigator)" <tsanderen@mun.ca>
Cc: "de Boer Catherine(Supervisor)" <cdeboer@mun.ca>, dgulliver@mun.ca

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY
Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

ICEHR Approval #:	20221981-SW
Researcher Portal File #:	20221981
Project Title:	*Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators*
Associated Funding:	Not Funded
Supervisor:	Dr. Catherine de Boer
Clearance expiry date:	**December 31, 2023**

Dear Ms. Thalia Anderen:

Thank you for your response to our request for an annual update advising that your project will continue without any changes that would affect ethical relations with human participants.

On behalf of the Chair of ICEHR, I wish to advise that the ethics clearance for this project has been extended to **December 31, 2023**. The *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS2) requires that you submit another annual update to ICEHR on your project prior to this date.

We wish you well with the continuation of your research.

Sincerely,

DEBBY GULLIVER
Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, NL | A1C 5S7
Bruneau Centre for Research and Innovation | Room IIC 2010C
T: (709) 864-2561 |
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr | https://rpresources.mun.ca/

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Appendix H : Oath of Confidentiality for Transcribers

Project title: "Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators"

I, _____, have been hired to transcribe interview recordings for the research project entitled: "*Student-Initiated Confrontations: Understanding the Phenomenon and the Associated Training Implications for Post-Secondary Social Work Educators.*"

I agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, recordings, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.

2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., recordings, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.

3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., recordings, transcripts) to Thalia Anderen when I have completed the research tasks.

4. after consulting with Thalia Anderen, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Thalia Anderen (e.g., memory sticks, information stored on computer hard drive).

_____	_____	_____
(Researcher - print name)	(signature)	(date)
_____	_____	_____
(Transcriber - print name)	(signature)	(date)